Roles and Responsibilities of Paraprofessionals in Creating Inclusive Communities: A Three Dimensional Perspective

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Roles and Responsibilities of Paraprofessionals in Creating Inclusive Communities: A Three Dimensional Perspective

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Purpose

• The purpose of the study was to explore the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals within an inclusive classroom from three different stakeholder perspectives:
  1) General education teacher
  2) Special education teacher
  3) Paraprofessionals
Research Questions

The following questions guided this research:

1: How do paraprofessionals view their roles and responsibilities in the classroom?
2: How do general educators and special education teachers view roles of paraprofessionals in the classroom?
3: How do paraprofessionals collaborate with general educators/ special educators?
Today, paraprofessionals have become more responsible for assisting students with disabilities in the general education classrooms that is different from special education settings.

This change in service delivery setting indicates a change in:
- Service delivery model
- Roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals
- Training and support required to perform those roles

Most of the paraprofessionals and special education teachers believe that their primary role in the inclusive classroom is to manage students’ behavior and academics on one-on-one basis, within the class.

A study found that paraprofessionals were most effective when the supervising teacher clearly defined their roles and provided them with appropriate direction and guidance.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Participants</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| • The Midwest school district consist of four elementary schools:  
  • LakeView Elementary School  
  • Baker Public School  
  • Macclenny Elementary School  
  • Hiland Elementary Schools. | • The participants of the study included  
  • one classroom teacher  
  • one special education teacher  
  • three paraprofessionals |
| • Lake View Elementary school  
  • 4th grade classroom | • One of the paraprofessionals left the school in the start of study |
Methodology

Research design:

• Qualitative research design
• Case Study
• Purposive sampling
• The data was gathered and triangulated through
  • Structured interviews
  • Observation
  • Artifacts (email questionnaires, school handbook, students’ worksheets & artwork)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Participants</th>
<th>No. of Interviews</th>
<th>No. of Observations</th>
<th>Artifacts included</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom teacher</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Follow-up questions through email School handbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special education teacher</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Follow-up questions through email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraprofessional 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Pictures of worksheets and art work follow-up questions sent through email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraprofessional 2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Pictures of worksheets and art work follow-up questions sent through email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraprofessional 3</td>
<td>Left school</td>
<td>Left school</td>
<td>Questionnaire sent through email. 2 follow-up emails were sent with additional questions.</td>
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Data Analysis

- Data was analyzed qualitatively using:
  - Thematic analysis

- Data was analyzed from three sources:
  - Interview transcriptions
  - Observation
  - Artifacts
emergence of themes (initial findings)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coding</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
<th>Participant Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>One-on-one, alternative curriculum, IEP implementation, time management, teaching, disciplining the kids, managing behavior, greeting parents…</strong></td>
<td><strong>Everyday responsibilities</strong></td>
<td>One-on-One teaching Monitoring behavior Assisting general education teacher Monitoring Lessons Supporting interaction with peers Interaction with parents</td>
<td>“I work to monitor and work proactively to prevent inappropriate classroom behaviors, such as laying on the floor, making loud noises, hitting, kicking, and running out of the room…”</td>
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<td>Sharing IEPs, shared responsibilities, modeling instructions, know the hierarchy, meeting once a month, RESPECT, taking opinion…</td>
<td><strong>Collaboration among team members</strong></td>
<td>Everyday communication Monthly meetings Understanding hierarchy Respecting individual differences</td>
<td>“… because the only time we have to communicate is when students are in the room… I mean its not a good idea to talk about in front of students”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>lack of description of roles and duties, different perspectives regarding inclusion, lack of common planning time, lack of education and training…</strong></td>
<td><strong>Potential challenges</strong></td>
<td>Professional training (for both Paraprofessionals and teachers) Understanding hierarchy Specific roles vs general guidelines Time availability</td>
<td>“I would.. Because they know the students very well.. so yeah I would want it to be collaborative… but I also think that there needs to be an understanding that they would be provided instructions by the teachers regarding student goals.” “… I think a bigger issue is just that open communication and understanding that my job is the supervisor and I’m going to give you ideas and suggestions and feedback…”</td>
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Next Step

Initial Implication

• Regular monthly meetings
• Training
  • Teacher
  • Paraprofessionals
• Explaining the hierarchy
• Guidelines
  • General vs Specific
Work Cited


