

Propping up the Performative School

This page intentionally left blank

Propping up the Performative School: A Critical Examination of the English Educational Paraprofessional

BY

JO BISHOP

University of Huddersfield, UK



United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2022

Copyright © 2022 Jo Bishop
Published under exclusive license by Emerald Publishing Limited.

Reprints and permissions service

Contact: permissions@emeraldinsight.com

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without either the prior written permission of the publisher or a licence permitting restricted copying issued in the UK by The Copyright Licensing Agency and in the USA by The Copyright Clearance Center. Any opinions expressed in the chapters are those of the authors. Whilst Emerald makes every effort to ensure the quality and accuracy of its content, Emerald makes no representation implied or otherwise, as to the chapters' suitability and application and disclaims any warranties, express or implied, to their use.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-83982-243-8 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-83982-242-1 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-83982-244-5 (Epub)



ISOQAR certified
Management System,
awarded to Emerald
for adherence to
Environmental
standard
ISO 14001:2004.

Certificate Number 1985
ISO 14001



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Endorsements for Propping Up the Performative School

This book shines a much-needed light on the often overseen and undervalued, yet ever present 'educational paraprofessional'. Using a policy focus and rich ethnographic data the author brings new theoretical and empirical insights into the analysis of the 'educational paraprofessional', while intricately highlighting the neglected but valid role that they occupy within the diversified and performance-driven English state school system. (Dr Lisa Russell, The University of Huddersfield).

This book provides a unique insight into the significant contribution that 'paraprofessionals' play in our children's education. The research demonstrates how these often 'hidden' school staff support young people holistically in the important transition to adulthood by working inside and outside of their school setting. As such to fundamentally question our conceptualisation of learning and the present English schooling system. (Dr Doug Martin, Carnegie School of Education, Leeds Beckett University).

This study brings to life the day-to-day lived experience of contemporary education. By exploring the under-researched role of 'paraprofessionals' it also helps us to reflect on their crucial role in supporting young people through crucial life transitions. The combination of policy analysis, ethnography, and theorising makes the book both engaging and enlightening. Highly recommended to all those interested in the field. (Nick Frost, Emeritus Professor of Social Work, Leeds Beckett University).

This page intentionally left blank

To Frank and Sheila – for all that you are and all that you do.

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

List of Tables and Figures	<i>xi</i>
Abbreviations	<i>xiii</i>
About the Author	<i>xv</i>
Acknowledgements	<i>xvii</i>
Chapter 1 Introduction	<i>1</i>
Chapter 2 The Wider Policy Context Giving Rise to Learning Mentors	<i>9</i>
Chapter 3 Historical and Comparative Accounts of Paraprofessional Experiences	<i>29</i>
Chapter 4 Introducing Institutional Ethnography as a Means to Research Marginalised Work	<i>45</i>
Chapter 5 Introducing Priory Park High School	<i>67</i>
Chapter 6 The Official and ‘Seen’ Work of the Learning Mentors	<i>77</i>
Chapter 7 The Unofficial and ‘Unseen’ Work of the Learning Mentors	<i>93</i>
Chapter 8 View from the Top – A Coherent and Consistent Senior Leadership View of the Learning Mentor Role?	<i>107</i>
Chapter 9 View from Middle Management: The Multi-faceted Learning Mentor	<i>119</i>

Chapter 10	Mentors Talking Back	<i>129</i>
Chapter 11	View from an ‘Older’ Paraprofessional Group	<i>143</i>
Chapter 12	Discussion and Conclusion	<i>159</i>
	References	<i>175</i>
	Index	<i>183</i>

List of Tables and Figures

Tables

Table 1.	Distinctions between Professional and Non-professional Working Experiences and Practices.	40
Table 2.	Overview of Texts Identified at Priory Park High.	50
Table 3.	Data Displays.	64
Table 4.	Parallels between Earlier Accounts of Paraprofessionals and Contemporary Experiences.	160

Figures

Fig. 1.	Understanding the School's Activities As 'Core' and 'Peripheral'.	163
Fig. 2.	Mapping the Learning Mentor 'Seen' Activities.	165
Fig. 3.	Mapping the Learning Mentor 'Unseen' Activities.	166
Fig. 4.	Other Paraprofessionals Active in the Institutional Process.	168

This page intentionally left blank

Abbreviations

ABI	Area Based Initiative
EPA	Educational Priority Area
BSF	Building Schools for the Future
BS	Behaviour Support
BSW	Behaviour Support Worker
CE	Compensatory Education
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CWDC	Children's Workforce Development Council
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfE	Department for Education
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DES	Department of Education and Science
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EAZ	Education Action Zone
ECM	Every Child Matters
EiC	Excellence in Cities
FD	Foundation Degree
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HLTA	Higher Level Teaching Assistant
HND	Higher National Diploma
HSO	Human Service Organisation
IE	Institutional Ethnography
LA	Local Authority
LEA	Local Education Authority
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NPM	New Public Management

xiv Abbreviations

NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PFI	Private Finance Initiative
PL	Progress Leader
RAP	Raising Achievement Programme
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit
TA	Teaching Assistant
UK	United Kingdom
US/USA	United States of America
YM	Year Manager

About the Author

Jo Bishop is a Senior Lecturer in Childhood and Education Studies at the University of Huddersfield. She has worked in the English further and higher education sectors since the early 1990s teaching across a range of vocational and academic courses which prepare people for employment in schools, colleges, social care and youth work settings. Her current research interests lie in the enactment of policies which have resulted in a more diverse schools workforce. She has recently embarked on research which is looking at how processes and systems of pastoral care are conceived and implemented within an increasingly fragmented English school system.

This page intentionally left blank

Acknowledgements

I would like to convey a heartfelt thank you to the staff and pupils of *Priory Park High** in graciously giving up their time, answering my (many) questions and tolerating my presence, even on the busiest of days. I am in awe of the complexities and challenges that staff navigate in their desire to ensure that school is a positive experience for children and young people. To the support staff in particular, I hope this book has conveyed all that you do and the contribution that you make.

I would also like to express my thanks to those academic colleagues who have supported me throughout the writing of this book, particularly Robin Simmons who offered invaluable guidance at the proposal stage and Paul Thomas who provided feedback on draft chapters.

Earlier versions of some of this material have appeared in the *British Journal of Educational Research*, 69(2), 197–216, 2021 and *Perspectives on and from Institutional Ethnography* published by Emerald.

*Pseudonyms have been used for the school and its staff named in this book.

This page intentionally left blank

Chapter 1

Introduction

This book is about the experiences and contribution of educational paraprofessionals. It tells the ethnographic story of one such group – learning mentors – working in an all-inclusive state secondary school in the North of England. Educational paraprofessionals are not widely researched as school-based ethnographies have tended to reflect the focal points pursued by educational research more generally, such as curriculum and pedagogy (Goldbart & Hustler, 2005). In taking this path, studies have traditionally examined the activities, experiences and perspectives of teachers and pupils (Bird, 1980; Denscombe, 1980; Willis, 1977; Woods, 1980) with less regard for other school-based roles. Where the focus has been outside of the classroom it has tended towards the upper echelons of the organisational structure as typified by Wolcott’s (1973) seminal study of a school principal. This book sets out to broaden the parameters of a ‘standard’ school ethnography in going *beyond* both the classroom and the ‘teacher/pupil’ dichotomy. I argue that educational paraprofessionals are neglected but valid participants in schools, contributing a great deal to the education of young people albeit in less familiar and therefore more ‘hidden’ places than the traditional depiction of ‘classroom’. Furthermore, I feel it imperative that school/educational ethnographies accurately reflect the diversity of *all staff* now present in English state schools and that their experiences are documented according to ethnographic conventions, rather than merely ‘show-cased’ through ‘illustrative case studies’ (Cruddas, 2005, p. 111) of particular practice communities.

What’s in a Name? Defining ‘Paraprofessional’

At this early stage it is useful to unpack the phrase ‘paraprofessional’ which is used frequently throughout this book. In general terms it describes workers who in some way occupy the margins of professional status within education and a number of other related occupational fields. As is often the case, it is possible to identify a cluster of terms which have come about with similar meanings premised as they are on shared experiences. Within an educational context, ‘associate professional’ was proposed at a time when there was a degree of optimism regarding the potential value that new and existing non-teaching roles could offer as part of

**Propping up the Performative School: A Critical Examination
of the English Educational Paraprofessional, 1–8**

Copyright © 2022 by Jo Bishop

Published under exclusive licence by Emerald Publishing Limited

doi:[10.1108/978-1-83982-242-120221001](https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-83982-242-120221001)

2 *Propping up the Performative School*

a ‘children and schools workforce’ (Edmund & Price, 2009). Likewise, ‘learning support worker’ and ‘para teacher’ were used to describe similar roles and functions in post-16 educational settings (Bailey & Robson, 2004). Others note more critically how the term ‘hybrid professional’ has been utilised as a political means to inspire public confidence in less-qualified practitioners who have significantly lower salaries compared to teachers (Colley & Guery, 2015). In other human service organisations, the categorisation of ‘Blue-Collar Professionalism’ (McCann, Granter, Hyde, & Hassard, 2013) describes not only the liminal space occupied by paramedics but also conveys something about their struggle to achieve parity with other professional groups working in the English National Health Service.

Whilst these terms enable a useful overview of comparative titles, the older term ‘paraprofessional’ (Stanfield, 1973) is deemed to be the most appropriate to this particular discussion of educational workers because in using the prefix ‘para’ which signifies ‘beside’ or ‘near’, the worker is not identified by *negation* of their status (as with the terms non-professional or preprofessional), but rather as a *near*-professional, with no assumed expectation that they will necessarily move into a fully professional role. Moreover, the term paraprofessional is present in literature spanning both the time-frames and geo-political contexts covered in this book (see, e.g., Stewart, 1971 and Kerry, 2002, respectively). Thus having spent the last two decades researching both the concept and lived experiences of the ‘educational paraprofessional’ I am using the term to refer to any or all of the following: teaching assistants, higher level teaching assistants, learning mentors, behaviour support workers, inclusion workers, cover supervisors, parent support advisers and, I am sure, new titles still to come.¹ All of the above roles, whether temporary, now defunct, rebranded or continuing to endure, have at certain points in their varying histories been tasked with providing ‘new’ solutions to the seemingly intractable ‘problems’ of underachievement and disaffection within the state school system and are seen as continuing to play a fundamental role in pastoral and inclusion interventions in English school settings.

Their Presence and Roles in the Workforce

A recent school workforce census indicates that non-teaching staff with pupil support roles in English state-funded schools numbered 298,083, with just over 75,000 of these in secondary schools (DfE, 2018a). Behind these statistics is a story of policy evolution, policy borrowing and policy departures, all of which will be examined in the following chapters. But every story needs a starting point and in this case, it is 2001, when the then Secretary of State for Education, Estelle Morris, envisaged that 10 years on, schools would be ‘rich in the number of trained adults [other than teachers] available to support learning to new high standards’ (Department for Education and Skills, 2001a, p. 15). Just over a

¹Exact numbers for each group are difficult to extrapolate as learning mentors come under the Teaching Assistant category and behaviour workers come under the category OSS (Other support staff) or BEHM (Behaviour Manager/Specialist).

decade later this prediction appears to have been confirmed with references to a ‘diverse cast of “other adults” working in and around schools’ (Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012, p. 2).

So what do educational paraprofessionals actually do? The titles referred to above give some idea of the area or responsibilities accorded to each role. For example, in secondary schools, teaching assistants tend to provide targeted support to individuals or small groups of learners and are predominantly classroom based. Learning mentors on the other hand provide interventions that take place outside of the classroom for children and young people deemed as having barriers to learning. Furthermore, in the early days of the role’s implementation they were tasked with building relationships with families, communities and relevant agencies. It is worth noting that some commentators and schools do not make such distinctions in job title and use the term ‘Teaching Assistant’ generically to refer to those types of interventions mentioned above and others still (Tucker, 2009). Whilst distinctions can be made, it is also important to emphasise the overlapping nature of roles. For example, learning mentors can work with pupils deemed as having behavioural issues but this task could also be in the domain of the more recent behaviour support worker. Different avenues of support will often have a different underpinning philosophy and approach. Whilst *some* thought may have been given at both strategic and operational levels about how these roles sit alongside one another, it would be fair to say that this can often be overlooked in the frenetic and high-tempo pace of day-to-day school life, resulting in contradictory or confusing experiences for pupils on the receiving end of such interventions. Furthermore, the specifics of different paraprofessional roles will depend on *when* and *where* the role is implemented. For example, compared to other paraprofessional roles, teaching assistants have a considerable longevity having been a recognised part of the educational landscape certainly since the 1990s but established in embryonic form prior to that after the implementation of the Plowden Report in 1967 (Bartlett & Burton, 2020; Bishop, 2021). This provided the first documented reference to ‘teaching aides’ in English primary schools, a term often assumed to be imported as part of policy borrowing from the United States of America (USA or US) which at the time was expanding similar roles due to a drive for anti-poverty policies such as Head Start, a programme of early childhood intervention (Dunning, 2018; Lewis, 2004; Silver & Silver, 1991). There are earlier iterations still, ‘classroom-based assistants’ existed from the early 1960s (Clayton, 1993) and going back significantly further ‘pupil-teachers’ in the nineteenth century (Simmons, 2017). By contrast, learning mentors arrived much later (late twentieth/early twenty-first century) and initially only in those geographical areas covered by the policy which led to their implementation. This often piecemeal and arbitrary approach to the design and implementation of paraprofessional roles will become more apparent as the discussion progresses.

Another important point to consider is how educational paraprofessional roles are characterised. A cursory look at educational news media articles conjures up images of workers whose contribution is integral but whose visibility is questionable. Thus, paraprofessionals are described variously as: an ‘auxiliary army’ who are a ‘force to be reckoned with’ (Barker, 2008); the ‘backroom brigade’

4 *Propping up the Performative School*

(Barton, 2010); part of the ‘management engine’ of a school (Woods, 2013) and ‘unsung heroes’ (Maddern, 2013). The paraprofessional workforce has traditionally been a feminised one and the most recent figures suggest this continues to be the case. In 2020/221 there were a total of 271,307 full time equivalent (fte) ‘teaching assistants’ (an official categorisation which includes learning mentors in this case) of which just over 248,000 were women. The category of ‘Other Support Staff’ which includes behaviour support workers shows a similar disparity with just over 34,000 fte women and 4,420 fte men (<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk>). Such demographics are reinforced by the salary which is usually ‘term-time only’, thereby assumed as a secondary income to that of a primary earner and a work arrangement which enables women to continue their own caring responsibilities during school holidays. Some of the newer paraprofessional roles suggest that this workforce is also becoming increasingly racialised (Bishop, 2021) for reasons which will be explained in due course. A more recent premise of paraprofessional roles is that they represent a ‘stepping stone’ or ‘preprofessional’ opportunity, providing experiences of educational and pastoral support work which will secure an individual’s entry into teaching, social work and other allied professional training courses (Drury, 2013).

Despite paraprofessionals’ now significant presence in the state school system, studies of their work and experiences tend to be small in number (Bishop, 2011; Bishop & Sanderson, 2017; Jones, Doveston, & Rose, 2009; Lee, 2011; Mansaray, 2006). Furthermore, after an initial period of optimism in the early 2000s regarding their potential contribution, it is their differential status that has ultimately served to reinforce a segmentation of functions between these occupational groups and their professionalised teaching counterparts (Edmund & Price, 2009). As stated above, this book focusses predominantly on the English learning mentor. It examines how this particular paraprofessional role was historically constructed and then continued to evolve through policy agendas enacted at the local level. The ‘Learning Mentor’ was conceived and implemented by the New Labour government (1997–2010). It drew in part on the rising popularity of youth mentoring which from the 1990s was utilised as a common approach to engage and work with young people not in education, employment or training (Colley, 2003a; Piper & Piper, 2000). This represents a further example of policy borrowing as such initiatives had been popular in the USA from the early 1980s² (Freedman, 1993; Philip, 2003). As will be explored further in the following chapter, the learning mentor formed one element in a series of social justice initiatives which underpinned this government’s commitment to equity in schooling. However, this was an agenda which sat uneasily beside the acceptance and continuation of the quasi-market created within state education by their Conservative new-right predecessors (Thomson, 2020).

My own interest in work-based ‘helping relationships’ is long-standing. As a student of Social Care in the late 1980s, I observed and worked alongside

²Largely achieved through mass volunteer-based movements rather than the types of salaried positions under discussion here.

paraprofessionals attached to the Social Work profession. Their role was to support young people who, at just 16 years of age were preparing to leave the care system to embark on their adult lives. In the absence of a formal ‘corporate parent’ (a role not legislated in England until 2017), care leavers had only these more informal relationships with their residential key workers to rely upon in making their transition to independent living. Some years later, my focus shifted to state schools where I recognised similar skills and values being utilised by adults who were not teachers but nevertheless played a significant part in supporting pupils as they navigated their way through compulsory education. In one such example – which might be understood as a reconnaissance study – (Bishop, 2011) I aimed to ascertain how the work of learning mentors had developed some 8 years after the role was implemented. The data that this study generated indicated multiple, often contradictory ways in which learning mentors described their work, ranging from providing emotional support to vulnerable pupils, whilst monitoring more overtly institutional concerns like attendance, behaviour and ultimately attainment. What was also discernible was the degree of autonomy that some learning mentors were afforded in comparison to their professional teaching counterparts as shown in this extract below:

Engaging with young people is my key focus. This takes me into all sorts of areas such as car mechanics, coaching rugby teams, gym work, routine building maintenance, visits to local businesses, etc. (cited in Bishop, 2011, p. 39)

I started to become intrigued by the tightrope that these workers were often required to walk in what I tentatively described as their ‘dual role’ of, on the one hand, engaging young people through the offering of emotional and social support whilst, on the other, meeting institutional imperatives of monitoring academic progress and attainment. I questioned what the personal impact of performing such a role might be and it was these ponderings that led to the ethnographic study of learning mentoring reported in this book (Bishop, 2017, 2021).

Since conducting the ethnography (2013–2015) the educational landscape has continued to evolve. There have been two changes of government with each one pursuing policies that have led to a more fragmented system of schooling in England (Ball, 2021; Mortimore, 2013). The existence of multi-academy trusts, free schools and faith schools alongside the now endangered community or ‘maintained’ school,³ makes it more challenging than ever to build a coherent picture of the pastoral and inclusive interventions that schools adopt, not to mention the philosophies that underpin them. In more recent times, a period of policy paralysis has also taken place due in the first instance to the lengthy and at times seemingly intractable resolution of the United Kingdom’s (UK) exit from the

³Community schools are state funded and have maintained their relationship with the local authority which employs the school staff, controls admissions, and owns the land and premises (Mortimore, 2013).

European Union, followed then by the outbreak and subsequent impact of the Covid 19 pandemic. Arguably, it is the latter which has given renewed attention to long-standing concerns regarding how socio-economic inequalities shape educational experiences and outcomes (Thomson, 2020). Not surprisingly, heroic characterisations of educational paraprofessionals emerged once again during this period with one study describing them as ‘the mortar in the brickwork of our schools’ (Moss, Webster, Harmey, & Bradbury, 2021, p. 30). Thus, it is a timely point to re-emphasise the important role played by educational paraprofessionals; to go beyond the ‘headlines’ and grasp an appreciation of the realities of their lived experiences as they continue to ‘prop up’ the education system in which they are situated.

Structure of the Book

Chapter 1 has set out the concept of the English educational paraprofessional by identifying a number of roles which come under this term; their presence in the school workforce and the ways in which their work and contribution has been characterised. A brief introduction has been given to the paraprofessional role of learning mentor, which forms the key focus of this book. The issues identified in this initial discussion will be picked up and examined further in the following chapters. A brief note for international readers: the focus on English, rather than UK educational policy and provisions in this book is due to the devolved nations (Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales) pursuing their respective agendas to a greater or lesser extent.

Chapter 2 examines the political environment in which the learning mentor role was conceived. Particular attention is paid to the policy *Excellence in Cities* alongside other early intervention programmes and area-based initiatives both past and present. It also considers how the parallel agenda of ‘remodelling’ led to a restructuring of the teacher role. This involved (firstly) the reallocation of some teaching and learning tasks to more established paraprofessionals like teaching assistants and (secondly) the jettisoning of activities of a more pastoral nature to newly installed paraprofessional roles. For contextual purposes, broader policy agendas around social exclusion, a stated desire to abolish child poverty and the introduction of different working practices within the children and young people’s workforce are also discussed in this chapter. This includes a brief introduction to the concepts of New Public Management (Hood, 1995) which has given rise to a system of ‘performativity’ (Ball, 2003; Elliot, 2001), both of which are returned to in Chapter 12 for further critical analysis. The final part of Chapter 2 sets out how the learning mentor role was constructed in both government literature and educational news media, highlighting the partial understandings of the role displayed by some teachers and school leaders. This discussion also considers academic critiques of learning mentorship/youth mentoring to ascertain their usefulness in developing a critical understanding of the role and the work activities associated with it.

Chapter 3 offers a wider geographical and temporal perspective in considering the pre-existence and rationale for paraprofessional roles akin to the learning

mentor in another capitalist nation, the USA. Here, we delve into a rich historical literature that offers accounts of ideologically driven, anti-poverty projects which desired to establish career trajectories for non-professional workers in the human and health services. This discussion also includes extracts from ‘real-time’ research studies which have proved invaluable in documenting who undertook paraprofessional roles and what their experiences were.

As might be expected from a discussion of methodology, Chapter 4 provides a commentary on the research design and methods employed in the ethnography including site selection, access and sampling; the consideration of ethical issues; methods employed and how the data were analysed and presented. However, the parameters of this discussion go much further in outlining how the study reported in this book was influenced by Institutional Ethnography (IE) (Smith, 2005) as a means to research marginalised work. In doing so it sets out how characteristics of IE were utilised as informing devices once in the field. Here I cover ‘standpoint’; the ‘relations of ruling’ and the notion of the problematic; the identification of texts; explicating the ‘work knowledges’ of different participants and the ability to distinguish between institutional and experiential accounts. Examples of data which provide illustrations of these are presented throughout which will be of interest to readers regardless of whether they have an established or developing knowledge of IE. As such, this chapter may be accessed and read as a stand-alone section.

Chapters 5 through 9 represent the ethnographic study itself. Chapter 5 begins by introducing the setting in which the ethnography takes place. This starts with a brief history of the school, identifying key milestones and significant events in its evolution as a ‘maintained’, all-inclusive state secondary school. It then moves on to give a ‘guided tour’ of the school on a typical Monday morning, a ‘story’ which is based upon composite accounts written up over the fieldwork period. This device is a means to introduce the paraprofessionals who are the key actors in this ethnography so here we meet not only the learning mentor team who as stated above form the main focus of this book, but also the higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs), teaching assistants (TAs) and behaviour support workers, all of whom are considered as key informants. Included here are the learning and pastoral provisions that the paraprofessionals occupy, thereby setting out a useful contextual backdrop for the many issues that are identified and discussed in later chapter and re-emphasising the earlier point that this is an educational ethnography which focusses on what goes on *outside* of the mainstream classroom.

The key focus of Chapter 6 is in setting out the formal/official and what I have termed the ‘seen’ aspects of the learning mentor role. It provides an in-depth examination of the provisions they staff (namely Breakfast club and the mentor base) and the one-to-one interventions they are tasked with providing. In contrast, Chapter 7 examines the unofficial or ‘unseen’ domain of the mentors’ work, presenting a series of ad hoc, spontaneous and unofficial interventions which highlight the peripheral nature of their work and role. In doing so, this chapter captures the voices of young people gained in part through pupil data which evidence young people’s understandings of the learning mentor role and how it differs from other staff roles. Chapter 7 also considers pupil agency through

accounts of how pastoral systems are navigated and decisions made, regarding how and when they access support. To give further context to the mentor's work, this chapter also charts pupil experiences and perspectives on their educational experiences more generally.

The next two chapters set out how the learning mentor role is understood by those occupying other positions within the school hierarchy. Chapter 8 presents the views of three members of the Senior Leadership Team (the Headteacher, the Deputy Headteacher, Teacher and the Director of Pastoral Care) whose varying understandings of the role become increasingly apparent as the chapter progresses. Chapter 9 then turns to the Middle Management of the school looking at both the Progress Leader and the Year Manager positions. These two roles offer a useful means by which to understand how academic and pastoral functions within a school have been 'uncoupled', with those from a teaching background focussing on the academic 'progress' of pupils and those not being tasked with the management and monitoring of pupil attendance and engagement whilst addressing whatever issues might act as a hindrance to these. This chapter deals with questions of whether paraprofessionals like the learning mentor are able to meet the expectations of these two distinct managerial positions. Having considered the views of senior and middle managers, Chapter 10 offers a 'right to reply' to the learning mentors by further examining how they manage, acquiesce and at times resist the official but often contradictory prescriptions of their work seen in the previous two chapters.

Chapter 11 provides an opportunity to examine how unique the mentors' experiences are in terms of the challenges they have faced both past and present. It does so by going back to the more established paraprofessionals (HLTAs and TAs) first introduced at the start of the ethnography. Through the accounts they provide, it is possible to identify shared experiences to the mentors when they were themselves entering schools as a new role, one decade earlier.

The final chapter draws out and discusses key issues identified in both the ethnography and supporting literature. It presents an overview of the construction of the educational paraprofessional, drawing parallels between two policy agendas presented, albeit 50 years and two continents apart. It considers one important difference which is how performativity impacts on the educational paraprofessional in terms of both concept and practice. This leads to a discussion regarding the crucial question of how such 'helping relationships' develop and operate within the context of performance-based cultures. The final issue under consideration is what the enactment of the learning mentor and other paraprofessional roles tells us about how practices previously conceived as 'pastoral' are evolving.