

Chasing improved pupil performance: the impact of policy change on school educators' perceptions of their professional identity, the case of further change in English schools

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Abstract

Changes in education systems across Europe are a response to perceived needs to improve academic performance. The recent workforce remodelling agenda, in England (2003-5), reflected a growing concern that centralisation and the associated deskilling of teachers had gone too far. The resultant restructuring of the work of teachers, giving roles previously performed by teachers to staff without teaching qualification, needs to be considered from the perspective of those involved. What is clear from comparative studies is that experiences of the implementation of such policies, is influenced by local factors. The study reported here focuses on the effect of a significant policy change on teachers in 2 English local authorities through a mixture of 557 questionnaires and 86 semi-structured interviews collected from 5 secondary and 9 primary schools. The data focuses on the changing roles of teachers and teaching assistants and the lessons to be learned for system changes beyond remodelling.

Key Words

Remodelling schools; teachers roles; teaching assistants roles; innovation; autonomy

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Changing Education, changing teachers' roles

Over the past 30 years there has been a significant drive towards greater managerial control over teachers' work and greater levels of accountability set for school systems (Ball, 2007; Sachs, 2003). This is partly in response to data arising from international studies of pupil educational performance and linked to a growing concern to secure a competitive edge in an increasingly globalised economy (Ball, 2007; Bottery, 2000). Indeed, that efficiency, economy and effectiveness are paramount is not restricted to education, but has taken place across all public services in developed countries (Ozga 2002). In this article we aim to explore a significant recent change in teachers working conditions arising out of the continuing desire to raise standards in English schools. Our concern is to address the relationship between policy intentions, the approach taken to policy implementation in schools and educator professional identity. We examine the ways in which these contribute to successful change in practice. The article begins by situating the current changes within the context of international policy trends before examining one particular policy initiative, the Remodelling of the School Workforce in England. Having set the context we then discuss the data drawn upon for this article reporting the views of senior leaders, teachers, governors, teaching assistants and administration staff.

In education the emphasis on change has manifest itself in different ways across Europe, Australasia and North America according to the histories and traditions of these countries. In Switzerland, for instance, policy makers, placed great emphasis on teachers working and planning together as a team, rather than their more common practice of individual planning (Vogt 2002). This was influenced by research evidence that such practices would enhance the educational culture of a school. In France the very structured centralised curriculum arising from the Republican ideals of a 'universalistic approach to organization and social provision – the same for everyone' (Broadfoot et al 2000 p38) was freed up and the (civil servant) teachers encouraged to take more control of what and how they taught. This challenged teachers' views of their role, so reducing their sense of pride in their professionalism which was defined as 'doing a good job' by delivering the curriculum well (Osborne 2002). Almost the opposite effect resulted from the introduction of a National Curriculum in England and Wales in 1988 which paved the way for greatly increased levels of accountability through national testing and league table reporting in what Ball (2003) called an environment of 'performativity'. Webb (2006) reports on centrally driven, inconsistent changes to the curriculum that challenge teachers' professional identity. Sachs (2003) describes how the new managerialism in New Zealand has led to the establishment of restrictive and professionally challenging lines of accountability. In England, as Webb (2006) and Gunter and Rayner (2007) argue, a climate has developed where the failures in education are laid firmly at the door of the schools and teachers. In the USA similar phenomena had also left teachers vulnerable to the stress of media assault (Smylie et al 2004). Moreover, English teachers' sense of professional identity, tied as it was to a long history of autonomy and responsibility for children's learning and the curriculum, became 'fragmented' (Ball 2003) leading to reduced job satisfaction (Vulliamy 2006).

Nowhere have the intensification of workloads and the challenges to teachers' professional identities and purpose been greater and more centrally controlled than in England. This is demonstrated through school league tables and centrally designed

and delivered training for teachers in, for example, how to deliver the various nationally developed approaches to teaching literacy, numeracy, and more encompassing Primary and Secondary Strategies. Over the years this has raised the levels of pupil performance, as measured by standard tests, but at a cost. Teachers have become increasingly viewed, not as an autonomous professional, but as the 'teacher technician' (Dadds 1997),

Pedagogical processes are not conceived in terms of teaching the whole child but rather in relation to the technical delivery of subject content and the achievement of prespecified learning outcomes.

(Stevenson 2007 p236).

There has been something of a change in direction in recent years prompted by a number of issues. Firstly there was recognition by policy makers of the excessive workload of English teachers confirmed in the PricewaterhouseCooper Teacher Workload Study (2001). Second were predictions of a crisis in teacher recruitment and retention from the School Teachers' Review Body (DfES 2000) and concerns that the improvements in performance had slowed down or even stopped. In addition there were increasingly voiced views that the narrowness of the curriculum is detrimental to the production of the kind of flexible, problem solving lifelong learners needed for the future workforce of a leading economy. How teachers are responding to yet more changes, and how effective they might be in improving educational outcomes is a complex question. As Becker and Reil (1999) found in the US "The notion that instructional reform will follow organisational reform is not demonstrated" (p 3). They go on to suggest however, that where practitioners see the need for reform and have a part in shaping it, there is an increased chance of improvements to practice.

Comparative studies of the effect of changes in policy on teachers have shown that the histories, school and National cultures and associated professional identities of teachers all have a significant impact on how effective a policy is (see for example Vogt 2002 and Osborne 2002). In England Ball and Bowe (1992) illustrate this through discussion of the slippage and contestation involved in the way that teachers interpreted and implemented the National Curriculum. Further they argue that, implementation could be used to reinforce current practices, teachers setting their experience, expertise and priorities against new structures and content arising from the proposed curriculum. Thus they point to the potential for teacher professionalism providing a basis for resistance. In the US Archibald and Porter (1994) reported that teachers could maintain a belief in their control of the curriculum despite state policy intervention. Webb (2009) cites Nias (1989) as describing teacher identity in the early 1980's as a fusion of their personal and occupational selves, an identity intimately tied to child-centred, holistic approaches and which was endorsed by government. Webb goes on to explain that after the Education Reform Act of 1988 this self-identity was challenged and a newly assigned social identity with an emphasis on competency, consumerism and accountability came to the fore. Sfard and Prusak (2005) describe identity formation in terms of the stories people tell about themselves (those which influence their own perceptions of themselves as well as others perceptions of them) and the stories that others tell of them. If then as Woods and Jeffrey (2002) have argued, the working and the personal lives of teachers have more recently become separated and that a re-positioning in relation to a social identity defined in terms of performance output and targets has been established, the 'stories' have become

misaligned. As a consequence adaptation is needed to reconcile the personal and public stories of individual identity (Sfard and Prusak, 2005).

Webb points out that teacher identities are remade and reaffirmed in response to policy change that is perceived as beneficial to children thus accommodating changes in practice. The standards agenda however is for Webb, something which constrains the work of teachers and which has implications for their pastoral role. She argues that under these circumstances and given the unremitting nature and speed of change required, teachers become fatigued, frustrated, disillusioned, cynical and subject to multiple and structural identities. For Vincent (2003) whilst such pressures lead to a public social identity as a competent performer, particularly in the light of formal inspection, it hides another self that maintains underlying professional values. Day et al. (2006) view the complexities involved in understanding teacher identities as crucial to understanding the ways in which teachers construe and construct their working lives. Moreover, they maintain that the experiences of their personal lives are intimately linked to the performance of professional roles as teaching demands significant levels of personal involvement. Day et al. conclude that teacher identities vary from teacher to teacher, and differ at different times. They also argue that alienating teachers from their values and practices, from their institutions, from their education authority and from central government leaves some teachers unable to reconcile their sense of purpose with what they feel they are being asked to do. The potential result is early retirement, resignation, notions of being trapped, and a sense of having left behind a 'golden age' of education. Thus in order to understand teachers it is important to understand what categories they have chosen to evaluate themselves. Identity for Day et al. is "less stable, less convergent and less coherent than is often implied by notions of a 'substantive self'" (p 610). Thus a teachers' self image at times of change is not fixed, but is negotiated (Busher, 2006). Policy change is therefore just one aspect of the changing nature of teachers' work. Changes to professional roles are likely, as discussed above to have significant influence on teachers self image and indeed, because the changes involve the wider workforce, must impact on the identity of that wider workforce.

Workforce remodelling, another solution?

In England workforce remodelling was being introduced in three stages between September 2003 and 2006. The remodelling agenda is a radical one, purporting to be concerned with creating possibilities for a reduction in teacher workload providing them with time in the working day to focus on more creative planning hence improving the quality of the learning experience for their pupils. In order to do this the policy called for the removal of administrative and clerical duties from teachers, implementing a time allowance for those with management responsibilities and introducing a statutory 10% time off timetable for planning, preparation and assessment (PPA). The anticipated sense of freedom to innovate in a less pressured work setting was counterbalanced by an expectation that,

in return for greater professional autonomythe Government requires more accountability and a step change in standards'

Collarbone 2003, www, governornet.co.uk

The purpose of workforce remodelling then, is not simply an altruistic attempt to reverse the effects of years of tightening up of control over teachers' work, which has resulted in a greater tendency in them towards conformity (Bottery 2007). It is, as Gunter and Rayner (2007) suggest, about breaking habits and instigating fundamental cultural changes in schools. The erosion of teachers' responsibilities can be seen as a function of the 'increased use of staff who are not qualified teachers to work in a range of teaching and teaching support roles' (Stevenson 2007 p 225). The dramatic increase in the numbers of support staff in English schools, especially of Teaching Assistants over recent years (Whitty 2006) has been presented as a means to an end in terms of reducing teachers' workload. For Gunter and Rayner (2007) the use of non-qualified teachers demonstrates a lack of support for teaching pedagogy or consideration of the moral aspects involved in ignoring the importance of teachers' identities not to mention the challenges this presents in thinking about the purposes of education. This concern related to the involvement of non-qualified teachers led one of the national teacher unions to withdraw from National agreements (Stevenson and Carter 2007) as it flies in the face of long years of work by unions to achieve an all-graduate status for the teaching profession (Bach et al 2006).

In this paper we consider the response of teachers and other professional educators to the introduction on workforce remodelling in two fairly typical Local Authorities from the English midlands looking particularly at the impact it has had on their professional identity. We look both at the way teachers and schools have taken on board the requirement to change and at how the changes they have made have had an impact on individuals' perceptions of their roles and hence professional identities.

Methodology

The first and largest of the two included projects was designed to contribute to Local Authority (LA) consideration of the impact of workforce remodelling and in particular to find out if, as a result of what they described as a 'unique venture', schools are now 'thinking and doing things differently'. Like many others the commissioning LA (LA1) had made a major commitment to the remodelling project in terms of retraining of LA personnel, time taken in working with groups of schools, engaging staff in discussions, and providing information and training to school staff, and supporting Headteachers through the process. This major change project, with such high ambitions taking place in a period of continuing policy change alongside demographic changes in the region requires a range of strategies in order to understand its impact. The commissioned research was seen as an important part of this. A second LA (LA2) became interested in the initial report from the first project. LA2 saw the possibility of comparisons that could be made with the findings emerging from LA1. It had a particular interest in whether schools saw remodelling as yet another centrally imposed change or as an opportunity for positive and valuable change. LA2 was interested in the extent to which the particular view held by schools resulted in a truly remodelled workforce.

The key was not simply to look at what had changed on the surface, but to consider how professionals made sense of these changes (Burrell and Morgan 1979, O'Brien et

al 2008). Hence what Miles and Huberman (1994, p8, quoted in Rumsby 2007) refer to as a “modified ethnographic approach, suitable for highly contextualised, emotionally charged and time dependent process ...” was adopted. There is, ‘no direct route to what we might choose to call the inner experience’ (op cit p209), in that we cannot directly observe perceptions, or the sense that individuals make of the change process, which in any case are not fixed. This can be seen as an example of a phenomenon that Silverman (1993) described as one that ‘always escapes’ (p202). Perceptions can only be made real through the behaviour of those involved in the initiative and researched through observation of these behaviours either directly, or most likely through individuals describing their own views or behaviours (and as referred to earlier in the construction of self-identity, Sfard and Prusak, 2005).

Given the high stakes placed on workforce remodelling by the LAs, and the sensitivity of individual’s comments in the context of relatively small groups of often easily identifiable staff, it was essential to ensure both confidentiality and anonymity to informants (BERA 2004 ethical guidelines were carefully adhered to throughout the studies reported here). Semi-structured interviews undertaken with a range of staff across both LAs as indicated in Figure i. The interviews were conducted, by university researchers making it clear that they were independent of the LA. Schools were invited to take part and once permission had been granted by the Head Teacher, staff within schools were free to decline to be involved. It was essential to encourage staff to be as free as possible to define their own meaning and, in an atmosphere of mutual trust to co-elaborate ideas and views with the interviewer (Rumsby, 2007), the interviewer providing ‘interpretations of interpretations’ (Sullivan, 2007). Hence interviewers adopted a position of learning from the interviewee, ‘I want to know what you know, in the way that you know it’ (Sherman Heyl 2007 p 369).

Figure i about here

Gaining a representative sample of respondents under these conditions was not the main concern. Moreover given the complexity and variety of a whole LA with its range of school types, including rural, semi-rural and urban, large and small, primary and secondary, special and other schools, LA1 commissioned a survey in addition to the interviews. This was considered to be the most efficient and economical way of large scale data collection (Morrison 1993). Thus methodological triangulation (Cohen et al 2006) was achieved through the use of a questionnaire which was designed and piloted before distribution in 2006 (and before the second tranche of interviews in this LA) to a representative (25%) sample of all 4690 staff. Responses were invited from all school staff including caretakers through to Headteachers. The return rate was 12% (545 questionnaires). The largest proportion of returns were from senior leaders, including Headteachers (31%), 16% from teachers, 10% from teaching assistants, 11% from administrative staff and 1% from support staff. Thirty six percent of the returns were from primary schools and 58% from the secondary phase. Data from the questionnaires was not linked to specific schools or to interview data. Schools were not treated as separate cases for analysis or reporting. The second authority (LA2) had already conducted a survey of schools the data from which was made available to the project researchers and so only the qualitative part of the project was conducted by the researcher. Whilst five primary schools took part in LA2 only one secondary school volunteered. This throws into question the representativeness of that school, but more importantly destroys any attempt at anonymity. Consequently

data from this school was used to a limited extent to support interpretation of the LA questionnaire but was not reported in any detail.

Across the whole data set care was taken not to see the schools who did volunteer as representative, rather their views provided insights for the researcher to use, with all the caveats associated with such a sample, to consider questions of interpretation and meaning of the process of workforce remodelling and in particular of the views of the new professionalism that this was intended to engender. The discussion of issues in this paper is presented to ensure that the way the data was gathered is taken into account.

The investigative instruments explored respondents knowledge of the workforce remodelling agenda; what changes they had observed as a result of this; whether they had a 'change team' in the school; who was involved and who led teams instigating change; what their personal involvement in remodelling had been; and what their attitudes were to teaching assistants teaching whole classes. Questionnaire data gathered basic information whilst the interviews probed these questions more fully. Data from the questionnaires was subject to simple descriptive analysis using excel spreadsheets rather than to complex analysis as the main focus was on interviews. Interview data were analysed through an initial reading and re-reading to begin to identify themes across the whole data set, which were highlighted on the transcriptions. These themes were then checked against the questionnaire data and refined. The emerging themes were then used to form categories of ideas which were in turn checked back against the interviews to begin to link these to respondents, and hence to group respondents around specific ideas. This approach is similar to that described by Spencer et al (2003) as the analytical hierarchy or scaffold in which raw data is initially sorted to form a base which once constructed provides a 'viewing platform' from which to make sense of the data (p212) and so to build the next platform, moving up what Miles and Huberman (1994 cited in Spencer et al 2003) referred to as the 'abstraction ladder'. Initial data management and the resulting descriptive accounts were developed by the original researcher (first author) from transcriptions. These were then validated by a second researcher (second author) who was familiar with the project and the LA s, and then deepened through a further review of the data set. Finally explanatory accounts were developed with quotations selected to support these accounts.

Freedom to innovate and the context in which educators work – findings from interviews and questionnaires

It was clear from the range of data gathered from LA1 that, as Vogt (2002) suggests, the professional identity of educators is not fixed, and the process of implementation of this policy initiative caused all concerned to 'renegotiate' their professional selves. Emerging from this complex data are themes that describe a close interrelationship between the manner of implementation and the ways in which the actors make sense of their role. It also reveals how they feel about themselves as educators. In this paper we focus on the data relating to how far and in what ways schools and teachers have ceded control of classroom delivery of teaching to TAs, and in turn, how teachers and TAs feel about this in terms of their own professional roles.

The 2006 questionnaire to staff in LA1 (see fig i) revealed that for teachers and teaching assistants whole class teaching was still seen as the province of the qualified teacher. This was expressed through responses that either indicated that teaching assistants should not be allowed to teach whole classes or that they could do this only if they fulfilled additional criteria deemed necessary in order to perform this role. These criteria were provided in open response sections of the questionnaire. Fewer than half the respondents completed these sections suggesting that the views of educators are equivocal. It is also interesting that TAs were more likely to express a view than teachers themselves.

Figure ii about here

The reasons, where these were given by teachers against using TAs in this way included the view that the TAs role should remain as one of supporting individual children; that TAs lacked subject expertise; TAs lack of a teaching qualification; the impression that standards would fall; the fear that behaviour would deteriorate; and that TAs did not receive sufficient remuneration for such a level of responsibility. The reasons expressed by TAs for not taking classes were broadly similar with a slightly greater emphasis on pay and an expression of a need for training and concerns about workload. The more complex reasons for these and other similarly varied views were revealed in the themes emerging from the interviews conducted which suggest that the perceptions of the roles of teachers and teaching assistants can be placed on two different but interrelated continua.

i) The Teachers' continuum

Teacher retaining control

PPA time is now a requirement for all teachers. In many primary schools the only way to release such 'quality' time is to use teaching assistants to take over the class, or to buy in specific expertise, such as football coaching or music teaching. In LA 2 the primary school governors interviewed thought that the introduction of PPA time had made a difference to teachers workloads, "It's certainly made a difference to the teachers, yes, no doubt about that" (governor LA2 primary 1). This is interesting in the light of the questionnaire data from LA1 which also indicated that all but one senior leader thought that there had been an improvement in teachers work-life balance as a result of remodelling. Teachers and teaching assistants were less consistent in their responses however, with around a third believing there was no improvement or were 'not sure' that there had been. Two primary teachers interviewed argued that PPA time was not providing them with additional time, and as one teacher responsible for pupils in their final year at primary school, put it,

I think I want to hold the reins Monday to Friday...., although the person that takes the class is very good, you don't get the same flow. I don't think any teacher would say no to PPA, but in fact you have to plan that PPA time (for the TA).....So in actual fact, although you are getting PPA time, that time is taken up to plan for someone else ...A lot of it is down to your conscience, sometimes its your professionalism. So I mean, speaking for myself, it's had no affect whatsoever.

Teacher Governor, Primary 3 LA2

This may give us an insight into why some teachers did not perceive benefits for their work-life balance. In this particular case the teacher has not relinquished control over what the class does retaining her view that her professionalism lies in her authority over the delivery of the curriculum and her ability to deliver the content well. A further primary teacher expressed a similar need for control.

So, as the class teacher you're ... well I am, quite protective of those subjects 'cos I'm accountable at the end of the day.

Teacher Governor, Primary 4 LA2

The above comment rather undermines the aspiration implied in a statement by Pat Collarbone (opcit), that greater autonomy will result in improved standards, and instead focuses on the issue of accountability.

In secondary schools the situation is a little different. Teachers have always had some 'free' lessons in which to plan and undertake management and administrative duties although two secondary teachers did state that they spent less time covering lessons for other staff. Economies of scale have meant that headteachers are able to use administrative staff to take on more of these duties, including, for example, examinations officers and external exam invigilators. Teacher absence, for courses or due to sickness has traditionally been 'covered' by teachers who were 'free', now this role has been taken on by 'supervisors', although such staff are generally not seen as teachers. Thus this entailed,

... removing staff from positions – teaching staff- from positions which weren't really suitable for teachers to be doing, and making sure the support staff were clear what their roles and responsibilities were in relation to picking up those duties.

Headteacher, Secondary 3 LA1

Hence, for teachers in the secondary schools included, the change has been in terms of protection of their free planning time, in effect there was no real difference to their view of their teaching role. Therefore at this end of the continuum teachers are keen to protect their control over curriculum delivery and are concerned with their feelings of accountability, but beyond this to reflect these teachers' understandings of their identity as teachers as directly and personally responsible for their pupils' learning.

Teacher sharing aspects of control

Although respondents in schools did not always express exactly the same views as each other and schools differed from one another all but two primary schools fell into the category of sharing some aspects of control and were collaborating around curriculum delivery. In order to illustrate this point the case of primary school 5 in LA 2 explains some of the complexities considered to be important for enabling different staff to be involved in delivering the curriculum. In this school the TAs were consulted about covering classes to release teachers from the classroom. The TAs expressed concern and a lack of confidence about carrying this out. After a period of discussion it was decided to begin by breaking up the PPA time allowance so that TAs took the register and delivered pre-set tasks that reviewed and re-enforced work done the previous day. This enabled staff to come in later and work at home, or to

arrive early to get on with a task should they choose to do so thus having a concentrated period of work at the beginning of the day.

...we were very wary as how to use people's skills, but not overstretch them, make them feel uncomfortable, so that they felt that they were doing the best job that they could... (Head teacher)

It's made the TAs more responsible for and more... well I suppose it is all about the responsibility. They feel more involved now, it's much more now sort of team teaching than TA/teacher role... (TA)

This situation came under review as TAs confidence rose and as a result of teachers expressing a desire for a more concentrated period of time for PPA. The decision was to be made in the light of discussion and through ensuring that no-one was placed in a situation where they felt uncomfortable.

Given the wider aims of workforce remodelling, with its intention to significantly change the way teachers and schools worked, to turn teachers into 'leaders of learning' (Knapp et al 2003) and to up-skill teaching assistants to become part of the collaborative effort, teaching is the responsibility of the school rather than simply the individual teacher. This second, 'sharing aspects of control' end of the continuum is nearer to this interpretation of the policy aim.

In respect of teachers responses in interview the continuum seems to run at one end from them adopting a position where their view of their professional role does not allow them to gain from the PPA time allocated, and indeed their absence from the classroom can be viewed as deleterious to pupil learning. At the other end of the continuum teachers remain the critical element in children's learning, but see the time away from the classroom as beneficial for the quality of their own teaching and hence to their pupils. They are also happy to engage teaching assistants in the delivery of the curriculum within boundaries that defend teaching assistants, teachers and teaching and learning. This provides some early indications that some teachers are willing to cede some time to TAs and are able to relinquish some level of personal control to the group in order to build a more exciting curriculum.

ii) The Teaching Assistant Continuum

The constrained Teaching Assistant

From the interviews conducted in secondary schools teaching assistants had not noticed any change. Whilst two had taken on roles with responsibility related to a subject area, only one of these was attributed to the remodelling process. In the primary schools however six TAs talked of increased workloads and all talked of extra responsibility.

... there's more jobs for the TAs to do, we got given more roles, more roles and responsibility...

Teaching Assistant, Primary 3 LA1

Only two saw these responsibilities as burdensome and something about which they expressed some resentment and this was tied up with notions about roles and responsibilities. On the questionnaires from LA1 sixteen teaching assistants commented negatively about their experience of extra responsibility, poor pay, less time with individual children and feelings of greater pressure.

I have been left in charge of classes at the whim of teachers, not just timetabled cover. Work left is inadequate and I often have to think of other tasks to fill in lesson time. No training has been offered with regard to interactive whiteboard. Teacher often removes laptop so board cannot be used anyway... Although required to take responsibility for classes and their management, teaching staff do not share their knowledge/information freely.

Primary School TA

Whilst this is an extreme example it serves to highlight the potential pitfalls where teaching assistants are not fully inducted into their new classroom role and is in direct contrast to the example given earlier on the teachers continuum.

The enabled Teaching Assistant

At this end of the continuum teaching assistants felt included and valued as part of the teaching team.

I think because we now have to do PPA time, we work together more as a team with the teaching staff... planning and talking about what we're going to do and then feeding back after the session

Teaching Assistant, Primary 3 LA2

I think if anything it's made us (the staff) - the relationship stronger, because some of the members of staff that maybe I wouldn't have got to speak to in depth about things, now I do.

Teaching Assistant, Primary 1 LA1

The system in schools allows for TAs to progress along a career route from TA1 to TA3 which recognises that they have undertaken additional training and have gained expertise. This development was encouraged, and TA3s were appointed where PPA cover involved teaching.

... my role as team leader.. for the TAs .. things ... need sort of disseminating down to them ... its made them more responsible ...
... they feel more involved now.. its more team teaching than TA/teacher role.

Teaching Assistant, Primary 1 LA 2

TAs were encouraged, or took it upon themselves to take the initiative and develop an area of expertise. This occurred in both primary and secondary schools although this was more prevalent in the primary sector (5 primary TAs and 2 secondary TAs interviewed).

MFL (Modern Foreign Languages) we're doing a project for Leading Edge ... I was quite interested in what was going on mmm. I asked if I could be involved ... and now I'm practically leading and running the Leading Edge..... they've been fantastic, the whole school.

Teaching Assistant, Secondary 3 LA1

Teaching assistants enjoyed these responsibilities and felt that they were really adding value to the curriculum.

... you can always bring in new ideas and ways to improve and ways to go forward...I think...the more you develop something the better it becomes...

Teaching Assistant, Primary 1 LA2

The notion that 'untrained' teaching assistants could be in a position to make an impact on what is being taught represents a significant incursion into the professional role of the teacher. In these schools however, albeit limited in number, the relationship between teachers and teaching assistants was strong. What is more difficult to determine is the extent to which this is about the culture and climate of the school, about the individuals that make up the school, or about the remodelling initiative. After all, a facilitative headteacher is more likely to utilise any external agenda to facilitate whole staff involvement.

Conclusions

In a study of a system change as complex and multifaceted as workforce remodelling it is difficult to draw single powerful conclusions. We can, however, use the evidence to inform thinking about the ways in which teachers and schools view their professional status and how this is influenced in relation to how they implemented workforce remodelling. For those teachers who retained control of the classroom their strong sense of direct and personal responsibility for their pupils meant that they had difficulty in sharing that responsibility with others. This is a particular dilemma in an environment of performativity (Ball, 2007) and a standards agenda (Webb, 2009). These teachers had 'come into teaching to teach' and thus, as argued by Stevenson (2007), saw remodelling as a potential erosion of their role.

Where teachers had engaged with remodelling as something that was carefully instigated in ways that ensured a confident staff, this was viewed as a positive move allowing a wider range of staff to be more fully engaged in classroom activity. It may have been the particular focus of the questions asked at interview, but teachers did not point to league tables and test results as reasons for retaining 'control' of their class, although they do feel a sense of responsibility to their pupils to ensure good marks. What they pointed to were issues of 'flow' of lessons, the ability to step back and reflect in order to raise the quality of the learning experience and the opportunity to take the extra time to 'do the job a little bit better'. Consequently they were not articulating the fragmentation referred to by Ball (2003) or indeed the sense of their role as technician highlighted by Dadds (1997). These differences in reaction may

however indicate differences in the underlying values held by teachers (Vincent, 2003) and differences in how they choose to see themselves (Day et al 2006).

The remodelling agenda was intended to move teachers to 'leaders of learning' as a means of raising standards. This shift required engagement with ideas moving beyond the provision of additional planning time, to a willingness to adopt a high risk strategy of handing over some direct responsibility for pupil learning. This strategy could erode individuals professional identity and, in times of high stakes accountability, risk outcomes as measured in pupil performance. That could be damaging to individuals and schools, a concern articulated by Gunter and Rayner (2007). Becker and Reil (1999) indicate that structural reform may not translate into practice and whilst practice in the schools researched had changed in relation to the remodelling agenda in terms of the activities of teaching assistants, it is as yet difficult to know what, if any, impact this is having on the teaching and learning process. As Ball and Bowe argue (1992), implementation may act to reinforce current practice and teaching staff may resist shifts that move beyond a surface change.

What emerges from the evidence in this study is perhaps a subtle difference between the professional who believes that they are the one person who can actually deliver quality learning for pupils by being there and by being in control of all aspects of planning, and the expanded view of professionalism that involves the management of the learning experience by using all resources available (including staff). Although the data emerging from this study would need supplementing, the suggestion is that the issue is not one of perspectives on professional stance, but one of perceived professional status. If professional identity and status is key, then supporting the confidence of teachers is important when encouraging them to reconsider approaches to teaching and learning. Thus the central message of this study is that in the schools researched the self-confidence of staff appeared to be related to how the changes were instigated. Where implementation was thoughtful and developmental, staff confidence was maintained and thus their sense of professional identity protected.

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Figure i

	Primary School	High School	No. Visits	Senior Leader /HT	Teacher	TA	Admin	Governor	Total Interview's
LA1	4	4	2	14	13	12	11		50
LA2	5	1	1	6	6*	7	5	4	28

- * all of whom were teacher governors

Figure ii

