

# Expected Roles, Responsibilities And Interdependency Between A Shadow Teacher And A General Teacher In Mainstream Education.

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## Abstract

*The term inclusion is not only subjected to the provision of educational opportunities for the disabled and underprivileged child by providing them a different, special, reasonable and high quality learning experience and segregating them from the main stream education but a broad term which foster inclusion of a special child amidst a normal classroom by providing him/her the same kind of environment, need and support in correspondence and alongside with the other same aged students. Amongst the various provisions which foster the inclusion of a special child in a regular classroom, one of the very effective ways is to associate a shadow teacher with the child. The association of a shadow teacher to the special child and the coexistence with the other students and a regular teacher within a single roof comes with a variety of individual and shared responsibilities. This paper discusses the variety of roles, responsibilities, needs and expected part a shadow teacher plays in an inclusive classroom.*

**Keywords:** *Shadow teachers, Inclusive education, Special educators, collaborative classroom teachers, ADHD, Autism*

## Introduction

Inclusive education in layman's language means education for all irrespective of cast, creed, sex and any disability. All the children in today's era are the future citizens of tomorrow therefore irrespective of the fact that they are disabled or not, either belong to a certain stratum of society or are physically emotionally/ psychologically challenged, all have the right to education up-to fourteen years of age. Many people think that the term inclusive education is only for the disabled students -and it means education for the disabled children. But the term inclusive education has a broader concept. It means to include all the children of the society in the education process. Moreover

children with disabilities and special needs are themselves not only deprived of basic ailments but also are subjected to face disparagement in public spheres. This might be because of the prejudices built against the disabled and special children, lack of recognition, lack of training and awareness programs provided to the teachers, attitudinal barriers, social constructs and rigid curriculums. Hence, by inculcating the values of inclusion in Indian education system, the focus of various schools today has been centered towards meeting the learning needs of all types of learners by providing them the same and equal number of opportunities and experiences as of what has been provided to the student in general education settings. The aim is to help them reach their full potential, foster holistic

development of the child and cater their individual requirements, by fulfilling their basic rights to education and making them a part of mainstream educational setup.

In an inclusive classroom, the concept of human diversity is embraced at ground level where teachers act as a mediator in building connection of the child with diverse needs/belonging to diverse culture and races, to the general classroom setup and provide guidance and support in encouraging these children's genuine and valued participation .(2) This can be done by creating a flexible curriculum and adapting it significantly to provide support to each child's academic, physical, mental, cognitive, emotional, behavioral and social development by gradually identifying their strengths and altering the methods of teaching, techniques used in classroom setting. For an instance adding more images and using visual aids to foster the need of a visually impaired child or children who couldn't find it easy to grasp from text-based material/content. A teacher can also provide worksheets, supplementary learning aids, flashcards for children with short attention span etc. Amidst these innumerable methods of catering the individual needs of a learner in a diverse classroom, one very authentic and successful one is the association of shadow teachers to the special child in regular classroom setting to ensure the development of child with the rest of the class is not hindered due to his or her special requirements.

A shadow teacher can be defined as para-educators/an educational assistant/co-teachers or teacher's aid who provide one on one assistance to the child with special needs during the early stages of education. These educators are responsible to identify the individual needs of the learners,

their level of mental, social and behavioural understanding, variety of learning disparities and disabilities and provision of ailments, support, guidance and assistance throughout the learning process to help them evolve alongside the regular students by focusing on their academic, social and behavioral skills . They help a child in achieving and grasping some or all the opportunities as well as experiences that a mainstream classroom has to offer and receiving extra attention and guidance simultaneously. They foster child's interaction in the classroom, helps them build a network, assist them in their work and are extensively trained to help a child in getting up with the rest of the fellow students and peers. These special educators are needed when in a classroom with learners of diverse need and attention, simple instructions are difficult to contemplate and to be executed as per the academic ability of the child. Here the role of a shadow teacher is to provide one on one assistance and help a child in accomplishing the task in time, process information provides cues and signals . They also act as a connector between the teacher, fellow classmates and the guardians or parents of the child. They not only report daily child's progress but also establish a rapport with the child and help the child in functioning independently to foster long-term goals . This paper pays emphasis on perceptions of general teachers regarding special educators, what roles they have, how are their responsibilities similar, different, or shared by the general class teacher and how are their availability hindered or fostered. It also pays emphasis on how both the teachers work individually and interdependently within a classroom. The study concludes with the responses given by the teacher trainees, as per their understanding of the concept, need for and importance of a shadow teacher. The paper also pays emphasis on the importance of collaborative

learning in classroom which not only covers how a child learns in a classroom with respect to his relationship with his/ her peers, or a more knowledgeable other but also with many concerns professed by both shadow as well as general class teacher.

### Literature review

In the research paper *Role of Shadow Teacher in the provision of Academic and Social Support for Children with Special Needs at Inclusive Schools* by Abdul Hamid, Hafiz Muhammad Irshad-Ullah and Zikra Faiz, the researchers talked about the roles and responsibility of shadow teachers for the social, educational and behavioral development of a special child. They laid importance on developing programs and providing guidance and recognition to shadow teacher, despite having a significant job how they are merely viewed as supplement teachers. Shadow teachers provide support to develop LSRW skills, peer to peer interaction, time management and developing collaborative and coordinating skills in a child. They help a child in developing social understanding and facilitate learning, the discussion signifies the difference between academic support and social support provided to the children. Majority of the participants (39-45%) thought with the help shadow teachers many academic skills develop in a child in inclusive schools. The role of a shadow teacher is to help the mainstream children at school by helping fill in the holes in the learning procedure, to enable the children to fabricate self-confidence, just as to advance positive association in the study hall by helping the children center around significant ideas, and generally help the kids to create scholarly and social abilities.

In the article, *The Role of a Shadow Teacher*

*in the education of Autistic Individuals* by Gaurav Kant Goel, he has shared his experience as a father of an autistic child, paying emphasis on the role of a special educator, he has shared his insights and experience on how the student's IEP team which comprises the special educator, physical, behavioral and speech and occupational therapists works on his individualized goals while a shadow teacher works on his/her academic, social and behavioral goals. In his article he shares some anecdotal references and tips on how instructions or prompts are being used as a major technique to make students learn any skill. The article concludes some very crucial roles a shadow teacher plays in a child's life which includes bridging a gap between peers, sensitizing other students regarding the individual needs of the autistic child, providing sensory diets, clues, and language instructions .

In the research work, *A proposed Conception to Develop the Professional Competencies of the Shadow Teacher According to the Techniques of The TEACCH program*, by Aya Mohamed Elrashidy, the researcher gave a descriptive overview of the varied skills, professional competencies required by a shadow teacher and what are the various Problems that shadow teachers face due to lack of experience and good preparation. It also shows how TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children) helps a shadow teacher in developing the desired skills and attributes required to cater the need of an autistic child in the mainstream classroom for example by using constructivist education to encourage communication skills, social skills, playing skills and attention, Training the parents through their participation in designing the child's sessions etc .

### Objectives of The Research:

- To identify the differences and similarities between the responsibilities shared and perceived by a regular teacher and shadow teacher in a general classroom setting.
- To discuss the need for and importance of shadow teachers in schools.
- To analyze the role of a shadow teacher in the light of a varied background of the learners.
- To analyse the rate of interdependence and collaboration between a shadow teacher and a general teacher in mainstream education.

### Research Questions:

How are the roles and responsibility of a regular class teacher different, similar or shared with that of a shadow teacher?

What is collaborative teaching, how inclusive schools have adopted it.

What are the various factors that impact the inclusion, practises and availability of shadow teachers in school?

What are the various circumstances which foster the need of a shadow teacher?

### Research Methodology:

The research followed a descriptive approach where literature is reviewed regarding the roles and responsibilities of a shadow teacher in compliance with that of a normal teacher, in an inclusive set-up. The study also discussed various circumstances which hinder or foster the availability of a shadow teacher by referring to various literary work on different type of learners.

To support the findings, a questionnaire was prepared and data was collected from pre-service teachers, in order to explore the individual and collaborative teaching roles and responsibilities of both, a special educator and a general teacher, and to know about the perceptions of teachers regarding the shadow teachers and their attitude towards inclusion. The questionnaire was divided into two sections, one carrying questions based on teacher's perception regarding inclusion and the other focusing on roles of a shadow teacher and a general class teacher in a single classroom.

### Limitation:

The study was limited to the collection of data by preservice teacher trainees who have already been a part of inclusive classrooms and few who have not yet been a part of it. The research was limited to the perspective of teachers and based on their understanding of the concept of inclusion, whereas different perspectives from school authorities, administrators, co-ordinators, or educational professionals might have added more authenticity to the work.

### Theoretical Framework

The social learning theories not only help us understand how people can foster learning in social contexts by gathering and synthesizing information from each other but also informs us on how we, as educators can construct a strong and affective learning community. The social learning theory given by a Russian teacher and psychologist, Lev Vygotsky in 1962, states that we learn from our surroundings and through or communication and exchange of thoughts/ interactions with others. Examining how our social surroundings influence our learning process, Vygotsky suggested that

learning of a child in a classroom is dependent upon the kind of interactions he have with his peers, teachers, and other authorities. Hence a role of a teacher in constructing knowledge of a learner is not only confined to books or to the classroom discourse but also on their ability to maximize the learner's capacity to have discussion, interact with others, collaborate and learn through taking feedbacks . This theoretical background implies learning as a social process that takes place within a society or culture and school being considered as a miniature of society, a child knowledge is constructed and evolves in his social context through interactions and joint attempts of all, peers, teachers, experts, authorities etc .

The concept of sociocultural theory laid the foundation of cooperative learning and gave rise to social interdependence theory. It comes into practice when individuals share a common goal and their outcomes are affected by the consequences of other's action. There are three conditionals that describes the types of social interdependence- Cooperation, competition, and individual efforts . The positive interdependence which consequently promotes interaction is 'Cooperation'. It exists when people work together in order to achieve the desired shared goal hence the individual's achievements are positively correlated. In cooperatively structured situation, an individual tends to accomplish and strive to achieve outcomes that are equally favorable for all those with whom one is associated or cooperatively linked.

The Oppositional interaction that arises due to negative interdependence is called 'Competition' which exists when individuals work against each other to accomplish a desired goal despite it being achievable by only one.

When the situation is structured individually with no interdependence and results in no interaction it is termed as individual efforts. it occurs when each individual is responsible for his own success, work by themselves to accomplish goals that are not related to what others might have set. In this there is no correlation amongst the participants and their achievement of goal. Hence they seek consequences that are personally beneficial and have no interference or concerns with that of others. cooperative learning can be seen as byproducts of social interdependence theory and undertake the role of teachers in formal and informal setting, as a facilitator who not only is responsible for instructing students effectively but also in creating a cooperative and conducive environment in the classroom.

Johnson et al.(2014) saw cooperative learning as a collaborative task that promotes interaction in order to achieve desirable shared outcomes in cooperative context to achieve maximum potential in learning. This approach is built upon immensely collaborative efforts and relationship of a teacher in classroom with the students, other faculties, and experts. Hence these postulates can be the foundational principles for an effective teaching environment which formulates the requirements of a teacher to cooperate, collaborate, connect, construct, observe and share experiences effectively and profoundly .

The focus of the study is derived from the perceived roles of general and shadow teacher, how they collaborate, cooperate, monitor, analyses, and evaluate in an inclusive classroom or a collaborative teaching setup. The attitudes and perceptions of teachers have been explored, with respect to expected roles and responsibilities

towards the special children who are included in the mainstream education to facilitate and provide further insights for both in-service and pre-service teachers .

### **Perceived Roles, Responsibilities, and need of Shadow Teachers**

The shadow teacher is referred to as a para teacher or a skilled professional who works alongside the general class teacher and aims to provide the desired social, behavioral, emotional, and academic support to the child in need and care in a general classroom .

#### **Roles of A shadow teacher in an inclusive classroom is to help her/his student in-**

- Staying focused on studies, during lectures, while listening to instructions etc.
- Actively participating in the class.
- Completing the classroom activities by providing appropriate guidance.
- Displaying appropriate behaviours.
- Successfully function in an environment where he/she can be easily distracted.
- Improving communication.
- Respond appropriately to his/her peers, other social situations.
- Prompting to initiate conversations.
- Learn about the interests, nature, and names of the classmates.
- Being encouraged to act independently.
- Achieving additional attention.
- Keeping a check upon the success and developments of one's own, by reviewing the

child's development and monitoring his /her interactions .

- Getting adapted to the teaching curriculum by individualising techniques.
- Understanding the dynamics of social interactions.
- Bridging the gap between him/ her and the teacher or peers.
- Coping up with others by accessing the additional aids like supplementary worksheets, flashcards, prompts, handouts provided by the shadow teacher for better understanding of course material .

Hence role of a shadow teacher should be to provide support to the students, the teachers, the organisation and should provide clear and easy instructions A shadow teacher understands a variety of learning gaps and allows a special child to attend a mainstream class as well as availing the extra attention, requirements and needs being catered. The teacher not only helps the child by getting along with him/ her personally but also help him/her in maintaining relationships and getting assistance in schoolwork, activities and various required platforms. He/she works as a professional and helps children with varied forms of disabilities like specific learning disorders, autism spectrum disorder, dyslexia, ADHD, behavioral issues, intellectual disabilities, or emotional disorders.

#### **A shadow teacher to be affectively professional should be-**

- Experienced in working with the children with disabilities.
- Having significant knowledge and experience in handling/ managing and analysing child's

behaviour.

- Possessing the ability to facilitate peer interactions, encourage relationships and play.
- Able to wisely chose when a child require interdependency and when he/she is supposed to let loose.
- Collaborative in nature and must have the ability to communicate with the regular teacher constructively.
- Adaptive towards the changes.
- Able to share responsibilities of a child with the regular classroom.
- Identify the needs, basic requirements, and characteristics of the special child.
- Coordinate with the regular teacher.
- Able to reduce behavioural problems faced by the child and maximize social interactions.
- Trained.

**Shared responsibilities with the regular class teacher-**

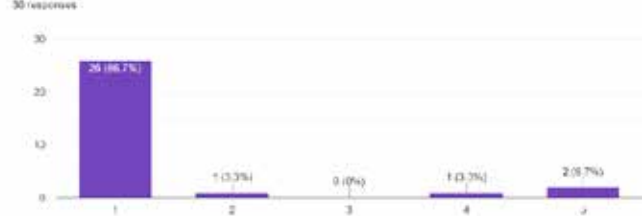
- The shadow teacher develops a new and systematically designed curriculum based upon the needs and requirement of the special child with the help of the regular teacher by making minor changes to the one prepared for the rest of the class.
- The shadow teacher and the general teacher should adopt co-teaching methods and are subjected to be present in the classroom together. Their cooperation in learning and teaching process helps the child in maintaining a healthier connection with the rest of the class’s performance.
- Special educators evaluate the child’s dai-

ly performance and also report the same to the regular class teacher in order to track the child’s progress and development with respect to the objectives set by his/ her expert teams.

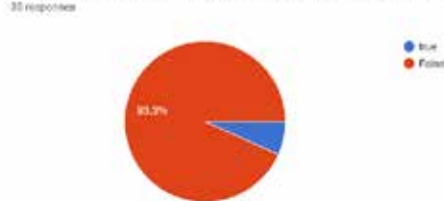
- They help the student in realising their own potential, uniqueness and abilities and also helps the regular teacher in realizing the importance of inclusion in classroom.

**Result and Analysis.**

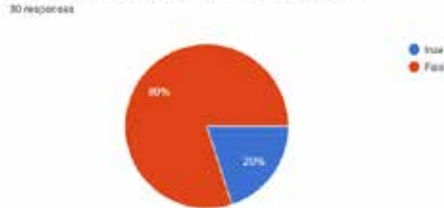
The inclusive schools facilitates the progress of each child irrespective of their ability/ caste/background/social, emotional and behavioral disparities.



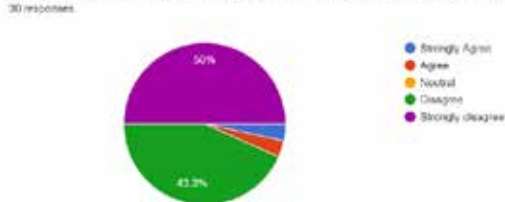
I'm uncomfortable with the notion of including special children in general classroom.



A general curriculum can meet each individual's need?



Children with disabilities should be taught separately in different classrooms and setups?



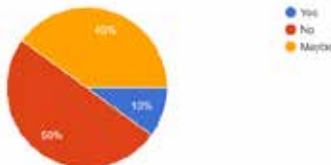
Due to rejection of students, it's permissible to locate them in secluded environments?  
30 responses



Integration of special children into general classroom is possible if the necessary support is available.  
30 responses

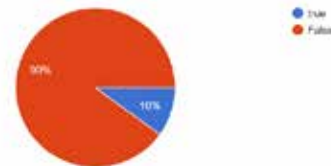


Special children need special schools.  
30 responses



### Roles and responsibilities of both the teachers (Shadow +General)

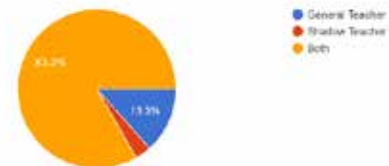
Inclusion solely means having different schools, classrooms, educators, curriculum and teachers for the special children.  
30 responses



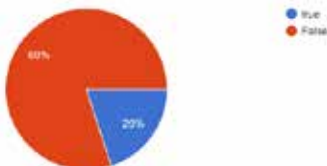
Due to rejection of students, it's permissible to locate them in secluded environments?  
30 responses



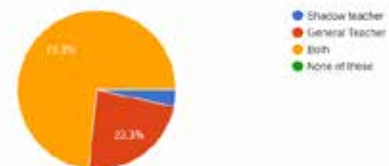
Who is responsible for "planning" an inclusive classroom in general setting?  
30 responses



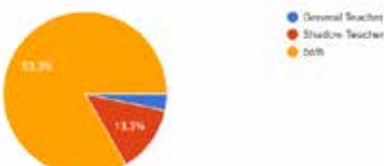
A general curriculum can meet each individual's need?  
30 responses



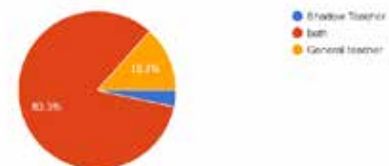
Demonstrate Hands on Techniques  
30 responses



Who is responsible for "behavioral management" in an inclusive classroom in general setting?  
30 responses



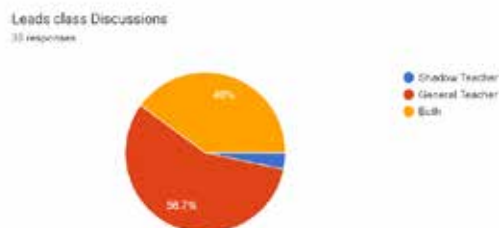
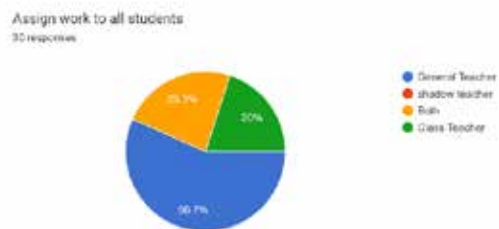
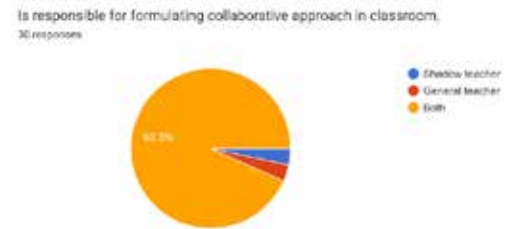
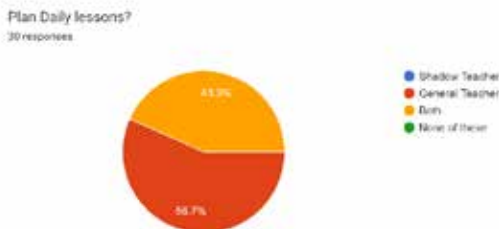
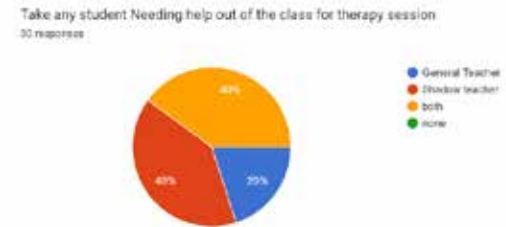
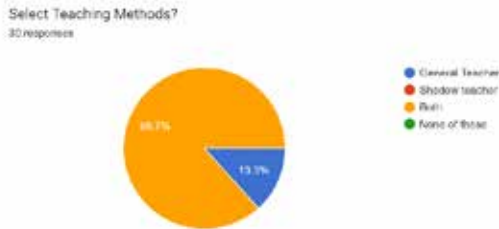
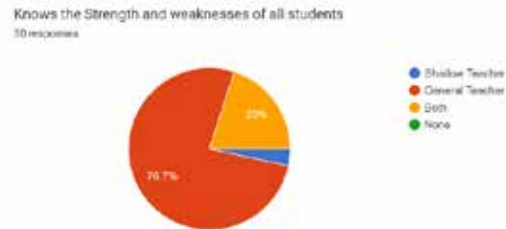
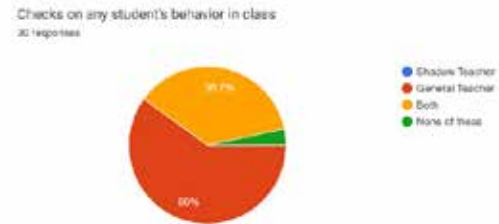
Who selects teaching methods in an inclusive classroom?  
30 responses



Who works directly with the special education students during the classroom discourse?  
30 responses







### Interpretation-

The results clearly depict that the preservice teachers are aware of the concept of inclusion, 90% of the sample results in favor of including a special child in general classroom and support the idea of inclusion in mainstream schools. The teachers are also comfortable with the presence of a special child in their classroom and hence evolving, manipulating, designing and adapting new curriculum for the same. The second section which comprises of questions pertaining to individual and shared roles of a general teacher and a shadow teacher also support the theory of collaboration and cooperation amongst the teachers. The responses given regarding duties of both teachers majorly reflect shared roles in an inclusive classroom. The only duties for a shadow teacher that are constrained to individual role are subjected to her/his association with the child and

revolves around his performance, behavior and progress in the classroom where as individual roles of a general teacher are pertaining to addressing the entire class, building and encouraging discussion forums and other activities in respect to each child and any child in the class. All the other concepts which range from selecting procedures of planning, organizing, evaluating and assessing a special child's learning in the classroom are shared by both the teacher, they collaboratively work to adapt and inculcate the best suitable techniques, methods and approach of teaching so that not only the special one but also each child in classroom is targeted and achieve success.

To conclude it can be seen that all the roles that require one on one assistance are subjected to the shadow teacher but the ones which require inputs, suggestions and are directed towards the goals for the entire class are expected out of a general teacher. Moreover they both work in compliance with each other to foster learning of each child and achieve maximum results by coordinating, collaborating and sharing their roles and responsibilities. In order to foster a better and conducive environment for both child and the teachers to exist all together in a class as a whole and not like fragmented entities it is essential to propagate the importance of collaboration and constructivism as well the notion of inclusion which is much beyond that just a mere idea of establishing special schools for child with variety of needs.

## **Conclusion**

The cooperative learning focuses on five major characteristics of collaboration and cooperation. These include- positive interdependence or Cooperation; one on one or face to face interaction; individual efforts or accountability;

group processing; and social skills pertaining to interpersonal or small groups. Hence these signifies the teaching approach to be followed or inculcated in inclusive classrooms, a joint venture of both the shadow teacher and the general teacher, where they both work for the development and progression of a special child. The second component reflects the physical and verbal interaction that takes place between the child and the teacher, between the special child and the shadow teacher, the special child and his peers, and between the shadow teacher and the regular teacher where they all communicate to accomplish the group goals. Another component which comprises of individual efforts and accountability can be seen in three terms and emphasizes the role of the shadow teacher and the regular teacher individually, how she/he teaches, the techniques she/he adopted, methods she uses and his/her approach hence each teacher performs their responsibilities. Followed by interpersonal which allows every teacher to exist socially, collaborate, assess their progress and also maintain a healthy relationship with other teachers. Lastly the interpersonal and social skills reflects the amalgamation of trust building, continuous and clear communication, collaboration, support and conflict resolutions amongst the teachers in order to ensure their jointly work together as a team for fulfilling the desired objectives.

These factors are known to most of preservice and Inservice teachers but they fail in practicing it in general. Each individual thinks that they have confined set of roles and responsibilities pertaining to a child's education and in compliance to that they plan, organize, and evaluate their lessons accordingly. Amidst the various roles and responsibilities where a general class teacher is seen having distinct notion, roles and responsibilities

when it comes to an inclusive classroom, various preservice teachers who are aware of the factors that laid the foundation of inclusion, chose making of curriculum, selecting techniques, worksheets, evaluation process and planning as an integrated and collaborative work where both the teachers work for the desired one end goal. While issues like discipline, catering to the individual need of the special child, contemplating thoughts, processing information, interpreting visual, verbal cues and supplementary aids are subjected to be addressed by the shadow teacher

Although each individual have a different aim, varied set of objectives and different techniques of teaching, but both work for the same cause that is enhancing the learning experience of a special child in mainstream classroom, hence instead of classifying the roles, responsibilities and duties of each, the shadow teacher's and the general teacher's, a cooperative approach towards teaching should be adapted, where both the teachers in a general classroom are interdependent of each other and aims to work in cohesion. The result implies that although earlier the idea of inclusive education was seen as a separate service, not as a cohesive work of collaboration, cooperation, communication and understanding between both the kinds of teachers but due to the increase amount of knowledge and the recently emerged values of inclusion has led the teachers understand the gravity of collaborative work and the essence of sharing responsibilities of a special child in mainstream education. Although sometimes despite being aware of the demand of the hour both the kind of teachers try to avail and embrace their individual roles in the classroom, but this has recently been tackled and various joint programs, trainings and general training courses have been introduced to embrace the values of

inclusion, promote positive attitude towards it as well as fostering collaborative learning where roles of a general teacher is also shared by a shadow teacher.

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