

ROLE DETERMINANTS OF TEACHERS
OF THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

By

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ABSTRACT

The trend to mainstream visually impaired students in British Columbia over the last seven years has resulted in new teacher roles--those of itinerant or resource room teachers. Changing caseloads, teaching technology and philosophy have created a dynamic milieu in which such teachers operate. This study was undertaken to fill a gap in exploratory research data on some of the factors that determine the role of these teachers in this province. A questionnaire was designed and completed by the 44 teachers of the visually impaired in British Columbia.

Results of the study gave information from 40 responding teachers regarding teaching training characteristics, work setting, details on the size and characteristics of caseloads and the orientation of services. A beginning was also made in determining some common concerns and issues in the field. The need for further research in many of these areas in addition to role definition was suggested to be of benefit to both specialist teachers and other professionals with whom they consult.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Attitudes toward the blind in society evolved over many hundreds of years, from periods of exclusion through protection and finally to some form of integration. The climate in society's attitudes towards handicapped and minorities changed. The blind themselves were partially responsible for the emancipation of their ranks. In their fields of expertise some gifted individuals made outstanding contributions to society. The invention of new technology and improved communication systems moved blind people into industry, private enterprise and the professions--from areas where they had traditionally sought employment (Lowenfeld, 1973). These movements gave rise to improved mobility techniques which like communication technology have continued to be refined and developed and now constitute specialized areas of instruction for visually impaired individuals.

Schools for the Blind and Special Classes

The education of blind children grew historically through the need to protect these children in institutions where their specialized needs could be met. Through the work of certain individuals in an atmosphere of enlightened social consciousness, schools for the blind were established, at first in Europe and later in North America. It was commonly assumed that a blind student would be unable to handle the regular academic curriculum along with sighted peers. Anderson, Martinez, and Rich (1980),

mention that teachers and administrators generally believed children that were handicapped could make better progress and would be removed from social and academic pressure if a homogeneous grouping of such children were done. This, considering the state of the art regarding communications technology and the training of teachers at that time, was considered the only viable solution and it remained so right up until comparatively recently.

Development of Independence from the School for the Blind Model

While schools for the blind sprang up all over the world, there were still opponents of their philosophical assumptions who disputed this aspect of segregation of the blind from society. Some experimentation was done in Europe and North America to develop specialized classes for the blind within public schools.

Lowenfeld (1956) pointed to three main factors which favoured the establishment of braille classes in public schools: (1) the increasing integration of the blind into society; (2) the American high regard for public school education; and (3) growing recognition of the importance of family life for the individual child.

The Mainstreaming Trend

Educational practices reflected in part the values of society and more "humanitarian" influences could not help but have an effect on the segregation of handicapped children in special classes or schools. The trend of the 1960s and 1970s was to educate children in the least restrictive environment. Even some of the founders of schools for the blind also

considered public education for these children. Critics of schools for the blind often pointed to children being educated in these schools as if they were blind, being forced to read braille when it was becoming increasingly well known that, with suitable practice and good environmental conditions, learning through even a damaged or diseased eye could be achieved. The populations of visually impaired students served by these schools fluctuated with certain epidemics or conditions and with large numbers of children requiring education, a substantial need to provide some consistent delivery of educational service became apparent.

Mainstreaming in the United States

In 1975 President Ford signed Public Law 94-142, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. This piece of legislation together with input from education generally, parents, advocacy groups, and the courts gave impetus to mainstreaming movements already present in the educational system.

This law served as a statement of national policy. It ensured that every handicapped child, regardless of handicapping condition, has the right to a publicly supported, appropriate education. To help attain this goal, Congress provided the states with additional federal dollars to build a full continuum of services for all children (Hasazi, Rice & York, 1979). Along with legislation, provision for a team approach including parents in identifying and educating handicapped students was facilitated.

Mainstreaming in Canada

Here the concept of integration showed in various reports, among them the Commission on Emotional and Learning Disorders in Children (CELDIC, 1970) and Standards for Educators of Exceptional Children in Canada (1971). Unlike the United States, Canada does not have federal involvement in the education of the handicapped. In 1969, Ballance and Kendall found only one province--Nova Scotia--with mandatory legislation. As of 1980, six provinces have legislation described as mandatory. These are in order of proclamation: Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Newfoundland, Quebec, and Ontario (Goguen, 1980).

However, having such legislation does not guarantee the appropriate education for handicapped children. Educational practices and procedures in many cases can be still "up in the air" or haphazardly administered. Apart from the variability across the provinces in legislation, funding patterns for service delivery also vary and create differences in local policy.

Practice in British Columbia

In 1978 the Jericho Hill School for the Deaf and Blind became a school for the deaf only. Blind and severely visually impaired children were to be integrated into public school classes. A provincial coordinator for the visually impaired was appointed and a provincial resource centre for the visually impaired was established. Provincial appointments and facilities are administered by the Special Programs Branch of the Ministry of Education. While B.C. does not have compulsory legislation it is a matter of Ministry

of Education policy that every child is entitled to an education. Specific responsibility under section 155 of the School Act rests with the elected local board of school trustees of the district in which the child is resident. This Act requires each school board to provide the basic educational program in a variety of settings, using teachers in either regular or special assignments (Ministry of Education, Province of B.C. Special Programs, 1980). This means that within the province, special education services are non-prescriptive and variable from one school district to another, depending on local conditions and circumstances. Generally the model of services employed is a cascade system which offers a continuum of services thus increasing the probability of providing an appropriate education for visually handicapped children.

The Development of Teacher Training in B.C.

With the foregoing changes, an acute need for specialized teachers to facilitate integrated education for visually impaired children was created. To fill this need a diploma program at the University of British Columbia was developed in 1977. Until recently when the University of Western Ontario initiated a teacher training program, the U.B.C. program was the only university based teacher preparation program in this field in Canada. Many teachers of the visually impaired received their training outside of the country. On August 1978 a circular from the Ministry of Education recommended that teachers have: a valid B.C. certificate, a master's degree or equivalent diploma in the education of the visually impaired, and demonstrated skills in human relations and communications. While this sets

the tone for high quality trained professionals it is still only a recommendation.

Itinerant programs were developed, due to the diverse needs of the children and the often widespread geographical settings in which visually impaired children are located. Different models of service gave rise to varying job descriptions. The relatively low incidence of visual impairment combined with the special and diverse needs of this population created predominantly itinerant programs. Resource room programs for visually impaired children have been established in larger centres to help those requiring more intensive assistance. In practice both itinerant and resource room teachers serve similar populations in Canada. The teacher preparation program of the University of British Columbia is designed to train teachers to be itinerant, resource room or special class teachers of the visually impaired.

The Need and Rationale for the Study

Statement of the Problem

Although integrated education and mainstreaming is an accepted concept across Canada, we find that the guidelines for national policy are not set out in any national document. Csapo (1980) stated the following:

Special Education in Canada today is an intricate patchwork quilt of political accident, professional ambition and pedagogical oversight loosely bound together with provincial permissive or mandatory red tape and federal neglect. It is definitely not woven from the dissemination and knowledge about results of contemporary research nor the collective wisdom of special educators within districts (p. 215).

It is against this background that specialist teachers of the visually impaired must operate. Because of the looseness of policy, it is essential that their activities be monitored. It could be asked: Who is best able to do this? Administrators? Principals? Teachers themselves? If such monitoring is done, what guidelines are to be followed in this process? There has been a lack of research and study in this area although it is vital to provide an information base illuminating teacher role issues, skills and training as well as data concerning children's needs.

Recognizing this need my survey "Role Determinants of Teachers of the Visually Impaired" is an investigation of the factors that determine their role. It includes the following areas as it raises questions about: teacher or caseload characteristics, the percentage of time spent in seven teaching activities and within the three categories of direct service, assessment, and consultation. It studies the nature of time spent on the multi-handicapped portion of the caseload and asks questions about factors influencing time management and frequency and type of interpersonal contacts required by the job.

While success in programming by teachers of the visually impaired will be strengthened and given direction by special education laws and coherent policy, in the long run, competent and effective personnel are most likely to provide the best possible education to visually handicapped children. It is they who can delicately balance educational outcomes with children's needs in the face of integrated education. Training is obviously vitally important to their success for the specialist teacher plays a crucial role in mainstreaming. The titles resource consultant or specialist teacher of

the visually impaired do not necessarily describe specific or well defined positions within the administrative framework of special educational programs. It is therefore important for these special educators to document and evaluate their activities both as a means of clarifying their roles for other professionals and parents as well as for themselves. One way special educators of the visually impaired can facilitate interaction with related service personnel is to be comfortable and knowledgeable in their job.

A study of the role of itinerant teachers has not been done in British Columbia. From the experiences of specialist teachers of the visually impaired such a study is regarded as important, timely and necessary. It can provide a data base from which to deal with issues and concerns as well as strengthen the sense of professional identity among specialists. Many colleagues have expressed the need for more guidance from other professional colleagues. An itinerant teacher may have only infrequent contact with other itinerant teachers of visually impaired children. Others feel uncertain about the parameters of their roles. They are pioneers in a process where often ad hoc arrangements for services reflect "reactions to vocal pressure groups rather than systematic planning for all exceptional students" (Goguen & Leslie, 1980, p. 22). Some skills were formerly regarded as the domain of social workers, public administrators, psychologists or health care personnel (Bauer, 1977). These are the skills involved in counselling parents, vocational guidance, etc., that may fall to the itinerant teacher when no other assistance is locally available for blind or visually impaired children.

While local practices in special education support the integration and mainstreaming of handicapped children into regular classrooms, research is inconclusive on the academic value of mainstreaming (Anderson, Martinez & Rich, 1980). The values of mainstreaming include benefits to non-handicapped as well as the handicapped. "Non handicapped students and handicapped students together have an opportunity to learn the importance of sharing and caring for one another regardless of individual differences" (Allan & Sproul, 1981, p. 39). Handicapped children functioning in a regular class for all or part of the day with the help of an itinerant or resource teacher are not only freer of the stigma of being isolated a special class may bring, but their educational and social experiences can more closely approximate that of the non-handicapped peer group to which they can and must adjust for later vocational and personal success. To help clarify the role of the specialist teacher is therefore important for the continuing professional success of these teachers and ultimately to continue to make mainstreaming with its concomitant advantages to the child, work well.

Specific Needs or Concerns of the Study

A number of issues prompted this study.

1. Policy issues and research.
2. Teacher concerns; organization, time management, and role complexity.
3. The interaction of the specialist teachers with others.
4. Service to multi-handicapped children.
5. Vocational education.

Policy issues and research.

Policy may sometimes be regarded as an administrative burden. Abeson and Zettel (1977) note that:

Policy leads to definition of those children who are eligible to participate in programs; it defines the services to be provided, it leads to the specification of the nature and quantity of personnel to be made available for the delivery of services to eligible children; and finally it provides for the availability of resources such as dollars, space, and time to allow the above responsibilities to be implemented.

Specialist teachers in British Columbia do have some guidelines provided by the B.C. Ministry of Education's Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines. However for the most part, special educators have had to define their own roles depending on the type of children they serve and the types of services they provide. Individual teachers' definitions are often guided by their personalities, backgrounds, training and interests rather than by some definite policy. While many teachers have created interesting and satisfying interpretations of their roles, others have found it difficult to function. The recent trends of integration and mainstreaming have wrought changes fashioned from philosophical ideals rather than practical and organized approaches in education.

Reynolds (1981) mentions difficulties such as the provisions of P.L. 94-142 running well ahead of changes in the training of personnel for their new roles. Much research needs to be done on the utility and development of the mainstreaming concept.

Canadian special education is shaped in each province and although there are many similarities, there are important regional and provincial differences. This thesis explores the delivery system of educational services to visually impaired students in B.C.

The Ministry of Education in the province of British Columbia states in a publication entitled B.C. Education Special Programs (1980) that: "special educators have particular responsibilities for sustaining their professional awareness and development as a basis for changing programs to meet changing needs," (p. 8) and that importance is placed on "conducting evaluation and research activities to reflect new emphasis and to incorporate new knowledge to constantly improve special education and the quality of special services" (p. 9).

It is not clear as to who is responsible for evaluation or who can satisfactorily conduct such evaluation activities. Special education like all education must maintain an openness to necessary monitoring and change processes.

Teacher concerns: Organization, time management, and role complexity.

Josephine Taylor (1978) pointed out that new delivery systems may be required to meet changing needs. Taylor noted that itinerant teachers who have too small or too large and widespread caseloads find it difficult to serve children adequately.

On the other hand, where there is a single special class "the teachers of this type of class are often faced with children of too great a variation in age and developmental needs to be able to serve these children adequately" (Rogow, 1976, p. 20).

In speaking of support services Elizabeth Dillon-Peterson (1980) mentioned some of the problems of staff development in implementing new programs such as inadequate staff development programs, materials or on-site assistance not being in place, inadequate planning, or practical research material or a clinical centre for referral not being available.

The itinerant model designed for low incidence groups with specialized needs such as the visually impaired, seems to be the most viable approach, yet it lends itself to many problems. Among these are: time spent travelling as opposed to being in contact with the child, difficulty of interaction with other staff, difficulties of material production and distribution, professional isolation, and lack of supervisory contact. Stager (1978) suggests that such difficulties make it a problem to measure overall program effectiveness and he describes a self study questionnaire given to teachers of the visually handicapped and local educational administrators that may be helpful in monitoring such programs. Haight (1984) discusses a special education teacher consultant model which she feels may be untenable, as it is being implemented without certain provisions such as role definition at state and local levels, or professional preparation in consultation skills. Time management and role definition is included as an important part of this study.

The interaction of the specialist teacher with others.

Barraga (1981) called attention to the need for special educators to be effective members of a transdisciplinary team and asked "Can we begin to perceive ourselves as facilitators, synthesizers, and coordinators of

learning experiences for teachers rather than as dispensers of all knowledge needed to work with visually handicapped individuals?" (p. 99). The interaction with others is extended to other professionals, as well as parents. Bennett (1982) defined interaction with others in terms of the linkage between paediatrics and others in interdisciplinary roles. He notes the potential hazards and problems associated with this process, particularly in group interaction which can threaten the effectiveness of the interdisciplinary process. He described a situation where disciplines may outline their perceived areas of expertise and may respond negatively and defensively to sharing these or there may be differences in philosophical orientation, assessment and management. The dynamics of the special educator's role were discussed by Spungin (1978) who noted "the special education teacher must play a fluid role, sometimes acting as leader, but at all times being ready to play a supportive role in helping the team and the regular classroom teacher" (p. 11).

The role of principals in mainstreaming is increasingly recognized as crucial yet few guidelines exist for coordination between teachers who come from outside the school (itinerants) and principals. Principals need to be aware of the best educational practices for visually handicapped children (Clarke, 1984). Crossland, Fox and Baker (1982) distributed a questionnaire survey to class teachers, special education consultants, and educational appraisal personnel. The study found the greatest ambiguity existed in the role of the school principal as perceived by teachers. Teachers and principals reported confusion about the role of appraisal personnel who worked in an itinerant type setting. Role clarification is an issue which obviously requires specific attention.

The interaction between the specialist teacher and others such as parents, teachers, and persons from other disciplines is a key to effective management of the role. The survey reported here will present information on this interaction between itinerant teachers and other teachers, parents and professionals.

Service to multi-handicapped children.

The responsibility for multi-handicapped children rests with whom? Hart (1969) discusses the importance of teacher preparation in this area to ensure specialist teachers are equipped to deal with this responsibility. Bourgeault, Harley, and DuBose (1977) report on a program of service delivery for those children whose visual impairment is one of their primary handicapping conditions. What often needs to be understood about these children in addition to their special needs is that because the setting in which they are may have changed, a whole new set of challenges may exist for the specialist teachers and they must be equipped to deal with these.

This survey will look at the numbers of multi-handicapped children specialist teachers work with and the major form this takes when it is without a systematic framework of service delivery.

Vocational education.

Jenkins and Odle (1980) noted that there have been few programs combining vocational training resources with special education resources. Although "all of the educational activities of visually handicapped students can be considered as preparation for their future vocations; . . . these

students have special needs which should be met by the school program", (Misboch & Sweeney, 1970, p. 53).

Certain attitudes and skills can be more appropriately taught in the public schools than with later vocational rehabilitation and this must be done by someone familiar with the unique needs of visually handicapped students.

It will be interesting to see from results of the survey what part the specialist teacher plays in the area of vocational preparation which is included as one of seven teaching activities in Part II of the questionnaire.

Additional Related Research

A study done in the United States of morale among teachers of the visually handicapped, suggested a variety of sources of stress by these teachers. Isolation, type of service delivery entailing a lot of driving resulting in limited impact and slow progress in the case of multi-handicapped blind children were most frequently mentioned. Another finding indicated that more active and frequent supervision and expressions of appreciation by administrators would probably help in raising the morale of these teachers (Bina, 1982). It would seem that a good deal of appropriate interpersonal professional contact and involvement is important.

Davis (1982) found inability to develop effective time management strategies and inadequate development of effective communication skills with other professionals or parents and the syndrome of serving many masters simultaneously was frequently reported by itinerant teachers. These were a cause of frustration and anxiety for special education teachers. This study

was based on a survey of 450 practising special education teachers in 14 states and reported at least nine sources of frustration, one of these of relevance to my study being redefinition of role and expansion of responsibilities, with lack of direction and recognition by colleagues, supervisors and the public at large.

Dugoff, Ives and Shotel (1985) studied the relationship between the perceptions of resource room teachers, classroom teachers and principals working in the same school. They were concerned with the degree of emphasis placed on various role functions by the resource room teachers as they performed their jobs. These authors found significant differences for 6 of the 18 role functions they studied. This survey conducted in 23 elementary schools has implications for the resource room teacher to work more closely and effectively with regular class teachers.

A national survey was conducted by Spungin (1977) in the United States. Relying on data from 790 of the 1,933 questionnaires sent out reported the reactions of teachers of the visually handicapped in both public and residential schools. One important finding of this survey was that whichever title or program a teacher of the visually handicapped used as an identifying label bore little consistent relationship to the time spent on various teaching activities. By far the greatest time was spent by teachers providing instruction (approximately 50 percent). Spungin concluded that perhaps it was time for teacher educators to define the legitimate function of teachers of the visually handicapped more clearly and to attempt to educate the special education administrators as to the scope of their role. "For too long, teachers of the visually handicapped have attempted to be

all things to all people--from a tutor to a low vision specialist, to mention only two" (Spungin, 1977, p. 110).

A study done in Canada (Rogow, 1978) pointed to the complex role of itinerant teachers. She surveyed 22 itinerant teachers in the four western provinces and concluded that an appropriate model for teacher education of these specialist teachers should reflect the multiple roles required. The purpose of the study was to investigate what itinerant teachers actually do. Caseload characteristics were reported.

Hill (1984) conducted a nationwide Canadian study and examined factors influencing the quality of programming for visually impaired children attending public day schools in Canada. One hundred and four teachers of the visually impaired were included in the study. Recreation and family living programs were reported to be of uniformly high quality, whereas programs relating to preschool and the multi-handicapped seemed to represent the greatest lacks.

In reviewing studies concerned with the roles and responsibilities of itinerant teachers or determinants of their role, very little information was reported in Canada. It is now possible to report on 7 years of mainstreaming practices in B.C.--the school for the blind was closed in 1978. This is why exploratory research is essential. Information on teachers, caseloads, the work role and areas of need or issues in the field remain unknown and can only be guessed at. This study will be limited to this province within the context of its particular guidelines and at this stage will only generate a factual information base about the role of teachers of the visually impaired. A beginning will be made in determining

areas of need within the setting in which B.C. specialist teachers can operate and which later studies can investigate. Although of interest to other provinces as a model of service delivery, findings from this study can not be compared directly to those in other provinces with different policies, delivery systems, or training requirements for teachers.

Definition of terms

The terms used in the survey and this thesis will now be defined for clarification.

Blind students.

Blind students are those who use braille as their primary medium for learning.

Consultation models.

These imply that the teacher consult with either the student, the parents, the teacher, or others responsible for working with the student and infrequently works directly with the student.

Direct service models.

This refers to the specialist teacher working directly with the child on a regular basis.

Integration.

This will be defined as synonymous with mainstreaming.

Low vision students.

These students generally use print as their primary medium for learning although they may require optical, size, or distance magnification as aids for learning.

Mainstreaming.

The creation of different and new educational arrangements for handicapped students which try to provide such students with the closest possible equivalent of normal humanizing learning environment. . . . Mainstreaming does not mean the wholesale elimination of special education self-contained classes. Rather it provides various options for handicapped students, from special to regular classes, from full-time to part-time integration, depending on the individual needs and capabilities of the student and on the availability of appropriate placements (Allan & Sproul, 1980, pp. 4-5). The above definition (particularly the first sentence) also denotes the term "least restrictive environment".

Multi-handicapped visually impaired students.

Those students with visual and other handicaps such as mental retardation, hearing, or other physical handicaps which interfere with their learning in such a way as to require some mediation and modification of educational programs by a specialist teacher.

Program - itinerant.

In these programs the specialist teacher travels from school to school serving children enrolled in both regular and special classes.

Program - resource room.

The resource room is located in either an elementary or secondary school. Students are enrolled in a regular class and come to the resource room for special assistance--Braille readiness, learning to read braille, consultation, special curriculum adaptations. Students may spend a portion of every day in the resource room or they may come less often. The resource

room has the special equipment and learning devices necessary for blind and low vision students.

Theoretically the resource room is capable of providing more intense sustained instruction, but often itinerant teachers are able to provide individual children with daily sessions. The amount of time given to each student may depend on caseload numbers as well as the needs of the child.

This paper is organized in four chapters. The introductory chapter looks at the background to the study, and the need and rationale for the study noting specific needs and reviewing some research that has been done in the field. Chapter Two describes the methodology that was used in this research. Chapter Three presents the results of the survey and in conclusion Chapter Four provides a discussion or interpretation of the major findings, the implications of these findings and a summary.

CHAPTER TWO

Method

This chapter is concerned with research procedures specifically, the subjects, the instrument designed and procedures followed. See the Appendix for a copy of the questionnaire used in this study, the two covering letters and information sheet.

Subjects

Subjects were the population of specialist teachers of the visually impaired in the province of British Columbia, who are functioning as either resource room teachers, itinerant teachers or a combination of both. The subject population serves both blind and low vision children as well as visually/multi-handicapped children. Special class teachers who may have a few blind students were not included.

The provincial directory of specialist teachers of the visually impaired presented by the Province of British Columbia, Ministry of Education, Division of Special Education, 84-85 served as source of locating teachers. Thus the 41 resource room and itinerant teachers listed and three additional teachers constituted the subject population of 44 teachers surveyed. All of the teachers are employed by school districts within the province on a full or part-time basis. Of this population, 24 are from Vancouver/Lower Mainland school districts, while the others are located in other school districts throughout the province. There were eight males and 36 females.

The age range was from the early 20's to early 60's. Variables such as training, professional qualifications and work settings were unknown before the survey. No sampling procedure was necessary since the entire population was surveyed.

Most results are based on the group as a whole with no sub-groups except on one variable (number of children on caseload), which was studied for full-time and part-time groups separately as well as together.

Instruments

The questionnaire was developed by the primary investigator who has also worked as an itinerant teacher of the visually impaired and who has developed a close liaison with other colleagues in the field through university teaching, practicum supervision and the alumni association.

This association and experience in the field combined with reviews of the literature, which pointed to concerns and facts regarding the roles of these teachers that we do not yet have information about in this province, was instrumental in developing the items on this questionnaire.

Due to the widespread geographical locations of the subjects and the mostly factual nature of the information sought regarding the role of these teachers, the questionnaire format was chosen to be satisfactory for this purpose.

The purpose of this survey was to gather information in the following areas: teacher characteristics including training, experience and setting, caseload characteristics including the nature of the handicap and service given, proportion of time and nature of time spent in the seven teaching

activities, factors influencing time management and finally interpersonal skills required by the job.

All questions, except for Part III A and two questions in Part III B requiring perceptions or impressions, asked for factual information and were relatively simple to answer. Some more complicated calculations were required in Part II A in determining the proportions of time spent within subject areas and Part III B in the calculating and averaging of contacts with parents and other professionals.

Procedure

The research design employed was a descriptive questionnaire study (see the Appendix for complete proofs). Data collection began in mid April 1985 and continued till approximately mid June 1985.

Prior to sending out the questionnaire, I administered it to six teachers who filled it out and after interviewing these teachers with regard to item ambiguity and clarity of instructions I made minor modifications to the questionnaire before using it for the study. The questionnaire and letter explaining the study was sent to all 44 teachers. Teachers in the Vancouver/Lower Mainland area were also contacted by phone and interviewed personally following completion of the survey to determine whether there were any major concerns or issues that were not addressed by the survey. Acquainting teachers with the purpose of the study was enhanced by speaking to them at a meeting of the B.C. Vision Teachers Association. The information provided to these teachers was included in a newsletter distributed to other teachers in the province. All of the 17 teachers

present at this meeting agreed to complete the questionnaire and the interview. The remaining teachers who were not present at this meeting received their questionnaires and covering letter by special delivery. A second wave of the questionnaire was mailed out at a later date with a revised covering letter.

When all the questionnaires were returned the data was sorted into tables of frequency or percentage distribution under each variable.

Apart from items requiring more calculation or impressions on the part of the subject, the researcher feels that there would seem to be no apparent reason why questionnaire items would be answered in an inaccurate manner as most require factual information. A number of teachers remarked that it was an interesting exercise for them to sit down and analyse their caseloads and role in such a fashion. Other teachers mentioned that this information was 'at their fingertips' as they are frequently required to provide this kind of information.

The relative consistency of teachers' answers within those areas requiring calculations or impressions would seem to indicate that no major difficulty was created by the format of the questionnaire. No instructions apart from those given to all teachers in the covering letters was given prior to filling out the questionnaire. Most teachers filled the questionnaire out in the same school month (May 1985).

As an attempt to get an information base on the mainstream services offered to visually impaired students there appear to be no significant biases or difficulties seen by the researcher that would affect the results in any major way.

CHAPTER THREE

Results

Table 1. Teacher Training/Experience Characteristics (N = 40)

The majority of teachers in the province are university trained and qualified from formal courses in the education of visually impaired children. Out of forty, twenty-seven have a University of British Columbia post-graduate diploma or better. Five others have other qualifications, generally from the U.K., and eight have had no formal training in visual impairment, although they may have taught for a number of years with schools for the blind. Some of these 13 teachers without a U.B.C. diploma or better may have done some university course-work related to the teaching of visually impaired children.

Learning Disabilities was the most common qualification outside of the field and 18 teachers or 45 percent have had some training in this. Of the 40 teachers, 9 have had post-graduate (Master's level) specialist training in Orientation and Mobility.

Most teachers have had between 6 and 10 years of teaching experience in total, not necessarily all spent in the teaching of visually impaired students, and most have had 6 or more years teaching visually impaired students.

Additional analysis of the questionnaire not shown on Table 1.

Fifteen teachers or 37.5 percent of teachers had teaching experience in regular and/or special education outside of the visually impaired field.

The number of years since graduation ranges from 1 to 25 with 5 to 6 years being the average.

Table 1

Teacher Training/Experience Characteristics

Highest level of training for teaching visually impaired students (N = 40)	
Training	No. of teachers
Diploma	15
Masters (part)	6
Masters	6
Post-Masters	0
Other than above	5
No formal training program	8
Other qualifications in special education (N = 40)	
Qualifications	No. of teachers
Learning disabilities	18
Guidance/counselling	8
Emotional disturbance	4
Mental retardation	10
Other	2
Qualifications related to visual impairment (N = 40)	
Qualifications	No. of teachers
Orientation and mobility	9
Deaf/blind	3

(table continues)

Years of teaching experience (N = 40)	
Years	No. of teachers
1 - 2	7
3 - 5	8
6 - 10	16
11 plus	9

Years of teaching visually impaired students (N = 40)	
Years	No. of teachers
1 - 2	10
3 - 5	11
6 plus	19

Table 2. Characteristics of the Setting (N = 40)

Teachers are based in either major cities or small urban settings. No teachers serve only children in rural settings. Of the 40 teachers surveyed, 24 are in the Lower Mainland area, either in central Vancouver or outlying close communities.

Somewhere between 200 and 600 kilometres a month was travelled by most of the teachers (18). Of the 10 teachers that travel more than 600 kilometres a month, 8 are in small urban settings which was found by further analysis of the data not shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Characteristics of the Setting

Size of Community (N = 40)	
Size	No. of teachers
Major city	15
Small urban	25
Distance travelled per month in kilometres (N = 40)	
Distance	No. of teachers
Not applicable (resource setting)	5
Less than 200	7
200 - 399	9
400 - 599	9
600 - 800	5
Greater than 800	5

Extent of Teaching Employment - Full-time/Part-time (Not shown on a table)

Out of the 40 teachers, 30 are full time and 10 are part-time.

Percentage breakdown of the part-time teachers is as follows: 1 at 90 percent, 3 at 80 percent, 2 at 70 percent, 2 at 60 percent, 1 at 50 percent, 1 at 20 percent. Teachers working full-time with the visually handicapped differed from those working part-time only with regard to size of caseload.

Table 3. Numbers Served and Characteristics of CaseloadsNumbers served according to the type of service (N = 40).

These 40 teachers appeared to be serving approximately 440 visually impaired children, giving direct service to approximately 61 percent and serving on a consultative basis to approximately 39 percent. The number of students per teacher is approximately 11. If the 10 part-time teachers are eliminated from the calculations, the number of students per teacher is 12.4. Three teachers had high caseloads (25 children or more). The median number of students per teacher is nine.

Numbers served and characteristics of the multi-handicapped caseload (N = 40).

Of the 156 total multi-handicapped students served, two-thirds can be classified as low vision.

Numbers served and characteristics of caseloads (N = 38).

Two questionnaires were disregarded in this area due to miscalculations. The remaining 38 questionnaires indicated that these teachers were serving 414 students of whom approximately 11 percent were classified as blind, 54 percent low vision and 35 percent multi-handicapped. This latter group included only both blind or low vision students with additional disabilities.

Table 3

Numbers Served and Characteristics of Caseloads

Numbers served according to type of service (N = 40)			
Type of service	No. served	% served	Average no. served per teacher
Both services	440	100	11
Direct service	270	61.4	6.8
Consult	170	38.6	4.2

Numbers served and characteristics of multi-handicapped caseload (N = 40)			
Characteristics	No. served	% served	Average no. served per teacher
Total multi- handicapped			
visually impaired	156	100	3.9
Multi-handicapped			
blind	49	31.4	1.2
Multi-handicapped			
low vision	107	68.6	2.7

(table continues)

Numbers served and characteristics of caseload (N = 38)			
Characteristics	No. served	% served	Average no. served per teacher
Total visually			
impaired	414	100	10.9
Visually-impaired -			
blind	44	10.6	1.2
Visually-impaired -			
low vision	225	54.4	5.9
Visually-impaired -			
blind or low vision			
also multi-			
handicapped	145	35.0	3.8

Table 4. Numbers of Teachers Spending Time in Each of the Seven Teaching Activities and the Relative Percentage of Time Spent in Each (N = 40).

Most time is spent in the two areas - Low Vision or Curricular Adaptation and Methodology. Vocational Preparation is at the lowest end of the scale occupying 3 percent of teachers' time with 17 out of 40 teachers spending no time at all in this area. Relatively high numbers of teachers spend some time in all these areas except for Braille and Vocational Preparation.

Additional analysis of the questionnaire not shown on Table 4.

Generally speaking, every teacher reported that some time was spent in assessment, direct service, and consultation. The majority of time is spent in direct service for each of the teaching activities.

Table 4

Numbers of Teachers Spending Time in Each of the Seven Teaching Activities and the Relative Percentage of Time Spent in Each (N = 40)

Teaching Activity	Average % of time spent	No. of teachers spending time
Low vision	26.7	38
Braille	12.6	26
Orientation and mobility	9.1	33
Curricular adaptation/methodology	21.4	37
Living skills	6.1	33
Vocational preparation	3.0	23
Technology	12.0	37
Administration/supervision	9.1	32

Table 5. Nature of Service to Multi-handicapped Students (N = 36).

Of the 40 teachers, 36 have multi-handicapped students on their caseloads. Generally these teachers spend some time in the three areas of assessment, direct service and consultation.

The greatest number (20 of the 36), spend the majority of their time in direct service to multi-handicapped students although a large number of teachers (13) spend only some time in it.

The greatest number (27 of the 36), spend some time in assessment, but few (only four) spend the majority of their time in this area.

The greatest number (25 of the 36), spend some time in consultation with 11 spending the majority of their time on it. All teachers spend time in consultation to a greater or lesser degree.

Table 5

Nature of Service to Multi-handicapped Students (N = 36)

Time spent	Type of service		
	Assessment	Direct service	Consultation
no time spent	5	3	0
some time spent	27	13	25
majority of time spent	4	20	11

Table 6. Ranking of Variables A to D Which Relate to the Use of Time (N = 40).

On variable A Table 6 shows that the majority of teachers spend the greatest amount of time in direct service to students. Preparation of materials and consultation are the next most time consuming activities.

Variable B on Table 6 focuses on the criteria by means of which time is allotted to each child. As one might expect, the time spent with a child depends most of all on the teacher's assessment of his or her needs. The size of the teacher's caseload also has an impact on the time allotted individual children, whereas needs determined by the Supervisor of special education have little major influence.

Variable C on Table 6 shows that consultation is the main focus of out-of-school activities with preparation of materials and professional meetings also playing a major part.

Variable D looks at areas where more time seems to be needed by teachers and here non-academic direct service appears to be a major need, with other areas such as academic direct service and classroom observation also requiring more time to be spent on them.

Out of all the teachers surveyed only one teacher indicated that no more time was needed and this particular teacher had only two students and was employed 20 percent.

Additional factors teachers mentioned with each variable under "Other" are the following (these are not shown on the table).

Variable A: Inservice, program planning and counselling

Variable B: Parents and distance travelled

Variable C: Reading--literature updates, organizing recreational needs and administration--paperwork

Variable D: Parents, professional development, visiting other itinerants, research, and integration of visually impaired students with others.

To summarize, direct service appears to be the primary function of the teachers surveyed with their allotment of time mainly determined by their own assessment and caseload numbers. Consultation appears to be a primary focus of out-of-school time and an important area of need in time management is to allow more time for non-academic direct service. Finally, over and above the areas I mentioned teachers appear to have a number of other needs for which they require more time.

Table 6

Ranking of Variables A, B, C & D Which Relate to the Use of Time (N = 40)

Use of time	No. of teachers ranking items	
	With 1	With 2
A. I spent most of my time in:		
Direct service	33	4
Administration	1	7
Assessment	1	8
Consultation	6	8
Preparation of materials	2	15
Travelling	2	7
B. The time allotted to each child is determined by:		
Numbers on caseload	6	23
My assessment of needs	34	3
School's assessment of needs	3	6
Class teacher's assessment of needs	2	8
Supervisor of special education's assessment of needs	1	2
C. Time spent after school is mainly:		
Professional meetings	9	12
Parent counselling/guidance	3	13
Consultation teachers/other professionals	17	11
Preparation of materials	15	5
Service to the child	4	3

(table continues)

Use of time	No. of teachers ranking items	
	With 1	With 2
D. If there was more time in my workday to accomplish more things, they would be:		
Classroom observation of children	7	8
Opportunities for assessment	2	6
Direct service - academic	11	6
Direct service - non academic	18	9
Time for preparation of materials	7	6
Opportunities to consult teachers/other professionals	3	6

Note. Items were ranked from 1 to 6 where applicable. 1 is the highest rank.

Some teachers gave the same rank to more than one item and some items were left unranked.

Table 7. Needs of Teachers with Respect to "On the Job" Interpersonal Contacts (N = 40).

Teachers tend to work with the listed groups, particularly parents and class teachers. Just less than half of the teachers feel more contact would be advantageous with parents, class teachers and other professionals (42.5 - 45 percent). Approximately a quarter of the group feel the need to have more contact with agencies and fewer (12.5 percent) feel more contact would be advantageous with principals. Teachers feel the greatest need to explain their role in more detail to class teachers (57.5 percent) and principals (55 percent).

Additional analysis not shown on Table 7

Contacts with all groups classified as Other professionals, i.e., Speech, Hearing, Psychologists, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, Nurses, Doctors, and Agencies, whether vocational rehabilitation or recreation, are high. All professional groups appeared to be similarly utilized by teachers. The following gives the numbers of teachers who have contact with the various groups or agencies:

<u>Group or agency</u>	<u>Number of teachers</u>
<u>Other professionals</u>	
Speech	30
Hearing	27
Psychologists	25
Occupational therapists	21
Physiotherapists	26
Nurse	25
Doctor	25
<u>Agencies</u>	
Vocational	23
Rehabilitation	20
Recreation	26

Other groups with which teachers were in contact were: community colleges, social workers, school boards and personnel, U.B.C. special education, provincial resource co-ordinators, technology centres, the Children's Diagnostic Clinic and neurological centres.

Of the 40 teachers only 8 stated that the amount of contact with all these groups is sufficient and only 6 expressed no need to explain their role in more detail to any of these groups.

Table 7

Needs of Teachers with Respect to "On the Job" Interpersonal Contacts (N = 40)

Needs	% of teachers responding to each item				
	Parents	Class teachers	Principals	Other professionals	Agencies
I work with	92.5	97.5	77.5	85.0	80.0
More contact					
advantageous with	45.0	42.5	12.5	42.5	25.0
Explain my role					
in more detail to	37.5	57.5	55.0	35.0	2.5

Table 8. Teachers' Average Frequency of Contact with a) Parents and b) Other Professionals (N = 40).

Table 8 reveals that most teachers are in contact with parents on average every two weeks to twice a term, whereas contact between them and class teachers or other professionals is most common on a daily or twice weekly basis.

These figures were difficult for teachers to estimate as they had to average out their caseload and at times, individual child contact. Often their contact fluctuated as a problem situation arose and then was solved. Many teachers added footnotes to this effect.

Table 8

Teachers' Average Frequency of Contact With a) Parents and b) Other Professionals (N = 40)

Contact	No. of teachers responding to frequency of contact					
	Daily	2x week	Weekly	2x month	Monthly	2x term
a. With						
parents	0	3	4	10	13	10
b. With other						
professionals	16	11	5	4	3	1

Table 9. The Nature of Teacher Contact with Parents (N = 40).

All teachers responded to one or more of these items. Teacher contacts with parents were most frequently seeking support or assistance, asking advice or questions about the child's progress and least likely to be interpretation of diagnosis.

Of the 40 teachers 5 mentioned that parents rarely contacted them as usually the itinerant or resource room teacher contacted the parent and then the parents have these concerns. This may be the case with more than just these five.

Table 9

The Nature of Teacher Contact with Parents (N = 40)

Contact	No. and % of teachers responding to frequency of contact	
	No.	%
Advice	29	72.5
Help in solving a problem	26	65.0
Seeking support/assistance	35	87.5
Questions about child's progress	30	75.0
Results of assessment	20	50.0
Interpretation of diagnosis	16	40.0

CHAPTER FOUR

Discussion

Teacher Training/Experience Characteristics

A high proportion of teachers working with visually impaired children in British Columbia are qualified to teach through a formal post-graduate university training. Almost a quarter of the group are taking their specialist training beyond the level recommended for certification and most of these are being certified as orientation and mobility specialists.

Considering that the mainstreaming trend is relatively recent in B.C. specialist teachers of the visually handicapped appear to be a relatively stable group with the average time spent in the field being 6 or more years. The majority of these teachers have had no regular classroom experience or experience outside of the visually impaired field, and in most of these cases, the experience with the visually impaired is an itinerant rather than a classroom model.

Characteristics of the Setting

The majority of teachers are in small urban communities. Depending on the distance from a major centre such as Vancouver or Victoria, this group has differences in access or choice of medical facilities, resources, materials, etc. The physical area for which the teacher of the visually impaired is responsible varies widely as is shown by the variations in distances teachers travel on school business. Small urban centres often

responsible for large rural areas necessitated travel of more than 600 kilometers a month for 10 teachers, 5 of these travelling more than 800 kilometers a month. This latter group would be then travelling an average of 40 kilometers a day. This may affect the amount of teaching time this group is able to give in comparison, for example, with those 10 teachers who do less travelling than the average 200-600 kilometers. Factors such as accessibility to resources and time spent in travelling could greatly affect the role of teachers from one part of B.C. to another.

Numbers and Characteristics of Caseloads

Considering that the vast majority of visually impaired students fall into the low vision category rather than being blind braille users and also the fact that the proportion of direct service is approximately 61 percent to approximately 39 percent on a consultative basis only, the numbers on the caseloads appear quite manageable. The median number of students per teacher is approximately 9. The ability to serve this number of students does depend on factors mentioned earlier such as geographical spread and access to resources and also on another factor which is shown by these figures--the number of multi-handicapped students on the caseload. With approximately one third of the teacher's caseload multi-handicapped, i.e. with other significant handicaps in addition to their visual impairment, the trend to mainstreaming more multi-handicapped students has resulted in some cases in additional and new duties for teachers and can possibly add to their caseload.

Nature of Service to Multi-handicapped Students

It seems that most teachers (20 of the 36) spend the majority of their time in direct service and 13 spend some time on it. Exactly how much time is given to this group in proportion to their other students is not known. Consultation and assessment also occupy a large amount of time as co-ordinating with other professionals responsible for the child, in addition to observation and assessment in many different settings, can be very time consuming.

Numbers of Teachers Spending Time in Each of the Seven Teaching Activities and the Relative Percentage of Time Spent in Each

The high percentage of time spent in low vision as opposed to the low percentage of time spent on subjects like braille or orientation and mobility is not surprising considering the proportion of the caseload that is blind. Curricular adaptation and methodology also occupying a high percentage of time and involving a high number of teachers is consistent with the itinerant teacher's need to produce tangible and immediate benefits to the classroom teacher. Vocational preparation has a low percentage. According to survey results, of the 440 students served by itinerants or resource room teachers at least a quarter of these were at the secondary level and 33 specialist teachers had secondary school students on their caseloads. This does not include those who are multi-handicapped and are at secondary level. It is surprising that vocational preparation gets such a low percentage of time and is covered by so few teachers. A number of the teachers noted that they feel this area is the responsibility of outside agencies.

Although a low percentage of time is spent on technology, the high number of teachers who work in this area shows the increasing importance of this area for the visually impaired.

Emphasis primarily over all these areas on direct service rather than assessment or consultation gives us a guide as to the active teacher-orientation rather than the consultative orientation of teachers in the province.

Ranking of Items on Variables A to D Relating to the Use of Time

I spend most of my time in.

The high ranking most teachers put on direct service shows the teaching oriented nature of this group. Although assessment and travelling are ranked low they are ranked equally. It is interesting to see assessment with this ranking (only nine ones or twos), when it is such a useful tool for measuring and monitoring progress and determining placement. One possible reason for its low ranking could be that there are often set times of the year where it is usually done and then times when it is not so necessary. So depending on the time of the year, it may not appear to occupy a lot of time. Although the nine teachers who did rank travelling with a 1 or 2 generally had high mileages (450 kilometers or more), there was an equal number of teachers with similarly high mileages who didn't rank it highly, so travelling is not seen in the same way by all teachers.

The time allotted to each child is determined by.

Results here clearly establish that specialist teachers regulate their own time allotment both through their own assessment of needs and in consideration of the numbers present on their caseloads.

If there was more time in my work day to accomplish more things they would be.

It was interesting to identify the primary need here as being the need for more non-academic direct service. This seems to indicate a general unfilled need itinerant or resource room teachers find in management of their time. Whatever the extent or content of these non-academic needs are however, has not been established by this survey.

Contact With Parents and Other Professionals

Results show that contact with either parents or other professionals is very frequent especially among the group--class teachers and other professionals which is almost on a daily basis. The groups with whom these teachers work are varied and serve different functions or roles of which the itinerant must be cognizant. Even if this part of the specialist teacher's role is not time consuming, it requires a high level of skill and understanding in the area of human relations and problem solving, and communication should be a significant part of the teacher training program or in-service education. More than 40 percent of the teachers required more contact with parents, class teachers, or other professionals. More than half needed to explain their role in more detail to class teachers and

principals--the very groups so immediately influential in bringing about the success of mainstreaming.

The Nature of Teacher Contact With Parents

The specialist teacher's role extends beyond the mere academic or non-academic tutoring of the child. Skills required in these areas of interpersonal communication are equally important to those within the academic setting and may be critical to the success or lack of success of mainstreaming. Itinerants or resource room teachers who are busy and/or have large or demanding caseloads may require some structure to carry out this area of responsibility effectively.

Implications For Further Study or Research

Further studies of itinerant teachers and their roles are warranted. I found a great deal of interest within this group as to the results of this study. Many teachers mentioned their academic or professional isolation and wanted to know what other itinerant teachers were doing, the problems they were facing and how they went about solving them. From an interpretation of the results of this study it would appear that it would be valuable to examine further, a number of factors or concerns regarding the role of specialist teachers of the visually impaired. These are:

1. The type of continuing education required by itinerants.
2. The numbers of teachers involved and the type of classroom experience that these itinerant teachers have had. To work with class teachers

in a realistic manner involves a good grounding in general curriculum and a balanced view of the classroom in which the handicapped child is placed.

3. The access teachers have to materials and resources--both medical and academic with proximity to a major centre as a factor.
4. The time spent travelling as opposed to teaching time. One might look at this area on an individual basis in more detail taking one or two teachers with high and low travelling time and look at the effectiveness of time management in each case.
5. The background training of specialist teachers of multi-handicapped children, the amount of service given to them, and the difficulties or challenges associated with serving them.
6. The relative importance and present management of this area of vocational preparation as it is perceived by specialist teachers.
7. The amount of assessment done by these specialist teachers, how often it is carried out, how much is required and whether individual education plans are written for each student on a regular basis.
8. The perceptions of specialist teachers with respect to the influence of the school based team in terms of assessment of needs and action plans as well as interactions of the group, actions and responsibilities defined at meetings and follow through of decisions made at these meetings.
9. The types of direct non-academic service are seen to be essential unfilled needs of the service to visually impaired children.

10. The investigation at a provincial level of the need to provide more in-service, literature or other such coverage for class teachers, principals and other professionals. It may be difficult for the specialist teacher in consideration of the pressing responsibilities and varieties of situations they serve in, to also ensure effective public relations, i.e., with parents and professionals. However, it would seem from interpretations of the results that such networking is essential.
11. The teachers' perceived levels of competence and background training in the area of human communication skills. Once again the machinery for parent involvement is not so automatically in place as it is in the United States with parent participation in the writing of individual educational plans (I.E.P.'s) and review of placement. This leaves specialist teachers here, understanding the importance and value of involvement, but lacking the structure and resource backing required to address these duties consistently.

Limitations of the Study Questionnaire

Twenty-two of the teachers who participated in the survey were personally interviewed following completion of the questionnaire. These teachers expressed interest in the study and the fact that they were personally interviewed. A personal approach or interview situation is preferable to a questionnaire in collecting information on the limitations of the questionnaire. Some teachers expressed the views that misunder-

standings or difficulties could arise in answering some survey questions and some important items may be missed by a survey. Criticisms of the present questionnaire were that teachers didn't know how to classify their Bachelor of Education degrees or in-service courses. The section dealing with caseloads presented difficulties to some teachers; for example, some teachers were not sure whether the multi-handicapped category was inclusive of the first two categories or not. Others encountered problems in calculating percentages, but most found that once they started they were able to do this section without difficulty. A distinction between the itinerant teacher contacting the parent and the parent contacting the teacher would have been useful and would have assisted the interpretation of this section more fully.

Frequency of contact with parents or other professionals was difficult for teachers to calculate. If the items were asked in a different way, it might have been easier to answer.

There were a number of suggestions of additional questions. These include:

1. Were teacher aides available? This is a factor especially for teachers with multi-handicapped or blind students on their caseloads.
2. What guidelines do teachers/districts use (regarding the amount of vision a child has) to determine placement of a child on a caseload?
How are borderline groups handled?
3. What is the review process involving the identification, screening and placement of students within districts?

4. When a child moves from one district to another, what information moves with the child?
5. How are suitable materials for students secured?
6. What are the systematic ways teachers may have of working out need priorities of their caseloads, the review process as needs change and thus service time?
7. Are there budget considerations for materials, equipment, etc?
8. Is there a need for a provincial curriculum guide for blind multi-handicapped students?
9. What are job satisfaction factors?
10. What is the teaching environment in which itinerant teachers work? For example, is it a basement of a school or a district services office in combination with other district staff?
11. What is the philosophical approach of the itinerant? For example, does the itinerant share responsibilities with classroom teachers? Do itinerants establish what they can or can't do or do they attempt to be all things to all people. Do they adopt a resource or tutor approach or a combination? All approaches have their place with some children in some situations.

What does the itinerant feel about the itinerant model?

Summary and Conclusions

Success in mainstreaming is largely due to effective service delivery by itinerant or resource room teachers. In order to be effective these

teachers need not only skills and competencies acquired by a recognized formal training in the field of visual impairment, but also an understanding of their role functions and awareness of teacher role issues and changes in the field.

This study was undertaken in response to fill a gap in exploratory research data on mainstreaming as it is practiced in B.C., out of an awareness regarding concerns of colleagues about issues and changes in the field and finally through a belief that teachers need a body of research and an understanding of their role to establish a sense of their profession.

A survey instrument was developed to explore some of the factors that determine the role of teachers of the visually impaired and to give a British Columbia information base on that role.

Results of the study gave information regarding teacher training characteristics, setting, details on the size and characteristics of caseloads and the orientation of the services that these specialist teachers provide. In addition exploration of some of the common issues and concerns of those who work within the field was begun. A number of implications for further research grew from this data and the information generated from this survey could be of interest for pre-service or in-service teacher training considerations.

It can be seen from questions or issues that are raised in this chapter, whether from the resource or itinerant teachers of the visually impaired that this changing profession is not short of challenges. Determinants of the role of specialist teacher of the visually impaired are many and varied. Apart from the complexity of the role, changes in educational philosophy,

caseloads and teaching technology will continue to demand that such a teacher be well trained and adaptable. Some aspects of the role are amenable to change while others require a process of persistent evaluation and experimentation.

I would like to conclude with a quotation I feel is appropriate to the issues brought forward in this thesis.

As individuals we each live with the difficult problem of attempting to make our professional lives meaningful while at the same time working in enterprises which require collaboration among diverse role groups. In a sense then we are all corporation people who have the simultaneous problems of not only coping with, but reshaping, our institutions while preserving our individual identities. It is imperative to remember that unless we work together to reshape our institutions (in this case the institutional forms that regulate pre-service and in-service teacher education), we will be relatively impotent as persons to make our own professional lives more productive and to be more meaningful in the lives of our students (Joyce, Howey, & Yarger, 1977, p. 74).

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A P P E N D I X

PART I

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY: I.D. # ()

Training

What is the highest level of training you have had in the area of the Visually Impaired? Circle the appropriate letter.

- a. Diploma.
- b. Masters degree. Area of specialization _____
- c. Post-Masters' degree: Specify _____
- d. Other: Specify _____

What other areas of related training do you have? State diploma, course or other qualification. Circle the appropriate letter.

- a. Learning disabilities _____
- b. Deaf-blind _____
- c. Orientation and Mobility _____
- d. Guidance/counselling _____
- e. Emotional disturbance _____
- f. Mental retardation _____
- g. Other: Specify _____

Teaching Experience

How many years have you taught? Include this year. _____

How many years have you been employed as a teacher of the Visually Impaired?

Include this year. _____

How many years since you graduated from training in the Visually Impaired?

_____.

Setting

What is the size of the community in which you teach? Circle the appropriate letter.

a. Major city b. Small urban (up to 50,000) c. Rural (less than 2,500)

How many kilometers do you travel each month on school business?

Approximate. Don't include travel from home to work and vice versa.

_____.

What is your official role title?

Circle.

Full-time / Part-time _____ %

Type of Program

Circle the item that gives the best description of your type of service delivery system.

a. Special class

b. Resource room

c. Itinerant program

d. Resource room / Itinerant program

e. Teacher consultant

f. Residential school

g. Hospital / Institutional setting

h. Special school: Describe _____

i. Other: Describe _____

Type of Caseload (Visually impaired only)

What is the total number of students on your caseload? _____

How many students do you provide direct service to? _____

How many students do you have on a consult basis? _____

How many Blind learners? (Braille) Elementary _____ Secondary _____

How many Low Vision learners? Elementary _____ Secondary _____

How many Multi-handicapped learners? Blind _____ Low Vision _____

PART II A

Indicate the percentage of your regularly scheduled work time within a school year. You should indicate the current year.

Codes:

Indicate how much time is spent within the three categories; Assessment, Direct Service and Consultation:

(n) no time spent

(sn) some time is spent

(m) majority of time spent

TEACHING ACTIVITIES	TOTAL TIME SPENT OUT OF 100%	(n) no time spent (sn) some time spent (m) majority of time spent
1. Low Vision	_____ %	() Assessment () Direct Service () Consultation
2. Braille	_____ %	() Assessment () Direct Service () Consultation
3. Orientation/ Mobility	_____ %	() Assessment () Direct Service () Consultation

(figure continues)

TEACHING ACTIVITIES	TOTAL TIME SPENT OUT OF 100%	(n) no time spent (sn) some time spent (m) majority of time spent
4. Curricula Adaptation/ Methodology	_____ %	() Assessment () Direct Service () Consultation
5. a. Living Skills	_____ %	() Assessment () Direct Service () Consultation
b. Vocational Preparation	_____ %	() Assessment () Direct Service () Consultation
6. Technology	_____ %	() Assessment () Direct Service () Consultation
7. Administration/ Supervision	_____ %	() Assessment () Direct Service () Consultation

TOTAL = 100%

PART II B

To be completed by teachers who have multiply handicapped children on their caseload. That is, children with visual and additional handicaps.

Please indicate the number not percentage in this group that you serve and indicate by using the code how much time is spent in each of the three categories; Assessment, Direct Service and Consultation.

(n) no time spent

(sn) some time is spent

(m) majority of time spent

	NUMBER SERVED	(n) no time spent (sn) some time spent (m) majority of time spent
<u>Multiply-Handicapped</u> <u>children with Visual</u> and other handicaps such as <u>Mental Retardation,</u> <u>Hearing or Physical</u> handicaps.	_____	() Assessment () Direct Service () Consultation

PART III A

RANK THE FOLLOWING, LEAVING OUT THOSE AREAS THAT DO NOT APPLY. USE 1 AS THE HIGHEST RANK.

1. I spend most of my time in:

a ___ Direct service to the child

b ___ Administration

c ___ Assessment

d ___ Consultation

e ___ Preparation of materials

f ___ Travelling

g ___ Other: Elaborate _____

2. The time allotted to each child is determined by:

a ___ The number of children on my caseload

b ___ My assessment of needs

c ___ The school's assessment of needs

d ___ The regular class teacher's assessment of needs

e ___ The Supervisor of Special Education's assessment of needs

f ___ Other: Elaborate _____

3. Time spent out of school hours is mainly:

a ___ Professional meetings (team/school based or other)

b ___ Parent counselling or guidance

c ___ Consultation with teachers or other professionals

d ___ Preparation of materials

e ___ Service to the child

f ___ Other: Please list _____

4. If there was more time in my workday to accomplish more things, they would be:

a ___ More classroom observation of children

b ___ More opportunities for assessment

c ___ More direct service - academic

d ___ More direct service - non academic

e ___ More time for preparation of materials

f ___ More opportunities to consult with teachers/principals/other prof.

g ___ Other: Please list _____

PART III B

PLEASE CIRCLE THE LETTERS THAT ARE NEXT TO ALL THE AREAS THAT APPLY.

1. I work with the following:

- a. Parents
- b. Class teachers
- c. Principals
- d. Other professionals: Circle Speech/Hearing/Psychologist/O.T./
Physiotherapist/Nurse/Doctor
- e. Agencies serving the visually handicapped: Circle Vocational/
Rehabilitation/Recreation
- f. Other: Please list _____

2. More contact wuld be advantageous with the following:

- a. Parents
- b. Class teachers
- c. Principals
- d. Other professionals: Circle Speech/Hearing/Psychologist/O.T./
Physiotherapist/Nurse/Doctor
- e. Agencies serving the visually handicapped: Circle Vocational/
Rehabilitation/Recreation
- f. Other: Please list _____
- g. This does not apply to me as the amount of contact is sufficient

3. I would like to explain my role in more detail to:

- a. Parents
- b. Class teachers
- c. Principals
- d. Other professionals: Circle Speech/Hearing/Psychologist/O.T./
Physiotherapist/Nurse/Doctor
- e. Agencies serving the visually handicapped: Circle Vocational/
Rehabilitation/Recreation
- f. Other: Please list _____
- g. None of the above
- h. Comments if desired _____

4. How frequent is your contact with parents?

- a. Daily
- b. Weekly
- c. Monthly
- d. Once or twice a term
- e. Other _____

5. Do parents contact you for the following?

- a. Advice
- b. Help in solving a problem
- c. Seeking support or assistance
- d. Questions about the child's progress
- e. Results of assessment

Dear,

The attached survey is concerned with role determinants of our job as Specialist Teachers of the Visually Impaired. It is part of a Canadian study I am conducting for my Masters' thesis (Education of Children with Visual Impairments).

This project is concerned with exploring factors that shape and determine our role such as; the setting in which we operate, the type of children we serve and our perceptions of our job roles and responsibilities. The results of this study may be important in that they will help us to build a picture of the diversity and challenges we face in this specialized profession.

Your experience is valuable in keeping us in touch with the realities of the field and the changing needs of the population that we serve. I would anticipate that the survey will require around 10-20 minutes of your time to answer and is divided into three parts:

PART I requires information on your training and work setting. It involves just circling the correct category or brief answers.

PART II is in two sections and requires you to estimate the amount of time spent in various teaching activities and if applicable with multiply-handicapped children.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Sincerely yours,

Julia Hass

Graduate Student

Instructor, University of British Columbia

Sincerely yours,

Julia Hass.

Graduate Student,

Instructor, University of British Columbia.

The following may be of help in filling out PART II A of the survey.

Teaching activities

1. Low vision..... Those activities which include development and assessment of visual functioning, perceptual skills and training in the use of optical aids.
2. Braille skills..... Involves the teaching of braille readiness, tactile awareness, braille reading, nemeth etc.
3. Orientation and Mobility.. Teaching of basic concepts related to space position and movement. Teaching of orientation, exploration and mobility related to independent travel.
4. Curricula adaptation and methodology..... Those activities of the academic curriculum that require individual adaptation to the needs of the child. For example, Maths/ Science. They include teaching strategies.
5. a. Living skills..... Developing growth in independent living skills, e.g., grooming, hygiene, homemaking, community resources, financial management, etc.
b. Vocational prep..... Developing skills directly related to getting/keeping a job or teaching job related work skills.

6. Technology..... Teaching or guidance in the use of various technological devices including computers, Versa Braille, Optacon, Visual Tek, typewriter, etc.
7. Administration/
Supervision..... Supervision of personnel and evaluation of instructional programs. Arranging and giving of workshops, inservice, etc.