

# NaPTEC Symposium September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016

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# Questions

- ▶ *How do TAs, Mentors and TTs perceive the experience and practice of the deployment of TAs by TTs during classroom teaching experiences on University based ITT programmes?*

subsidiary questions:

- i. What do trainee primary school teachers perceive their role to be in deploying TAs in the classroom?
- ii. What do TAs perceive the role of trainee teachers in the classroom?
- iii. To what extent is deployment of TAs commented upon by visiting tutors?
- iv. What is the role of 'teacher identity' in managing the deployment of teaching assistants?
- v. How can trainee primary teachers be better prepared to deploy teaching assistants?

# Who am I?

- ▶ ITE lecturer
- ▶ Primary Department
- ▶ Link tutor

# Context

- ▶ Should number of TAs in schools be reduced?
- ▶ DISS (2009) – the more support a child receives from a TA the less academic progress they make
- ▶ MAST – increased interaction with TA away from class teacher and the class
- ▶ Wider Pedagogical Role:
- ▶ Deployment (pedagogical), practice (interactions), preparedness (how ITE should prepare them!),
- ▶ MITA: the purpose of effective TA practice.

# Lens – Bourdieu

- ▶ [(Habitus) (Capital)] + Field = Practice (Bourdieu)
- ▶ Case Study

# Literature

- ▶ *There has been little academic attention given to the role of teaching assistants in working with ITE trainees...* Bignold & Barbera (2011, p. 367)
- ▶ *Increase in TAs – Plowden 1967*
- ▶ *Professional identity*
- ▶ *[(habitus) (capital)] + field = practice* (Bourdieu, 1984, p.101).
- ▶ A teaching identity (the teacher a trainee wishes to become or the identity given) is constructed through social interaction. This interaction, alternatively termed as discourse, is the interaction of the self with beliefs, attitudes and values that exist in socially constructed situations (Danielewicz (2001)

# Research Sample

- ▶ From 107 – 29 interested – 17 wanted to be interviewed. Selected:
- ▶ 14 students from BA year 3 Primary QTS cohort (+4)
- ▶ 11 female, 3 male
- ▶ 5 former TAs, 5 no TA experience
  
- ▶ 5 schools
- ▶ 5 TAs and 5 mentors/class teachers

Main Question: How do TAs, Mentors and TTs perceive the experience and practice of the deployment of TAs by TTs during classroom teaching experiences on University based ITT programmes? ?

- ▶ The notion of 'hierarchy' within the classroom is an accepted practice by trainee and teaching assistant but it is the habitus of the trainee which problematizes the situation. The trainee teacher realizes that in the act of deployment she, in effect, moves up the hierarchical position as deployment is practised. Her habitus, which is how she engages in this process, as a result of accrued capital, allows this to become an easier part of her pedagogy. *In other words, if the trainee has prior experience, usually in the form of work based experience, she has the skill to be able to do this.*



# example

- ▶ The trainee teachers perceived themselves at the bottom layer of a hierarchy that they interpreted to exist within the classroom:
- ▶
- ▶ Niamh - *so it's like the pecking order in the classroom it is student teacher is like at the bottom of the pecking order...*
- ▶
- ▶ *...but my first placement we were definitely, if there was a pecking order we would have been at the bottom of that.*

# How?

- ▶ Most of the sample used a 'localized familiarization' technique to create a cover for the act of deployment.
- ▶ Partnership
- ▶ Collegiality
- ▶ Equality
- ▶ 'sharing'
- ▶ Deflection of power

# example

- ▶ When the trainee teacher feels that there is a sufficient degree of **familiarization** (which can be instigated by either party) then the imagined act of deployment becomes easier to impart in the real life situation:
- ▶ Ryan - *I put so much importance on just chatting to them as people like trying to build up a relationship with them, being able to sit in the staffroom and chat with them at lunchtime...because it in life in general if you feel valued as a person...everything improves...so... yeah in a classroom that's really, really crucial*

# summary

- ▶ Within the 'field' of the classroom Bourdieu would argue that there are individuals who attempt to label capital (value and skills) and then distribute it. It is appearing from the analysis that although the trainees recognize their existing capital, from their teacher training course, they are not easily prepared to accept the hierarchy this capital endows. In other words, guidance from the DfE ( 2012) in the form of the Teachers' Standards allows them to assume the dominant position within the relationship with the teaching assistant. The trainee teacher during a school experience should be able to deploy an assistant but they choose not always to be willing in accepting their position at the top of the hierarchy.
- ▶ The trainee teacher perceives a hierarchy to exist in the classroom and appears not to continue in the overt struggle for power – but rather does this covertly. This is done by the trainees' process of 'familiarization' and, in their perception, working towards equality in the classroom through negotiation and discussion.

v) How can trainee primary teachers be better prepared to deploy teaching assistants?

- ▶ **Named Colleague**
- ▶ **Orientation**
- ▶ **Sharing of skills**


The Named Colleague will be the member of the teaching staff, who in this instance is the teaching assistant, who will be the point of welcome in a school and the person to whom the daily issues of classroom practice would be addressed

First the pragmatic matters including familiarity with the daily routine and procedure of the primary school and classroom:  
The second level would be to make it apparent to the trainee that their presence, their input and their pedagogy is a welcome addition to the school's community of practice (Wenger, 1998)

The knowledge of the skills available to the trainee teacher from the teaching assistant is valuable but needs to fit into a wider pedagogical understanding of how teaching and learning will be effected in the classroom

# New thoughts

- ▶ Contribution to knowledge (struggle!)
- ▶ It is the situation of two powerless groups determining a relationship where power is absent – that is they do not have power to change matters eg policy or practice. A TT is expected to have power to deploy a TA but can be hesitant or unprepared/unskilled to do that. What happens is a process of negotiation from the terms of the TT and an acceptance of that from the TA.
- ▶ Therefore there is a smaller area of power being contested in a school but limited to the personnel involved and the time of the school experience.

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- ▶ Contribution to knowledge and contribution to practice: supporting trainee teachers in identifying their powerlessness and the intricacies of the relationship they have with another powerless group, teaching assistants and allowing them to develop the consciousness of how to move that interaction/relationship into a mutually powerful one in terms of pedagogy.
  - ▶ The powerlessness manifests itself in barriers that both groups set up to delineate their own professional space and claim it. This is false power because their powerlessness is dependent on external factors, and what it does is to keep them both in spaces of powerlessness while giving some measure of professional autonomy.
  - ▶ In coming to an awareness of the nature of their interaction the trainees are in a better position to understand the barriers both externally and internally and to initiate a more equitable relationship that restores professional power to both groups (eg orientation & skill sharing from my recommendations). And this can be realised when the trainee (maybe the TA as well) has conscience awareness of the external limitations on their actions.

# Contribution to knowledge

- ▶ My 3 way recommendations as part of the partnership between university and schools within ITT
- ▶ Designing a curriculum for a TA apprenticeship model
- ▶ Re-examining notion of 'class within itself' and the theory of 'organising & disorganising' Michael Thompson.



# Further steps

- ▶ Writing
- ▶ Exploring the dilemma of how TTs are to make an impact on children's learning, with the deployment of a TA, but have very little power to make changes (little or significant). Can TTs only make changes when they are NQTs? Is there space for reflective (and meaningful) practice during a SE or is it that there is no scope for this.