



Resource Room (RR) in an Inclusive School –What, Why and How ?

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Abstract

In an inclusive classroom, often teachers need extra support for enhancing the skills of some or all children. This becomes more challenging in the case of children with special needs. Therefore, the establishment of a well-equipped resource room is very important in inclusive schools. This article reflects upon the importance of resource rooms in schools. Some important materials related to the enhancement of Physical, Psychological and Social skills of students are also listed in this article.

Key Word: Resource Room, Inclusive School, Physical Skill, Psychological Skill, Social Skill

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Introduction

Inclusive education is the outcome of the vision and advocacy of various policies and schemes. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 is India's attempt for universal free and compulsory education for children of age 6 to 14 years. This act created opportunities for all children, including those with special needs, to study in the nearby schools. NEP 2020 also focuses on mandatory inclusion of children with special needs in regular schools. For a school to be inclusive in the real sense of the term, it needs to develop an equitable curriculum and must provide equal participation, opportunities and accessible resources. There is a long list of desired features for implementation of inclusive education, at the school level. Currently inclusive schools are transforming to become more child friendly, with more and more accessible infrastructure, so that all children can learn together under the same roof, irrespective of abilities and disabilities. Children in inclusive schools study together and participate in various activities such as games, drama, debates, robotics, clubs, excursions, workshops, laboratory work, celebrations etc. These activities are an essential part of school and hence often require accessible infrastructure, including human support for effective participation of all learners including children with special needs. Collaborative consultation involving educational staff, allied health professionals and parents is considered best practice in inclusive education, for enhancing participation of all children in both indoor and outdoor activities

What is a RR? According to IBE UNESCO, any resource (including print and non-print materials and online/open-access resources) which supports and enhances, directly or indirectly, learning and teaching is called a learning resource.

RR is defined as a separate classroom or dedicated space for special education outside the mainstream classroom (Volkmar & Wiesner, 2009). According to the above definition, RR can be an area which is carefully designed to support and address the Special Educational Needs (SEN) of learners. Such rooms provide support for all kinds of intervention programs, individualized educational plans, parents and students counseling, homework assistance, developing TLMs etc. The idea behind the RR is to create a least restrictive environment for all children including children with disabilities. They can learn concepts with additional support with the help of different resources. In addition to it, RR also support the social needs of students, who sometimes fall on the outskirts of the general education classes and are more willing to step out of their comfort zones and make friends (Watson 2019)

Apart from that, there can be RR especially in rural areas or difficult geographical terrains, where nearby children who do not have access to schools can come and visit these RR and can get educational support. RR in regular schools are often associated with children with disabilities and special educators. However, the RR is a setting wherein all students with their special needs, are provided with special educational support with the help of well-equipped tools and educational materials to ensure that students make the most of the general education services (Mackey, 2014). Therefore RR are beneficial for all children in the classroom where they can learn together from each other and create an inclusive society in the future.

Why are RR necessary?

RR are the essential part of 'inclusive education' which means a system of education wherein students with and without disability learn together and the system of teaching and learning is suitably adapted to meet the learning needs of different types of students with disabilities (RPWD Act 2016). However, sometimes in classrooms of inclusive schools, children are not able to get the essential extra support from teachers due to a number of reasons such as teacher student ratio or workload, time table, lack of sufficient space for individual attention etc. Apart from that teachers often are engaged in various academic tasks and responsibilities. Larger settings sometimes create difficulties in understanding new concepts for children having learning difficulties and

special needs. In this scenario, a child can be pulled out from the regular class for a few hours in the RR where he/she can receive individualized attention in their respective subjects and other needs. In these rooms, students with disabilities leave the general education classroom for a specified period of time to attend the RR and receive specialized instruction as designated by the goals and objectives outlined in their Individual Education Plans (IEP) (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2010 cited in Meere, K. 2013). This process can be done for other students also who may be facing difficulty in understanding the concept or they can receive therapy/counselling for improving the study habits, behaviors and so on. RR in inclusive schools provide child friendly environments where 'all children' can get supportive infrastructure and resources so that a sustainable learning environment can be provided within the four walls of schools. There is a strong evidence that creativity can be stimulated, via learning activities that require making or customizing the artifacts, if the learners are engaged in the process by using wide range of appropriate materials, tools and other resources (Davis et al. 2012). Not only this, collaboration among various stakeholders is an important dimension for equipping and implementing the RR in an inclusive education system. For example, visits of therapists, physiologists, and professional counselors for RR on a regular basis is very important in planning and setting goals. Time to time meetings with regular teachers, parents and special educators can be done in RR. Apart from that, the RR are flexible in all aspects including designing infrastructures, selection of equipment, learning resources and human resources to cater the educational needs of all children at any time during school hours. Therefore designing the infrastructure of the RR is an important part of its establishment.

RR are required as they provide dedicated space for –

- storing resource material
- usage of resources without distractions and feeling of alienation
- providing one to one interventions if needed
- resources that can be borrowed for usage in the mainstream classroom settings

- exemplar or prototype resources can be displayed and used for training and research purposes

Human support for RR:

RR can be effective only when it works on collaboration and cooperation of stakeholders. The school management, teachers including the para-professionals and parents are the main stakeholders in RR. These three parties should work in an organized manner, meet regularly, document everyday observations and should also collaborate with other agencies in the community (Deshpandey, 2013).

Professionals such as psychologists, therapists, community members and school administration have a significant role to play and contribute, towards realizing the optimum potential of the learners with and without special needs, development of IEPs, experimenting with innovation, implementing therapies etc. A psychologist can contribute in assessment, provide referrals to the parents, provide counseling, and train school staff. Community members can help in identification of out of school children with special needs, and conducting awareness programs. Teachers and special educators can contribute towards nurturing creativity among students irrespective of their disabilities, enhancing communication skills of all children and so on.

Suggestive List of material in RR

The list of material presented below is collated from the Samagra Shiksha Guidelines, research publications and relevant documents from national and international organizations. An ideal RR should have the following–

1.Fidgets, Therapy Balls, Therapy Bands –sensory items to help students address sensory needs and prepare for academic work. Fidgets are small objects majorly used for pleasant but purposeless activity with hands.

2.Highlighter Stripes/Reader Tracker–helps children stay in line without losing the point of reading. These can be line or word windows, depending on the ability of the child to read word or line.

3.SandBox, Cream/Gel, Rice or other grains (uncooked)--can be used for practicing the written work like spellings, number and letter formation, fishing numbers in a box

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














of rice or other grains. These add fun to learning with sensory integration and development of motor skills, without adding the stress.

4. **Timers** –facilitates students for transitions from one activity to another and aids in visualizing abstract concepts such as time. Any timer for example big clocks with numbers in print or braille, talking clocks, sand timers, colour change timers or digital clocks can be chosen depending on the need and context.

5. **Visuals for Daily Schedule**– can be used for providing visual support for daily schedule, within a particular time period may help in sequencing activities with the help of first –then –strips, and also for facilitating picture based communication with a child struggling to express her/himself verbally. Example for modified daily schedule with visual support is given below--

Daily schedule with visual support

Class 5





| | | | | | | |
|-----------|--|--|--|---|--|---|
| Monday | English  | Maths  | Hindi  | L u n c h  | Hindi  | EVS  |
| Tuesday | Maths  | Hindi  | EVS  |  | English  | Arts and Craft  |
| Wednesday | English  | Maths  | EVS  |  | Gardening  | Reading  |

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| | | | | | |
|----------|--|--|--|--|--|
| Thursday | EVS  | Hindi  | English  | Dance  | Maths  |
| Friday | Hindi  | English  | Drama  | Gardening  | EVS  |

Another example, illustrating how the visual schedule can be of benefit to a child with special needs, in organizing the day and may have a better connect with the classroom activities is given below--

First Demo/listen than DO

| | | | |
|--------------|---|-------------|--|
| FIRST |  Listen to the Audio | THEN | WORK SHEET a. Write the meaning of these words 1. Explore 2. Estimate 3. Gasp 4. Ignore b. Write word meaning of the following 1. Rough 2. Ugly 3. Violent 4. Victory |
| FIRST | OBSERVE THIS WATCH  | THEN | DRAW THIS PICTURE |
| FIRST |  Observe the leaf | THEN | EXPLAIN THE TYPE OF VENATION |
| FIRST |  See the Picture | THEN | WRITE STORY BASED ON THIS PICTURE |

6. **Manipulatives**—are puzzles, games, beads, strings, sticks etc that children can use and manipulate to internalize a concept or build/practice a skills

7. **Picture of Rules and Expectations** – These could be simple class rules as mentioned below—

- a. we keep silence during class with visual of finger on lips
- b. seek permission to speak with visual of raised hand
- c. Throw trash in bin with visual of dustbin

8. **Reward or Leader Board**— indicating the stars and stickers earned for following the rules, submitting the work on time, being responsible for learning and so on.

9. **Graded Reader** – the books for reading having ability and interest addressed, for example 40 book set Barkha developed by NCERT

10. **Assistive Devices or Technology Solutions** – computer, tablets, projectors, etc. In addition to the above ten items a RR should have the following to support the therapy sessions and one to one practice.

11. Physio-Therapy and Physical Exercises— Activity mattress (for providing supportive and comfortable space for occupational activities), multi -exercise therapy unit (for facilitating stretching exercises in case of muscle spasm or strain), shoulder wheel (students can strengthen their muscles, can be used in muscle spasm and cramps), hand gym kit board, grip exerciser (with base), Dumbbells, Exercise putty board (plasticine), therapy ball, adjustable furniture, thick pencil holder, book stands and page turner, etc.

12. Cognition Related—Pencil maze test board (enhances coordination between eye hand), counting and color sorting beads and plate set (can be used for concepts attainment like number sense, estimation, color recognition etc.), Sound discrimination set, Body parts puzzle kit with Braille or tactile markings, size perception square board set, Geometric shape from board set , Pyramids round, pyramid square, counting abacus,

number cut outs (1-50), Make believe money in different denominations of coins and Rs., Geometrical solid shapes, small and big circle towers, Clay molding dough and so on.

13. Specialized material for Students with vision challenge– Braille kit including abacus, stylus slate, Taylor frame, etc. embossed tape rubber sheets, push pins, Orientation and mobility aids such as school layout map, Magnifying glasses such as cylindrical magnifiers, hand magnifiers, rectangular readers, etc., Talking books/audio textbooks preferably in DAISY, Braille alphabets English/ regional language , charts with tactile markings and so on.

Points to Ponder while gathering material for RR

- Try local than go beyond
- Low cost no cost self- made material may be better than the commercially available
- Improvise and innovate
- Same material may be used for more than one purpose and to address more than one need
- Engage students, parents, peers and community members in gathering the aids as and when feasible

A case worth mentioning-- RR in Gujarat under Samagra Shiksha, is facilitating disability inclusion and has taken many initiatives such as –

- Provision of disability appropriate aids and appliances
- Multi category training of Special educators: Each of the special educators has been trained to handle all existing categories of disabilities. These courses include an online repository of resources focusing on identification and classroom management for each of the categories on Diksha Portal / Samarth 2.0.
- Parent counseling
- In-School RRTherapeutic services by the Therapists
- Transport & Escort allowances: The allowance is linked with the school attendance and transferred through Aadhar-linked direct transfer.

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- Monitoring: State level and district level Inclusive Education Committee has been formed for reviewing and monitoring progress wrt enrollment, disability certifications and educational achievements.
- Well equipped RR at cluster level with disability wise Teaching Learning Materials (TLM), ICT equipment's like- Read & Write software, Hardware like desktop, printer & Pen drive, stationery materials, music and sports equipment's

Conclusions

RR play an important role in enhancing the socio psychological skills of all children, while primarily focusing on addressing the needs of CWSN. Therefore, the RR should be accessible to 'ALL' children irrespective of disabilities. The vision is to make schools more welcoming and provide better learning opportunities to children according to their needs. However, this can only be possible when school administration, management, teachers and parents work together with cooperation and collaboration. Engagement of different organizations and agencies working in the field of special education would be beneficial for establishing a RR in an inclusive school. Apart from that, time to time disability screening of all children would play a greater role in early identification and intervention of Children with disability. Documentation of IEP and assessment reports should be done with utmost care. In addition, teacher training, the need to adjust teacher workload, increase teaching resources and provide time for professional development as critical issues that must be addressed if the 'learning in regular classrooms' (LRC) system is to be effective and sustainable.(Poon-McBrayer 2016). Establishment of a well-equipped RR should not be restricted to schools only. We can think of different types of RR that can be established for those students who cannot get access to schools due to various reasons like rural areas, difficult areas etc.it would be a great initiative to bring inclusion in place.

Road Ahead

- RR should not be restricted for the usage by children with disabilities only rather they should be open for all children.
- RR as common center for a cluster of schools
- Technology to be an essential part of RR

- Counseling for higher studies or vocational choices

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