**CHAPTER 1: WHAT’S IN A NAME?**

**Introduction**

Ever heard the phase ‘Behind every good teacher there is a great teaching assistant’? Sound about right? Well -without a doubt the support a brilliant teaching assistant (TA) can give can be endless, and if the partnership between a teacher and a TA is strong, then the result can only be an amazing educational experience for all. You see great partnerships all over the place, such as, Johnny and Baby from Dirty Dancing, or Torvill and Dean. When people work together and complement each other, sparks fly.

So the million dollar question is how do you become a brilliant TA? How do you make those sparks fly? How do you become the teaching assistant that is able to support pupils to reach their potential?

We hope that this book can support you on your journey to becoming brilliant or propel you towards even greater brilliance. We aim, in this chapter, to equip you with necessary knowledge and understanding regarding the key roles and responsibilities of teaching assistants. But to begin this chapter focuses on the history of TAs and the key documentation related both to your role and the governance of the school. It has been said that to understand where you are going it is important first to come to terms with where you have been; as such we explore the ever evolving role of the teaching assistant.

But first – how many Teaching Assistants are there?

In reading statistical information regarding the number of TAs and indeed teachers in schools the numbers are often presented in terms of headcounts, that is, the actual number of individuals working in schools. However, this statistic can be misleading as the majority of teachers work full time while the majority of other staff in schools, to include TAs, work part-time. Therefore most statistical information takes account of this and presents numbers in regard to full-time equivalent (FTE) members of staff.

**The 28 per cent**

Let’s look at the state of play in English schools from 2000 to 2013. During this time the number of TAs dramatically increased despite a slight decrease in student numbers; indeed the number of TAs more than tripled. There were 79,000 (FTE) TAs in 2000 and 240,000 (FTE) TAs in 2013 (Masdeu Navarro, 2015, p. 10). The rise in TA numbers can be compared with the increase in teachers over this time, which was 14% (Statistics UK, 2013). As a result the overall student-teaching staff ratio fell dramatically.

‘In November 2016 there were 957.9 thousand full-time equivalent (FTE) school workforce employees, to include classroom teachers, teachers working at leadership levels, teaching assistants, school support staff and auxiliary staff, in state-funded schools in England. 48 per cent of the schools’ workforce were teachers, **28 per cent teaching assistants** and 25 per cent were non-classroom based support staff’ (DfE, School Workforce in England, 2017, p.4).

*A brief History of TAs*

*Part 1: 1960 to 1978*

Teaching assistants had arrived, though during this time they were referred to as general assistants or welfare assistants. As early as 1967 the Plowden Report (DES, 1967) highlighted the potential role of assistants to support teaching programmes and raise educational standards. Moyles & Sushitsky, (1997) reflecting on these years noted that welfare or general assistants were predominately women who were employed within Primary Schools to encourage and help pupils. Further their responsibilities included: preparing resources; collecting and returning pupils’ work; first aid and undertaking lunch and break time duties (Clayton, 1993, p. 34). In other words these general assistants were involved in in tasks such as cleaning paint pots, sharpening pencils, collecting dinner money and listening to pupils read. The year, 1978 marked a pivotal point in education within this country in that the Warnock Report (DES, 1978) was published. This ground breaking report established three key principles:

* pupils with special needs should (as far as possible) be educated in mainstream school;
* schools should promote a ‘positive and challenging’ approach to SEN pupils that emphasised abilities and potential;
* and that SEN should include not only those children who attend special school but children who have transitory or continuing difficulties.

As such more and more pupils with special educational needs were integrated into mainstream schools with the consequence that additional staff were needed and these additional staff were often teaching assistants.

Baskind and Thompson (1995) reflecting on the Plowden (DES, 1967) and Warnock (DES, 1978) reports commented that both:

had envisaged that assistants should be engaged because of their personal qualities, it was further expected that successful candidates would have a good general education and that continuing in-service training would be received once employed. Indeed the Plowden Report was visionary in its anticipation of future incentive allowances for additional responsibility and a planned programme of training that could provide a career route to teacher training. (p. 47)

*Part 2: 1979 to 1987*

The evolution and expansion of the teaching assistant continued though if you were working within a school at this time your official designation would probably be the ‘NTA’ standing for non-teaching assistant.

The 1981 Education Act was pivotal in that it was the first piece of legislation that imposed a duty upon local educational authorities, mainstream schools and teachers to provide the necessary support to children with special educational needs such that they would be able flourish. Again there was a further increase in the number of teaching assistants employed. Research by Hodgson, Clunies-Ross and Hegarty (1984), identified TA responsibilities, during this time, to include:

* Hearing children read
* Interpreting for hearing-impaired children
* Checking that pupils were "at work"
* Preparing teaching material and other resources
* Cataloguing books
* Helping with creative activities
* Note-taking
* Engaging children in conversation
* Taking groups for home economics
* Helping children with implements during practical lessons
* Acting as an amanuensis
* Tidying the library, organizing and putting-up displays
* Helping with language programmes (Clayton, 1993, p. 35)

At this time teaching assistants had two main roles; the first involving activities that freed ‘the teacher from routine and mundane classroom activities of a non-professional nature, and the second consisting of carrying out direct instruction under the teacher's guidance’ (Clayton, 1993, p.35).

In terms of recruitment Hegarty (1985) indicates that upon starting a job as a TA, two thirds had some professional training, usually the National Nursery Examination Board (NNEB) qualification, though most had no experience of working with pupils with SEN. In terms of conditions of work Wigley et al. (1989) found that they all TAs surveyed held temporary contracts,

for a maximum of 27 hours per week. The number of hours can be increased or decreased at short notice. They are not paid for school holidays, but have a leave entitlement of twenty days plus statutory bank holidays. (Wigley et al., 1989, p.3)

*Part 3: 1988 to 2002*

As we move from the decade that brought us *ET* and the fall of the Berlin Wall into the decade that brought us the Spice Girls, The X Files and Titanic, the number of TAs within England increased again. The Education Act (HMSO, 1988) introduced the National Curriculum, local management of schools, a new school inspection body and stipulated national standard assessment tests to measure attainment levels; all of which added pressure to teachers. The 1989 Children’s Act and 1993 Education Act further established the statutory rights of all children to receive an education appropriate to their needs and that is was the school’s responsibility to educate all their pupils.

In 1992 the Audit Commission acknowledged the expense of meeting the educational needs of SEN pupils. Lorenz (1992) an author of books such as ‘Effective in-class Support’ (1998) commented:

Thus whether resources for children with special needs have been delegated to schools by their LEA or retained centrally, the need to make ‘efficiencies’ has become a predominant consideration. Clearly by employing assistants rather than teachers or even nursery nurses, schools and LEAs can make real savings. (p. 27)

In 1993, the year when Michael Jordan retired from professional basketball, Terrance Clayton, commented that:

The role of the British classroom assistant has developed over the last quarter of a century from one of care and housekeeping to now include substantial involvement in the learning process itself. Today's classroom assistants, particularly those working in mainstream schools with children with special educational needs, could well be described as 'assistant teachers'. However, one should add in caution that they serve in a supportive capacity under the day-to-day supervision of the class teacher whose role also seems to be changing towards that of 'classroom manager'*.*

(Clayton, 1993, p. 42)

The next landmark event was the publication of the first Code of Practice on Identification and Assessment of Children with Special Educational Needs (DfE, 1994). This document recognised the legal entitlement of students designated as having a ‘statement’ to additional provision and support that set about once again a dramatic increase in the numbers of TAs employed within schools.

Though the Warnock Report had outlined the aim of inclusion in 1978, the inclusion of more pupils with special needs in mainstream schools, in response to the 1996 Education Act, necessitated greater pupil support. By 1999 The Centre for Studies of Inclusive Education (CSIE) proclaimed that there were no legitimate reasons to separate children, within special schools, for the duration of their schooling.

Of course, all these changes to include the introduction of the national curriculum and the increasing number of children identified with SEN within mainstream schools added greatly to teachers’ workload. To some extent the pressure on teachers was offset by additional responsibilities given to TAs, though there were criticisms that the most vulnerable and needy pupils were being supported by staff with the least qualifications.

An editorial in the magazine ‘Special Children’ April 2001 writes:

Mrs Overall to the fore…

If you were the parent of a child with special needs, which type of support would you prefer for him? A teacher, or a cleaning lady? You may well be thinking ‘no competition’ but pause for a moment and re-consider this from a headteacher’s point of view. Your budget is stretched. You have to be seen to be ‘doing something’ about providing for pupils with special needs you can’t afford to employ a teacher – even if you could find one. Mrs Overall is a very pleasant lady. She has attended four days training as a classroom assistant and she is cheap. She also happens to be one of the school’s cleaning ladies. Far-fetched? Not at all. This is a true reflection of the situation in many schools at the moment. (p.3)

A further article written in The Evening Standard (Gilman, 2001) tells the story of one Teaching Assistant:

Here was my chance to make a difference. Early last year; I heard about a vacancy at a local school that sounded ideal. Keen to help students achieve their potential, as I had failed to do, I jumped at the opportunity. I assumed I would get some training. Surely they wouldn’t take somebody off the street and chuck them straight into a classroom with the most disruptive students? But that’s exactly what they did. My fellow teaching assistants advised me to make it up as I went along. (p.28)

To counter these criticisms of lack of training, programmes, to include NVQ’s based on National Occupational Standards (LGNTO, 2001), were introduced. Further, in 2001 Foundation Degrees for Teaching Assistants were introduced in England (Dunne et al., 2008). These Foundation degrees were designed as a flexible Higher Education ‘*vocation focused qualification’* which aimed to integrate academic and work-based learning.

In 2001 the then labour government released the Special Educational Needs (SEN): Code of Practice (DfEE, 2001) which outlined a staged approach to meeting the needs of pupils with SEN to include: early identification, school action, school action plus and statements of special educational need with provision often expressed in numbers of hours of TA support.

In 2001 the PriceWaterhouseCoopers Teacher Workload Study Final Report responded to concerns regarding teacher workload and proposed solutions which in part advocated supporting teachers and reducing workload through the effective and efficient use of staff other than teachers. This was supported and recognised by a HMI report (Ofsted, 2002) which suggested that the quality of teaching in lessons where TAs was present is better than in lessons without them.

*Part 4: 2003 to 2008*

In the year of 2003 when England won the Rugby World Cup with Jonny Wilkinson's famous drop goal, the Department of Education published the Raising Standards and Tackling Workload: a national agreement (DfES, 2003). This document became known as the Remodelling Agenda or Agreement. The Agreement promised teachers that ten percent of their teaching time would be set aside for Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA) from 2005 and that cover for this time need no longer be provided by qualified teachers. The Agreement set out the role of the Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) who would be able to cover PPA time. Crucially the agreement paved the way for individuals without QTS to undertake activities previously confined to only qualified teachers. The impact of the changes advocated by the Agreement were said to strike at the heart of teacher professionalism. Research into the deployment and impact of support staff who achieved HLTA status (Wilson et al., 2007, p. 9) proclaimed that it was ‘clear that the HLTA role has the potential to change the way in which education is delivered and to make a positive difference to school life.’ However, it was noted that the practice of split contracts for support staff was widespread, that is, a teaching assistant, including those who meet the higher level teaching assistant (HLTA) standards, will only receive enhanced pay for those hours when they are specifically deployed in an HLTA capacity (WAMG, 2008).

Howes (2003, p.147) in reviewing the literature on the impact of teaching assistants concluded that further research and attention needed to be given to the role of paid adult support in respect of:

* The role TAs had in regard to not only of raising standards, but also their role in contributing to pupils’ ‘engagement in learning’;
* The risk of TAs inadvertently marginalising pupils through isolated support and;
* The important mediating role that TAs can play between school, teachers and children or young people.

Referring back to the article written in the Evening Standard (Gillman, 2001) the author reflects:

One pupil I was supporting was in a high-ability set but had mild dyslexia which meant he could be slow to copy things down. I decided that the best strategy was to sit with him and make sure he was keeping up. All seemed well for a couple of weeks but then I bumped into a teacher who was responsible for this student’s special needs input (I had not been informed of her existence). I explained I had been sitting next to our student and helping him. She looked aghast and told me that this was inappropriate as it could draw attention to the student and make him even more self-conscious and withdrawn. Instead, I should make a point of circulating round the class, helping anyone who needed it but keeping a discreet eye on our pupil. (p. 28)

Lorenz (2002) in writing guidance for TAs outlined three types of support:

* The TA that is Velcro’d to the pupils they support. This way of working does not allow the pupil to relate to others in their class and may make pupils feel even more isolated;
* the TA who is compared to the hovering helicopter, always at hand if anything goes wrong and;
* the ideal type, ‘the bridge builder’ who creates with the teacher learning opportunities that the pupil can do and opportunities where the pupil can interact in a positive manner with other pupils.

In 2004 the then labour government published the *Every Child Matters* document (DfES, 2004) which set out to provide a framework for services that aimed to both protect children and young people and maximise their potential. The document promoted five outcomes:

Being healthy

Staying safe

Enjoying and achieving

Making a positive contribution and

Economic well-being

The aim of this document was to reduce the numbers of children who experienced educational failure, engaged in offending or anti-social behaviour, suffered from ill health, or became teenage parents. In a review of the impact of the Every Child Matters (ECM) Agenda (Lewis et al., 2007) it was noted that though schools, to include teaching staff, had made good progress in implementing the agenda the main challenge for schools was to develop closer collaborative working relationships with other services involved in supporting children and young people.

Though the impact of TAs had been researched over the last decades it was in 2003 when one of the largest of its kind study began conducted by Peter Blatchford and colleagues at the University College London’s Institute of Education. The study, the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) ran for six years and;

sought to provide a rigorous description of the characteristics and deployment of support staff, including the nature of their activities and interactions with pupils, and to address their impact on teachers, teaching and pupils. (Blatchford et al, 2012, p. 8)

*Part 5: 2009 to 2013*

In 2009 Peter Blatchford and colleagues finished their six year Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS project). Results from the project concluded that while TAs had a positive effect on teachers in terms of workload, job satisfaction, and stress, it was found that the more a TA supported a pupil the less progress they made (Blatchford et al, 2012).

These findings both beneficial in terms of teacher satisfaction and troubling in regard to negative outcomes on pupil progress were explained by the authors using the Wider Pedagogical Role (WPR) model (Blatchford et al. 2012). This model provided a detailed picture of factors impacting on the quality of support staff work and acknowledged that the negative effects of TAs could be attributed to aspects of preparedness and deployment, that is, aspects outside the control of support staff (for further details see chapter 7).

Following on from the DISS report (Blatchford *et al*., 2012) the Effective Deployment of TAs (EDTA) (Blatchford *et al*., 2013) project took place between 2010 and 2011. The project used as a starting point the implications of the Wider Pedagogical Role (WPR) model to explore alternative strategies in order to empower schools to release the untapped potential of their TAs. The aim of the EDTA study was to work in collaboration with headteachers, teachers and TAs in order to develop school-based strategies for effective TA deployment and practice in mainstream schools. Effective strategies included: creating liaison time between teachers and TAs; ensuring that TAs worked more often with middle and high attaining pupils while teachers worked with low attaining and SEN pupils and encouraging TAs to ensure interactions with pupils be focused on understanding rather than task completion (Blatchford *et al*., 2013).

*Part 6: 2013 and beyond*

After 14 years of the SEN Code of Practice (DfEE, 2001), the code was redeveloped and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years (DfE, DoH, 2015) emerged. The code of practice was statutory guidance for organisations working with children and young people that had a special educational need or disability. The important points from the code of practice included: a clearer focus on the views of children and young people and parents in decision making; an emphasis on close co-operation between education, health services and social care and importantly that:

teachers are responsible and accountable for the progress and development of the pupils in their class, even where pupils access support from teaching assistants or specialist staff. (Paragraph 6.36, p. 99)

In 2014 The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) Teaching and Learning Toolkit, was published and presented a research based guide that compared the impact of initiatives and resources on pupils’ attainment with their cost. Following on from this the Education Endowment Foundation released the ‘Making Best Use of Teaching Assistant Guidance Report’ (Sharples et al., 2015,) for schools, which outlined recommendations to maximise the impact of teaching assistants. More on this will be presented in Chapter 7.

Perhaps as a final comment to our discussion on the history of TAs it is important to return to pay and conditions. A recent TES article (Sept. 11th, 2017) outlined a number of contract options available to TAs to include:

* Permanent all year
* Temporary all year
* Permanent term time
* Temporary term time
* Casual

In regards to contracts amongst local authorities the vast majority of TAs are on term-time or casual contracts with TAs most likely to be on a limited pay scale ranging from around £13,600 to a maximum of around £15,900 per annum (TES, 2017). However, in commenting on pay and conditions, the Guardian’s Secret Teaching Assistant (The Guardian, Nov. 12th, 2016) reflects:

I originally planned to have career in teaching, but I soon realised the benefits of working as a teaching assistant (TA). Granted, the pay leaves a lot to be desired, but we are privileged to be able to develop close, supportive relationships with the pupils who need it most.

*Discussion Point: A pause to reflect*

If we take a moment and look back at the last 60 years of TA deployment it is safe to say a lot has happened to both the TA role, and the educational system they work within.

Within the historical review a number of recurring themes have emerged to include:

Changing roles and responsibilities;

Pay and Conditions;

The need for Training;

The professional relationship between TA and teacher;

The impact of inclusion and;

The impact of government policies on schools.

Further, various terms have been used to describe the role of the TA over the years to include:

Welfare assistant

*Jill of All trades? (*Moyles & Sushitsky, 1997)

*An extra pair of hands? (*Wilson et al., 2003)

*Mum’s Army*

**But, what can we learn from the evolving history of TAs? From your view, working in schools now:**

What has changed over the years?

What has remained the same?

What in your opinion is the way forward?

Activity 1.1 A day in the life

*From the case study below can you guess the year? On what basis have you made you decision?*

It’s a Monday morning and Mrs Price, the TA, arrives at the school early (7:45) even though she is not officially paid until (8:45) as she values the time she has with the class teacher to set up and talk about the day ahead. It is just after break and Mrs Watson, the class teacher, is trying to get the class ready for English. Mrs Watson calls out: ‘Children come on, tidy your Maths books away, where did you get that football David? It’s nearly time for English!’ Some children listened, and started to put their books away, others still distracted kept on playing. Mrs Watson continued, ‘David please put away that football! Stanley don’t push Charlie over!’ Mrs Price, the TA, has started to read out children’s names, ‘Alan, David, Linda, come with me it’s time to read.’ Mrs Watson shouts above the ever increasing noise, ‘Year 2! Please come and sit on the carpet! Mrs Price after you have heard Alan, David and Linda read, can you prepare the resources for art this afternoon?’ ‘Of course!’ Mrs Price, the TA, replied. ‘Thankyou! I wouldn’t know what I would do without you!’ exclaims Mrs Watson.

Roles and Responsibilities

So back to the title of this chapter, what’s in a name?’ Often the first piece of information we have about someone is their name and what they do, and we use this information to form impressions. So it seems there is a lot to a name!

From our brief History lessons, we have a better understanding of how the roles of teaching assistants have evolved over time. Not only have their roles and responsibilities changed, but also their titles. TAs can have many different interchangeable and overlapping roles and responsibilities throughout the day, all as important as each other.

Getting to grips with the many different TA roles can be like learning a new language. A lack of understanding of this language can make you feel at first like an outsider; so let’s now look at these many roles outlined in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Roles and Responsibilities

|  |  |  |
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| **Role** | **Aims** | **Responsibilities** |
| TA or Classroom Assistant | **To support the teacher and pupil’s learning.** | Preparing the classroom  Creating and preparing resources  Supporting pupil(s) with their learning  Supporting with behaviour management  Pastoral care of pupils  Carrying out interventions under guidance  Supporting with general classroom management |
| Learning Support Assistant (LSA) | To work with the teacher to prepare and deliver learning programmes and support to individual pupils, or groups. | TAs and LSAs are often thought to have similar roles. While these terms are often used interchangeably the definitions of these roles will vary between schools. However, learning support assistants usually have a more pastoral role and will often be hired to undertake intervention programmes. Responsibilities include:  Supporting pupils with specific needs whether special education needs or gifted and talented learners on a 1:1 basis, or as a group;  May often be tasked to support certain pupils;  Carrying out interventions, as directed by the teacher  which tend to be outside the classroom and;  Liaise with the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) regarding pupils they have been assigned to support. |
| Learning Mentor | The aim of a learning mentor is to support pupils and in doing so will collaborate with teachers, senior managers, parents, carers and other agencies thus helping to create a network of support. | Learning mentors provide support and guidance to help pupils who are experiencing difficulties in learning due to social, emotional or behavioural problems. Learning mentors can work with children and young people of all ages and can work with a pupils individually or in small groups. Responsibilities include:   * working with other relevant educational professionals to select pupils for mentoring; * discussing the aims of mentoring with pupils; * agreeing and writing action plans to support underperforming pupils both inside and outside of the classroom. |
| Parent Support Advisor | To work with schools, pupils and families to resolve concerns around low attendance and helps parents to support their children’s learning. | May identify concerns or problems and offer advice or solutions to support attendance. Parent Support Advisors will facilitate the building of relationships between parents and schools. They may also help to arrange alternative education for pupils who are excluded and may make referrals on to other agencies. |
| Behaviour Support  Worker/Advisor | To provide specialist advice and support for individuals with challenging behaviour. | May include carrying out behavioural assessments and producing recommendations, implementing behavioural interventions, and liaising with external agencies as appropriate. Behaviour support workers/ advisors may also deliver training to staff teams in how to deal with challenging behaviour. |
| Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) | To support the emotional needs of pupils. | There is both a national recognition and concern regarding the rising number of young people with mental health needs. Schools have an important role to play in supporting pupils with a range of emotional difficulties, from those who appear withdrawn to those who have challenging behaviour. The Emotional Literacy Support Assistant, with appropriate training and support, can enhance pupils’ emotional literacy, behaviour, self-esteem, emotional wellbeing, peer relationships and resilience. |
| Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) | To support the teaching and learning with a greater level of responsibility. | The Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) role was introduced in 2003. This role is awarded to TAs who meet the national HLTA standards. An HLTA does all the things that regular TAs do, only more with the key difference being the increased level of responsibility. HLTAs will have additional responsibilities to include: teaching classes and covering planned absences. |
| Apprentice TA | To train as a TA while learning at college and gaining a qualification. | Apprentice TAs will have similar responsibilities to teaching assistants though there is a recognition that they will be studying for qualifications or meeting standards as part of their apprenticeship. Apprentice TAs are to be treated the same as any other member of staff with the understanding that they are learning, and so have certain limitations in regards to responsibilities and to what they can achieve. |

TAs responsibilities will vary from school to school, however whether they have a pedagogical focus (on the learning) or a non-pedagogical focus (pastoral role) their ultimate aim, whether direct or indirectly is to support learning and teaching and ultimately aid pupils to achieve their potential.

For those readers wanting to become a TA our next activity may help, and it may be of interest for those already in post who have responsibilities for supporting new TAs. When applying for a TA role it is worth noting that jobs in education mainly appear at certain points of the year. These are normally at the beginning of school term, with the job marketing really opening up from May to July. This is when people normally look to move to another school.

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| **Teaching Assistant job description at Everyday Primary**  **JOB PURPOSE**:  To enable pupils to access learning by supervising and assisting pupils across a wide range of activities and supported learning activities. To promote the development of the physical and mental wellbeing of pupils as directed by a teacher. Contribute to the effective organisation of the school with administrative and clerical support.  **KEY ACCOUNTABILITIES**   * To actively promote and comply with the School’s Policies and Procedures relating to: Safeguarding, Health and Safety, Equal Opportunities, and Data Protection. * To work closely with colleagues to achieve and plan objectives and targets. * To participate in Employee Development schemes and Performance Management and contribute to the identification of own team development needs.   **PRINCIPAL RESPONSIBILITIES/DUTIES**  **Curriculum support**   * Assist with the planning of learning activities by identifying and preparing resources required to support lesson plans and learning outcomes. * Preparation of materials/equipment (e.g. books, pencils, art supplies, games, IT equipment), preparing and clearing up activities with the pupils. * Maintaining classroom resources and designated areas. * Supervise individuals or small groups of pupils undertaking teacher-led learning activities by coordinating and explaining basic instructions for the activity, adjusting activities within the scope of the lesson plan in response to pupils’ learning needs. * Assisting pupil achievement by monitoring learning against learning outcomes and informing the teacher of progress. * Assist pupils to develop their independence. * Support the use of IT as a tool to enable learning. * Arrange the classroom to create a positive learning environment including classroom displays. * Assist in the supervision of children in the playground, supporting the teacher in ensuring the maintenance of high standards of behavior. Work on play skills with individual children. * Assist at lunch time either in the hall helping and encouraging children to learn the social skills of mealtimes, or in the playground encouraging co-operative interaction.   **General school support**   * Be involved in extra-curricular activities (e.g. clubs, activities, trips, open days, presentation evenings). * Within the working day be available to support teaching staff through the production of teaching resources. * Report student and school issues in line with the School’s policies for health and safety, child protection, safeguarding and behavior management etc. * Attend all staff meetings and professional development sessions as required. * Any additional responsibilities as directed by your line manager.   **Discussion Point:**  What are the key TA responsibilities that the school requires from this TA?  How does this job description differ from your own role as a TA?  How could an experienced TA support a TA just starting out in meeting these  responsibilities? |

Progression Routes

Once in post there are a number of progression routes open to TAs. Progression can be achieved through the gaining of additional qualifications, and/or through completing professional development relevant to your role; both will increase your experiences and enhance your practice. Outlined in Table 1.2 are a range of qualifications, starting with Level 2 and concluding with teacher training and postgraduate opportunities. Please note that the specific titles of awards and qualifications may vary between training providers, colleges and universities.

When considering your future it is important that you gain impartial and appropriate advice, some of the following points may be worth considering:

* **Online courses:** Research the credentials of online courses as some may not be attached to any recognised qualification or credit transfer system;
* **Do your research:** Speak to colleagues or career advisors within local colleges or universities. If the opportunity arises attend open days and;
* **Consider your options:** What do you want to achieve? How long will it take you? How much will it cost?

Table 1.2: Progression Routes

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| **Level** | **Qualifications** | **Description** |
| 1 | Entry Level qualifications for post 16 courses | Level 1 courses include BTEC diplomas and NVQ 1 and GCSE’s grades (D-G) |
| 2 | National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Certificate in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools  Teaching Assistant Apprenticeship | These qualifications develop a TAs practical skills and knowledge and cover areas such as: safeguarding, learning strategies, communication, and understanding the school context. Typical individuals undertaking these qualifications will either be employed in a school or working within a school as a volunteer.  This apprenticeship programme has a set of standards that an apprentice must meet, and which can include a qualification. The aim of this standard is to give schools more autonomy over their apprentices learning programme. Apprentices need to be working within a school or education setting in order to complete the programme. |
| 3  (equivalent to A levels) | National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Diploma in Specialist Support for Teaching and Learning in Schools |
| Teaching Assistant Apprenticeship |
| 4  (Higher education courses at early degree level.) | Higher Level Teaching Assistant | A set of professional standards that an experienced TA must demonstrate. These include: Professional Values and Practice, Knowledge and Understanding and Teaching and Learning activities. The HLTA designation is a ‘status’ and not a qualification. |
| Foundation Degree in Teaching and Learning Support | Designed to further your knowledge and understanding of how to support teaching and learning of pupils. Often foundation degrees are designed so that if you wish to gain a full degree, there are opportunities to do so. Foundation degrees are level four in the first year and level 5 in the second. |
| Certificate in Education | This qualification, at Level 4, for the post-16 (further education/lifelong learning) sector aims to develop an understanding and knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of a teacher/trainer, and the necessary skills in delivering and assessing in education and training. This qualification will enable progression on the Level 5 Diploma in Education and Training. |
| 5 | Diploma in Education and Training | The Level 5 Diploma in Education and Training are recognised teaching qualifications for the post-16 (further education/lifelong learning) sector. After completion of Level 5 individuals wishing to extend their qualifications for teaching in the post-16 sector (further education/lifelong learning) can apply for the Professional Graduate Certificate of Education and Training, (Level 6). |
| BA (Hons) Education Studies | A three year degree (Level 4-6) designed to develop your knowledge and understanding of education, and includes the opportunity to carry out research. Individuals successfully completing this degree may choose to progress to train as a teacher. |
| 6 |
|  | The Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (**QTLS**) **status** is a designation awarded to teachers in the Further Education (FE) sector. |
| 7  (postgraduate  level) | Teacher Training – PGCE or Schools Direct (QTS) | These programmes require a degree and this would be a route for individuals wishing to become qualified Primary School or Secondary School Teachers. |

As outlined in Table 1.2 there are numerous progression opportunities but it is always helpful to hear the career journeys other TAs have taken. The following case studies will reflect a range of progression routes that TAs can follow within the education sector.

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| **CASE STUDY : From TA to Teacher to Aspiring SENCo**  Shaun worked at a maintained Secondary School as a TA and then as a cover supervisor before moving to work in the Further Education (FE) sector. Shaun’s line manager commented that he had a real aptitude for teaching and as such Shaun enrolled for and completed the Level 4 Certificate in Education, and then the Level 5 Diploma in Education and Training. Indeed his College paid for Shaun to attend this training as part of his professional development. Shaun then applied for the Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) (Level 6). Shaun is now a qualified teacher working in a FE college supporting students with SEN. |

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| **CASE STUDY: From Apprentice TA to Degree**  At the age of 17 Mable knew she had a passion for working with children. Mable completed her Level 2 Teaching Apprenticeship and then progressed to the Level 3 Teaching Assistant Apprenticeship while at the same time completing her Level 4 Certificate in Education. Mable has now enrolled to do the Foundation Degree at a local university and aspires to be a teacher. |

**CASE STUDY: From TA to HLTA to art therapist**

Danielle has worked as a TA for going on 17 years. In 2003 she gained her NVQ 3 and two years after she gained the HLTA status. Danielle’s line manager has always encouraged her to consider a role in teaching but Danielle has always been very busy with her four children. But now that the youngest has left for university Danielle feels it is ‘me time’ and that she would like to follow her dream to become an art therapist. Danielle believes that art therapy will help her with her role in the behaviour support unit. Danielle did think of becoming a teacher but actually she loves being a TA and a HLTA.

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| **Discussion Point**  Consider these case studies, which one appeals to you?  Can you see that there are many routes, not just the conventional ones?  Each case study describes someone who has followed their dream. What is your dream? |

Summary

So as in true educational style we are doing a plenary. Hopefully you’ve gained a better understanding of the history of TAs, the main roles a TA has, training opportunities for TAs and progression opportunities available to you. Before you move onto the next chapters we would like to introduce you to two influential writers.

The first is Simon Sinek, marketing consultant, motivational speaker and author of ‘Start with the why – how great leaders inspire everyone to take action (2009). Simon Sinek argues that people tend to find it easier to explain WHAT they do and HOW they do it, but struggle with the WHY. Simon asks, ‘Why do you get up in the morning? Why does your organisation exist?’ and, ‘Why do you do your job?’ Simon Sinek believes that your **why** encompasses your purpose, beliefs, values and vision. It is your vision that inspires you to do what you do and sustains you in your role when work can become challenging. When you start thinking, acting and communicating with the **‘Why’** you can inspire others. So let’s look at activity 1.3.

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| Activity 1.3: Complete the sections below thinking about yourself as a TA.  **WHAT** do you do?  **HOW** do you do it?  **WHY** do you do it?  Had a go – perhaps you may have come up with something like this.  **WHAT**: I support learning activities and the teacher to enable pupils to achieve their learning outcomes.  **How:** I prepare resources, I work with individual pupils on teacher-led learning activities and I help the teacher to manage behaviour.  **Why:** I believe my role involves working together with the teacher for the good of the child. I do what I do because I believe that I can make a difference and that I can enable the pupils to be the best they can be. |

The second writer we wish to highlight is Stephen R Covey, and his book *‘The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People’*. Covey (2004) identifies 7 habits that highly effective people exhibit, however, it is Habit 2: ‘Begin with the end in mind’ that we want to bring to your attention. Why have you bought this book? What do you hope to achieve? If you wish to become a brilliant TA what does that look like? What does your ‘end’ look like? Stephen Covey states that Habit 2 is based on imagination and encourages you to begin each day, task, or project with a clear vision of your desired direction and destination. So if we ask the question again, ‘what does your ‘end’ look like - what would you say?