

An Investigation into the Dilemmas and Solutions of Resource Classroom Curriculum Development

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Abstract: In recent years, the rapid expansion of resource classrooms across China has led to an increased demand for the equitable and high-quality allocation of educational resources. While curriculum development is a key driver of operational efficiency, the current state of resource classroom programs in China continues to face significant challenges that require urgent attention. This study explores common issues in curriculum development, examining constraints across several dimensions, including educational values, faculty development, professional training, infrastructure support, and administrative coordination. By identifying the root causes, this paper proposes strategic measures to optimize curriculum development in resource classrooms, with the goal of advancing educational resource programs nationwide.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Resource Classroom Curriculum, Curriculum Development.

1. Foreword

Curriculum and instruction form the foundation of school education. Providing high-quality education for students with disabilities depends not only on optimizing inclusive classroom teaching but also on developing specialized curricula in resource classrooms. These classrooms are designed to offer targeted potential development and compensatory education for students with disabilities. The "Guidelines on Strengthening Inclusive Education for Children and Adolescents with Disabilities in Compulsory Education"[1] emphasizes the need to enhance the efficiency of resource classrooms, ensuring that specialized services such as individual tutoring, psychological counseling, and rehabilitation training are effectively delivered. This underscores the importance of curriculum development in resource classrooms as a key element in improving the quality of inclusive education.

Currently, many primary and secondary schools in China have actively developed curricula for resource classrooms. Scholars have explored various aspects of these programs, including curriculum design frameworks, instructional formats, content development, and the demographic targets[2]. Zhan Shiyong and Xu Jiacheng specifically examined formative assessment methodologies for these courses[3]. Yang Jing studied the professional competencies of resource teachers[4], while Wu Qingying and Zeng Zhengmin pioneered the development of integrated practical curricula. Building upon existing research and practical experience, this paper systematically analyzes the practical significance, challenges, and optimization strategies for resource classroom curricula in China. Grounded in the national context and guided by the principles of inclusive education, the study aims to enhance the educational quality for students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms.

2. Current Challenges in Resource Classroom Curriculum Development

Resource classroom programs are specialized initiatives aimed at addressing learning gaps and unlocking the potential of students in mainstream education. These individualized

courses, typically delivered through one-on-one instruction or small group sessions, are operated within school-based resource centers. While significant progress has been made in upgrading these facilities, many regions still face shortages of adequate resource classrooms and qualified instructors, which presents substantial barriers to effective curriculum development. Research by Yang Jing identifies systemic issues within resource classroom programs across certain districts[5]. These include insufficient personalized support, uneven distribution of course types and class hours, and the low representation of core academic subjects. Despite these challenges, innovative practices are emerging in some schools. However, these pilot initiatives still face significant obstacles that require further exploration and refinement. As a result, the development of a comprehensive resource classroom curriculum system remains a relatively new and complex challenge that calls for deeper academic research and practical exploration.

2.1. The Limited Scope of Resource Classroom Courses Creates Another Form of Isolation

Resource classroom programs are typically designed as customized educational plans by resource teachers for students with special needs, within specific teaching environments. However, the limited scope of these services, often restricted to students with disability certifications, has led to the underutilization of these programs. This stands in stark contrast to the more effective use of other school resources[6]. As a result, some may argue that establishing resource classrooms for a small group of minority students represents an improper allocation of resources. The narrow scope of service further exacerbates social isolation among special education students, transforming resource classrooms into isolated "islands" that are disconnected from the broader student community. When special education students attend these programs for individualized services, their classmates may develop skepticism or even negative perceptions[7]. Additionally, this limited client base restricts curriculum development, often steering programs toward specialized education frameworks that struggle to integrate with existing curricula or form meaningful connections with other

academic disciplines. This fragmentation leads to a lack of systemic structure in resource classroom programs, resulting in disjointed educational systems that fail to form cohesive and effective educational frameworks.

2.2. The Curriculum Design of Resource Classrooms Lacks Adaptability, with Courses Being Arbitrarily Set

While schools have made progress in establishing resource classrooms, significant gaps remain in aligning curriculum development with students' needs. On one hand, insufficient attention is given to individual differences and practical requirements. Schools often implement uniform sensory integration programs without considering the specific needs of students, adopting a "one-size-fits-all" approach that fails to address personalized behavioral challenges or meet actual demands. On the other hand, the curriculum tends to be overly simplistic, focusing primarily on academic remediation and rehabilitation programs, while neglecting other important needs such as life skills adaptation and psychological support, thereby limiting holistic development. Moreover, the systematic organization of courses needs improvement. The long-standing absence of standardized teaching plans has led resource teachers to independently develop individualized education plans, resulting in fragmented and unstructured content that undermines coherent learning and student progress[8]. Urgent measures, including accurate assessments, scientific planning, and institutional reforms, are needed to better align the curriculum with student needs and promote comprehensive development.

2.3. Low Expectations for Special Education Students, with Simplistic Curriculum Objectives and Content

In the field of curriculum development and teaching practices for special education resource classrooms, two interrelated critical issues currently prevail: the severe neglect of student autonomy research and pedagogy, and excessively low expectations for special education students. Due to the various learning challenges faced by these students, they are often subject to negative perceptions from society[9], which creates multiple obstacles to their development.

On one hand, there is a lack of research-based teaching that focuses on fostering student autonomy. Curriculum design fails to incorporate elements that encourage independent exploration and self-directed learning. Traditional lecture-based methods dominate, while heuristic and inquiry-based teaching approaches are seldom used. The teaching environment also lacks a supportive atmosphere where students are encouraged to express themselves and make decisions independently. This results in passive learning, which hinders the development of self-directed learning abilities and limits students' multifaceted potential.

On the other hand, expectations for special education students remain unduly low. Most general education teachers expect these students to simply sit quietly in class without disrupting others, rather than integrating into classroom activities and learning. Some teachers even see attendance in resource classrooms as merely offering a break for students, thereby relaxing management expectations. When setting teaching objectives, resource teachers often fail to consider students' full potential[10], relying instead on academic performance evaluations that are one-dimensional and lack

depth. Teaching methods remain overly simplistic, with little systematic analysis of resource classroom environments and student conditions, making it difficult to achieve meaningful progress. As a result, many teachers are skeptical about the effectiveness of resource classroom curricula in promoting the growth of special education students and fail to recognize their significance.

2.4. Most Resource Classroom Courses are Only Implemented on the Timetable, Lacking Systematic Management and Supervision

Currently, resource classrooms in China have made significant progress in their development. Both policy guidance and resource support have substantially improved compared to the initial stages of construction. However, practical implementation still lacks comprehensive consideration in curriculum development. Key issues, such as whether to establish resource classroom courses, which subjects to offer, the content of the courses, and the teaching methodologies[11], remain unstandardized. This leads to fragmented curriculum design and superficial implementation. There are no clear reference standards for course objectives, teaching processes, assessments, classroom structures, or operational procedures, making it difficult to achieve meaningful educational outcomes. While supervision is an effective measure to advance inclusive education, some areas still reveal that classroom courses remain superficial. During scheduled class hours, resource classrooms often lack actual instruction, with planned lessons neither being implemented nor delivered in practice. A significant number of resource classrooms operate only intermittently during inspections, functioning in semi-open or even closed states, with daily closures[12].

2.5. Insufficient and Uneven Distribution of Course Resources, with Excessive Emphasis on Sensory Integration Equipment

Even in economically developed cities with well-equipped resource classrooms, the utilization of equipment remains low. Field observations show that sensory integration devices are a prominent feature in most resource classrooms. However, this equipment is often underutilized, largely due to procurement biases. Resource classrooms tend to indiscriminately stock expensive medical rehabilitation equipment. Early-stage resource classroom construction focused excessively on rehabilitation instruments, which dominate the "dominant market share." [13] Yet, sensory integration devices are not always the most critical need for all special education students. Some students require subject-specific remediation or developmental tools, while essential teaching aids, learning materials, and supplementary resources that directly support classroom instruction remain insufficient[14]. Surveys indicate that assessment tools and teaching case studies are only prevalent in 60% of classrooms, with intervention training resource kits having a 40% [15] adoption rate. The lack of specialized resources, such as teaching aids and learning tools, directly impacts the effectiveness of the curriculum, hindering the overall operational efficiency and development of resource classrooms.

3. Strategies for Optimizing Resource Classroom Curriculum Development

3.1. Conceptual Transformation: Integrating Resource Classroom Courses into the School Curriculum Management System

Awareness of curriculum development in resource classrooms is the fundamental prerequisite for effective curriculum construction. To ensure the successful operation of resource classrooms, they must be integrated into the overall development strategy of the school, with the principle of serving all students as the guiding philosophy. First, the school curriculum system should prioritize promoting the development of every student. For mainstream students with special educational needs, resource classrooms should offer tailored support. The scope of curriculum services should be expanded beyond students with disability certifications in mainstream classes to include those with special educational needs or learning disabilities, fully utilizing the educational and training functions of resource classrooms. Second, the development of resource classroom curricula should complement traditional classroom teaching. The core philosophy should emphasize respect for individual differences and adopt a people-centered approach. By collaborating with extended service interest classes, potential development courses can be introduced to address common challenges faced by mainstream students as well as others with special needs. For instance, attention training games and drama performance courses can be offered. These programs leverage the strengths of students with special needs, helping them build confidence, self-reliance, and independence, thereby enabling their full potential to thrive in mainstream school settings and daily life. Furthermore, resource classrooms can involve both regular and special students in collaborative activities, fostering an inclusive environment. By welcoming all students with special needs into resource classrooms, these spaces can become integrated environments where special and regular students develop together. Ultimately, the development of resource classroom curricula is not solely the responsibility of resource teachers. Regular educators should also be involved in curriculum development. By promoting collaboration between resource and regular teachers, perceptions of resource classroom programs can be gradually reshaped. Well-designed resource classroom curricula can significantly enhance classroom efficiency and reduce the workload in regular classes. Support should be provided to help regular schools develop and implement personalized resource classroom programs, integrating them into school-specific curriculum systems and gradually creating inclusive environments. As a core resource platform, the resource classroom can offer comprehensive support services. Beyond serving students, it should encourage teachers to conduct school-based experiments in integrated education curricula, promoting the professional development of special education specialists in regular schools. This approach will strengthen collaboration between resource and regular teachers, while also enhancing resource teachers' sense of belonging.

3.2. Team Building: Establish a Dedicated Resource Teacher Team and Form a Curriculum Development Team for Resource Classrooms

The document "China Education Modernization 2035" emphasizes the need to revitalize the staffing of public institutions, optimize the staffing structure, and place greater emphasis on the teaching workforce[16]. Various measures should be taken to increase the total number of teachers, particularly to strengthen and improve the pool of special education teachers. The selection, training, and management of resource teachers must be improved, with a focus on recruiting more resource teachers, especially those with expertise in special education or inclusive education. Resource teachers should be granted the appropriate authority to ensure their work is conducted in accordance with established rules and regulations. Efforts should be made to accelerate the establishment of an administrative management system for resource classrooms, with a clear division of responsibilities and a reasonable hierarchical structure. This should include increasing the scope of responsibilities assigned to resource teachers and clearly defining what they "should do, how to do it, and to what extent." Given the multiple roles and busy schedules of resource teachers, their recruitment and training should be prioritized to avoid part-time work arrangements. Professional talents should be leveraged to drive curriculum development. Additionally, work responsibilities should be reasonably divided. As heads of resource classrooms, resource teachers can take a leading role in developing the curriculum for these classrooms. However, the development of resource classroom curricula should not fall solely on the shoulders of resource teachers. The "Management Standards for Compulsory Education Schools" issued by the Ministry of Education in 2017 explicitly states that schools should "create conditions to establish resource classrooms for students with special learning needs and equip them with full-time and part-time teachers." This is part of schools' responsibilities to "meet needs and pay attention to student demands" and "ensure equal rights for students[17]." This means that the responsibility for resource classroom curriculum development should not rest solely with individual resource teachers. Schools must also take on corresponding responsibilities by providing the necessary human and material resources to support curriculum development. Furthermore, schools should foster collaborative teams where resource teachers lead partnerships with regular faculty members. Resource center administrators should work with regular school administrators to establish management protocols for resource classrooms, clarify responsibilities at different levels, refine management systems for resource teachers, and prevent the duplication of tasks assigned to resource teachers by both special education centers and regular schools.

3.3. Professional Training: Systematic Training to Enhance Teachers' Capacity in Curriculum Development for Resource Classrooms

Through theoretical studies and training in resource classroom curriculum development, educators not only deepen their understanding of its significance but also

cultivate essential skills in curriculum design and instructional practices. Resource teachers must possess a strong foundation in special education theory and practical teaching experience, complemented by interdisciplinary knowledge across multiple domains. Strengthening the core team for "curriculum resources" development is essential, requiring systematic training, management, and hands-on practice for educators. The resource center should serve as a platform to integrate special education resources across the district and facilitate teaching research activities. Comprehensive training programs should be implemented for inclusive education teachers to help them adjust and develop curriculum frameworks, with a focus on practical training and nurturing core talent in resource classroom curriculum development. Additionally, process-oriented discussions should be promoted, using the resource center to coordinate regional special education resources. The focus should be on the value, characteristics, content structure, and teaching formats of resource classroom curricula, achieved through targeted teaching research activities. First, fostering collaborative learning between mainstream schools, special education schools, and regular schools will drive mutual development. Strengthening cooperation and training among these institutions enables complementary growth: special education schools can offer guidance on resource procurement and individualized education, while regular schools can share their expertise in existing curriculum development. Joint resource classroom activities will create inclusive platforms for special education students, benefiting all parties. Resource teachers should also train regular school teachers in inclusive and special education, while regular teachers can mentor resource teachers in curriculum development, fostering mutual learning and growth. Second, pilot programs for curriculum development should be coordinated by incorporating resource classroom course construction into itinerant guidance initiatives, offering specialized technical support to address practical implementation challenges. By starting from resource centers, we should systematically plan and offer adaptive courses. This approach not only addresses the shortage of curriculum resources in resource classrooms but also alleviates the issue of delayed service instruction under the current "double reduction" policy. At the same time, inviting itinerant instructors to provide hands-on guidance in resource classrooms will enhance resource teachers' practical skills[18], allowing them to master relevant techniques that improve classroom quality, increase teaching efficiency, and reduce student burdens. Encouraging collaboration between regular and special education teachers is essential to overcoming the fragmented reality of curriculum development. By selecting, adapting, creating, and designing resource classroom courses based on both general education and special education curriculum resources, we can enhance training effectiveness, strengthen research capabilities, and develop high-quality courses. This will gradually build a comprehensive, multi-dimensional curriculum resource repository.

3.4. Support and Guarantee: Establishing a Sustainable Mechanism for Curriculum Development in Resource Classrooms

Material Support: Rational Allocation, Comprehensive Availability, and Effective Utilization. The educational essence of resource classrooms should be emphasized by

prioritizing core teaching aids that meet the needs of both students and teachers. Through curriculum development, resources should be utilized efficiently. Blind procurement of rehabilitation equipment should be avoided, as such devices require high levels of professional expertise from teachers and may lead to unnecessary waste[19]. Instead, simple, practical small-scale rehabilitation and psychological intervention equipment with minimal investment should be appropriately configured, ensuring precision and avoiding idle equipment. It is important to strengthen the management and allocation functions of school districts and district resource centers to consolidate advantageous resources. Expensive, underutilized equipment should be placed in higher-level resource centers or resource classrooms, ensuring optimal resource utilization through strategic deployment[20]. Emphasis should remain on the educational essence of resource classrooms by prioritizing core teaching aids that align with both student and teacher needs. Comprehensive assessments of special-needs students' individual requirements should be conducted, adopting a student-centered approach. Through curriculum development, existing resources should be creatively utilized to meet educational goals while improving resource efficiency.

Institutional Safeguards: Establishing a Clear and Effective Support System to ensure sustainable curriculum development in resource classrooms, the following measures should be implemented: **Establish a Comprehensive Inclusive Education Management System:** A clear framework should be created to guide resource classroom curriculum development. This includes defining the primary responsibilities for curriculum development and establishing a support system. Detailed guidelines should be formulated regarding key responsibilities, target groups, course types, and supervision mechanisms. All teachers responsible for students with special needs should actively participate in curriculum development teams to encourage multi-stakeholder involvement. **Explore Long-Term Mechanisms for Curriculum-Based Education:** Resource classroom courses should be integrated into school-wide educational plans and syllabi, with specified class hours and necessary funding allocated. This integration will help ensure that resource classrooms are effectively incorporated into the overall school curriculum. **Prioritize Curriculum Development:** Curriculum content and formats should be continually enriched and refined. Inclusive education guidelines should be updated to offer tailored course selection based on student characteristics, ensuring that the curriculum meets the diverse needs of special education students. **Establish a Systematic Evaluation Framework:** A comprehensive evaluation system should be implemented to ensure the effectiveness of the entire process-planning, implementation, and assessment. Timely evaluations will help prevent operational blind spots in resource classrooms, guaranteeing the effectiveness of teaching, interventions, and training. Evaluation and assessment play crucial roles in diagnosis, analysis, guidance, and promotion. Scientific management, tailored to the actual conditions of each school, is essential for the effective operation of all tasks under regulatory oversight.

A strict, systematic management mechanism is crucial to ensure that resource classroom curricula operate smoothly, effectively meeting the needs of students and contributing to their long-term development.

3.5. Specialized Development: Gradually Promoting Resource Classroom Curriculum Development based on Local Conditions

Currently, there are no clear regulations regarding curriculum design for resource classrooms. It is crucial to develop relevant courses in these classrooms to effectively enhance the capabilities of students with special needs. China's rich historical and cultural heritage, along with its vast landscapes, provide a unique opportunity to leverage local resources and characteristics to create new educational content. For instance, Dengshuang School utilizes the expertise of resource teachers to develop paper-cutting courses that help unlock potential for mainstreaming students. These courses not only enhance practical skills but also foster confidence and joy[21]. Wanhe Primary School has developed rural cultural education resources based on its unique characteristics, allowing students to grow through the preservation of rural cultural traditions[22]. Additionally, courses and activities that support family education and parent-child interactions can be created. Through the development and implementation of "parent-child courses," parents receive guidance and consultation on educational training methods for children with special needs, ensuring that support services are normalized and sustainable. As these initiatives progress, curricula and teaching content should be planned based on changing service needs and practical conditions, with real-time adjustments made to educational activities. Targeted development of personalized courses, covering perceptual, cognitive, motor, and verbal communication skills, as well as life skills and school adaptation, can meet the diverse needs of special education students. This enables students to excel in inclusive educational environments, promoting holistic development and enhancing public satisfaction with the quality of special education. Moreover, the group-based operation of educational institutions has emerged as an innovative approach adopted by local education authorities in response to comprehensive reforms in compulsory education. "The 14th Five-Year Plan for Special Education Development and Enhancement" proposes fostering collaborative partnerships between special education schools and mainstream schools through integrated group-based operations, creating inclusive educational environments that support the integration of children with disabilities and their peers[23]. Resource centers can play a leading role in establishing inclusive education groups within mainstream schools. This model represents a new paradigm and support system for special education services. By implementing group-based operational frameworks, resource centers can effectively guide curriculum development in resource classrooms, facilitating seamless collaboration and resource sharing among schools, educators, students, and educational resources.

4. Conclusion

This paper proposes corresponding recommendations to address the challenges faced by the resource-room curriculum, including a limited scope of service recipients, insufficient adaptability of curriculum design, overly simplistic curriculum objectives and content, a lack of curriculum supervision, and inadequate allocation of curricular resources. The recommendations are as follows: Conceptual

Transformation, Team Building, Professional Training, Support and Guarantee, Specialized Development.

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