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

Shehreen Iqtadar

University of Northern Iowa

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

By: Shehreen Iqtadar
Advisor: Dr. Amy Petersen
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?
Current Literature

Today, paraprofessionals have become more responsible for assisting students with disabilities in the general education classrooms that is different from special education settings

(Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000; Cameron, David Lansing, 2014)

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

(Riggs & Muller, 2001)

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

(Fisher and Pleasants, 2012; Sarah, Douglas, Shelley, Chapin, & Nolan, 2015)

A study found that paraprofessionals were most effective when the supervising teacher clearly defined their roles and provided them with appropriate direction and guidance.

(Chopra et al., 2011)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - The Midwest school district consists 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>
</table>
| Classroom teacher            | 3                 | 6                   | Follow-up questions through email  
School handbook                                                                     |
| Special education teacher    | 3                 | 6                   | Follow-up questions through email                                                 |
| Paraprofessional 1           | 1                 | 6                   | Pictures of worksheets and artwork  
follow-up questions sent through email                                              |
| Paraprofessional 2           | 1                 | 6                   | Pictures of worksheets and artwork  
follow-up questions sent through email                                              |
| Paraprofessional 3           | Left school       | Left school         | Questionnaire sent through email  
2 follow-up emails were sent with additional questions.                              |
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>one-on-one, alternative curriculum, IEP implementation, time management, teaching, disciplining the kids, managing behavior, greeting parents…</td>
<td><strong>Everyday responsibilities</strong></td>
<td>One-on-One teaching</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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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monitoring behavior</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assisting general education teacher</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Monitoring Lessons</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Supporting interaction with peers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Interaction with parents</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<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><strong>Everyday communication</strong></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>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monthly meetings</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Understanding hierarchy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Respecting individual differences</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>lack of description of roles and duties, different perspectives regarding inclusion, lack of common planning time, lack of education and training…</td>
<td><strong>Potential challenges</strong></td>
<td>Professional training (for both Paraprofessionals and teachers)</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.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding hierarchy</td>
<td>“... 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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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Specific roles vs general guidelines</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Time availability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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Next Step

Initial Implication

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


