# COLLABORATION

# IN

# INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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# Content

# Abstract

Inclusive education becomes a bigger part of education all over the world and therefore different ways of how to deliver inclusion best emerge. One of those includes collaboration between different professionals within education. General teachers, teaching assistants, and special education teachers can collaborate in many different ways within a classroom and therefore might be able to deliver inclusion in a successful way. Researchers worldwide have studied different ways of collaboration within classrooms, such as *co-teaching, partnerships,* and *consultation* (Mitchell, 2014; Mastropieri, and Scuggs, 2006). Within those types of collaboration each professional educator would have their own role and responsibilities (Inclusion BC, 2014), which would define how the team would work and to what extent it may or may not be successful. Questionnaires and observations in an international school in South America have been carried out, those did not only ask for the participants' opinion on inclusion and collaboration within the classroom, but also their roles and responsibilities as well as the students' perceptions in the eyes of the participants and from the researcher's perspective. Through the field research as well as the literature review it became clear, that collaboration between educational professionals within a classroom was seen as something positive, as 62.5% of all participants agreed with this. Furthermore, it seemed to affect the children in a positive way, as 100% of all participants mentioned. The most common reason given for this was that children would feel more save and comfortable and their learning was enhanced. In conclusion this research has shown that collaboration between educational professionals is beneficial for all students not only in an academic matter, but also for their social and emotional development and well-being.

# Introduction

The approach of inclusive education has existed for decades, but is still not an established practice in all schools or countries. **Inclusive education** is defined as an educational approach, whereby students with special needs are integrated into mainstream classrooms (Bryant, Bryant, & Smith, 2017; McManis, 2017; D'Amico and Gallaway, 2010). This will be elaborated further in the literature review.

The roots of inclusion are to be found in the original Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) law, which was passed in 1975 in the United States. Laws such as IDEA were passed all over the world. According to Bryant, Bryant, and Smith (2017), to those that developed IDEA, inclusion meant that children with disabilities should have the right to enter a public school and receive free education, just like everyone else. Inclusion first was established in a way, whereby schools opened up special classes and only included children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms, when it was possible or convenient in subjects such as art, music or physical education (Bryant, Bryant, & Smith, 2017). This later opened up the discussion whether this was truly inclusion. Advocates of children with disabilities stated that the benefits of inclusion would outweigh intensive services offered at special schools or in special classes (Bryant, Bryant, & Smith, 2017).

Even though inclusion could still be considered to be a fairly new approach for some schools, there are many different forms in which it can be executed. Some are strongly connected to collaboration between different professionals, such as general teachers, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals, like teaching assistants. A **general teacher** in this case is a person that spends most of the day with their class and is responsible for all students and their progress. In comparison, a **special education teacher** is a person that works with special needs children, but also supports or advises the general teacher when it comes to challenging situation due to children's behaviour in the classroom. While the general teacher and the special education teacher are both professional educators, a **teaching assistant** is defined as a person that assists the general teacher, including but not limited to classroom management and instruction. They also provide support to students if needed. In the literature review these definitions will be further elaborated on, as well as the roles and responsibilities of these professionals.

The following sections focus on how the three mentioned professionals can collaborate in different ways, some of which are described in detail in the literature review. Throughout the fieldwork this research study is highlighting to what extent the different forms of collaboration are successful in inclusive education and what effect it might have on the students within a classroom, as well as their perceptions.

# Objectives

As inclusive education becomes a bigger part in education worldwide, different forms of how to ensure true inclusion emerge. One of these is the concept of collaboration between different professionals in one classroom. As previously mentioned this can happen in various ways. This research aims to create an overview on how teachers, teaching assistants and special education teachers can work together to create an inclusive classroom. As collaboration always depends on the participating people and on the situation itself, this research is only a guideline, which might provide others with a starting point. As it also is a case study and only includes collected data from one school in South America, the research outcome is limited to this specific context and might only provide others with a sense of what forms of collaboration there are and how they might affect inclusion. As collaboration between professionals in a classroom always has an effect on the students, this research also includes how the different forms of collaboration are perceived by the students.

# Motivation

Whether children with special learning needs have the right to attend mainstream education, depends on the country and the laws governing education, though through the Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education it is stated that "every child has a fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning" (UNESCO, 1994).

Even though this statement exists, each country still has its individual laws for education and inclusion, one example from the United States of America is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004; Bryant, Bryant, & Smith, 2017). This law guarantees the right of public education for students with disabilities. Inclusion itself can be provided in various ways, depending on the curriculum, the school's perspective and the country's educational system. Support for children with disabilities still often happens outside the classroom, through pull-outs or even in separate classrooms or schools and is most of the time only provided through special education teachers (Bryant, Bryant, & Smith, 2017).

Through educational internships completed during my undergraduate study, as well as colleagues and friends in education from all over the world, I was introduced to numerous ways of  inclusive education. During the Inclusive Education Minor at NHL Stenden, I deepened my understanding about the topic of inclusion, different disabilities and how they can be integrated into the classroom. These understandings coupled with my personal experiences as a student teacher, as well as during my own schooling as a student with the learning disability dyslexia, have lead me to wanting to find ways in which inclusion is not only provided successfully, but also without singling out children with disabilities, as it happened to me. Collaboration between the different professionals mentioned above seems to be one key factor to this problem in my opinion. The better different professionals would work together to provide support, the better the outcome and the effect on students could be, especially on students that have any special need.

# Research Questions

**Research Question:**
- How do students perceive the different types of collaboration between general teachers, special education teachers and teaching assistants in an inclusive classroom?

**Sub Questions:**
- Answered by the literature review
    1. What are the roles and responsibilities of teacher assistants, general teachers and special education teachers in an inclusive classroom?
    2. How should an inclusive classroom look like?
    3. What are the benefits and struggles of inclusive classrooms?

- Answered partly by the literature review
    4. How can the different parties collaborate with each other to create an inclusive classroom?

- Answered by the field work/study
    5. How can the different parties collaborate with each other to create an inclusive classroom?
    6. What effects does collaboration between the three parties have on the students?
    7. How does collaboration between the three parties affect inclusion?

This research focuses on collaboration between educational professionals within inclusive education, and focuses within that range on the participants' opinion and the researcher's impression of the students' perception of the different types of teaching teams within their classrooms. In order to find an answer to the main research question, the sub questions serve as a guideline, according to which information and data is gathered.

# Significance

Collaboration is an important factor in nearly every field, not only in education. This research will aim to add to the current understandings of these benefits. The cooperation between general teachers and special education teachers is seen as a key factor for successful inclusive education, when it comes to providing students with appropriate support (Löser & Werning, 2013; Schwager, 2011). Collaboration is a useful tool and it supports not only the students, but is also beneficial for teachers. The importance of understanding the different ways of collaboration adds to the significance, as this research is providing an overview about some of the forms of collaboration between the three parties: general teachers, special education teachers, and teaching assistants.

Clarity regarding roles and responsibilities among the team members, as well as a shared view on inclusive education, are crucial for good collaboration. According to Giangreco (2013), ensuring that everyone knows what their role is and what responsibilities everyone has, is as important as a shared view towards inclusive education and good collaboration skills. Correspondingly, Jurkowski and Müller (2018) state that developing a common perspective on teaching and learning fosters inclusion. Consequently, this can help to avoid misunderstandings and problems in a team. The questionnaires, as well as the outcome of this research, could be used in schools worldwide, as they provide a starting point and a chance to find out what might have led to problems or misunderstandings in the past.

Furthermore, children tend to notice when collaboration is not working or a problem between the staff members occurs in the classroom and that influences their behaviour in the classroom. Tassoni (2007) states that children are very observant, meaning that children will learn by observing, for example, skills in teamwork and collaboration. They are also sensitive towards the behaviour of others and will most likely adopt the behaviour modelled (Tassoni, 2007).

As a result, viewing collaboration from different perspectives and taking a closer look at how students perceive different forms of collaboration will provide a better understanding on what kind of impact collaboration has on inclusion and those involved. The guideline provided by this research, may help participants realize what their role should be in comparison to what it currently is. This can lead to further discussions and in the best case to an improvement in their collaboration skills. In conclusion, this research will provide knowledge and tools to find out about collaboration between professional educators in a classroom and how to improve.

# Literature Review

**Definition of Inclusive Education**

Inclusive education is an educational approach, whereby students with special needs are integrated into mainstream classrooms. According to McManis (2017) this means that students, no matter their disabilities, attend an age-appropriate class in a mainstream school. Children should receive quality instruction, intervention, and support in order to succeed in a mainstream school (Dale McManis, 2017). D'Amico and Gallaway (2010) state the purpose of this approach is that all students, no matter their disability, academic level, behaviour, or learning style, are able to participate. In brief, inclusive education is an approach, which enables all children, regardless of any special need to receive instruction, intervention and support in a mainstream classroom.

**How should Inclusive Education be?**

According to The Understood Team (n.d.), inclusive education is supposed to provide students with special needs with the support they need in the least restrictive environment. Furthermore, Advocacy in Action (2016) states that all students should have the right to access the mainstream curriculum. Even though this is the aim and the child's right, the mainstream curriculum may not be beneficial for students with special needs. Stragilos and Stefanidis (2015) elaborate that if modifications are needed, they should be made under a universal design for learning. Consequently, inclusive education should be accompanied by a positive ethos and learning environment, through which all students, including those with special educational needs, would feel welcome and were able to experience community (NCSE, 2011) in order for inclusive education to work, which means that schools and teachers need to provide accommodations to those children in need. In conclusion, all students should be seen as learners with potential and it has to be taken into account that everyone learns in different ways.

**Benefits and Struggles of Inclusive Education**

In general, it can be said that inclusive education is beneficial for all students not only for those with special needs. This is also mentioned by The Understood Team (n.d.) and McManis (2017), as it also fosters the expectations a teacher has for each student, which can increase the students' motivation. Similarly, it maximizes the students' potential and increases their awareness and acceptance towards diversity (Advocacy in Action, 2016). Students also learn to work together and support each other, which leads increasingly to better friendship opportunities among all students (Advocacy in Action, 2016). Especially children with special needs will benefit, as inclusive education will teach them to adapt to the real world. Other researchers mention that respect for diversity also creates a more welcoming and safe environment in a classroom (Inclusive Schools Network, 2015). In short, inclusive education is not only beneficial for students with special needs, but also for students without.

In contrast, there are still some struggles inclusive education faces. Inclusion, and whether it can be successful, depends on the attitude of schools and teachers (Stefanidis & Strogilos, 2015). Therefore, different cultures among professionals can be challenging, as they all come with a different view on inclusion, as Chao, Lai, Ji, Lo, and Sin (2018) state. Glazzard (2011) also raises awareness of struggles, such as that personal values are nearly impossible to separate from inclusion, or that a lack of commitment can be a challenge. Furthermore, Glazzard (2011) elaborates that schools might often claim to be inclusive, because they admit students with special needs, but their actions are exclusive,

as they might put all students with special needs in one class. Adding to that, inclusion takes time, patience and energy and schools therefore are often not truly inclusive (Glazzard, 2011). In brief, this means that inclusion still faces many challenges. Nevertheless, the main factor that determines whether inclusion is successful or not is the commitment and attitude of teachers and schools.

**Definitions, Roles and Responsibilities of General Teachers, Special Education Teachers and Teaching Assistants**

A general teacher is a person that spends most of the day with their class and is responsible for all students and their progress. This is also defined similarly by the NCSE (2011). A general teacher is responsible for evaluating and reporting the students' progress, planning instructions, implementing goals and objectives as well as for the successful communication with colleagues and parents (Inclusion BC, 2014). Consequently, the general teacher is responsible for all students in their classroom, which includes differentiation, for example during planning and instructing (NCSE, 2011). As mentioned by Rasmitadila and Goldstein (2017), the general teacher should divide time and attention equally among all students. Additionally, they need to manage the class by accommodating specific needs in instruction and materials (Rasmitadila & Goldstein, 2017). In short, a general teacher's role is to plan, instruct, assess and evaluate the whole class, as well as the educational progress of all children.

In contrast, a special education teacher is a person that is trained to support special needs children, but can also support or advise the general teacher when it comes to challenging situations with any children in the classroom. According to Project IDEAL (2013), a special education teacher should provide support and instruction to children with special needs in order to promote participation in a regular classroom. Furthermore, Project IDEAL (2013) elaborates that these specialists create Individualized Educational Plans (IEP), collaborate and consult with the general teacher, and maintain contact with the parents of the special needs students. In addition, their responsibilities can be extended into more collaborative roles, as argued by Giangreco (2013); this can take the form of consulting or co-teaching. In summary, this means that a special education teachers main responsibility lays with the special needs students; they are responsible for the instruction and support of children with special needs.

In comparison, a teaching assistant aids the general teacher, when it comes to classroom management and instruction, but also provides some support to students if needed. They, "work with the teacher as a classroom team" (Inclusion BC, 2014, p. 39), though are often assigned to work with specific children, as it is stated by Inclusion BC (2014). Their responsibilities can vary greatly depending on the school, the curriculum, as well as the teachers they are paired with, meaning responsibilities may include behaviour management, classroom observation, collecting data and keeping record for the teacher (Groom & Rose, 2005).

Most teaching assistants work specifically with special needs children, as Groom and Rose (2005) state. Though their responsibilities can vary greatly, they mostly will be responsible for some clerical, personal care, social/behavioural support and supervision of students, as Giangreco (2013) expresses. They are also often seen to be improving the students' motivation, attention, and behaviour, according to Rasmitadila and Goldstein (2017). In short, this means that the teaching assistant occupies the role of an assistant with varying responsibilities, with the main focus on

supporting students in need of extra attention for various reasons, meaning not only special needs students, but all children that require some sort of support.

**Definition of Collaboration**

Collaboration in general describes a situation, in which two or more people work together to achieve a common goal. Hodkinson (2016) states that different services would plan together to reach a common goal and overcome issues that might occur. A comparable definition of collaboration is given by Mitchell (2014), as he defines it as a process, whereby a group of people with different areas of expertise combine their resources in order to find a solution to a problem over a period of time. In conclusion, this means that collaboration happens when multiple people work together in order to reach a common goal.

**Different Forms of Collaboration in Inclusive Education**

As previously noticed, collaboration in education can occur in many different forms, three of which are co-teaching, consulting, and partnerships. For this research collaboration is defined as the teamwork between general teachers, special education teachers and teaching assistants. Co-teaching is an educational model, which includes two or more professionals working together and co-instruct the students in one classroom. Co-teaching can be defined as, "the practice of pairing teachers together in a classroom to share the responsibilities of planning, instructing, and assessing students" (Trites, 2017). Previously Murawski (2008) mentioned that co-teaching would include two professionals, who would "co-plan, co-instruct and co-assess a diverse group of students" (Murawski, 2008), which aligns with Trites statement. Mastropieri and Scuggs (2006) claim that in co-teaching a general teacher and a special education teacher deliver instructions together in a mainstream classroom, where students with and without disabilities learn together. In summary, co-teaching is the collaboration between two or more professionals, general teachers, special education teachers, and teaching assistants, that share the responsibilities in one classroom.

Comparatively, consultation is a collaboration between multiple professionals, whereby one is advising the other. In an educational context this means that the special education teacher offers support and guidance on curriculum modifications to the general teacher (Mitchell, 2014). Additionally, Mitchell (2014) mentions that the participants meet outside of the lessons to discuss curricular, teaching, and assessment adaptations, whereby the special education teacher may provide additional materials and help to adapt the classroom environment. While they share planning duties, Mitchell (2014) explains that the main responsibilities still lie with the general teacher.

Similar to consultation are partnerships, which mostly occur between general teachers and teaching assistants. Mitchell (2014) states that hereby the main responsibility lies with the general teacher, while the teaching assistant helps planning and conducting the lesson, but mostly stays with students that need extra support, generally students with special needs. Mitchell (2014) also underlines that the teaching assistant should avoid making special education students dependent upon their support.

**Conclusion**

Good collaboration always depends on the attitude and willingness towards teamwork and the situation the collaboration is placed in, meaning the support received from the schools' leadership, the schools' policies, the atmosphere and the culture of the members. According to Mitchell (2014), collaboration is one of the most important factors in order for inclusive education to be successful; it is of vital importance that this is realized in every classroom. How effective different forms of collaboration really are in practice and how the different professionals chose to collaborate and what they expect, as well as how this affects the students and inclusive education, was uncovered by the fieldwork described in the Research Methods and Methodology section.

# Participants and Context

The fieldwork was conducted at an international school in South America in the early years department. The school facilitates both a primary and secondary department and is considered to be a large school, meaning it has over 2000 students enrolled. Even though it is designated as an international school, the majority, meaning over 50 percent, of the students are natives from the host country. Most students, who are not from the host country are from another South American country or come from families with mixed heritages, whereby one parent is from a South American country. The early years department follows an English immersion program with an enquiry-based learning philosophy. Each classroom has both a general teacher and a fully qualified and trained teaching assistant who is with the class at all times. They also have a special education department, with currently four teachers, to support students with disabilities.

The fieldwork of this research focuses on the teaching teams, consisting of a general teacher and a teaching assistant. As inclusive education is a part of the study as well, special education teachers have also been included. In the study a total of eight participants (four general teachers, two teaching assistants, and two special education teachers) took part and four classrooms with each 25 students and a teaching team have been observed. In addition, a part of this research is asking about how the children perceive the dynamics of the different types of collaboration inside the classroom, their perspective has been taken into consideration as well. This was done through the questionnaires, as well as through a part of the observation sheet (see Appendix 1 & 2).

In the following general teachers will be named *general teacher A, B, C, & D,* while teaching assistants will be called *teaching assistant F, & G* and special education teachers will follow by *special education teacher H, & J.*

# Research Methods and Methodology

This study is a qualitative research design that examines a specific school and therefore qualifies as a case study, to be more precise as an, "embedded single-case design" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018, p. 384). For a qualitative case study, it is required that the field work is conducted in a natural setting, such as a school environment; that humans are studied in some way, for example their behaviour; and the analysis for the data has to be inductive, as it is mentioned by Cohen et al. (2018). Furthermore, the researcher looks at this research through the lens of a future teacher. In conclusion, this research is a qualitative case study, which has been viewed from a future teacher's perspective.

As a consequence, for the chosen methodology the research includes literature research, as well as fieldwork in the form of questionnaires and observations. Questionnaires will be used to gather data from the general teachers, teaching assistants, and special education teachers, as they allow, as stated in *Research Methods in Education* (Cohen et al., 2018), standardized and open questions and are able to cover multiple topic areas. It ensures that the answers are comparable up to the highest possible extent. In contrast, observations have been conducted to investigate how well the perceptions match the reality in the classroom. Cohen et al. (2018) describe that observations add validity to the research itself, as in this case it compares the perception of teachers to the reality observed in real time by the researcher. Moreover, the observations are structured and based on the results of the questionnaires. As the observation sheets include observations of the children's perception it is ensured that all perspectives have been taken into account and the findings are valid.

The children's perception was gathered in two different ways: (1) within *Part 4: View on collaboration within the classroom* of the questionnaire (see Appendix 1), and (2) within the observations, as visible through *Part 1 – Children's perception*, *Part 4 – Behaviour management and classroom management*, as well as *Part 6 – Additional comments and observations* (see Appendix 2). Though the students have not given the answers themselves, taking into account what the participants think and how it was observed in the classroom by the researcher, provides a good insight on how children react to different forms of collaboration.

As a consequence of the chosen methodology and the chosen research question, the methods are closely liked and build up on each other. In Table 1, the connection between the methods and the sub questions are made visible.

Table 1
*Connection Between Methods and Sub Questions*

| Method \ Sub question | Question 1 | Question 2 | Question 3 | Question 4 | Question 5 | Question 6 | Question 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Literature review | X | X | X | X | X | | |
| Questionnaires | | | | X | X | | X |
| Observations | | | | | | X | X |

# Research Tools

The tools used for the fieldwork include, as described earlier, questionnaires as well as structured observations. Both will focus on collaboration between the three different professionals: general teachers, teaching assistants, and special education teachers, within inclusive classrooms. The questionnaire focusses on their own perception of collaboration and inclusion while the observations are conducted by the researcher, and therefore from her perspective, and also have a section about children's perception of inclusion and collaboration.

The questionnaires consisted of four parts: (1) roles and responsibilities in the classroom; (2) types of collaboration in the classroom; (3) view on inclusion; and (4) view on collaboration within the classroom (see Appendix 1). The first two parts were multiple choice, in the form of tables on the different topics, where each participant had to tick, depending on the table, whether something occurred or not, and/or to what extent. In contrast, parts three and four included closed as well as open questions, whereby the closed questions were only multiple-choice, but the follow up questions asked for elaboration and reasoning. Through this variety of questions and topics the participants provided the researcher with comparable data in a qualitative as well as in a quantitative way. With the open questions it was also more likely to find connections and different forms of reasoning, and therefore different perspectives on inclusion and collaboration.

The observations were conducted by the researcher in two separate forty-minute sessions. To guide and structure the observations and to make them as valid as possible, the researcher created an observation sheet with different kinds of questions, opened as well as closed, and included an open section for additional comments. The observation sheet is divided into six parts: (1) Children's perception, (2) Language, (3) Communication between the team members, (4) Behaviour management and Classroom management, (5) Visual roles and responsibilities, and (6) Additional comments and observations (see Appendix 2).

These tools were designed to ensure that all perspectives and topic areas were taken into account. As the observation sheets were based on the results of the questionnaires, they are directly connected and build upon each other, providing a unique set of data that looks at the same topic areas from different perspectives and through different lenses.

# Data Collection

As previously mentioned, there are three different ways in which data was gathered. First, the literature research, which focused on investigating the existing theory for inclusive education, as well as collaboration between educational professionals, specifically between general teachers, special education teachers, and teaching assistants. Second, the fieldwork, which was conducted at an international school in South America in form of questionnaires. These have been answered by general teachers, teaching assistants, and special education teachers. Third, also as a part of the triangulation, are observations which have been conducted in different classrooms by the researcher. These will be looking at the collaboration of the different professionals within the classroom, as well as at the children's perception of inclusion and collaboration. This triangulation ensures the validity, as it is mentioned by Cohen et al. (2018).

The questionnaires are aimed to collect data regarding the general and special education teachers' and teaching assistants' perception of collaboration, inclusion, and their roles and responsibilities in a classroom and in a team. Eight questionnaires were handed out to different participants. Furthermore, four classrooms were observed in two forty-minute sessions each. These were conducted by the researcher in a structured way, due to the use of observation sheets. This ensured that all different perspectives were covered appropriately. The completed questionnaires and observation sheets were collected by the end of the data collection.

# Analysis

The results of the questionnaires and observations were collected and analysed according to different codes, for example according to profession. This means analysing the responses of teaching assistants for example. Furthermore, the data was coded according to key factors mentioned in the research questions, such as *inclusive education*, *students' perception* and *types of collaboration*. From this coded data, trends, frequencies and differences in preferred types of collaboration and views on inclusion were identified. Some of the gathered and analysed data was converted into graphs to show the use of different forms of collaboration.

To achieve that, this research was analysed in a deductive, as well as inductive way, meaning that for deductive reasoning, it will be looked at facts and theory that is already existing to gather data, while for inductive reasoning it will be looked at the data in order to find general trends.

The process of coding began when all questionnaires were collected, as the observation sheets were based on the findings of the questionnaires. Even though some of the data was already coded, all data was analysed a second time for any new codes to emerge after all data was gathered and according to the previously mentioned codes to ensure no information was left out (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). Codes that have been important in this research are: *view on inclusion, types of collaboration, perception of collaboration,* and *teamwork skills*. All data was analysed using these codes, though the data analysis was not limited to those codes, meaning that different codes have been added as well.

# Description of Data/ Presentation of Results

**Roles and Responsibilities**

General teachers, teaching assistants, and special education teachers all have different roles and responsibilities, which was visible throughout the literature research, as it is mentioned by different researchers, such as Inclusion BC (2014), Project IDEAL (2013), and Giangreco (2013), as well as many more. This statement was reinforced by the fieldwork, due to the fact that the different participants rated their responsibilities and overall role in the classroom quite different depending on their profession (See *Figure 1*. Results: Roles and Responsibilities.). While teaching assistants and general teachers are mainly focusing on the progress of all students, the special education teachers state, that they are mostly focusing on individual children.
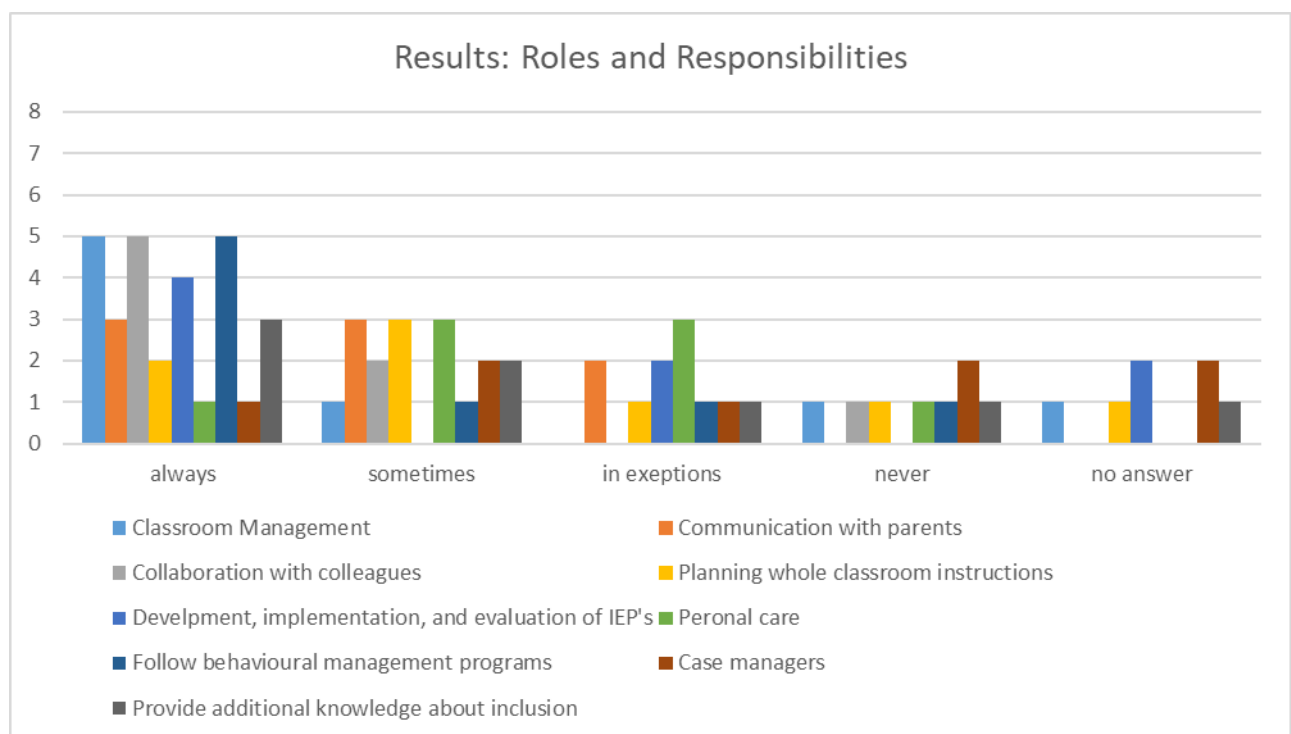


Figure 1

As shown in "*Figure 1*. Results: Roles and Responsibilities." five out of the eight participants in total, stated *collaboration with colleagues* was part of their role or responsibilities. Out of the other three participants two said, that *collaboration with colleagues* was sometimes part of their role and one said that it never is part of neither their role nor their responsibilities. This is an interesting finding as 100% of the participants said that collaboration was important (see Appendix 3), especially in an inclusive context. It shows quite a contrast between what is considered important and what the participants count to their responsibilities and whether or not something is part of their role.

Additionally, more interesting results appeared within the different professions, some examples are: *Personal care, communication with parents, Individualized Educational Plans (IEP),* and *providing whole classroom instructions*. This can be seen in Figures 2-5. Especially when it comes to the development, implementation, and evaluation of Individualized Educational Plan's the answers vary among general teachers between *always* and *in exceptions*, the same pattern occurs within the group of special education teachers. Another interesting development is, that teaching assistants have not answered this section at all.

As shown in "*Figure 2*. Individualized Educational Plan's." three out of four teachers would develop, implement, and evaluate IEP's and consider this their responsibility. In contrast teaching assistants did not answer this characteristic at all. This could be explained by their general role, which is according to the literature research, that they support the general teacher, but do not provide any accommodations or modifications for students with special needs (Inclusion BC, 2014). Special education teachers in the other hand had different opinions on to what extend this would be part of their role or responsibilities, as one said it to always be part of their role and one said this would only be the case in exceptions.
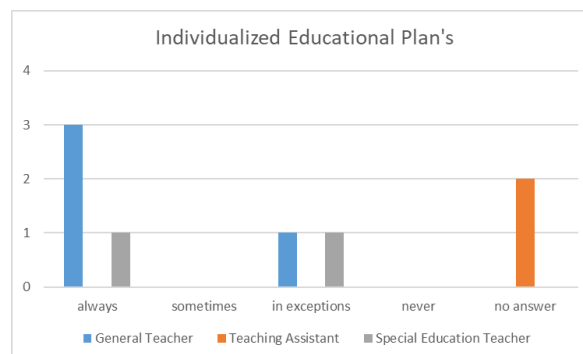


Figure 2

"*Figure 3*. Communication with parents." shows the answers of all participants regarding their opinion on whether or not *communication with parents* is part of their role or their responsibilities. It is visible that teachers generally see it as part of their profession to communicate with parents, while teaching assistants and special education teachers pend between *sometimes* and *in exceptions*. This may be explained by the fact that special educational teachers focus only on individual children and therefore would only communicate with the parents of those children. Teaching assistants may simply not always be in the position to communicate to parents about their student's process or academics. As this point was not further defined in the questionnaire the interpretations or perceptions of each participant may have differed.
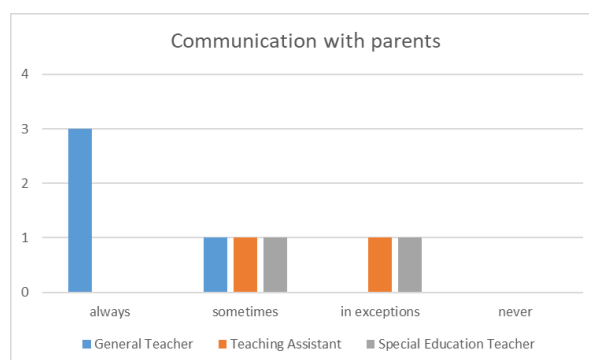


Figure 3

*Whole classroom instruction* as well as *Personal care* where mostly answered as expected after the literature research, as personal care (e.g. toileting, mobility, feeding, dressing) usually fall under the responsibilities of teaching assistants. It therefore was not surprising that they answered either with *always* or with *sometimes*. Significant was that the special education teachers did not see it as part of their role or responsibilities. This stood out, as *personal care* might affect students with special needs even more than regular students.
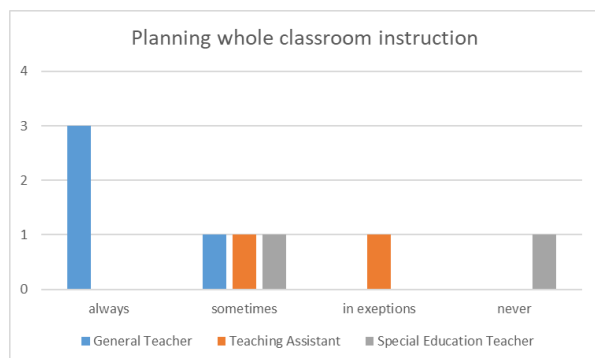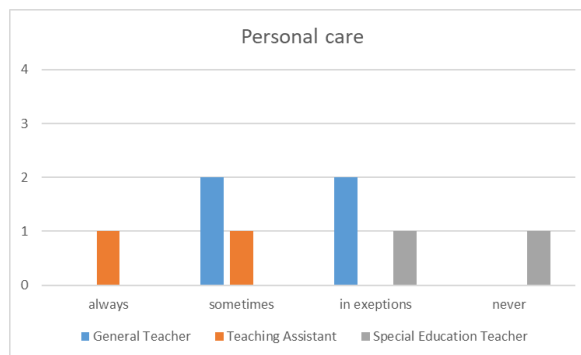


Figure 4



Figure 5

In comparison, results from the four observed classrooms were quite similar. In general, they only differed in smaller details, which provides clarity on how teaching teams generally work. These small differences also show the diversity between the different teams, as each member is unique, which automatically leads to differences between the teams. But overall it was clearly visible to the researcher that all participants had a similar idea on what their role and responsibilities were, depending on their profession. This has not only been observed, but was also shown by the answers in the questionnaires.

"*Figure 6*. Observations: Roles & Responsibilities." shows that most roles and responsibilities were quite similar in all four classrooms, only very few differences were observed, such as *leading small group activities* which has only been observed by a teaching assistant in one classroom. Comparatively constant communication with the other staff members inside the classroom was only observed in one classroom in one general teacher.
In contrast behaviour management has been carried out by all members of staff in all four classrooms. The indication of the special education teacher only doing this in two out of the four classrooms only came to show, as the special education teacher did not attend all lessons that have been observed.
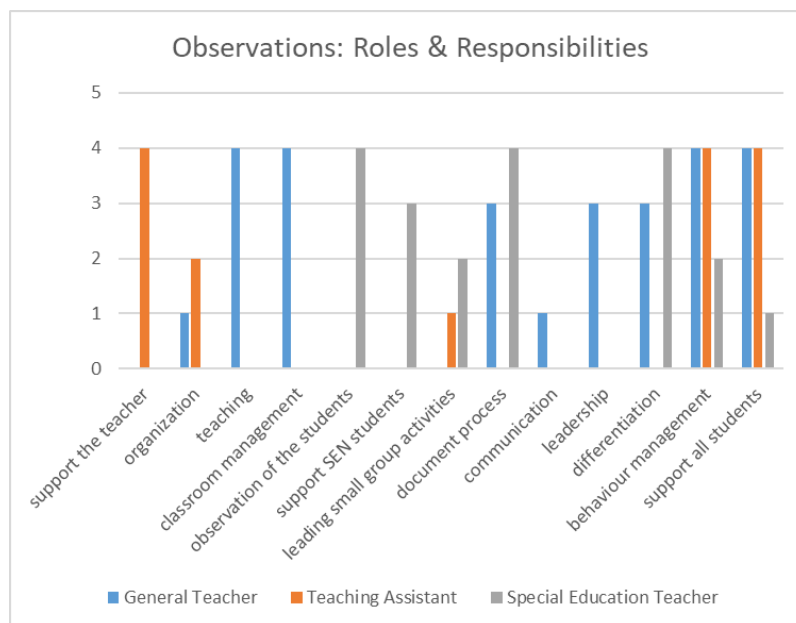


Figure 6

In conclusion both the results of the questionnaires and the results of the observation sheets showed a similar picture: though there are differences in how the participants perceive their roles and responsibilities in comparison to how they have been observed, they generally point in the same direction. General teachers, teaching assistants, and special education teachers all have a similar perception on what their role is and what their responsibilities in a classroom are and this has also been visible during the observations.

**Types of Collaboration**

The strategy of *one teaches, one assists* was the most common in the different classrooms, as 100 % of the participants agreed on that strategy, while on other types of collaboration, such as *station teaching*, their opinions would differ (see Table 2). Furthermore, the main responsibility would

always lie with the general teacher, which was also indicated by 100% of the participants no matter their profession. Within *one teaches, one assists* general teachers and teaching assistants agree that the role of the teaching assistant is to assist and support the teacher and the students in classroom activities.

In contrast strategies next to *one teaches, one assists*, whereby the teaching assistant or the special education teacher generally would always assist the general teacher, such as *one teaches, one observes, alternate teaching,* and *station teaching* would occur in the classrooms as well. This though, as shown in Table 2 would occur less frequently than the strategy of *one teaches, one assists.*

Table 2

*Occurrence of Different Types of Collaboration*

| Occurrence / Type of collaboration | Occurs total number of answers: 8 | Does not occur total number of answers: 8 | No answer total number of answers: 8 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **One teaches, one assists** | 100% | 0% | 0% |
| **One observes, one teaches** | 75% | 12,5% | 12,5% |
| **Parallel co-instruction (teaching the same thing at the same time to smaller but equally sized groups)** | 75% | 25% | 0% |
| **Alternate teaching (teaching the same thing to different sized groups)** | 75% | 25% | 0% |
| **Station teaching (teaching different content to smaller groups – comparable to station work)** | 87,5% | 12,5% | 0% |

The observations in the four different classrooms showed that communication was happening on a regular basis, especially between the general teacher and the teaching assistant, but also between the special education teacher and the general teacher or the teaching assistant, whenever this was needed. Generally, this communication was done within informal meetings between all three parties and happened whenever there was time or when it was needed.

Consequently, communication happened every day between the general teacher and the teaching assistant. Meanwhile special education teachers would communicate with the teacher in informal conversations but also through observation sheets on a regular basis as well, but less often than the general teacher would communicate with the teaching assistant. Communication between the special education teacher and the teaching assistant was observed in two out of the four classrooms, but was less frequent in comparison to the communication between other parties. Which was to be explained by the observation that the special education teacher would not attend all lessons, but just a few throughout the week, meaning time to communicate was limited.

In conclusion this shows that collaboration is happening in a quite similar way in the observed classrooms, and even though it may be done in different ways and forms, still all observed classrooms showed a similar pattern when it came to the form and frequency of communication among each other and their team members.

**View on Inclusion**

Inclusion was defined in a very similar way by all participants, no matter which role they have in the classroom. In their own words the participants agreed that inclusion was defined by being aware of differences in children and providing them with the opportunity to be taught in one classroom no matter their abilities and/or disabilities. Furthermore, the participants seemed to agree, that inclusion is important in education, as shown in "*Figure 7*. Do you believe inclusion is important in education?".

Do you believe inclusion is important in education?

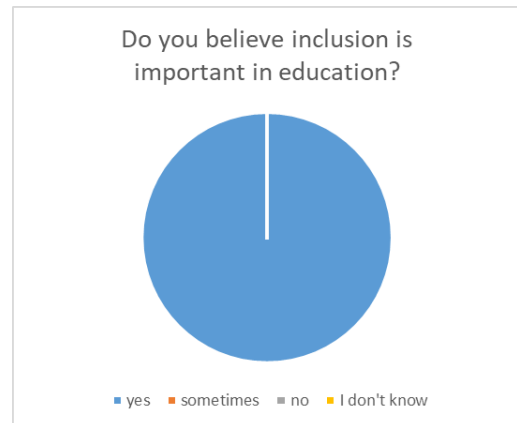yes    sometimes    no    I don't know

Figure 7

This strong statement was supported by different reasons on how it can benefit children and what was required in order for inclusion to be successful. General teacher A stated, that a teacher would need an "understanding of all children's needs. A good relationship with the class [and] being a good role model" in order for inclusion to work well.  Teaching assistant G agrees with this statement, as she mentions the importance of being a good role model for the children as well as to lead by example. Adding to both of those, special education teacher J states, that it is crucial to attend the individual needs of children, as they need to feel they are progressing as well.

Inclusion is a concept, which does not have one specific way in which it can or should be carried out, but rather is a concept that depends on many factors, such as the schools vision, the teachers' opinion on inclusion and many more. This also became visible by the great variety of responses in the questionnaires. General teachers highlighted different parts of inclusion than special education teacher and teaching assistants. It also was dependent on the individual's beliefs and experience, as their answers varied not only between the different professions but within one profession, such as general teachers.

General teachers A and B for example added that the environment and the activities within the classroom would have to be adapted in order to provided inclusion. Furthermore, the general teachers A and C, as well as teaching assistant G and special education teacher J agreed that children would need to learn to accept and respect differences among each other.

Special education teacher H also highlighted that all children should "have the right to education, opportunities, and treatment" as well as that it is important to have a positive attitude towards all children. This also aligns with the statements of general teacher A and teaching assistant G, which include that professionals need to role model behaviour and acceptance as well as respect to children.

As a last important point, general teacher C argues that "the school, the teachers, the admin staff, the helpers, everyone as a community needs to know that we become facilitators for all the needs of our students". General teacher B agrees with this. In conclusion this means, that it is not only important that professionals inside the classroom practice inclusion, but that all people within the schools' community will have to work together in an inclusive way in order to achieve true inclusion.

**View on collaboration within the classroom**

The topic collaboration seemed to be equally important to the participants, as 100% of them stated that collaboration within inclusion is crucial (see Appendix 3). Collaboration was mostly seen as something very positive, as it would provide a wider range of perspectives, ideas and expertise, as it was stated by the participants within the questionnaires. As an example, teacher B stated that different staff members are "supplying their special talents and resources". Furthermore, they could see the positive impact collaboration had on the students, as they felt more safe and comfortable inside the classroom.

Within the limits of this field work, communication, mutual respect and listening to each other were the key skills and most valued among the participants, as it is shown in "*Figure 8*. Collaboration Skills.". This part was not answered by all participant, meaning the graph only shows the data gathered from five participants (still each profession has at least one representative in this data), whereby the four skills, which were rated the highest by each participant were taken into account.
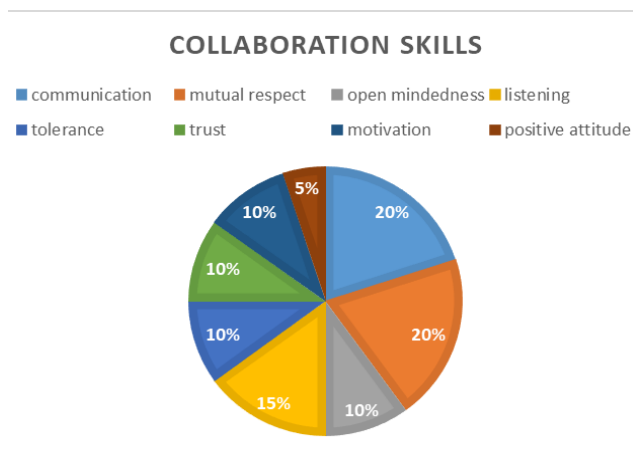


Figure 8

Regarding the kind of teaching team, they have been working in or are currently working in, it appeared that *partnerships* were the most common, as 62.5% of all participants stated that they have either worked or are currently working in a *teaching partnership*. The second most common was *co-teaching* with 50%. As all participants were asked to state in which kind of teaching team they have been working, two of the participants gave multiple answers, as they have been part of different teams at different schools and stages of their career. These differences also reflect on their personal views and believes as well as their current situation in their classroom teaching teams.

Another positive outcome was that 75% of all participants stated that they would like to be part of a teaching team (see "*Figure 9*. Would you like to be part of a teaching team?"). As they were also asked to elaborate their answer, it gave an insight on why they felt that way. Significant was, that even tough 12% answered with *maybe* and 13% answered with *no* their reasoning showed that they were not generally against teaching teams, but that they were saying that this would depend on the environment, the circumstances and the team members. Those who have answered positively, where mostly reasoning this with the
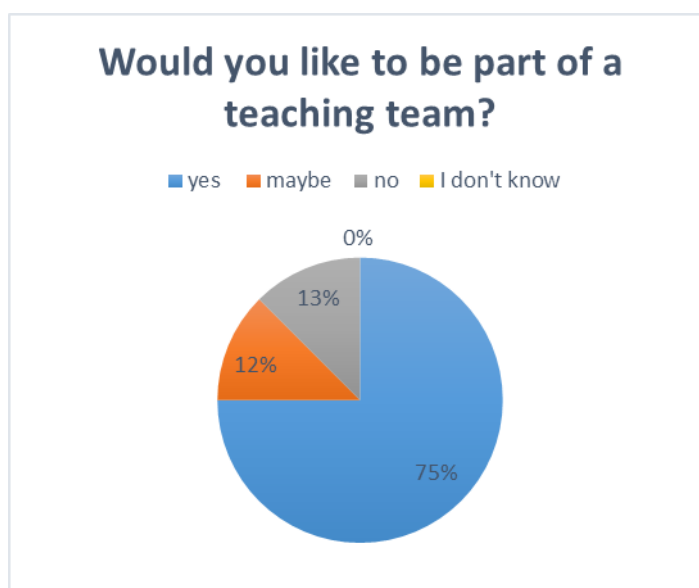


Figure 9

benefits of having different perspectives, knowledge, and ideas on discussion points. "[…] a dual dynamic could be complementary in the children's learning." (Special education teacher J). This statement can be reinforced by the reasoning of general teacher B ("better options for children.") and C ("can be beneficial in the long run for the children").

The questionnaire also asked about the participants' impression on how students would perceive their collaboration with staff members within the classroom and what kind of impact this had on them and their learning.

The children "feel supported and guided in many different ways" (special education teacher H), which can be explained by the fact that the students have two or more adults to turn to, when they have a question, a problem, or simply need support. This was also observed in the four different classrooms, as it was part of the observation sheet (see Appendix 1: *Observation sheet*).

Furthermore, the questionnaire showed that 87,5% of all participants said that collaboration within inclusive education would have a positive impact on the students, and only 12,5% said that this would depend, which was reasoned by stating that it always would depend on whether or not the collaboration was positive. The elaborations on why collaboration had a positive impact on students were quite extensive.

"They learn more, they feel more secure, they feel included, happier and part of the classroom (group)." (Special education teacher H). This statement alone shows how strongly the participants felt about this, as others, e.g. special education teacher J, general teacher A, and teaching assistant F gave similar reasons in their own words. General teacher C also added that the confidence of the students may increase and that they might engage easier.

How children perceived the different types of collaboration and the collaboration in general inside the classroom became quite clear during the observations. On major result was that children would feel equally comfortable around all staff members, which can be assumed, as most students, who needed support or had a problem of any kind, would simply approach the professional, that was available at that specific time. This showed that the children respected all staff members equally and trusted them.

Some exceptions have been observed as well, such as that students would during an ongoing lesson, approach the teaching assistant, if they had a problem, such as needing to go to the bathroom, or someone bothering them. This could be explained, by them knowing, that the teacher was busy explaining something and that they therefore chose to approach the teaching assistant instead, again this is simply an assumption and does not have to apply to all students.

Another interesting result of the observations was, that the students seemed not to care as much as predicted about the languages spoken by the staff members. Meaning that they did not necessarily only went to the teaching assistant, as they know that they would speak their mother tongue, but also would approach a teacher that did not speak their native language.

Though languages have been used in different ways in the four different classroom in the sense of who is using which language(s) and when this was appropriate, it could be observed that the children knew they would have to try and speak English, but they also seemed to know, that they would be heard and understood, no matter the language they were speaking in. Different team members that

are able to speak different languages made a difference, as children seemed calm and trusting and comfortable in the classroom. This was also mentioned in the questionnaires, as teaching assistant G also mentions, they feel connected to someone.

Furthermore, classroom rules may have been created by the general teacher, but would be reinforces by all members of the team. This way the students were listening to all members of the team equally and would not make a differences between them. This has been visible in all four classrooms, which have been observed.

In conclusion collaboration was seen as something positive and something that was highly valued. Even though collaboration would happen in many different ways, depending on the team members the general idea of teaching teams, seemed to be perceived by all participants in a similar way. This is also reflected in the observations carried out by the researcher.

Regarding the students' perception of collaboration, it can be stated, that according to the data gathered through the questionnaires and the observations, that children perceive it positively, as they feel visibly more comfortable and secure in the classroom. They seem to treat all staff members equally and trust and respect them generally. In conclusion, this shows that students perceive collaboration between different professionals as beneficial.

# Quality

The research focuses on the topic of collaboration within inclusive education from different perspectives. This includes questionnaires filled out by general teachers, teaching assistants, and special education teachers, as well as observations in four different classrooms. Both the questionnaire as well as the observation sheet include a sections, which is asking about the students' perception of collaboration between the different professionals within the classroom. As the observations build up upon the results of the questionnaires, the outcomes of the observations in combination with the results of the questionnaires validate the results of this study. The triangulation between literature research, questionnaires and observations ensures the validity of the outcomes, as Cohen et. al (2018) mention.

As this research is looking at the perception of people as well as their opinion, the gathered data had to be interpreted up to some extent, which can lead to a partially subjective outcome. In contrast, the use of the different methods and the various considered perspectives have added to the validity (Cohen et al., 2018).

Another struggle is that this research focused on one school in South America and therefore the findings are for that school only, even though the tools used can also be applied at other schools. This can also be seen as a strength, due to its "uniqueness" (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 270), which also adds to the reliability. By using structured questionnaires as well as structured observation sheets, which include the same questions for every participant and classroom, it has been easier to analyse and compare the results, which makes the study more reliable.

The study also includes both qualitative and quantitative parts, to ensure that not every question needs interpretation. Nevertheless, the tools used to conduct this research and the information discussed in the literature review can be used in every other school, which ensures that other researchers can continue with this work. The fact that sources from different countries and perspectives are used, strengthens the validity as well as the reliability. It shows that this is a relevant topic all over the world today.

# Ethics

As the data that has been gathered during the fieldwork has been very personal to some extent, it was important to ensure to the participants that everything is going to be transparent and anonymous. This means that every participant knows what will happen to their data as well as who will have access to the final product at all time, which is also stated by Cohen et al. (2018). This has happened through a consent form, through which the participants have been informed about what will be asked from them, what will happen to their data and about their right to withdraw.

Furthermore, the researcher has taken time to explain exactly what will be needed and all ethical guidelines and possible challenges, such as conflict of interest or cultural differences, in a joint meeting, before the data was collected. For contacting the researcher after that meeting, regarding possible questions or the request to withdraw, an e-mail address has been shared with all participants. Via this e-mail address the final thesis will be shared with the participants if they request that.

# Research Conclusion

**Q1 - What are the roles and responsibilities of teacher assistants, general teachers and special education teachers in an inclusive classroom?**

The literature research as well as the fieldwork have shown that the roles and responsibilities of the three different professions can vary, but in essence they are seen and carried out in a similar way. The role and responsibilities of a general teacher focus mainly on the entire class, meaning a general teacher is responsible for planning, delivering, evaluating, and differentiating lessons and activities, as Inclusion BC (2014) mention as well. A teaching assistant's responsibilities also focus on all children, but different from the general teacher, they are supposed to support the general teacher and provide support to students that may need it (Inclusion BC, 2014). Their responsibilities can vary greatly (Giangreco, 2013), as this always depends on the individual team. In contrast, special education teachers mainly focus in their role and responsibilities on students with special needs. They provide instruction for them, create Individualized Educational Plans (Project IDEAL, 2013), and supports and advices the general teacher.

The field work specifically has shown that the participants were able to reflect on their role and responsibilities depending on their profession, as well as on how these would impact their role within the teaching team. The study also showed that the participants understood what inclusion was and how different types of collaboration within inclusion might impact the children's learning. It was also visible that though generally the role and responsibilities would match not only among the participants, but also with the theory, that roles and responsibilities were nothing set, but rather something that would vary dependent on the different teams and dynamics within those.

**Q2 - How should an inclusive classroom look like?**

Inclusion is defined as an educational approach whereby students, no matter their disabilities, attend an age-appropriate class in a mainstream school, according to McManis (2017). In order for inclusion to work students with special needs need to be provided with support in the least restrictive environment (The Understood Team, n.d.). The results from the questionnaire have shown this as well, as participants mentioned that accommodations within the lessons might be needed, as well as a safe, accepting and welcoming environment.

**Q3 - What are the benefits and struggles of inclusive classrooms?**

According to The Understood Team (n.d.), McManis (2017), as well as the fieldwork of their research inclusion is beneficial for all students not only for those with special needs. Through the questionnaires it became clear that inclusion fosters understanding, empathy, awareness and acceptance towards diversity, which was also mentioned by Advocacy in Action (2016). In order for inclusion to work successfully a positive attitude towards inclusion is important. Furthermore, whether or not inclusion can be put into practice depends on the professional's personal values and whether or not they align with the idea of inclusion (Glazzard, 2011). This has also been mentioned by special education teacher J.

**Q4/5 - How can the different parties collaborate with each other to create an inclusive classroom?**

There are according to theory three main types of collaboration within the field of education: (1) co-teaching, (2) partnerships, and (3) consultation. Within these there are different ways in which those can be carried out: (1) one teaches, one assists, (2) one teaches, one observes, (3) parallel co-instruction, (4) Alternate teaching, and (5) station teaching. How these are carried out and to what extend would depend on the different teams, as it could be seen in the study. Partnerships were with 62,5% the most common, though co-teaching and consultations would occur as well. A similar pattern appeared on what team teaching style was the most common: while 100% of the participants said that one teaches, one assists was happening in the classroom, the other styles would occur as well but less frequently.

Furthermore, the participants in their questionnaires as well as when observed showed great understanding of their way of collaboration and good reflective skills on how the dynamics of their team worked and what their role and responsibilities in it were.

**Q6 - What effects does collaboration between the three parties have on the students?**

How students are affected or how they perceive the collaboration between the three parties depends on the individual child, though in this study only general trends have been gathered. The students within this fieldwork appeared to perceive the collaboration between different professional educators in the classroom as something common, something regular, as they have never experienced anything else.

It could be observed that children felt comfortable with all adults in the classroom equally, they respected, accepted, and listened to general teacher, teaching assistants, and special education teacher in the same way. Even though there might be slight differences between the individual children that could still be seen as a general trend.

The way students perceive collaboration also depends on the type of teaching team as well as on the style they chose to work in. Moreover, children are usually very perceptive when it comes to anything happening in their classroom (Tassoni, 2007). This also includes team dynamics as well as changes in their routine. Meaning, that children might not be able to pinpoint the differences between the teacher and the teaching assistant exactly, but they have a fair idea, on who is who. This could be observed, by the children's behaviour and whom they would turn to when it came to certain things. One example for this would be, that for strictly academic questions they would usually go to the general teacher.

Above all the children seemed to perceive collaboration between different professionals as something positive, which made them feel more comfortable and supported within their classroom and in the school in general.

**Q7 - How does collaboration between the three parties affect inclusion?**

As the school looked at in this study facilitates both, teaching teams, as well as inclusion, a connection between those was unavoidable. All classrooms were inclusive classrooms, facilitating one or more children that would need additional support and attention due to various reasons.

Inclusion generally was seen as something positive, as 100% of all participants declared in the questionnaire (see "*Figure 7*. Do you believe inclusion is important in education?"). It was also mentioned in the answered questionnaires that having multiple professionals in one classroom, would be beneficial, as students could be supported in a simpler way, in questions or problems.

Through collaboration acceptance, teamwork skills, and communication skills can be role modelled in a better way. According to the general teachers A and B it would be simpler to adapt activities and the environment in order to facilitate students with special needs as well as all others. Furthermore, teacher B added that not only the general teachers, teaching assistants, and the special education teacher would have to be a part of inclusion, but that the entire school community should be part of this.

In conclusion this means that collaboration and inclusion are two words that are hard to impossible to separate from each other, as they work hand in hand. Additionally, inclusion is nearly impossible to approach, when doing it all alone, as so many professionals, students, and parents are included in this process in any way.

**How do students perceive the different types of collaboration between general teachers, special education teachers and teaching assistants in an inclusive classroom?**

Coming back to the main research question it can be concluded that collaboration within inclusive education is perceived as something positive and beneficial by not only the general teachers, teaching assistants, and special education teachers, but also by the students themselves. Through observations, questionnaires and the literature research it became clear, that students appear more comfortable, feel more supported, and their learning increases. All this can be argued to be a result of successful collaboration and inclusion. As inclusion and collaboration are interconnected both have an impact on the students' behaviour and their learning. Though it must be stated that perception always is something personal and can only be generalized up to a certain point. Meaning, that some students might perceive collaboration within inclusion as something negative.

To answer the main question: students perceive the various types of collaboration within inclusion in many different ways, depending on the teaching team, their own personalities, and many more factors. Within this study it can be stated that the students perceive collaboration as something normal and as something that will help them develop, as it provides them with more opportunities to be heard and to solve their questions and problems before they become major issues. As far as it could be observed and after taking the general teachers, teaching assistants, and special education teachers views on children's perception into account, it can be stated that collaboration in inclusive education is perceived in a positive way.

# Discussion and Recommendations

When the topic and the study was first introduced to all staff members, the response was very positive towards taking part in the study and many general teachers, teaching assistants, and special education teachers agreed to take part in the study. However, less participants actually fulfilled this as originally anticipated, still participants from all three roles did complete questionnaires. Observations in contrast showed a different picture, as teacher, teaching assistants, and special education teachers were happy to let me observe their classes and showed interest in my findings.

Testing the questionnaire beforehand with some acquaintances who work in education meant the questionnaire was designed to gather the data needed in order to answer the research question. However, there were a few questions that had not been answered at all or not in the way anticipated by some or all participants. This could have maybe been avoided by reformulating the question asked or simply explaining in a bit more detail, what was asked from them.

The perspective of children, could have been covered in more detail, which was not possible in the amount of time and the children's limited level of English. It has been covered and in combination with the other results the perspective of the children was taken into account in an adequate way. Nonetheless, this could expend the study a bit more and would give it a different angle, which might be helpful in order to provide new teaching teams with an idea on how children will perceive and how they will react to teaching teams and therefore in what way this might be the most efficient.

As this research focusses on a specific school in South America, this research is only valid for this one unique context, but the tools used and the research results can serve as a starting point for schools all over the world. Meaning other researchers or even schools themselves could pick up the tools and the background literature research from this study and investigate their own school and teaching teams in order to find problems or improve their skills.

To provide a generalized answer, and therefore a more adequate guide on teaching teams, the study would need to be widened in the sense of including more international schools from all over the world, as teaching teams and the way they work might differ also depending on the culture the school is set in and the view on inclusion and the different countries. This could be a point taken into account when it comes to further research.

Overall this research has shown that collaboration in inclusion is not only working but something that can foster and enrich inclusion in many ways and that children as well as professionals benefit from it. Of course there is always more to learn and as this is looking at a specific, unique context there are limits to the research, but it covers a base and provides the specific school with not only an overview on how inclusion and collaboration are set in place, but also might give them an idea on how to improve or some more information about the background on inclusion and collaboration within it. Even though there are limitations to the results, different types of collaboration come with the very own benefits and struggles, but still hold many benefits for the students, which are not only about academics, but also for their social and emotional development and their well-being inside the classroom.

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# Appendix

**Appendix 1: Research Questionnaire (blank)**

# Research Questionnaire

Thank you for your time to help me with my research.

Name: _____

Which best describes your role at the school?
- ___ General Classroom Teacher
- ___ Special Education Teacher
- ___ Classroom Teaching Assistant

**Part 1: Roles and Responsibilities in a classroom**

Please fill out the following table. The table is about responsibilities within one classroom, please tick the boxes you find apply to yourself in a classroom.

| Characteristics | always | sometimes | In exceptions | never |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Classroom management | | | | |
| Providing accommodations and modifications | | | | |
| Communication with parents | | | | |
| Coordination and management of information from support personal (e.g., therapists, specialists) | | | | |
| Collaboration with colleagues | | | | |
| Supervise paraprofessionals | | | | |
| Planning instruction for whole class | | | | |
| Implementing goal and objectives of IEP's | | | | |
| Planning instruction for individual students | | | | |
| Development, implementation, and evaluation of IEP's | | | | |
| Adapting teaching style and activities to ensure success for all students | | | | |
| Know the children | | | | |
| Personal care (toileting, mobility, feeding, dressing, etc.) | | | | |
| Supervising the children | | | | |
| Assisting individual students and small groups | | | | |
| Follow behavioural management programs | | | | |
| Case managers | | | | |
| Provide information about students | | | | |
| Data collection and record keeping | | | | |
| Evaluating and reporting on students' progress | | | | |
| Provide additional knowledge about inclusion | | | | |
| Classroom observations | | | | |
| Complete and maintain all assigned students' records | | | | |

**Part 2: Types of collaboration in a classroom**

Please fill out the following table. The table is about characteristics of different forms of collaboration. Please tick the boxes with the characteristics you find in the collaboration in your classroom.

| Characteristics | Occurs | Does not Occur |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Distribution of responsibilities | | |
| Main responsibility lies with the classroom teacher | | |
| Responsibility for students is shared by two professionals | | |
| Responsibility for SEN students lie with the SEN teacher | | |
| Co-instruction | | |
| Assistance when it comes to classroom activities | | |
| Shared planning time | | |
| Shared responsibilities regarding adaption of the curriculum | | |
| Shared responsibilities in instruction | | |
| Shared responsibilities in assessing | | |
| One member offers guidance and support | | |
| Support for students with special needs: <br> If so, provided from whom: _____ | | |
| While teaching: | | |
| One teaches, one assists | | |
| One observes, one teaches | | |
| Parallel co-instructing (teaching the same thing at the same time to smaller but equally sized groups) | | |
| Alternate teaching (teaching the same thing to different sized groups) | | |
| Station teaching (teaching different content to smaller groups – comparable with station work) | | |

**Part 3: Views on Inclusion**

The following section holds questions regarding your view on inclusive education. Some questions will be closed questions to be answered by ticking a box, while others are open questions, which should be answered in full sentences if possible.

1. In your opinion: What is inclusion?

2. Do you believe that inclusion is important in education?

| Yes | | Sometimes | | No | | I Don't Know | |
|-----|-----|-----------|-----|-----|-----|--------------|-----|

3. Explain your answer to question 2 above.



4. What do you think a teacher needs to facilitate inclusion?



5. What is/would be your role in inclusive education?



6. How would you (start to) implement inclusive education?

**Part 4: View on collaboration within the classroom**

The following section holds questions regarding the view on collaboration in the classroom. Some questions will be closed questions to be answered by ticking a box, while others are open questions, which should be answered in full sentences if possible.

1. Do you think collaboration in inclusive education is important?

| Yes | | Sometimes | | No | | I Don't Know | |
|-----|--|-----------|--|----|--|--------------|--|

2. Explain your answer to question 1 above.

3. In order for collaboration to work, what skills does one need? Please rank the skills you include by their importance, with 1 being most important.

| Skills | Needed |
|--------|--------|
| Communication | |
| Mutual respect | |
| Listening | |
| Open mindedness | |
| Tolerance | |
| Trust | |
| Motivation | |
| Consideration | |
| Positive attitude | |
| Acknowledging input | |
| Other skills you feel are needed: | |

4. What do you expect from your team member(s) when collaborating in a classroom?

General Teacher:

Special Education Teacher:

Teaching assistant:

5. How well do you think you are collaborating with colleagues?

| Very Well | | Good | | Okay | | Not Well | | I Don't Know | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

6. In what area of collaboration would you personally like to improve and why?

7. Have you ever been in a teaching team?

| Yes | | No | | I Don't Know | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

If yes, in which one:

| Teaching team | Yes |
|---|---|
| Co-teaching (two teachers that work together in one class as equals) | |
| Consulting (one advises the other) | |
| Partnerships (one supports the other) | |
| Other (explain): | |

8. Do you think teaching teams are useful in inclusive education?

| Yes | | Depends | | No | | I Don't Know | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

9. If you could, would you like to be part of a teaching team?

| Yes | | Maybe | | No | | I Don't Know | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Reason:

10. Does collaboration between professionals (teachers, teaching assistants, specialists, etc.) have an impact on the students?

| Yes | | Depends | | No | | I Don't Know | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

11. Explain your answer to number 10 above.

12. What kind of impact does it have on the students? Give a reason for your choice.

| Positive | | Negative | | Depends | | None at All | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Reason:

**Appendix 2: Observation sheet (blank)**

# <u>Observation sheet</u>

*Observations regarding the teaching teams in different classrooms throughout the Kinder team.*

Class: _____

Teacher name: _____

TA name: _____

SEN name: _____

---

**<u>Part 1 – Children's perception</u>**

**To whom do the children go to, when…**

… they have an academic question: _____

… they need help with their schoolwork: _____

… they need help with general stuff, such as tying shoelaces, opening boxes during lunch/snack time: _____

… they have a problem: _____

… they want something extra to play with: _____

… they are hurt: _____

**<u>Part 2 - Language</u>**

**What language(s) does the staff speak?** – TA_____

Teacher _____

SEN _____

**Do the children go to the person speaking their preferred language?**

Yes O          No O

**<u>Part 3 - Communication between the members:</u>**

**Do the different members communicate with each other?**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| TA & teacher | Yes O | No O |
| TA & SEN | Yes O | No O |
| Teacher & SEN | Yes O | No O |

**How does that happen?**

Formal meetings, informal meetings, planning meetings, short conferences, through observation sheets, informal conversations,

In another way: _____

**How often does that happen?**

every day, whenever there is time, once a week, every second week, after school, in between lessons, during lessons (while children work)

At another time: _____


**Part 4 - Behaviour management and Classroom management:**

**Who sets the rule?** _____

**Who reinforces them?** _____

**Do the children listen to the** … - TA?        Yes O         No O

                                                     SEN?        Yes O         No O

                                                     Teacher?    Yes O         No O


**Part 5 - Visual roles and responsibilities:**

**Visual roles:** (when working together in one classroom)

The TA does: _____
_____

The teacher does: _____
_____

The SEN does: _____
_____


**Visual responsibilities:** (when working together in one classroom)

The TA does: _____
_____

The teacher does: _____
_____

The SEN does: _____
_____

## Part 6 – Additional comments and observations

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

**Appendix 3: Figure 10 - Do you think collaboration in inclusive education is important?**

## Do you think collaboration in inclusive education is important?

yes   somtimes   no   I don't know