

# Creating Resource Facility in Schools: A Significant Tool in the Teaching-Learning Process

SHALINEE BHARDWAJ\*

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## Abstract

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*The transaction of knowledge as per the student's needs and interest has always been an area of focus, particularly so at the elementary school level. This paper attempts to suggest how the teachers and the school can effectively contribute to enhance student learning by innovatively organising and utilising the common available resources. It recommends the concept of resource facility as an aid to teaching and learning, its necessity and significance in the school system, steps of setting it up in the school as per the financial resources available, kind of material to be kept in the facility, infrastructural requirements and its apt utilisation. The paper also indicates the role of the teacher as a facilitator and resource developer working in consortium with other members of the educational community rather than an individual provider of knowledge.*

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**Key Words:** Resource Room Facility, Structured Activities, Unstructured Activities

Human beings and other higher animals not only possess the unique ability to learn from their environment but also to effectively communicate these learnings to their offspring. The difference, however, lies in how best the acquired knowledge is transacted to the younger generation so as to provide a platform to construct further upon. Human beings have been endowed with an inimitable high-ended

system of communication i.e. language—verbal, written, body gesture—helping them to exist and grow as a sharing society. Yet, at times the above-mentioned modes are insufficient to exact the transference and understanding of this acquired knowledge to the learner. Thus, comes into view the necessity of translating it into a distinct form appropriately termed as a teaching-learning aid.

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\*Lecturer, Department of Education, Gargi College, New Delhi.

The teacher, being the facilitator of knowledge, continuously develops and evolves aids and teaching-learning material, according to the needs and requirements of the content and the learners. Over the years, this results in a gradual accumulation of teaching-learning material with the teacher that may or may not be seen or used by others. Such a wasting-off may be prevented, allowing a resource-sharing by all concerned with the education of the child! Thus arises the need of a 'resource room/facility' within the school system.

### **What Is a 'Resource Room or Resource Facility'?**

A resource room may be defined as a space or any entity created within the school boundary for the organised upkeep, utilisation and development of teaching-learning resources. However, the term seems to be a misnomer as a 'room' may not necessarily be an unavoidable prerequisite. In this context, probably 'resource facility' may be the alternate terminology, by which it will be referred to in the rest of the paper. In the present scenario, a resource facility is often considered to be synonymous with a high technology computer lab with multimedia applications and plentiful CD-ROMs for different content areas. It is also often mistaken with an audio-visual facility equipped with all the modern gadgets. On the other hand, a resource facility is a totally different concept that needs to be studied as distinct from the rest.

Rather than being just a physical space within the school, a resource facility is a dynamic, ever-evolving entity wherein the educators/teachers, the

school authorities and the experts work in unison so that the ultimate benefit reaches to the child. It is a place where the environment, the teacher, the child, the school and the expertise of people and technology all function as resources that are integrated and utilised for enrichment of the teaching-learning process. It is not just a storehouse for various teaching aids/material but an open entity where innovation, creative imagination and co-learning, both on the part of the teacher as well as the pupils, play a key role.

### **Why a Resource Facility?**

A resource facility serves the following purposes:

- Its foremost significance lies in giving 'knowledge beyond textbooks'. It provides the learners with an opportunity to explore a variety of learning material and learn from sources other than the regular textbooks.
- It aims to provide the pupil with a learning atmosphere that is free from fear and competition. Here, the pupil can learn effectively in a fearless and cooperative environment at his/her own pace.
- A resource facility provides enough scope to the learner for freedom of expression. The child can express his/her ideas in an informal set-up in whatever way he/she desires. For example, a child may be more comfortable in expressing his/her ideas through a picture rather than

in a written format! A resource facility gives the child an opportunity to behave as an individual rather than a group, which is normally the case in a regular classroom!

- Such a set-up also helps the teacher to observe and recognise children as individuals. Besides providing scope for individualised instruction, the resource facility also aids the teacher identifying the strengths and weaknesses of her/his pupil to take measures accordingly. The teacher can get a feedback about the needs of individual children and thus can develop better-targeted aids.
- Working in a resource facility helps in the development of various mental and manual skills in the learners. Creativity, design, organisation, interpretation and application, i.e. relatedness to real life situations, of thoughts and ideas is greatly enhanced. The pupils also learn to handle and manipulate various equipment and material, leading to an increased adeptness and dexterity.
- A resource facility provides a common platform where the experts and the regular teachers together can interact informally with the students—this helps them to know how children learn, the things and activities which interest them, etc.

- Last but not the least, it aims at a multi-pronged utilisation of resources: within the school between different classes or maybe between different schools, thus preventing wasting-off of isolated innovations and allowing a resource-sharing by all concerned with the education of the child.

### **How to Set Up a Resource Facility?**

Setting up of a resource facility within the school requires careful pre-planning and a thoughtful approach on the part of the teachers and the school management. This paper attempts to suggest a step-wise procedure that may be followed for the establishment of a resource facility in the school system.

**Step I.** Before starting this task, it is imperative that all the people involved in it—Principal, Headmaster/Headmistress, teachers, timetable in-charge, school administration, particularly the Finance and Accounts office, and the school management/governing body—are truly convinced of the concept, need and significance of a resource facility. For this, a meeting should be conveniently arranged. Also, the experts to be involved for different subject areas and for development of teaching-learning material should be decided upon and intimated in advance.

**Step II.** This involves studying the range of age-groups of students that the resource facility is intended to cater to. Accordingly, it has to be decided whether to have one facility for the entire school, or may be two. However, due to a large

difference in the type of content to be learnt and the teaching methods that can be used, it is advisable to have two separate facilities or two parts of the same resource facility—a *junior section* catering to elementary classes and a *senior section* for the secondary and senior secondary classes.

**Step III.** The next step involves planning for the type of activities that the resource facility will support. For example, it can provide for activities such as theatre, music and dance, arts and crafts, drawing, painting, clay modelling, puppetry, paper mache, model making, reading good children's literature, calligraphy, conducting small-scale science experiments, and so on. A list of all such activities should be prepared after discussions between teachers and the experts.

**Step IV: Buildings.** This important step involves listing all the requirements as per the above-stated activities and allocating finances accordingly. The required resources may be put under two

categories, *pre-existing resources* and *resources which are to be procured*. These resources need not be expensive since the innovative and hardworking teachers along with the experts can easily make many low-cost aids/materials. Students can also be trained in making good illustrative charts and models that they can prepare during their holidays. Besides enjoying this task, students will also gain many useful skills in the process. The school management can also contact the NGOs involved in education, particularly elementary school education, that will be willing to sponsor the establishment of the resource facility.

**Step V.** This involves calculating the pooled resources and dividing the requirements priority-wise. Accordingly, the process of setting up of the resource facility can be phased into Stage I, Stage II, etc. with the resources being added each year.

*For Example:* This organised additive process may be represented in a tabular

TABLE 1

Requirements*	First year	Second year	Third year
Basic facilities—room (optional), furniture (optional)	↔		
Assorted resources and low-cost aids/material—charts models, worksheets, board games, herbaria, etc.	↔		
Children's literature	↔		
Educational kits, CD-ROMs		↔	
Aquarium, terrarium, some equipment for science experiments		↔	

\* Requirements will vary from school to school. Also, this should not be taken as the complete list of required resources.

form below for ease of reference.

**Step VI.** The resource facility should be kept under the guidance of an in-charge who will be responsible for its maintenance and upkeep. A stock register, catalogue register, issuing register and set of instructions for use of resources must be maintained. A team of creative teachers may be assigned the task of regular upgradation and addition of resources to the facility in collusion with the experts. At least two continuous periods per week should be allotted for work in the resource facility. The timetable in-charge need be informed accordingly. Last, but not the least, a workshop should be organised for training the teachers in the use of this facility.

### **What Should Be the Infrastructure for a Resource Facility?**

Depending upon the financial capacities for the educational institution, a resource facility may be:

- High-budgeted facility
- Low-cost facility.

### **High-budgeted Facility**

The resource facility can be created in a sufficiently big well-ventilated and properly lit hall or room that can accommodate a class of 30-35 students. It can be supplied with cupboards to keep the resource material. Though comfortable seats may be kept, care should be taken not to clutter the room with chairs and desks. A resource facility can be best utilised if it has enough open space. It can be equipped with: a computer, LCD screen, TV, video, audio system, slide projector and

overhead transparency projector, an aquarium, a terrarium, a mini-lab space with some equipment for small experimentations, white board, notice/bulletin boards, etc.

### **Low-cost Facility**

Creating such a facility is important and more meaningful in the present Indian-school context. Rather than an elaborate infrastructure, this resource facility depends upon a strong conceptual base and requires much creative input on the part of the people concerned. It can be creatively set up in the school corridor or spread between classrooms or even under a tree! The resources can be low-cost, made of locally available material. Used packing cartons can be utilised for storage of resource material which, when kept one above the other, will form convenient cupboards and as per requirement its shelves can be increased or decreased. For display of charts and material prepared by students, etc. the walls of the classroom or corridor or branches of trees can be creatively utilised. Charts, books, magazines, etc. can be hung on a string/rope tied to the branches or on the walls.

### **What Should be Kept in the Resource Facility?**

The resources to be kept in the facility can be grouped under two categories:

- Organised resources, and
- Assorted resources.

The organised resources include aids and material, both instructional as well as experiential. It includes board games, other types of games, models, charts, puppets, material for art and craft

activities, worksheets, children's literature books, collection of short stories, poems, folktales, etc. As per the budget allotted, this section may also include an aquarium, a terrarium, audio-visual projection aids (listed elsewhere in this paper). These resources are to be kept in an organised manner and properly catalogued, may be grouped according to the concept dealt with, for easy retrieval and issuing. All the material must be accompanied by a set of instructions for its effective use in teaching and learning. A catalogue register may be made that includes a list of material/aids grouped under appropriate heads along with a brief write-up about the particular material, for example, the age group it caters to, the concept(s) it deals with, the material it is made up of, etc. A separate issuing register may be maintained for students as well as teachers.

Assorted resources include material that a child comes across in day-to-day living. One corner of the facility — "*the creative corner*" — can be devoted for the upkeep of such material. Things like toothpicks, matchboxes, matchsticks, used toothpaste tubes, straw, soft drink cans and bottles, 'Fruity' packs, pebbles, ice-cream sticks, buttons, old newspapers, magazines, cards, wool, photographic film and its cans, cycle-tyre tube, old ball-pen refills, magnets, beads, etc. can be put in shoe boxes and kept aside. Some stationery items—sketch pen, crayons, water colours, brush, pencils, pen, drawing sheets, paper, etc.—may be kept for use by children.

Besides the above-mentioned things, the resource facility can have a "*music*

*section*" including musical instruments like harmonium, *tabla*, *dholak* and flute, etc. for facilitating theatre activities. In order to stimulate an informal environment, the resource facility may be imaginatively divided into: a play section—*ao khelein*, a reading area, an exhibition space for display of material made by students, the creative corner, "*dadima ka pitara*" for the assorted material, etc.

### How to Use a Resource Facility?

Two kinds of activities can be performed in the resource facility.

**Structured or Pre-decided Activities:** These include games, worksheets, reading material, organised drama, music, puppet shows, etc. Different students may be given different tasks. Here, the teacher plays an active part—providing reinforcement, instructing, organising, making corrections, etc.

**Unstructured or Impromptu Activities:** These include the use of resources, particularly the assorted resources, by the students out of their own choice and interest. The students may be allowed to work in whatever way they like. Here, the teacher takes on the role of an avid observer, participating only when asked to but carefully providing hidden guidance to the students throughout their tasks.

Some resources, like charts, models, etc., may be utilised for supplementing classroom teaching.

A few things may be kept in mind to get the best out of a resource facility:

- Teaching-learning aids/material should be *integrating* many concepts of a subject area

or interlinking different subject areas, as far as possible. This is to provide a wholesome knowledge to the learners about the various phenomenon.

- The majority of the resources should be such that they could be used *across different classes*.
- Activities wherein the learners can *take home* their handiwork should be used more frequently. This provides a sense of ownership and belongingness to the students.
- Low-cost aids/materials that the students use *without the fear of breakage* must be kept.
- Use of resources must be linked to *rewards* in order to generate and sustain students' interest and motivation. For example, *bindi* stickers may be used with the colours signifying feedback on their performance.
- A *resource facility report* may be maintained for each student

that will give a descriptive account of the child's interests, acquisition of skills, social behaviour, etc. This report can be used by the teacher for planning her lessons and also in the development of resources.

The present education scenario in Indian schools demands attention to the organised development, utilisation and networking of resources. Establishment of resource facility in the schools not only provides a fearless environment for learning beyond textbooks but also helps the educators in knowing the individual in every child. The facility prevents wasting off of isolated innovations, allowing sharing and utilisation by a larger system. In Indian schools, where availability of financial resources is a limiting factor, understanding a resource facility as a creative concept rather than a physical infrastructure holds much significance.