The Perception of British Columbia’s Classroom Teachers and Educational Assistants on Consultation and Collaboration - A mixed Methods Study

By

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Inclusive education has seen many changes in the past decade and Educational Assistant (EA) numbers have dramatically increased in order to serve special education students within the classroom. EAs play a vital role in assisting these diverse students in achieving academic success. The relationship between the EAs and Classroom Teachers (CTs) is key. The principal purpose for this study is to examine how CTs and EAs perceive and describe their experiences with consultation and collaboration in British Columbia. Both quantitative and qualitative data collected through an online survey is analyzed using a mixed methods research design. Based on the analysis, both CTs and EAs have a different understanding of consultation and collaboration, both find that there is not enough time to meet during regular school hours, they do not have adequate training in how to work together effectively, and for the most part EAs are under-utilized.
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Dedication

For the Bahá’í Youth of Iran, who are persecuted in school and are refused admittance to institutions of higher education, due to their beliefs. May they continue to overcome the prejudices and injustices with the patience and perseverance they exemplify each and every day.
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Chapter 1

“Take ye counsel together in all matters, inasmuch as consultation is the lamp of guidance which leadeth the way, and is the bestower of understanding.” Bahá’u’lláh

Definition of terms:
Several key terms are used throughout this research thesis. There are many possible definitions for each of these terms and scholars in education and the social sciences continue to debate them. As a result, the definitions chosen were ones that were felt the most accurate for this paper.

Collaboration: “A style for direct interaction between at least two co-equal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision making as they work toward a common goal” (Friend & Cook, 2003, p. 5).

Consultation: A discussion between two or more individuals, which welcomes diverse perspectives, opinions and approaches in a candid, dispassionate, sincere, and loving approach in an effort to reach consensus (“Spaces of Consultation”, 2015).

Cooperation: Cooperation is a process in which activities are mutually agreeable to all parties involved, but it is not necessarily designed for their mutual benefit (Hord, 1986)

Classroom Teacher (CT): Refers to a qualified professional with a teaching certificate to teach in an area of the general curriculum in a K-12 setting “responsible for designing, supervising and assessing” their students’ educational program (BC Special education manual, 2013, p. 9).

Educational Assistant (EA)- An individual trained to assist a certificated or licensed teacher in the K–12 setting (Sullivan, 2009) to support students with special needs “from personal care to assisting the teacher with instructional programs” (BC Special education manual, 2013, p. 10).

Inclusive Classrooms- Inclusion in the classroom is the creation of a setting in which “all students are entitled to equitable access to learning, achievement and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their education” and where students are not just integrated but fully interacting with other students (BC Special education manual, 2013, p. V).
Introduction

One of the visible and important partners in special education is the educational assistant (EA) (Devlin, 2008). They “are indispensable members of the special education team and can give significant support to the classroom teacher (CT) and to students with special needs,” (Keller et al., 2007, p. 23). In recent years, the number of EAs has increased dramatically (Causton-Theoharis & Malgren, 2005; Villa & Thousand, 2003, Giangreco et al., 2010). They have been called educational assistants, teaching assistants (TA), learning support assistants, special education assistants (SEA), and paraprofessionals, in different school districts. The general term used in British Columbia (B.C.) today is ‘educational assistant’ (EA), and this is the term that will be used for the purpose of this research paper.

The review of extant literature describes common core EA responsibilities to exceptional students as providing academic assistance, supporting functional skill development, implementing behavioral intervention plans, facilitating communication and social interactions, collecting data, providing assistance with personal care, and doing routine clerical support (Downing et al., 2000; French & Pickett, 1997; Giangreco et al., 2001a, BCTF/Cupe, 2009). The EA role has changed significantly over the years and most have gone from working in learning resource rooms to working in general classroom settings (Villa & Thousand, 2003). This change was important for students with special needs as they could be integrated into classrooms and supports could be provided within the classroom rather than being removed and isolated from their peers (Villa & Thousand, 2003). Giangreco et al. (2001a) also noted that EAs might be put in situations where they overextend the boundaries of their roles "because too often professionals have failed to provide the plans, training, and support that is needed” (p. 494). This may indicate that there is a lack of communication between CTs and EAs.

EAs and CTs have a very important relationship. They are partners in ensuring that they meet the needs of their students. However, researchers suggest that effective service delivery does not just require a certain number of people, but requires both people with the appropriate skills and adequate time provided for them to work together and directly with students (Giangreco et al., 2013).

Educational team members can work together in a variety of ways, often described as collaborative or consultative. Some researchers believe that consultation is a process of exchanging thoughts and information, identifying issues, seeking advice and hearing views and opinions from an expert (Amering et al., 2009; Erchul & Martens,
Students learn best when CTs, administrators, EAs and other members of the team work together, sharing their diversity of knowledge and expertise to help students with their educational program. If all members of the team are in agreement about the implementation of a program for a student, differentiated tasks can be allocated to individuals with a variety of skills. Reports from throughout the United States’ school districts identify collaboration as a key variable in the successful implementation of inclusive education (Villa & Thousand, 2003, p. 22), yet it seems that schools are generally cooperative rather than collaborative in nature (Welsh, 1998, p. 121). Moreover, schools that have been identified as collaborative have greater success with students than traditional schools where teachers tend to be isolated (Cook & Friend, 2010, p. 4).

**Statement of Problem**

British Columbia’s Special Education policy manual (2013) describes collaborative consultation as:

“... a process in which people work together to solve a problem or address a common concern. A successful collaborative process is characterized by the following features: it is voluntary; there is mutual trust and open communication among the people involved; identification/clarification of the problem to be addressed is a shared task; the goal is shared by all participants; each participants’ contribution is valued equally; all participants’ skills are employed in identifying and selecting problem-solving strategies; and there is shared responsibility for the program or strategy initiated (p. V).”

This is a fairly thorough definition. However, according to Erchul and Sheridan (2008), a universally accepted definition of consultation does not exist. Some researchers have developed models of consultation and collaboration, which will be further explored in chapter two. As a result, there are a variety of definitions of the word, which make it hard to practice.

Throughout B.C.’s policy manual, there are many suggestions with regard to consultation and collaboration. It is worthwhile considering their implementation through the lens of research on the topic. In fact, according to Gravois (2012), “the greatest challenge facing the effective use of consultation service in schools is consensus as to what is and what is not consultation” (p. 84). He also suggests the implementation of “in-
service opportunities to support staff development to promote effective consultative models, school-based team and inter-ministerial collaboration” (p. 21). Waldron and McLeskey (2010) suggest, “a critical aspect of increasing capacity is improving the skills of professionals to meet student needs through professional development” (p. 61). They also go on to say, “schools that have a collaborative culture require a different type of leadership and decision making than traditional schools” (p. 65). They noted that the decision-making emerges from collaborative dialogues between many individuals. Even though collaborative consultation is suggested by the BC policy manual, it “is largely an add-on service provided if time permits, and if the given professional values it” (Gravois, 2012, p. 83).

The BCTF/CUPE document on the roles and responsibilities of teachers and teacher assistants and educational assistants (2009) contains a single line in the entire document where it indicates that the teacher and TA/EA “set consultative meeting times (p. 7)”. It does not give any details as to how to do this. According to Dettmer et al. (2013), most CTs and EAs have not had formal training in collaborative consultation. As a result, the relationship is hindered due to lack of communication and inadequate planning time or clear job descriptions.

Internationally, The Netherlands, Singapore, and Sweden have required at least 100 hours per year towards CT collaboration (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2007). Every three years, South Korean CTs are mandated to take teacher collaboration classes for 90 hours. Also, after three years on the job, South Korean CTs can obtain an advanced certificate and a salary increase when they have successfully completed a government approved collaborative program, which takes five weeks to complete (Hong & Kang, 2008). Another factor is that in-class teaching time is only 35% of the total teacher working time as opposed to 80% in North America, which could be used to prepare as well as attend meetings. During out of class time, the CTs work in a shared office space, which increases collaboration time. All of the above have partially contributed to job satisfaction, confidence and high student academic achievements (Hong & Kang, 2008).

Impact on Students

Inclusive education has seen many changes in the past thirty years. Before the 1950s, all disabled children were segregated. In fact the medical profession determined the type of education they received. By the mid-seventies when Individuals
with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was introduced, the law was first interpreted to mean that students with mild disabilities could be mainstreamed into general education classrooms with as little support as possible. Eventually students with more moderate to severe disabilities were integrated in late eighties, and support services became part of the classroom scene as supposed to removing students and the interpretation evolved to the approach known today as inclusion (Villa and Thousand, 2003).

According to UNESCO (2005) collaboration among educators facilitates inclusion. As schools become more inclusive learning communities, the relationship between CTs, EAs and other specialists is of utmost importance. Villa and Thousand (2003) believe that one way to promote inclusion is through collaboration. They noted that “…educators must become effective and efficient collaborative team members; they must develop skills in creativity, collaborative teaming processes, co-teaching, and interpersonal communication” in order to meet the needs of all diverse learners (p.22). In a study done by Goddard and O’Brien (2004), teacher collaboration had positive effects on student achievement in Mathematics and Reading. Fine (2010) espoused schools that are collaborative have higher teacher and student morale than other schools. In order for students to attain their potential, the students need a successful team of teachers teaching with a positive attitude and enthusiasm (Brown & Knowles, 2007).

Rationale & Significance

Many of the studies on collaboration and consultation have focused on the relationship between CTs and special educators (Van Garderen et al., 2012, Jimenez & Graf, 2008). As EAs have become an important partner in general education settings, their part in this process requires further exploration and understanding. This study will explore collaboration and consultation between teachers and EAs in B.C. schools. The results may help CT education programs and EA certificate programs to train CTs and EAs in developing effective communication skills and working collaboratively together, resulting in better education for all students.

This study is of significance due to the current scarcity of Canadian research concerning CTs’ and EAs’ experiences with respect to collaboration and consultation. The knowledge created will benefit education programs in developing appropriate pedagogical curricula on training CTs and EAs to be able to work in a collaborative environment. It also examines the need for CTs and EAs to receive professional learning opportunities in order to increase their understanding of their roles and responsibilities in
schools in B.C., which ultimately results in more appropriate educational programming for students with special needs. The issues raised may also help governing bodies in providing adequate resources to establish and maintain these relationships.

Research Questions & Method

The following question will be the focus of this study:

**What are the perceptions of CTs and EAs regarding collaboration and consultation within B.C. schools?**

Other supplementary questions that will be addressed are:

- Is there consultation and collaboration taking place amongst CTs and EAs in B.C.?
- What are the issues and what types of support are needed to create a consultative/collaborative relationship amongst CTs and EAs?
- Are EAs utilized effectively as respected members of collaborative teams?

Purpose

The principal purpose for this research is to examine how CTs and EAs perceive and describe their experiences with consultation and collaboration. As a result, a convergent parallel mixed research design was used. A mixed methods research design is a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and “mixing” both quantitative and qualitative research and methods in a single study to understand a research problem (Creswell, 2008). The reason this method was chosen was because when both quantitative and qualitative data are used together, it provides a better understanding of the research problem than either type by itself. This research was conducted through an online survey with both closed and open-ended questions open to CTs and EAs throughout B.C. Recruitment of individuals was conducted through contact and poster distribution to principals of each school in BC. In addition, recruitment was managed through the researcher's personal profile on Facebook and Twitter social media sites, the BCTF open forums, personal emails and word of mouth. As well, the BC Teachers page on Facebook and CUPE BC advertised on their online website.

Philosophical Assumptions

Philosophical assumptions in mixed methods research consist of a basic set of beliefs or assumptions that guide inquirers. Creswell and Planko Clark (2011), describe these assumptions as worldview or paradigms. This study was drawn from a pragmatic
stance. Pragmatism “draws on many ideas”... “using diverse approaches, and valuing both objective and subjective knowledge” (Creswell and Planko Clark, 2011, p. 43). Open and closed survey questions explored opinions, attitudes, and trends. They provided multiple perspectives and therefore, a convergent parallel design gave a broad understanding of the research.
Chapter 2

“The shining spark of truth cometh forth only after the clash of differing opinions.” ‘Abdul-Bahá

Literature Review

Description of the Field

There are a number of school consultation service models that have been developed (Erchul & Sheridan, 2008, Collins & O’Brien, 2011). This chapter will focus on seven models of school consultation that have more empirical data than other models as determined by my review of the literature. Next, the historical development of EAs within Canada and United States will be examined. In the third section, a review of the literature pertaining to research in the area of consultation and collaboration between CTs and EAs will be examined. This chapter concludes with a description of gaps in the literature related to the current study.

Caplan’s Model of Mental Health Consultation (MHC)

Background

The concepts and methods of mental health consultation began with Gerald Caplan in the late 1940s. Caplan was in charge of providing psychological and educational services to a large number of immigrant children in Israel. Since Caplan and his small team could not provide direct services to such a great population, they consulted with the teachers at the children’s schools. Caplan and his team shared information regarding mental health with the CTs and this increased their ability to provide services to the children. As a result, this reduced the number of direct services Caplan and his team needed to provide and more of the children’s needs were met (Caplan et al., 1994).

The Model

Caplan’s model looks at consultation between two professionals, the consultant (the specialist) and the consultee (the one seeking help) through prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation of mental disorders. The professional responsibility of the client remains with the consultee. The consultant may offer their expertise but is not responsible for the outcome of the case(s). The consultee may accept or reject the consultant’s suggestions because there is no hierarchical relationship between them (Caplan, 1995).
Caplan differentiates between four types of MHC. They are (a) Client-Centered Case Consultation, (b) Consultee-Centered Case Consultation, (c) Program-centered Administrative Consultation, and (d) Consultee-Centered Administrative Consultation. The first type deals with how the consultee manages his/her client(s). The consultant directly assesses the client(s) and provides information to the consultee so that he/she can effectively deal with his/her client(s). The second type, Consultee-Centered Case Consultation, also focuses on the consultee’s management of his/her client(s), but the focus is on increasing the consultee’s skills by focusing on the difficulties he/she is experiencing with his/her client(s). In the third type of MHC, Program-Centered Administrative Consultation, the consultant makes recommendations regarding program development and administrative concerns to the employing agency. The last type of consultation, Consultee-Centered Administrative Consultation, is similar to Program-Centered Administrative Consultation, but concentrates on improving the effectiveness of the consultee rather than addressing the program’s concerns at large (Caplan et al., 1994; Caplan, 1995). Caplan’s model of mental health consultation has not been used widely in schools because of its psychodynamic approach, lack of specificity, and limited empirical support (Erchul & Martens, 2002).

Bergan and Kratochwill’s Model of Behavioural Consultation (BC)

Behavioural consultation is based on the premise that the consultant’s knowledge and application of learning theory will help the consultee solve current problems as well as prevent future problems. In this model, principles of behaviour analysis guide the consultant through the problem solving and intervention process. The model uses a four-stage problem solving process aimed at producing clearly specified changes in the behaviour of the client/child. The first stage, problem identification, involves the specification of the problem to be solved during consultation. The second stage of consultation is problem analysis. A problem analysis interview (PAI) is conducted and variables that may facilitate the problem are identified, and a plan is developed to solve the problem. The third stage of the consultative process is plan implementation. During this stage, the consultant determines whether the consultee is implementing the intervention as intended. The final stage of consultation is plan evaluation. If the treatment is unsuccessful, then the consultant cycles back to the problem analysis stage (Kratochwill & Bergan, 1990). According to Erchul & Martens, (2002), “behaviour analytic
approaches to instruction and management are effective, empirically validated, and uniquely suited for use by school personnel” (p. 100).

Although the Bergan and Kratochwill model has served as a foundation for the development of behavioural consultation, other behavioural consultation models have been proposed and two models will be briefly reviewed.

*Watson and Robinson’s Model of Direct Behavioural Consultation*

The process of direct behavioural consultation is similar to traditional behavioural consultation in that the same four stage problem-solving process is used. The differences appear in the role of the consultant and consultee at each of the four sequential stages. For example, during problem identification the consultee not only meets with the consultant to describe the behaviour of the client, but in addition, the consultant directly observes the client. Direct observation of the client allows the consultant to form hypotheses about the function of the behaviour, model accurate problem identification and data collection, and plan a functional analysis for the next stage of consultation (Watson & Robinson 1996). Direct behavioural consultation not only provides verbal assistance to the consultee at each of the four stages, but it also models and gives feedback as well.

*Sheridan’s Model of Conjoint Behavioural Consultation (CBC)*

Conjoint behavioural consultation is based on systems theory, ecological theory, and Bergan and Kratochwill’s traditional four-stage model of behavioural consultation. CBC considers the broader context in which behaviour occurs. It engages the parent and CT in a collaborative problem-solving process with the assistance of a consultant. Some unique features of CBC consist of enhancing the home-school relationship, empowering parents to partake in the problem-solving process, and creating consistency across settings (Wilkinson, 2006).

*Rosenfield’s Instructional Consultation Model (IC)*

The goal of instructional consultation is to help CTs modify their instructional behaviour and to create a more effective learning environment for students. The instructional consultative process includes the following five sequential steps: (a) establishing a collaborative relationship between the consultant and the consultee; (b) problem identification and analysis; (c) planning instructional interventions to address
learning and behaviour problems (d) implementation of the intervention, and (e) termination. IC teams are composed of both a case management and a team structure. Although IC teams involve a multidisciplinary school team, the consultation process itself begins between a CT and a consultant (case manager). The relationship is non-hierarchical, where both individuals work together to resolve a problem (Rosenfield, 2008).

**Erchul and Martens’ Integrated Model of School Consultation**

The integrated model of school consultation is based on the behavioural consultation model as well as the mental health consultation model. It also incorporates relational communication research and the principles of social power and influence from social psychological literature. It defines school consultation as a process for providing psychological and educational services in which a specialist (consultant) works cooperatively with a caregiver (consultee) to improve the learning and adjustment of a student (client) or group of students. During face-to-face interactions, the consultant helps the consultee through the mechanisms of systematic problem solving, social influence, and professional support. In turn, the consultee helps the client through selecting and implementing effective school-based interventions. In all cases, school consultation serves a remedial function and has the potential to serve a preventive function (Erchul & Martens, 2002).

Based on all of these six consultation models, the integrated model seems to be the best fit for school consultation because it incorporates the strengths of many models into one. However, there are some drawbacks to these models. The above consultation models rely heavily on the consultant as an expert. Schulte and Osbourne (2003) highlight three interrelated problems to the above models. First, they do not include consultee input. Second, the models put the consultee in a subordinate position. Finally, since the consultant is not involved in implementing changes, there may be misunderstandings of how to apply the consultant’s recommendations. There is one model that seems to address some of these issues, *The Collaborative Consultation Model*.

**The Collaborative Consultation Model (CC)**

Developed by Idol, Paolucci-Whitcomb & Nevin (1995), CC represents a significant shift in thinking that there is one sole expert in an interaction. In collaborative
consultation, all individuals have expertise in some area and therefore have valuable contributions to make to the problem-solving process. In reading the literature on collaborative consultation, one can see, that its purpose can be broader than that of problem solving. Bos and Vaughn (2002) see collaborative consultation as a way to make the curriculum more accessible for all students. The underlying assumption about collaborative consultation is that CTs will learn from the interactions and put what they have learned into practice in the classroom (Brownell et al., 2006). For such a model to be successful, Idol et al. (1995) suggest participants to have active listening skills, effective oral and written communication, positive nonverbal language, and well-developed structures for conflict resolution.

The researcher feels that the CC model fits well with the CT and EA relationship as both can contribute valuable input to the consultative process, and play a central role, while reflecting upon their own experiences with students.

**EAs Historical background - beyond Canada**

EAs have worked as far back as the early 1900s in education and human service programs. However, it was not until the mid-1950s that their value was recognized in the United States. In the 1950s, after World War II, there were teacher shortages, which led the school boards to hire EAs for clerical purposes, which freed up the teacher’s time for direct instruction. In fact, in the late 1950s, an investigation was done to examine the responsibilities of EAs in special education. It was found that the primary responsibilities reported in each of the settings included non-instructional tasks (e.g., playground supervision, housekeeping tasks in the classroom, material preparation, and record-keeping). In the 1960s, events such as the civil rights and women’s rights movements, led to expanded programs across education and human services (Wallace, 2003). The EA’s role was also defined by the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 (Talley & Schrag, 1999), the Scheurer Amendment of 1966, and the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, which authorized the development of new careers for the traditionally undereducated underclass in economically distressed communities. As well, the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 opened the door to the hiring of more EAs to address a shortage of bilingual teachers (Lewis, 2004).

In 1973, the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) provided school districts monetary funds to train economically disadvantaged, unemployed, and underemployed persons in an area that would lead to professional growth. There was
also the ratification of PL 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (currently known as the Individual with Disabilities Education Improvement Act or IDEIA) that increased the demand for more instructional aides so that students with disabilities could have individualized services (Lewis, 2004, Talley & Schrag, 1999). Over the past thirty years, the role of EAs has continued to evolve.

Special Education Historical context - within Canada

The history of special education in Canada is very similar to that of the U.S., but with some significant differences. Education in Canada is not federally mandated. Every province is responsible for the way they make educational decisions. However, there are some federal events that influenced the evolution of special education in British Columbia.

The first was an educational report that was released in the late 1960s called “Living and Learning”. The report provided a strong endorsement of the right to a free public education for all children and the right for parents to choose the kind of education their child would receive. Another report from a large-scale study completed at the same time titled, “One Million Children”, concluded that 12% of the school population in Canada (1 million students) had special needs and the majority was not receiving services. The report recommended integration, free public education as well as instruction based on learning needs rather than exceptionality (Boyczuk et al, 2000). Another influential report in the early 1970s was the standards for education of exceptional children in Canada (SEECC). It highlighted the collaborative role of consultants, resource teachers and CTs (Winzer, 1993). The SEECC led to the development of special education courses in teacher education programs at many universities across Canada (Boyczuk et al, 2000). The next great implication for Special education was the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982), enacted in 1985. The charter under section 15 (1) states:

Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability (Constitution Act, 1982).

All of the aforementioned have had a great impact on the provinces to provide services to students with special needs.
**EA trends in British Columbia**

In British Columbia, there is a trend toward an increased number of EAs. From 1990 to 1999, the number of educational assistants increased from 1630 to 6508 (Siegel & Ladyman, 2000). In 2005, it had more than doubled to 12748 and in 2013, it had escalated to 20368 (Siegel & Ladyman, 2000); an increase of more than one order of magnitude. According to the B.C. Government Newsroom, approximately one in three classes have an assigned educational assistant (2014). As a result of this increase, it becomes even more important that attention is directed to how CTs and EAs work together effectively to support the needs of students with exceptionalities/learning needs.

**Research In Consultation and Collaboration**

In one study, Giangreco and Broer (2005) found that special educators and EAs spent about 7% of their time communicating and collaborating about the needs of students with disabilities and how to differentiate instruction for these students. These authors estimated the rate of communication to be as low as 2% for CT time. As well, nearly 70% of the EAs reported that they functioned with a high level of autonomy, by making curricular, instructional, and activity participation decisions without always having professional oversight. In another study done by Wallace et al. (2001) showed that training of CTs in supervising EAs and lack of time to effectively consult and collaborate with them to be the top concerns for EAs and CTs.

Prior studies and literatures have noted the need for ongoing communication between EAs and their supervising CTs (French, 1998, Marks et al., 1999; Trautman, 2004). “The most critical step toward establishing and maintaining good communication between team members is setting aside a regular daily or biweekly time for cooperative planning, coordination of efforts, and feedback” (Blalock, 1991, p. 207). Regular planning sessions are one indicator of a working relationship between the CT and EA (French, 1998).

Marks et al. (1999) found that EAs assigned to the general education setting were the individuals providing the majority of the support for students with disabilities. They suggested school districts cannot require them (EAs) to assume primary instructional responsibilities for students with special needs and reiterated the importance of collaboration and teaming when working to meet the needs of students.

Giangreco, Edelman, and Broer (2003) conducted a qualitative study across 46 schools in 13 states in which participants utilized a defined process to access their
current use of EAs and develop a possible action plan for areas of noted concern. Teams who utilized the system to create an action plan with their EAs found it improved overall rapport with EAs and created an opportunity for professional collaboration. One school noted, that “providing supports for teaching assistants in the areas of education and collaboration seems to improve self-confidence, which in turn seems to improve the working environment and the support of students” (p. 75).

In a multisite case study, Ghere and Barr (2007) identified four main areas reported by EA staff as reasons for leaving their current position: life events (i.e. retirement, entering college, etc.), transferring to another position within the school district, expectations and pressures of the job, and lack of collaboration between team members. The study found that 4 schools out of the 6 viewed EAs as important team members who were given opportunities to offer their insights. In these schools EA turnover was very low, when compared to the other 2 schools in the study, which according to the authors indicated that by creating a culture of respect and collaboration and fostering job-embedded learning can decrease EA turnover and in turn save money and time spent for re-hiring more aide.

Breton (2010) conducted interviews and surveys with 750 EAs assessing perceptions regarding the adequacy of their pre-service training and supervision, as well as, current professional development needs. Forty six percent of respondents stated their training working with their students was very poor to fair. When asked if they had received adequate support and direction on the job to conduct their roles and responsibilities, 29% indicated they were uncertain or strongly disagreed with that statement. About sixty percent of respondents reported having minimal collaborative opportunities with their supervising CT with 15.9% of them indicating they did not receive specific directives regarding support needs for their assigned student.

Gaps in Knowledge

Almost all of the research that has been done in the past twenty years has been based on either the relationship between special educators and general CT or between special educators and EAs (Giangreco et al., 2013; Van Garderen et al., 2012; Breton, 2010; French, 1998) in places other than British Columbia. There have not been any studies in British Columbia on consultation and collaboration between CTs and EAs. This study will begin to fill a gap in literature on the CT and EA consultative relationship in British Columbia.
Chapter 3

“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go with others.”
-African proverb

Methods

In order to explore how consultation and collaboration are undertaken in B.C. schools, this study addressed the question, “What are the perceptions of CTs and EAs regarding consultation and collaboration within B.C. schools?” It used the mixed methods convergent parallel research design and approach. This chapter includes a description of the setting and sample as well as an explanation of the informed consent procedure. As well, data collection procedures will be discussed, and the system for data analysis will be described.

Research Design

Creswell et al. (2011) identify six major mixed method research designs: convergent parallel, explanatory sequential, exploratory sequential, embedded, transformative, and multiphase designs. They define a mixed methods study as:

“…the collection or analysis of both quantitative and/or qualitative data in a single study in which the data are collected concurrently or sequentially, are given a priority, and involves integration of the data at one or more stages in the process of research (p. 212).”

This study used a convergent parallel design (Figure 1) in which quantitative and qualitative data were concurrently collected and were given equal weight (the same level of priority). Creswell (2009) defines this particular type of study:

“The researcher converges or merges quantitative and qualitative data in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem. In this design, the investigator collects both forms of data at the same time and then integrates the information in the interpretation of the overall results (p. 14).”
There are 3 reasons that a mixed methods approach was considered to be most appropriate for this study. The main reason for having chosen a convergent parallel method was derived from the purpose of the study, which was to explore consultation and collaboration between teachers and educational assistants in schools across B.C. The second reason was that the phenomenon being investigated (consultation and collaboration amongst teachers and educational assistants) was complex; such a complex phenomenon in social science required different kinds of methods because it could not be easily understood by using either purely qualitative or purely quantitative methods (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). The third reason was that the findings from this study could help initiate future studies as researchers and agencies look further into the CT-EA relationship. Thus, a composite model offered a more complete picture of the phenomenon, based on both types of data, and fostered a more thorough and deeper understanding.

**Setting**

Participants in the study completed an original online survey (Appendix A and B) that was distributed through esurv.org online services. The online survey was used because of ease in administration and the confidentiality provided by the encryption and Secure Socket Layer (SSL) protocol of the Internet. The rationale for this setting was that the Internet provides a cost-effective and timesaving method for potential study participants (Gravetter & Forzano, 2011). An online survey enabled the participants to participate in the study in the privacy of their own home, without any time constraints and at their own convenience. It also enabled the researcher to reach the population intended throughout the province with greater ease. Researcher bias or errors that can occur during interviews were eliminated with the use of online surveys. As well, since participation was voluntary, the response was more authentic (Cohen et al., 2007).
Participants

This study used purposeful sampling, which is the process by which subjects are selected due to characteristics and human choice rather than at random (Cohen et al., 2011). Participants were CTs and EAs working in B.C. schools and served as the population for this study. Some school districts required permission from the district superintendent. The participants were recruited through emails sent to each school principal in B.C. in the school districts that had given permission. The school principals received the overview of the study (Appendix C) and a poster (Appendix D) and were asked to pass on the information to CTs and EAs in their schools. The study was also advertised through social media sites (Twitter/Facebook) with a direct link to the online survey. CUPE BC provided a link to the research survey on their page and they distributed a newsrelease to their locals. Other methods that were used to recruit were personal emails to CTs (Appendix E) and EAs (Appendix F) and by word of mouth. There were no incentives offered to participants. Participants were not able to complete the online survey more than once although they could go back and edit their answers.

There were approximately 33000 public school teachers in B.C. (BCTF information services, 2012) and the number of independent school CTs was not available. The total number of CTs who participated in this study was 339. There were approximately 12500 EAs working in B.C. (CUPE BC website) and the number of independent school EAs was not available. The total number of EAs who participated in this study was 246. Participants ranged from Preschool to grade 12 classroom environments.

Pilot study

A pilot study was used as a “small scale version or trial run in preparation for a major study” (Polit et al., 2001, p. 467). It was also used to refer to the pretesting, or trying out, of a particular research instrument or research procedure (Baker, 1994). According to De Vos (2002), the goal of the pilot study was “to see if the beast will fly” (p. 410). Before the pilot study, a faculty member reviewed an initial draft instrument. As a result of this, the wording of many items was revised and the ordering and layout was slightly modified. The draft items were entered into esurv.org for use in the pilot study. Each set of items included an open-ended question that asked respondents to indicate problems or concerns with individual items or with sets of items. This allowed respondents the opportunity to indicate ambiguous or poorly worded items, or items that
generally did not make sense or apply to their situation. The draft was sent to 5 teachers and 5 EAs. The open-ended comments were analyzed first to determine items that respondents found confusing, ambiguous, or poorly worded. These items were then clarified or removed based on participants’ comments. Feedback from the pilot study participants indicated the survey took 20-30 minutes.

**Instrumentation and Data Collection**

The researcher chose to conduct an online survey with both closed and open-ended questions from which both descriptive and numerical data emerged. The purpose of the survey research was to generalize from a sample to a population so that inferences could be made about characteristics of the population (Creswell, 2003). Since the aim was to reach as many teachers and EAs as possible, this way of collecting data was the most feasible as there was a “rapid turnaround in data collection” (Creswell, 2003, p. 154). The surveys for both CTs and EAs were designed by the researcher and consisted of 23 questions for teachers and 22 questions for EAs. Data was collected for 10 weeks during the months of May, June and July 2015.

**Data Analysis**

The researcher chose a convergent parallel methods approach in order to triangulate the data. As Marshall and Rossman (2011) explain, “Triangulation is the act of bringing more than one source of data to bear on a single point” (p. 252). Having these multiple lenses enabled the researcher to have greater confidence in the results, since they were corroborated through both statistical and non-statistical measures. All data was analyzed using an Excel spreadsheet for quantitative and QDA Miner Lite software for qualitative data. Codification helped with organizing, managing, and retrieving the most meaningful pieces of qualitative data (Cohen et al., 2011). Creswell and Planko Clark (2011) describe the coding process as the “core feature of qualitative data” (p. 208). The quantitative data analysis involved conducting a descriptive analysis to determine the general trends in the data. The qualitative data analysis involved reading through the responses of the open-ended questions to develop a general understanding of the data. The written responses were imported into QDA Miner Lite software. Initial thoughts were written on the margins and codes were developed. The data was then organized into graphs and diagrams created to see relationships (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).
Ethical Issues

There were no overt financial, academic or professional conflicts of interest in this study, or in the researcher’s relationship to those participating in the study. This is due to the fact that each survey was completed online, thus ensuring that participants are not aware of the researcher’s identity. The researcher's relationship to the problem was academic in nature.

Confidentiality and Informed Consent

Identities of participants and data sets were anonymous. All information gathered pertaining to the mixed methods study was kept in the researcher’s secure computer and online through a password protected survey site. Prior to completing the online survey, informed consent was obtained from the participants. Participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. The data will be destroyed on August 30, 2019.

Assumptions and Limitations

The researcher assumed that the participants in the study volunteered to participate; the request to participate emphasized the voluntary aspect of taking part in the study and also the participants’ ability to withdraw from the research at any time. This investigation was limited to one instrument (a survey). This means that there may have been factors that were not captured in the study. A potential limitation may have been that other individuals may have taken the survey since it was advertised on Twitter and Facebook. The researcher made an effort on the survey to exclude those individuals by confirming that they were either a CT or an EA working in B.C. If they did not answer or did not confirm, the survey was ended. However, individuals could still have accessed by confirming they were of either profession. The researcher could not guarantee that the individuals that took the survey were in fact CTs or EAs. One concern raised by Dillman (2000) was that respondents may not have computer or Internet access or may lack the knowledge required to complete a web survey. This was a valid concern but the researcher felt that most individuals working in schools had access to a computer and the survey was quite easy to navigate. Another factor was the timing of the survey. Most CTs and EAs were quite busy with wrap up and ending the school year during the time the survey was available to be completed online, and this could have led to a lower rate of participation.
Validity

Validity in mixed methods involves both quantitative and qualitative strands of data. Creswell and Planko Clark (2011) define validity in mixed methods research as “employing strategies that address potential issues in data collection, data analysis, and the interpretations that might compromise the merging or connecting of the quantitative and qualitative strands of the study and the conclusion drawn from the combination” (p. 239). Some issues that may have affected the data could have been the sample size and potential bias because of the wording of items on the survey. In the data analysis, inappropriate use of statistics could have affected the validity, as well as the interpretation, favoring one set of results over the other, or not addressing contradictions (Creswell and Planko Clark, 2011).
Chapter 4

“Alone we can do so little - together we can do so much.”
Helen Keller

Results

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine how CTs and their EAs perceive and describe their experiences with consultation and collaboration in inclusive classrooms. In this chapter, the results and findings are discussed and organized by the individual research questions that drove this study. The results of the questionnaire are discussed under each of the headings. CT and EA responses were analyzed separately. The research questions were as follows:

1. What are the perceptions of CTs and EAs regarding collaboration and consultation within B.C. schools?
2. Is there consultation and collaboration taking place amongst CTs and EAs in B.C.?
3. What are the issues and what types of support are needed to create a consultative/collaborative relationship amongst CTs and EAs?
4. Are EAs utilized effectively as respected members of collaborative teams?

Demographic Data

Totals of 339 CTs and 246 EAs responded to the e-survey from throughout British Columbia; Table 1 shows the gender distribution.

Table 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Classroom Teachers</th>
<th>Educational Assistants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>73.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents were from school districts and independent schools from throughout B.C. (Table 2). Most of the participants were from the Metro and Vancouver Island regions, which have the highest number of schools.
Table 2: Geographical Distribution of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>School Districts</th>
<th>Classroom Teachers</th>
<th>Educational Assistants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Region</td>
<td>27, 28, 57, 58, 73, 74</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conseil scolaire francophone</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraser Valley</td>
<td>33, 34, 42, 48, 75, 78</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Schools</td>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kootenay Region</td>
<td>5, 6, 8, 10, 20, 51</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Region</td>
<td>35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 43, 44, 45</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>89</td>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>49, 50, 52, 54, 59, 60, 81, 82, 87, 91, 92</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okanagan</td>
<td>19, 22, 23, 53, 67, 83</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver Island</td>
<td>46, 47, 61, 62, 63, 64, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 79, 84, 85</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows that 43% of the CTs and 31% of the EAs had more than 16 years of experience.

Table 3: Years of experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Classroom Teachers</th>
<th>Educational Assistants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First year</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-5 years</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 or more years</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>43.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 shows more than 40% of the CTs had a Masters or graduate degree specialization. Over 70% of the EAs had either a certificate or a diploma and about 22% had a Bachelor degree.

Table 4: Level of Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Classroom Teachers</th>
<th>Educational Assistants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>54.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>37.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>17*</td>
<td>5.1*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Not specified or reported as graduate diplomas/Post baccalaureate diplomas

Table 5 shows that close to half of the CT respondents reported to have had more than a decade of experience with EAs in the classroom.

Table 5: CTs’ years of experience working with EAs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 years</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 or more years</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>45.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among CT respondents, about 85% work with at least one EA, 47.9% of which work with two or more EAs. They also reported that EAs spend about 40% of their time working less than 2 hours working with students in the classroom. Of the EA respondents, 68.4% work full time in classrooms, while the balance of the respondents report that they work less than a full day in the classroom. As well, 57.6% of the EAs
reported that they work in more than one classroom throughout the day (Tables 6 A-D).

Table 6A: Number of EAs working in a classroom according to CTs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6B: Total hours per day EAs work with students in the classroom according to CTs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Less than 2 hours</th>
<th>Between 2-4 hours</th>
<th>More than 5 hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6C: Total hours per day EAs work in classrooms according to EAs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Less than 2 hours</th>
<th>Between 2-4 hours</th>
<th>More than 5 hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>68.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6D: Number of Classrooms EAs circulate according to EAs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of CTs and EAs regarding consultation and collaboration within B.C. schools?

To answer this question CTs and EAs were asked one quantitative and one qualitative question.

According to Dettmer et al. (2013), there are a number of ways that educators can collaborate with EAs. The quantitative questions on both the CT and EA questionnaire were created using their suggestions. The quantitative question was:
Do you meet with the [EAs/TAs/CTs] to do the following: If "yes" or "sometimes" is chosen, please indicate when it occurs. The question focused on planning, delegating responsibilities, prioritizing tasks, preparing schedules, providing on-the-job training, giving feedback, managing conflict, and solving problems.

The qualitative question was:

How would you define consultation and collaboration?

**CT Results:**

Table 7 shows the percentage scores of the CTs’ degree of consultation and collaboration. The CTs' responses indicated that 31% of teachers plan with their EAs, 28% do not plan and 41% sometimes have planning meetings. With respect to delegating responsibilities, the CTs' responses indicated that 37% of CTs delegate, while 19% do not and 44% sometimes delegate. Under prioritizing tasks, 36% of CTs give specific tasks, while 21% do not and 42% sometimes prioritize tasks. As part of their supervision, CTs reported that 14% manage and prepare EAs’ schedules and 62% do not and 23% sometimes manage schedules. With respect to providing training for EAs, 15% of CTs indicated that they provide training, while 62% do not and 23% sometimes provide training to their EAs. As part of their supervisory role, 32% of CTs give feedback to their EAs, while 24% do not and 44% sometimes give feedback. In response to conflict management between CTs and EAs, 26% manage conflict, while 33% do not and 41% sometimes manage conflict. When it comes to solving problem, 40% reported that they solve problems with their EAs, 15% do not and 45% sometimes solve problems. Over 75% of all these interactions occur during regular school hours.
The responses to the second qualitative question, “How would you define consultation and collaboration?” were classified to three response types, which were 1) CTs who had a definition for each term separately, 2) CTs who defined the terms together and 3) CTs who did not have a definition. This question was important to ask because it gave an indication of CTs’ understanding of the terms. Of the 235 CTs who answered, 49 of them did not have a definition and wrote about their need to have time for consultation and collaboration. 101 CTs defined both words as one indicating that there is no difference between the two terms and 85 CTs defined each term separately. The 101 CTs who defined both terms together saw consultation and collaboration as a “planned regular discussion that leads to action.”

Those who defined each word separately saw consultation as a discussion with someone who is an expert. The goal of the discussion was to ask the expert for their input or to gain information but ultimately making decisions on their own. One CT had a different view saying that, “Consultation is a dialogue between at least two people, who ideally are seen as equals and who are all focused upon the subject of consultation, endeavoring to come to a consensus, if not unanimity, upon a course of action, to which, when decided upon, all put in effort to enact, regardless of their personal acceptance or view of the decision.” They defined collaboration as two or more co-equal parties working together, planning and solving problems to reach a common goal.
**EA Results:**

Table 8 shows the percentage scores of EAs’ degree of consultation and collaboration. The results from the responses to the question about planning revealed that 28% of the EAs plan with their CTs, 26% do not plan and 47% sometimes have planning meetings. With respect to delegating responsibilities, 21% of the EAs discuss delegation of tasks with CTs, while 51% do not and 28% sometimes discuss delegation of responsibilities. Under prioritizing tasks, 20% of the EAs discuss specific tasks, while 46% do not and 34% sometimes discuss prioritizing tasks. EAs also reported that 19% manage and prepare schedules with CTs, 54% do not and 27% sometimes manage schedules. With respect to on the job training, 11% of EAs reported that they receive on the job training, while 72% do not and 17% sometimes receive training. In response to receiving feedback from their CTs, 27% of EAs reported receiving feedback from CTs, while 36% do not and 38% sometimes receive feedback. With respect to conflict management between EAs and CTs, 30% manage conflict, while 41% do not and 30% sometimes manage conflict. When it comes to solving problems, 41% reported that they solve problems with CTs, 16% do not and 44% sometimes solve problems. Most interactions occur during regular school hours, however, over a third of these interactions were unpaid time for EAs.

Table 8: *The degree of consultation and collaboration according to EAs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Unpaid time</th>
<th>Paid time</th>
<th>Before or after school</th>
<th>During School</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Solving Problems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing Conflict</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving Feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving on the job training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing schedules</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritizing tasks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegation of responsibilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The responses to the second qualitative question, “How would you define consultation and collaboration?” were classified by three response types, which were 1) EAs who had a definition for each term separately, 2) EAs who defined the terms together and 3) EAs who did not have a definition. Of the 139 EAs who responded to this question, 30 did not have a definition, but wrote about their experience, 78 EAs defined the terms together and 31 defined each term separately. Those who defined the terms as one, felt that both consultation and collaboration are team meetings where people work together to discuss ideas, plan together, problem solve, while respecting and listening to everyone’s view, and then come to a consensus on a plan of action.

The EAs who defined each term separately felt consultation was a meeting where one individual is either receiving information or input from another person with expertise in order to plan and set goals for a student. They defined collaboration as teams working together, sharing ideas, solving problems and then plan to put goals into action.

Research Question 2: Is there collaboration and consultation taking place amongst CTs and EAs in B.C.?

To answer this question, CTs and EAs were asked one quantitative and two qualitative questions. The quantitative question was:

How often do you have informal planning meetings with the [EAs/TAs/CTs]? (These can be on the playground, the hallway, lunchroom...they are not pre-planned).

The qualitative questions were:

Describe the ways you communicate with the [EAs/TAs/CTs] that you currently work with?

Do you collaborate and consult regularly with the [EAs/TAs/CTs]? If yes, how many times a week?

CT Results:

Table 9A and 9B shows how often CTs consult and collaborate with EAs. Based upon the participant’s perception of consultation and collaboration, it seems that CTs felt that they are meeting with EAs everyday to either consult or have informal meetings, and most communication occurs in person (Table 10). However, of those face-to-face meetings, 55% of the participants mentioned that their meetings were “on the fly”, “usually a quick 30 seconds - 1 minute catch up” or “right before a lesson”. A CT
commented, “we are not provided with any prep time together ever … so each minute we chat/organize our teaching [during class], it takes away from students getting service.”

*Table 9A: Consultation and collaboration time according to CTs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consultation and Collaboration Time</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every day</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 times/week</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 times/week</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irregular</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 9B: Informal planning Type according to CTs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informal Planning Time</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every day</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 times/week</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 times/week</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every other week</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10: How CTs communicate with EAs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texts</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-verbal</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EAs Results:

Table 11A and 11B shows how often EAs consult and collaborate together with CTs. Based upon the participant's perception of consultation and collaboration, more than one third of EAs felt that they are meeting everyday to either consult or have informal meetings. 26% of the participants mentioned that they are “drive by” or “impromptu” meetings, and that most communication occurs in person (Table 12). Of the face-to-face meetings, 70% reported the meetings are in “passing” or “walking into class” or “in the minutes between class time.”

Table 11A: Consultation and collaboration time according to EAs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consultation and Collaboration Time</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every day</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 times/week</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 times/week</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irregular</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11B: *Informal planning Type according to EAs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informal Planning Time</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every day</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 times/week</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 times/week</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every other week</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12: *How EAs communicate with CTs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texts</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-verbal</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Research Question 3:* What are the issues and what types of support are needed to create a consultative/collaborative relationship amongst CTs and EAs?

To answer this question CTs and EAs were asked two quantitative and four qualitative questions.

The quantitative questions were:

[During your undergraduate or graduate training/In your Training] did you take courses that were dedicated to working with [EAs/TAs/CTs]?

While employed as a [CT/EA/TA], did you take any other courses/workshops dedicated to working with other team members?
The qualitative questions were:

Describe any types of professional development you have participated in while employed in your district that dealt with working with other members of the team. Are there other factors at the school level that could improve consultation and collaboration with [EAs/TAs/CTs]? Please specify.

What issues may prohibit you from consulting and collaborating with an [EA/TA/CT]?

Do you need any support to improve your consultative and collaborative relationship with [EAs/TAs/CTs]? If yes, what support do you need? If no, why not?

CT Results:

Table 13A shows that over 90% of the CTs have not had any courses on how to work with EAs in their studies. Table 13B shows that 32% of CTs reported that they had training while employed.

Table 13A: CT training in consultation and collaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training during undergraduate/graduate studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not know</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13B: CT training in Consultation and collaboration while employed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training while employed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants listed and described the types of professional development they had which they felt dealt with working with other members of the team. Of the participants who answered this question (n=192), 42% reported that they had not had
any type of workshop that dealt with working with other team members. About 19% of the participants reported they had workshops that partially dealt with this topic. There were only 6% of the participants who had taken a professional development workshop that dealt with this topic. The other participants reported courses in conflict resolution (5%), school-based session (3%), Professional Learning Community (PLC) (3%), Response To Intervention (RTI) (4%), Provincial Outreach Program for Autism and Related Disorders (POPARD) (2%), Co-teaching (2%), Individual Education Program development (IEP) (0.5%), Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (0.5%). 5% of the participants had taken a course as part of their degree program, and 3% could not remember if they had taken any such workshops.

Factors to improve consultation and collaboration

When asked what factors could improve consultation and collaboration (Table 14), CTs felt that having time to meet in the timetable was the best solution. One CT commented, “The EAs at my school do not get paid before or after the bell, so there is no time to plan with them other than on the fly.” Another commented, “My EA is in and out. Barely any time to talk and make plans for success for the student”. Some brought up the idea of paying the EAs extra for meetings before and after school. Some CTs felt that training was needed for both EAs and CTs. CTs need “courses on working with students with special needs, designations, adaptations” and EAs “lack training in the subject area.” Some suggested “proper training for teachers and EAs on collaboration”. Others thought that there should be “clear guidelines and expectations for all members of the team” “so teachers know what they can ask their EA to do/help with” as well as “a province wide set of protocols designed to assist in the collaboration between all parties”. Some CTs felt that EAs should be paid for their meeting time as most of the time the meetings occur when the EAs are not working. Some CTs felt that respecting and valuing EAs could improve consultation and collaboration: “there are still a lot of cases where teachers look down on TAs rather than valuing them as an important part of the team.” Another factor was looking to administrators and resource teachers to “take the lead in encouraging consultation and collaboration.” Other suggestions included having a consistent EA to provide “stable support to a student, as well as allow for more smooth collaboration” because “new faces in a constant revolving door of EAs make it difficult to build rapport”. Another suggestion was to include EAs in staff and IEP
meetings and have more team building activities where everyone can have “time to know each other better, to build trust, and to develop a shared vision.”

Table 14: Factors that could improve consultation and collaboration according to CTs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency [# of respondents: 224]</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time to meet in the timetable</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles and expectations</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid time for EAs</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration/Resource teachers</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent EA</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion of EAs in staff/IEP meetings</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team building activities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Issues inhibiting consultation and collaboration**

The issues that inhibit the respondent CTs from consulting and collaborating were by far lack of time and the budget to support meetings (Table 15). Interpersonal skills (verbal/non-verbal communication, listening skills, negotiating, problem-solving, decision-making) are another reported hindrance as some EAs “are not very open to feedback” or there are “differences in philosophy”, “opinion or approach”, which make it hard for both parties to communicate, however “those barriers can be broken by having the time to get to know each other”.

Another issue that was brought up was the knowledge and skill level of EAs. Some of the participants commented about the “lack of awareness of the specialized skill base” of EAs, other mentioned that some EAs “do not have the background in the subject matter” particularly in the “high school setting”, which could “limit the extent of the collaboration”. As well, the CTs feel unsure of their role and how to utilize EAs in their classroom.
Another theme that emerged was that some CTs believe is the lack of respect for and from EAs. One teacher said that some teachers “don’t even know their names.” Another teacher commented about working with an EA “who thought they were in charge” and was directing the teacher about the student. Exact number of CTs believe that the administrators need to make consultation and collaboration a “priority” and “presented [them] as valuable and essential.” Furthermore, exact number of CTs feel EAs change rooms so much that not only does it create “interruptions” but also make it hard to “touch base.” They add that it would be “hard to establish a collaborative relationship in these conditions” and suggest a consistent EA would motivate them to consult and collaborate.

Table 15: Issues that may inhibit CTs from consulting and collaborating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Frequency [# of respondents: 231]</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time/budget</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Skills</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge/skill levels</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles/Responsibilities</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Respect</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative support</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent EAs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Supports CTs Need

46% of the respondents asked for paid time for EAs and coverage for both team members to meet in a private setting (Table 16). 24% of the respondents felt they were working well with their EAs and did not require any support. 9.5% of CT respondents would like to understand the roles of EAs and CTs and what is expected of each. 6% of CT respondents would like to participate in consultation and collaboration workshops and the utilization and management of EAs workshops. 5% of CT respondents would like to see the support of administrators and resource teachers. Exact number of CTs would like to have support of a consistent EA, who can be matched to the job and be provided clear guidelines to follow when consulting and collaborating. 0.5% of CT respondents would like to see more respect towards EAs.
Table 16: The types of support CTs need

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support Type</th>
<th>Frequency [# of respondents 208:]</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paid time/coverage for EAs</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No support Needed</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Roles and Expectations</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation and Collaboration Workshops</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops on utilization/management of EAs</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration/Resource Teacher Support</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent EAs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match EA to the job</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear Guidelines</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EA Results:

Table 17A shows that over 60% of EAs have not had any courses on how to work with CTs in their studies and 59% reported that they had not had training while employed (Table 17B).

Table 17A: EA training in consultation and collaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training during studies</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not know</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The participants listed and described the types of professional development they had which they felt dealt with working with other members of the team. Of the participants who answered this question (n=119), 46% reported that they had not had any type of workshop that dealt with working with other team members. About 13% of the participants reported they had workshops that partially dealt with this topic. There were only 7% of the participants who had taken a professional development workshop that dealt with this topic. The other participants reported courses in conflict resolution (16%), Non Violence Crisis Intervention training (7%), team building exercises (6%), roles and responsibilities booklet (4%), Provincial Outreach Program for Autism and Related Disorders (POPARD) (2.5%), and 3% could not remember if they had taken any such workshops.

**Factors to improve consultation and collaboration**

When asked what factors could improve consultation and collaboration (Table 18), EAs thought “mandated regularly scheduled” “time set aside to do this that is not unpaid” or “taking away from the teacher’s prep time” could improve the consultation and collaboration between the two groups. The other factor some EAs suggested was that of respect. One EA commented, “It would be nice not to be judged on our level of earned education but on our experience and knowledge.” Another wrote, “we have a lot more to offer than just an additional warm body in the classroom.” It seems all they are asking for is “respect for the work EAs do from administrators and teachers.” Some EAs get the feeling from CTs that they are not comfortable consulting or collaborating with them due to their lack of education.

The next factor was the lack of training in a few areas for CTs and EAs. Some felt CTs need more training in special education. One EA commented, “It is difficult to collaborate with a teacher when they don’t know anything about Autism.” Others felt EAs and CTs should have workshops on how to work together and really understand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training while employed</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
each other’s role. One suggested “a program that goes from school to school educating teachers on how to collaborate more effectively.” Lastly, they would like to participate in more workshops together.

Another factor that was suggested was support from administration and resource teachers. The kinds of support could be “to recognize that an effective team doesn’t just “happen.” Often they take years to develop; “a supportive administrative staff … sees the importance and benefits of team meetings.”

The next factor was to include EAs by asking their input. One EA wrote that there needs to be “an attitude shift with teachers and administration … that EAs are the ones who actually deliver the services that they consult on and implement in the IEPs and that we should have a voice in that plan.” Another EA wrote that at their school, they have separate staff and support staff meetings. They find “this system to be very exclusive and it undermines [their] perception that [they] are part of an overall school team.”

Lastly, there seems to be confusion around the roles and expectations. Some EAs feel that the CT wants them to adapt or modify curriculum for their students. Other EAs notice that they “are left on their own to figure it out without guidance from the teacher.” They like to see “clear guidelines” on everyone’s role in order to have a better collaborative experience.

Table 18: Factors that could improve consultation and collaboration according to EAs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Frequency [# of respondents: 131]</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paid time in the Schedule</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Training/Workshops</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAs input in IEP/staff meetings</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration/Resource teacher Support</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles and expectations</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Issues inhibiting consultation and collaboration

The issues that may be inhibiting EAs from consulting and collaborating were a lack of time and the budget to support meetings (Table 19). The next issue brought by
some EAs was the attitude of both CTs and EAs. One EA commented, “Many teachers want to be in full control of their classrooms and see ... EAs as questioning their authority.” Another commented, “there needs to be a willingness of all parties to meet.” Another EA wrote, “Sometimes there is an ‘us and them’ attitude from teachers.”

Workload seems to be the next issue that may inhibit consultation and collaboration. EAs feel that both parties are “overwhelmed with their workload” and if there is a small break they have “been called away to assist in another classroom” and missed an opportunity to connect with the CT.

Interpersonal skills such as verbal communication, listening skills, decision making and problem solving seems to be lacking according to some EAs. “Some teachers do not want to listen to us, or believe that our ideas are valid”, wrote one EA. “They seem reluctant to go into detail on what or who they are seeking support for very frustrating!” commented another EA.

The next issue brought up was the lack of support from the administrators. This comment from an EA sums it all up, “Principals need to realize how important the EAs are to a school. I don’t know how many times there has been a ‘Team’ meeting and it didn’t include the EA who’s the one actually working with the child!”

In addition, EAs believe that the knowledge and skill levels of CTs working with students with special needs may be lacking. An EA wrote, “a lot of teachers have no idea what to do with the special needs child in their class, so if the EA is competent, they just leave the EA in charge of that particular child.”

Finally, EAs believe there is “confusion as to who is responsible for the delivery of services.” “Each teacher seems to have a very different idea of what a CEA [EA] does or should do and it is difficult to support teachers and meet their expectations while putting the kids first.” “Some teachers think the EA is their personal assistant to do odd jobs while others think an EA does all the student’s work for them. Open discussion should help with this.”
Table 19: Issues that may inhibit EAs from consulting and collaborating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency [# of respondents: 139]</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time/budget</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher/EA attitudes and Respect</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Skills</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Support</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge/ Skill Levels</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles/Responsibilities</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Supports EAs need

The most frequent answer was paid time for EAs and coverage for both team members to meet in a private setting (Table 20). Just as many EAs felt they had a great relationship with their CTs and did not require any support. 12% would like to see the support of administrators and resource teachers. 11% of EAs would like to be respected as members of a team. 6% of EA respondents would like to understand the roles of EAs and CTs and what is expected of each. 4% of EA respondents felt that the attitude of CTs contribute to the lack of consultation and collaboration. 3% of EA respondents would like to participate in consultation and collaboration workshops and 2% of respondents would like to be included in IEP/staff meetings.
Table 20: The types of support EAs need

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support Type</th>
<th>Frequency (no. of respondents: 122)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paid time/coverage for EAs</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No support needed</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration/resource teacher support</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Roles and expectations</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude of CT</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops on Consultation/collaboration</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include EAs in IEP/staff meetings</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 4: Are educational assistants utilized effectively as respected members of collaborative teams?

To answer this question CTs and EAs were asked one qualitative question. The qualitative question was:

In what ways do you feel that the [EA's/TA's/your] skills and knowledge are valued as members of a consultative and collaborative team?

CT Results:

Table 21 shows CTs’ perceptions of the value of EAs. The most frequent answer was the knowledge and experience EAs bring to the job. “EAs have training and experience that I do not possess. They are knowledgeable and caring and deserve credit for their educational contributions”, commented one teacher.

The next frequent answer was that EAs are valuable because they are “a direct link to the students’ success”, wrote a CT. As well, they are “intimately associated with and aware of the student or students who need integration support, and have a wealth of knowledge, skills and understanding about them and teaching them”, as a result this information would be helpful for team meetings.
Some CTs believe that “the EAs opinion is often underrated and not given enough value.” Another teacher comments that EAs “are seen as a support mechanism in a reactive sense, rather than an active resource to build and collaborate with.” As a result, a group of CTs feel that EAs are under-utilized and not valued as part of a collaborative team. One CT’s opinion was, “once EAs see themselves as professionals, other educators will show more respect.”

A few CTs believe that it all depends on the EA. “The skilled and committed EAs are definitely valued and consulted”, whereas others “walk through their job and watch the clock for quitting time and others who feel that they could do the teacher’s job better than the teacher” and consequently they “do not value every EA in the same manner.” A few CTs commented that EAs are “a role model for other staff and students.” There was also mention that “their possible ongoing relationship with both students and their parents can prove to be indispensable.”

Table 21: CTs’ perception of the value of skills and knowledge of EAs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Know their students and linked to their success</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge &amp; Experience</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under utilized</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depends on EA</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role models</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with families</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EA Results:

EA results show that their knowledge, experience and input are valued (Table 22). “The teacher knows my strengths and feels comfortable giving me opportunities to share those skills with the class.” Some EAs do not feel valued; “We are still seen as second class citizens in the school and this is reflected in the fact that it is mandatory for a teacher to be at a student’s IEP but often the CEA are not invited, or if they are, they are scheduled during a time when the CEA has to work unpaid.”
Another EA writes, “I don’t believe my skills are valued whatsoever ... I could offer so much to my district as well to the school and teachers ... when I offered my expert advice at one time I was told ‘I needed to know my place as an EA’.”

The next most frequent answer was the EA’s interpersonal skills. One EA commented, “I am willing to listen to others point of view and feel that they listen to mine.” Some EAs believe that they are respected as part of the team. One wrote, “The staff I have worked with this year all respect my abilities and know that I will do anything that is needed to move the children forward to their goals.” Another commented, “I feel respected as an EA. I feel included in the classroom and in deciding what would enhance a student’s education.” A number of respondents commented on their knowledge of the students they work with as being valuable to the team because they “know their strengths and weaknesses” and “the teachers that understands that will better utilize the EAs knowledge about the student.” Lastly, EAs mentioned that some CTs “value our opinions and suggestions, others don’t.”

Table 22: EAs perception of the value of their skill and knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency [# of respondents: 134]</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge &amp; Experience</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under utilized</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal skills</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know their students</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depends on CT</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5

“In many ways, effective communication begins with mutual respect, communication that inspires, and encourages others to do their best.” Zig Ziglar

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This research was conducted to examine the perceptions of CTs and EAs regarding consultation and collaboration in BC K-12 schools. The first section of the chapter presents a summary of the results. The second section offers conclusions drawn from the results. The final section focuses on recommendations for further study and practice.

The purpose of this study was to examine how CTs and their EAs perceive and describe their experiences with consultation and collaboration in inclusive classrooms. Specifically, the research sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the perceptions of CTs and EAs regarding consultation and collaboration within B.C. schools?
2. Is there consultation and collaboration taking place amongst CTs and EAs in B.C.?
3. What are the issues and what types of support are needed to create a consultative/collaborative relationship amongst CTs and EAs?
4. Are EAs utilized effectively as respected members of collaborative teams?

Data analyses revealed the following results:

Summary of the Results

An overwhelming majority of CTs (73%) and EAs (93%) were female. This is a typical number for BC as there are almost three times more female CTs than male (BC Education Facts, 2012) and BC female EAs compose more than 90% of the workforce (CUPE BC Report, 2009). The majority of the respondents were from the Metro and Vancouver Island regions. More than half of the CTs (61%) and half of the EAs (50%) had 11 or more years of experience. Over 40% of CTs had a Master’s degree or higher and over 20% of EAs had a Bachelor’s degree.

Nearly half of the CTs (45.7%) had more than 10 years experience working with EAs and almost half (47.9%) worked with two or more EAs. According to CTs, EAs spent about 40% of their time working less than 2 hours working with students in the classroom while over 60% of EAs reported working full time in the classroom. More than
half of the EAs (57.6%) worked in more than one classroom.

One interesting finding was the differences and similarities in the responses to questions that focused on consultation and collaboration. Most of the CT and EA participants saw consultation and collaboration as one definition, which implies that they did not have a clear knowledge of how to consult and collaborate or how to differentiate between the two terms. Only a fraction of the CTs and EAs defined each word separately and those who did not answer the question showed that they either did not read the question properly or did not understand what the two terms meant. For example most of the respondents wrote of their lack of consultation and collaboration. When it comes to collaboration, CTs seemed to plan or sometimes plan, delegate responsibilities, prioritize tasks, give feedback, manage conflict and solve problems with EAs. The majority of CTs did not train or manage and prepare the EA schedules. Most collaboration occurred during regular school hours. When it came to collaboration, EAs seemed to plan or sometimes plan, receive feedback, manage conflict, and solve problems. There was a balance between delegating responsibilities, prioritizing tasks and preparing schedules. The majority of the EAs were not trained. Most collaboration occurred during regular school hours but over a third of these hours were unpaid time for EAs. Overall, both CTs and EAs had a better understanding of collaboration than they did with consultation.

About half of the CTs (48%) reported meeting with EAs to consult and collaborate more than 3 times a week and 52% of EAs reported meeting with CTs to consult and collaborate, however the meetings were quick and informal rather than scheduled meetings. Most communication occurred face-to-face. Both CTs and EAs saw paid time to meet in the schedule as one major factor that would improve consultation and collaboration.

Another significant theme that emerged was the amount of training CTs and EAs received to prepare them to work with other school-based team members. More than 90% of CTs did not get any training in their studies to work with EAs and only 32% received training while employed. More than 60% of EAs did not get any training in their studies to work with CTs and 41% received training while employed. The other factors were training for EAs and CTs, clearer understanding of roles and responsibilities, paid time for EAs, greater respect for the EAs, greater administrator and resource teacher support, a more consistent EA, inclusion of EAs in Staff/IEP meetings and more team building activities. Both groups also reported a lack of time and budget for support
meetings as one major issue that inhibited consultation and collaboration. The other issues reported were interpersonal skills, knowledge and skills of EAs/CTs, roles and responsibilities, lack of respect and attitudes, workload, administrative support and consistent EAs.

Of note is that the responses indicated that CTs and EAs felt that they would like to have seen that EAs were paid and there was coverage for both team members to meet. Both groups also responded that it would be beneficial to more fully understand each other’s roles and expectations, to have consultation and collaboration workshops, and to have greater support from the administration and resource teaching staff. CTs also reported needing workshops that teach EA utilization and management, having a consistent EA, matching EAs to the job, and have clearer guidelines to follow when consulting. EAs reported wanting a change in the attitude of CTs towards them and being included in IEP/Staff meetings.

Both CTs and EAs indicated that EAs are of great value with regard to their knowledge and experience working with exceptional students. They specified that the EAs know their students’ strengths and weaknesses and could be of great value when making educational decisions for the students. Approximately 14% of CTs and 16% of EAs believed that EAs are under-utilized. A handful of CTs and EAs believed that it all depends upon the individual. A few CTs believed that EAs are great role models and their relationship with families is important. Some EAs believed that their interpersonal skills make them invaluable to the team.

Conclusions

Four major conclusions were drawn from this study. Each conclusion corresponds with a research question.

1. CTs and EAs have a different understanding of consultation and collaboration, which could result in false expectation, miscommunication, and misunderstanding.

2. Although some CT/EA teams are meeting in a systematic and planned manner, there is not enough time for consultation and collaboration to take place.

3. CTs and EAs do not have proper training, either during their studies or while employed, in working with another member of a team. Regular meetings in the schedule, where the EA is paid and there is coverage for the CT, were most often reported as a source to support consultation and collaboration.
4. EAs are generally valued as respected members of collaborative teams, however they are under-utilized.

Recommendations

Consultation and collaboration are terms that have been used in much of the literature, however their meaning is obscure. In fact, according to Schulte & Osborne (2003), a shared understanding cannot be guaranteed, which has an impact both in practice and research. Since research has not given a clear definition, it affects how these two terms are interpreted. The following definition is therefore offered based upon the Bahá’í Writings for consultation as an additional insight into the plethora of definitions that are currently used in literature: Consultation is a form of discussion between individuals and within groups which requires the suppression of egotism so that all ideas can be shared and evaluated with frankness, sincerity, courtesy, and openness of mind, and decisions arrived at can be wholeheartedly supported (“Spaces of Consultation”, 2015). Collaboration takes place when two or more individuals work together to achieve a common vision or objective (Friend & Cook, 2003). The collaborative consultation model (Idol, Paolucci-Whitcomb & Nevin, 1995) is suggested for CTs and EAs. It is recommended that team members decide on a definition or a model in order to have a clearer understanding and expectation when they meet to avoid disappointment in the process.

It is necessary for the CTs and EAs to regularly get together and evaluate how a student is progressing, re-establish roles and address any conflicts that might arise. Ongoing consultation throughout the school year is essential to positive communication and assurance that team members are meeting the expectations and needs of each other while servicing the student with special needs. Once time for collaboration has been built into the school day, the purpose of collaboration must be made explicit. Teams that meet regularly provide the opportunity to express concerns, offer opinions and clarify roles, duties and goals. Regularly scheduled meetings lead to increased job satisfaction, reduced tension, improved job performance and self-confidence (Wallace, 2002). It is important to note however, that consultation and collaboration should not be forced; the school community must see it as a valued and authentic practice. It is recommended that schools first try to develop and nurture the CT/EA relationship (Cameron, 2014). Administrators play a vital role in developing these relationships and building a collaborative school culture. School leaders who wish to improve CT and EA
capacity, efficacy, collegiality, inclusion, equity and overall student achievement need to see the importance of building these relationships. In order to achieve these, two foci for development are suggested, one school and district based practices and two, professional development.

School and district based practices

- Create a schedule and time during school hours for both CTs and EAs to meet
- Provide regular time in the schedule to meet with other members of the team (resource teachers, psychologists, Speech language pathologists, school counselors, parents/guardians, students, etc.)
- Be available and participate in team meetings
- Model good interpersonal skills and show trust and respect
- Provide school-wide workshops on team building, relationship building and consultation and collaboration
- Provide clear expectations on roles and responsibilities

Professional Development

In order to increase consultation and collaboration in schools, CTs and EAs need to be trained to effectively use consultation and collaboration in their daily interactions. It is therefore recommended that

- Courses in consultation and collaboration be included in CT and EA degree programs
- Encourage ongoing professional development as a team focused upon consultation and collaboration, team building, conflict resolution and communication skills
- Professional development training for CTs should include supervising EAs, teaching exceptional learners, and how to effectively use EAs in the classroom
- EAs should have training in the subject area they are assisting so they can be utilized successfully.

Since team building takes many years to develop, it is also recommended that EAs remain with the same CT for as long as is feasible and EA shuffling be avoided as much as possible.
Based upon the data gathered in this study, several research topics are recommended. First, from the groups that are having regular consultative and collaborative meetings, explore the types of successes and challenges they face. Second, look at the effects of team meetings on student success. Third, look at a comparison of trained CTs and EAs in consultation and collaboration and those who have not had any training. A fourth research idea would be to examine the attitudes and beliefs of administrators on supporting a consultative and collaborative school culture. Finally, research how consultation and collaboration works in schools where there is significant CT or EA turnover.

Conclusion

The role of the EAs has changed substantially over the past two decades and their numbers has increased dramatically to support and serve students with special needs in a variety of school settings. CTs continue to depend upon EAs to support the needs of these students, yet, they do not often find the time to collaborate and communicate with them (Causton-Theoharis & Malgren, 2005; Trautman, 2004; Wallace et al., 2001). Many EAs do not meet with their supervising CTs on a regular basis in a face-to-face meeting (French, 2001). Structured time to meet and discuss student outcomes to provide feedback and to monitor program implementation often does not occur (Causton-Theoharis & Malgren, 2005; French, 2003). BC CTs and EAs are faced with similar results as shown by research across North America. It is imperative that the BC government recognizes the need for consultation and collaboration between CTs and EAs and provides the appropriate resources to support them in their endeavor to support our students.
References:


CUPE BC retrieved March 19, 2015 from http://www.cupe.bc.ca/campaigns/education-assistants


Appendix 1

RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Dear ______,

My name is Kamelia Dousti-Stee and I am a graduate student undertaking a Master of Education in Special Education. As part of my graduate program at Vancouver Island University, I am carrying out a study to learn how teachers and educational assistants/teacher assistants perceive consultation and collaboration in their everyday work as they teach and include students with disabilities in the general education setting. I would like to see what is working well and what additional support is needed to improve and cultivate this relationship. I am inviting your staff (teachers and EA/TAs) to complete a brief 23-question online survey that will take about 20-30 minutes.

I was hoping that you could pass on this information to them. I have attached a copy of a letter of information about the study that gives the full details as well as a poster that can be posted in the staff room. This study has been reviewed and cleared by the Vancouver Island University Research Ethics Board. For more information, you can either contact myself or my supervisor, Mary Ann Richards (MaryAnn.Richards@viu.ca).

I would like to thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Kamelia Dousti
Vancouver Island University
Department of Special Education
kdoustee@stumail.viu.ca
Dear colleagues,

I am a graduate student undertaking a Master of Education in Special Education at Vancouver Island University. The research is being conducted in fulfilment of the thesis component and I would like to invite you to be a part of the study.

Are you a Teacher or an Educational/Teacher’s assistant?

If you answered YES to the above question, please consider participating in this study:

**Consultation and Collaboration Between Classroom Teachers and Educational Assistants in British Columbia- A mixed methods study**

The purpose of this study is to see how Teachers and EA/TAs perceive consultation and collaboration. You will be asked to fill out an anonymous computer-based survey: Your participation will take about 20-30 minutes.

The survey will be open from **May 11- July 10, 2015**

It can be accessed for both TEACHERS and EA/TAs:  
https://eSurv.org?u=consult9

For more information about this study please contact:  
Kamelia Dousti  
Vancouver Island University  
Email: kdoustee@stumail.viu.ca
Appendix 3

SURVEY INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS

Dear Colleague:

My name is Kamelia Dousti-Stee and I am a graduate student undertaking a Master of Education in Special Education. As part of my graduate program at Vancouver Island University, I am carrying out a study to learn how teachers and educational assistants/teacher assistants perceive consultation and collaboration in their everyday work as they teach and include students with disabilities in the general education setting. I would like to see what is working well and what additional support is needed to improve and cultivate this relationship.

If you decide to volunteer, you will be asked to finish a 20-30 minute online survey (esurv.org) that is completed anonymously. Survey questions focus on collaborative and consultative relationships between teachers and EA/TAs. Participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer and you can withdraw your participation at any time by not submitting your responses. Once you submit your responses, however, the information you provide cannot be removed from the study results. There are no known or anticipated risks from participating in this study.

The survey has been programmed to collect responses alone and will not collect any information that could potentially identify you. As a result, it is important for you to know that any information that you provide is confidential and anonymous. If you wish to participate, please visit https://eSurv.org?u=consult9. You will be required to read and agree to the consent statement before starting the survey.

Should you have any questions about the study, please contact Kamelia Dousti-Stee (kdoustee@stumail.viu.ca). Thank you for considering participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Kamelia Dousti
Appendix 4

TEACHER SURVEY

Consultation and Collaboration Between Classroom Teachers and Educational Assistants in British Columbia- A mixed methods study

Consent for Participation
You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Kamelia Dousti, Master of Education in Special Education student at Vancouver Island University. The research being conducted is in fulfilment of the thesis component of the program. The objective of the research study is to explore the perceptions of classroom teachers and educational assistants/teacher assistants regarding the collaboration and consultation of teaching practices throughout British Columbia school districts.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete a 20-30 minute online survey. Survey questions focus on collaborative and consultative relationships between teachers and EA/TAs. Participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer and you can withdraw your participation at any time by not submitting your responses. Once you submit your responses, however, the information you have provided cannot be removed from the study results. There are no known or anticipated risks from participating in this study. It is important for you to know that any information that you provide is strictly confidential and anonymous. All of the data will be summarized and no individual can/will be identified from these summarized results. However, your answers from the open-ended questions may be quoted in the thesis. As a result, given the relatively small study population, quotations are potentially attributable to individual participants, so your anonymity cannot be guaranteed. The survey service is called esurv.org. Furthermore, the survey has been programmed by the researcher to collect responses alone and will not collect any information that could potentially identify. Please visit the server’s privacy policy for more information.

The data collected from this study will be maintained by the researcher in her password-protected personal computer. The survey will be deleted from esurv.org by August 2016, and the data collected will be deleted by August 30, 2019. Should you have any questions about the study, please contact Kamelia Dousti (kdoustee@stumail.viu.ca), or her supervisor, Dr. Mary Ann Richards (MaryAnn.Richards@viu.ca).

If you have any concerns or questions about your treatment as a participant in this research, please contact the VIU Research Ethics Advisor at reb@viu.ca or by telephone at (250) 753-3245 ext. 2665. To keep a copy of this consent statement, you may use the print screen button and save it as a PDF file for your records. Thank you for considering participation in this study.

60
I have read the above information and understand it. I know I can skip/omit questions or withdraw at any time. I understand that by submitting this survey, I consent to participate in this research.

☐ I agree to participate ☐ I do not wish to participate (end of survey)

1. Gender

☐ Male  ☐ Female

2. Are you currently employed as a classroom teacher in British Columbia?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

3. Please choose the school district in which you are currently employed. If your district is not listed, please specify below.

   Central Region- 27,28, 57, 58, 73, 74
   Conseil Scolaire Francophone-93
   Fraser Valley- 33, 34, 42, 48, 75, 78
   Independent School
   Kootenay Region- 5, 6, 8, 10, 20, 51
   Metro Region- 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 43, 44, 45
   Northern - 49, 50, 52, 54, 59, 60, 81, 82, 87, 91, 92
   Okanagan- 19, 22, 23, 53, 67, 83
   Vancouver Island- 46, 47, 61, 62, 63, 64, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 79, 84, 85
   Other (please specify) ______

4. What grade do you teach? (Choose all that apply)

☐ Pre-School
☐ K-5
☐ 6-8
☐ 9-12

5. How long have you worked in an educational setting?
☐ This is my first year teaching
☐ 2-5 years
☐ 6-10 years
☐ 11-15 years
☐ 16 or more years

6. What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed? If currently enrolled, highest degree received.

☐ Diploma
☐ Bachelor’s
☐ Master’s
☐ Doctoral
☐ Other

7. Have you ever worked with an educational assistant (EA) or a teacher assistant (TA) in a classroom?
☐ Yes ☐ No

8. How many years have you worked with EA/TA(s)?

☐ 1
☐ 2
☐ 3
☐ 4
☐ 5-9
☐ 10 or more

9. In your current classroom(s), how many EA/TAs do you work with throughout the day?

☐ 0
☐ 1
☐ 2
☐ 3
☐ 4
☐ 5 or more
10. Approximately how many hours per day do EA/TA(s) work in your classroom?
- Less than 2 hours
- Between 2-4 hours
- More than 5 hours

11. How often do you have informal planning meetings with the EA/TA?
   (These can be on the playground, the hallway, lunchroom...they are not pre-planned).
   - Everyday
   - 3-4 times a week
   - 1-2 times a week
   - Every other week
   - Once a month
   - We don’t have informal planning meetings

12. Do you meet with the EA/TA(s) to do the following:
    If “yes” or “sometimes” is chosen please indicate if it is paid or unpaid time and when it occurs (Check all that apply).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>During School Hours</th>
<th>Before or After School Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegation of responsibilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritizing Tasks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing Schedules</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing on-the-job training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing conflict</td>
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<td>Solving problems</td>
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</table>
13. During your undergraduate or graduate training did you take courses that were dedicated to working with EA/TAs?

☐ Yes (how many) _____

☐ No

☐ I do not know

14. While employed as a teacher, did you take any other courses/workshops dedicated to working with other team members?

☐ Yes (how many) _____

☐ No

Open-ended questions: Please answer these questions to the best of your ability and with as much detail as possible. If you would rather not respond please indicate by writing N/A.

15. Describe the ways you communicate with the EA/TA(s) that you currently work with?

16. How would you define consultation and collaboration as a professional educator?

17. Describe any types of professional development you have participated in while employed in your district that dealt with working with other members of a team.

18. Do you collaborate and consult regularly with EA/TA(s)? If yes, how many times per week?

19. Are there other factors at the school level that could improve consultation and collaboration with EA/TA(s)? Please specify.

20. What issues may prohibit you from consulting and collaborating with an EA/TA?

21. Do you need any support to improve your consultative and collaborative relationship with EA/TA(s)? If yes, what types of support? If no, why not?

22. In what ways do you feel that the EA/TAs skills and knowledge are valued as members of a consultative and collaborative team?

23. What recommendations would you have for improving consultation and collaboration with the EA/TA(s)?
24. If you have any other comments in regards to consultation and collaboration with teachers that you would like to share please do so below:
Appendix 5

EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANT SURVEY

Consultation and Collaboration Between Classroom Teachers and Educational Assistants in British Columbia- A mixed methods study

Consent for Participation
You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Kamelia Dousti, Master of Education in Special Education student at Vancouver Island University. The research being conducted is in fulfilment of the thesis component of the program. The objective of the research study is to explore the perceptions of classroom teachers and educational assistants/teacher assistants regarding the collaboration and consultation of teaching practices throughout British Columbia school districts.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete a 20-30 minute online survey. Survey questions focus on collaborative and consultative relationships between teachers and EA/TAs. Participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer and you can withdraw your participation at any time by not submitting your responses. Once you submit your responses, however, the information you have provided cannot be removed from the study results. There are no known or anticipated risks from participating in this study. It is important for you to know that any information that you provide is strictly confidential and anonymous. All of the data will be summarized and no individual can/will be identified from these summarized results. However, your answers from the open-ended questions may be quoted in the thesis. As a result, given the relatively small study population, quotations are potentially attributable to individual participants, so your anonymity cannot be guaranteed. The survey service is called esurv.org. Furthermore, the survey has bee programmed by the researcher to collect responses alone and will not collect any information that could potentially identify. Please visit the server’s privacy policy for more information.

The data collected from this study will be maintained by the researcher in her password-protected personal computer. The survey will be deleted from esurv.org by August 2016, and the data collected will be deleted by August 30, 2019. Should you have any questions about the study, please contact Kamelia Dousti (kdouste@stumail.viu.ca), or her supervisor, Dr. Mary Ann Richards (MaryAnn.Richards@viu.ca).

If you have any concerns or questions about your treatment as a participant in this research, please contact the VIU Research Ethics Advisor at reb@viu.ca or by telephone at (250) 753-3245 ext. 2665. To keep a copy of this consent statement, you may use the print screen button and save it as a PDF file for your records. Thank you for considering participation in this study.
I have read the above information and understand it. I know I can skip/omit questions or withdraw at any time. I understand that by submitting this survey, I consent to participate in this research.

☐ I agree to participate ☐ I do not wish to participate (end of survey)

1. Gender

☐ Male ☐ Female

2. Are you currently employed as an EA/TA in British Columbia?

☐ Yes ☐ No

3. Please choose the school district in which you are currently employed. If your district is not listed, please specify below.

Central Region- 27,28, 57, 58, 73, 74
Conseil Scolaire Francophone-93

Fraser Valley- 33, 34, 42, 48, 75, 78
Independent School
Kootenay Region- 5, 6, 8, 10, 20, 51
Metro Region- 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 43, 44, 45
Northern - 49, 50, 52, 54, 59, 60, 81, 82, 87, 91, 92
Okanagan - 19, 22, 23, 53, 67, 83
Vancouver Island- 46, 47, 61, 62, 63, 64, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 79, 84, 85

Other (please specify) ______

4. In what grades do you work? (Choose all that apply)

☐ Pre-School
☐ K-5
☐ 6-8
☐ 9-12
5. How long have you worked as an EA/TA?

☐ This is my first year
☐ 2-5 years
☐ 6-10 years
☐ 11-15 years
☐ 16 or more years

6. What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?
   If currently enrolled, highest degree received.

☐ Certificate
☐ Diploma
☐ Bachelor
☐ Masters
☐ Other

7. In how many classrooms do you currently work?

☐ 1
☐ 2
☐ 3
☐ 4
☐ 5 or more

8. About how many hours total per day do you work in the classroom(s)?

☐ Less than 2 hours
☐ Between 2-4 hours
☐ More than 5 hours
9. In your training did you take courses that were dedicated to working with classroom teachers? If yes, how many?

☐ Yes (how many) _____

☐ No

☐ I do not know

10. Have you had other training while employed as an EA/TA, dedicated to working with other team members?

☐ Yes (how many) _____

☐ No

11. Do you meet with the classroom teacher to do the following: If “yes” or “sometimes” is chosen please indicate if it is paid or unpaid time and when it occurs.

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<th>Yes</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Paid time</th>
<th>Unpaid time</th>
<th>During School Hours</th>
<th>Before or After School Hours</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Prioritizing Tasks</td>
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<td>Receiving on-the-job training</td>
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<td>Receiving feedback</td>
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12. How often do you have informal planning meetings with the classroom teacher(s)? (These can be on the playground, the hallway, lunchroom...they are not pre-planned).
   □ Every day
   □ 3-4 times a week
   □ 1-2 times a week
   □ Every other week
   □ Once a month
   □ We don’t have informal planning meetings

Open-ended questions: Please answer all questions to the best of your ability and as much detail as possible. If you would rather not respond please indicate by writing n/a.

13. Describe the ways you communicate with the classroom teacher(s) that you currently work with?
14. How would you define consultation and collaboration?
15. Describe any types of professional development you have participated in while employed in your district that dealt with working with other members of the team.
16. Do you collaborate and consult regularly with the classroom teacher(s)? If yes, how many times a week?
17. Are there other factors at the school level that could improve consultation and collaboration with teacher(s)? Please specify.
18. What issues may prohibit you from consulting and collaborating with the classroom teacher(s)?
19. Do you need any support to improve your consultative and collaborative relationship with the classroom teacher(s)? If yes, what types of support? If no, why?
20. In what ways do you feel that your skills and knowledge are valued as members of a consultative and collaborative team?
21. What recommendations would you have for improving consultation and collaboration with the classroom teacher(s)?
22. If you have any other comments in regards to consultation and collaboration with teachers that you would like to share please do so below:
Appendix 6

TWITTER RECRUITMENT

#BCTeachers & EAs, be part of a research study on #Consultation & #Collaboration. Share your experience! URL

#BCTeachers & BC EA/TAs! Take part in a research #survey on #Consultation & #Collaboration. Make your voice heard! URL

Calling #BCTeachers & BC EA/TAs! 20-30min #survey. Take part! URL #Consultation #Collaboration

#BCTeachers & BC EA/TAs! Have u taken this #survey? Share ur experience! URL #Consultation #Collaboration

#recruitingnow #BCTeachers & BC EA/TAs! #survey on #Consultation & #Collaboration. Only 20-30 mins. Make ur voice heard! URL

__ days left #BCTeachers & BC EA/TAs! Take #survey now on #Consultation & #Collaboration. Build understanding! URL