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# **Collaboration between teachers and TAs: from co-configuration to re-configuration**

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# The state of affairs

‘Despite a growth in importance, analysis of assistant roles remains limited. [...] few attempts, if any, have been made to understand the structure, operation and consequences of these roles underpinned by a framework that places assistants at the centre of the analysis. In part, this relative neglect reflects the tenor of public policy debate. TAs, for example, have been presented very much as a means to an end, in this case improving teachers’ working conditions, rather than as a group of importance and interest in its own right’ (Bach, Kessler and Heron, 2006: 3) .

# Summary of presentation

1. Why collaboration? And why collaboration between teachers and TAs?
2. Understanding collaboration from the modernisation and remodelling policies perspective: effectiveness and freedom
3. Collaboration as co-configuration: Expansive learning
4. Collaboration as re-configuration: knowledge and human interests
5. Where to? Some ideas on future research

# **Why collaboration? Because it is a means to ...**

1. Connecting people
2. Sharing ideas and resources
3. Saving, and redistributing resources
4. Solving problems
5. Finding new solutions
6. Creating a sense of participation, ownership and common purpose

# Why the collaboration between teachers and TAs?

**Because** there are now around 163,000 (FTE) teaching assistants working individually and in collaboration with teachers to support pupils, teachers, and schools by supporting teaching and learning, or helping with tasks of administrative nature (TDA, 2008).

**Because** we still know very little about the nature, dynamics and impact their collaboration has on the personal and professional wellbeing of the collaborators, or of the children.

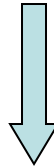
# From the modernisation and remodelling perspective: the looming crisis

- • Teachers identified workload as the major reason for leaving the profession
- Over 30% of teachers working week is spent on non-teaching activities
- Teachers generally have a poor work / life balance
- 45% of teachers are due to retire in the next 15 years
- 30% of teachers leave teaching in their first 5 years
- There is a need for the development and professional support for support staff
- There are specific teacher shortages in a number of key subjects
- There is a need for recognition of individual learning styles
- There is a need for assessment for learning not just assessment of learning
- There is a need for collaboration within and between schools (Jackson and Bedford, 2005:2)

**Or**

Teacher shortages

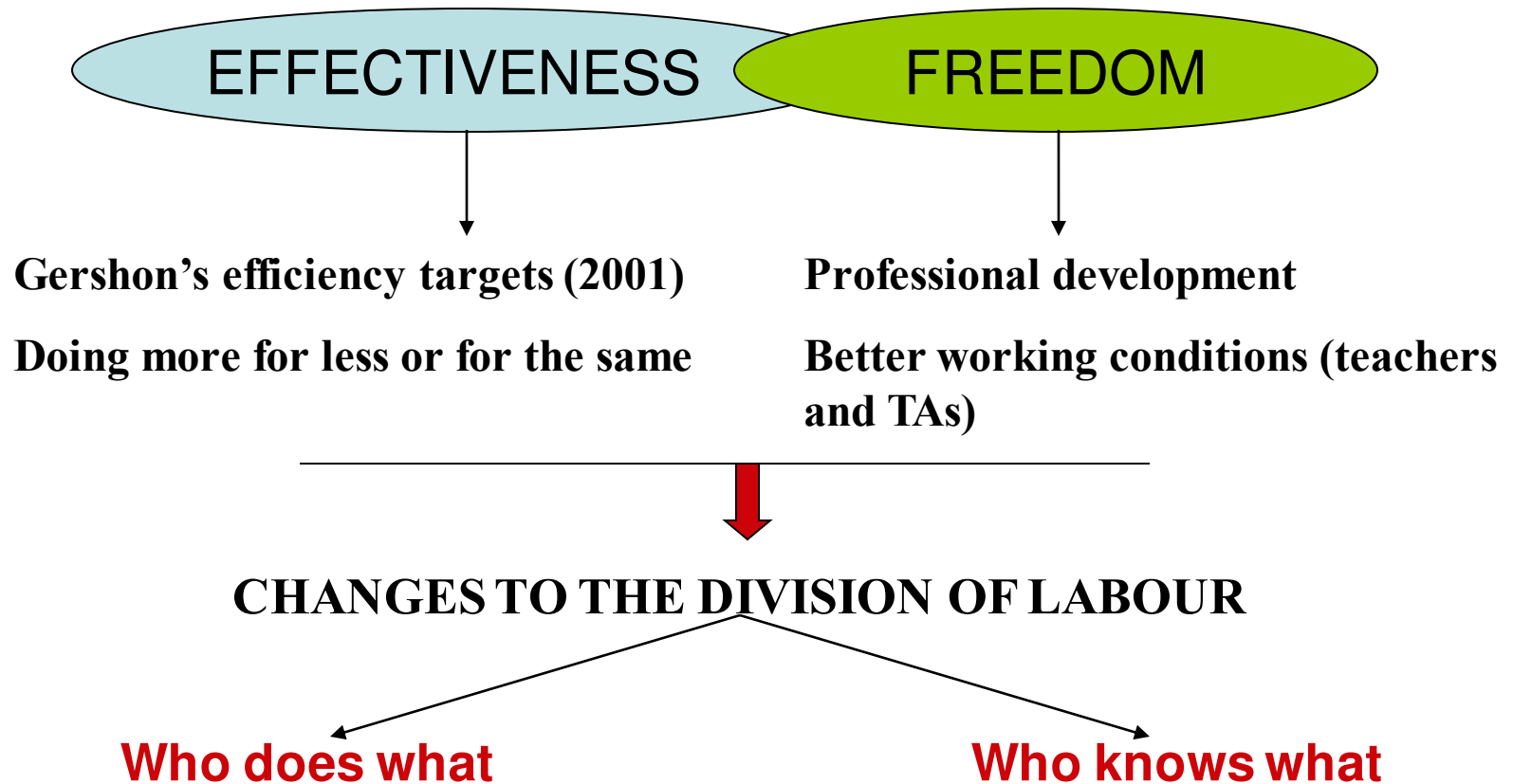
Teacher retention



- **changes in TAs' roles/tasks**
- **modification of training and professional development opportunities for TAs**
- **better use of ICT**
- **better use of other members of the support staff**



# The solution: remodelling the school workforce



# **Collaboration as co-configuration**

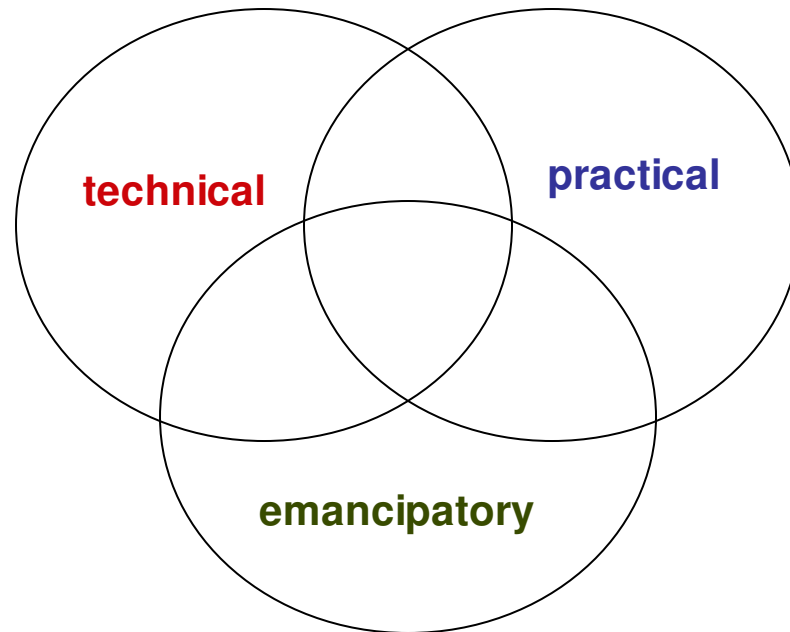
**‘an on-going partnership between professionals and service users’**

**which**

**‘demands a capacity to recognise and access expertise distributed across local systems and negotiate the boundaries of responsible professional action with other professionals and clients’ (Daniels, et al, 2007: 252)**

# Collaboration as re-configuration

The ability and willingness to think beyond traditional professional boundaries by acquiring, using and creating different kinds of knowledge in order to bring about effectiveness which is centred on the achievement of wellbeing as freedom.



# What is needed:

- **More empirical research on how modernisation is changing the working conditions of teachers and TAs**
- **More research on TAs' impact on teaching and learning which focuses on the hidden pedagogy of TAs**
- **More research that seeks the children's views on teaching, learning and the support they get**
- **the design and development of analytical and conceptual frameworks able to aid the understanding and evaluation of remodelling strategies**
- **the willingness and interest in multidisciplinary work**