



THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE ROLES OF A SOCIAL EDUCATOR

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Abstract

This article analyzes the specific responsibilities, distinctions, and complementary aspects of social educators and resource teachers within the context of inclusive education. Against the backdrop of challenges faced by traditional educational models in supporting students with diverse needs, inclusive education strives to ensure high-quality, personalized learning for all students. The research utilizes a methodology based on the synthesis of existing literature and comparative analysis. The results indicate that while the social educator primarily focuses on students' socio-emotional well-being, the classroom environment, and school-community collaboration, the resource teacher provides academic support to students with special educational needs through differentiated instruction, universal design, and assistive technologies. The discussion highlights the distinctiveness of these roles, their complementary nature, and the significance of effective collaboration. In conclusion, the partnership between both educators is of crucial importance for the success of inclusive education.

Keywords: Inclusive education, social educator, resource teacher, differentiated instruction, personalized education, collaboration.

Introduction

One of the primary objectives of modern educational systems is to ensure that every student receives a quality education, regardless of their personal needs and abilities. This objective is reflected in the principles of inclusive education, which entails the joint education of all students in mainstream schools. Although inclusive education initially focused on individuals with disabilities, over time it has evolved into a broader concept aimed at valuing diversity among all learners



and enhancing the access, participation, and success of marginalized groups. The concept of inclusive education has evolved significantly in recent decades. While it initially focused on integrating children with disabilities into mainstream schools, it is now understood as a broader process aimed at valuing the diversity of all learners and ensuring their full access, participation, and success. Inclusive classrooms are crucial for providing high-quality, personalized education to every child, allowing all students to learn together regardless of their needs and abilities. Research confirms that an inclusive approach improves academic performance, social development, and communication skills, while increasing empathy among peers and reducing school absenteeism and disruptive behavior.

However, implementing inclusive education poses several challenges. In particular, issues such as insufficient teacher training, limited resources, and unadapted infrastructure are highlighted. These challenges increase the need for specialized educational support. The responsibilities of the social educator and the resource teacher in inclusive education possess distinct characteristics, each targeting different aspects of the educational process. Each plays an essential role in creating an inclusive environment and ensuring the success of all students. The foundational role of a social educator lies in the concept of holistic development—addressing the emotional, social, and physical well-being of an individual rather than focusing solely on academic achievement. Unlike traditional teachers who are bound by a rigid curriculum, social educators utilize daily life and shared activities as learning spaces. This approach, deeply rooted in social pedagogy, aims to foster personal growth, self-reliance, and emotional resilience. By treating the individual as a whole, social educators ensure that vulnerable or marginalized groups are not just managed, but genuinely empowered to navigate their environments. To understand the distinct nature of the social educator, one must contrast it with the role of a traditional school teacher. While a teacher's primary objective is the transmission of cognitive knowledge and academic instruction within a formal classroom, the social educator operates in the margins of formal education. They address behavioral challenges, support social-emotional needs, and provide guidance that classroom teachers rarely have the time to offer. Once individual maps are ready, the social educator transitions the group into a collaborative, gamified challenge. Participants are paired up or placed in small teams. Their mission is to help each other "build a bridge" over the obstacles identified on their maps.



The Token System: The educator provides teams with limited resource tokens (representing community support, peer advice, or positive coping strategies).

The Interaction: To cross their obstacle, a participant must verbally explain their challenge to their teammate. The teammate must then "invest" a resource token by offering a practical, positive solution or a supportive word (External Opportunities).

In an educational institution, the social educator acts as a vital bridge, turning behavioral crises into learning opportunities and ensuring that a student's emotional struggles do not block their academic progress. A common point of confusion is the overlap between social educators and traditional social workers; however, their methods of intervention differ fundamentally. Social work is largely systemic and administrative, often revolving around case management, legal frameworks, welfare benefits, and crisis intervention through scheduled appointments. In contrast, a social educator's work is deeply relational and immersive. They spend extended periods within the client's daily environment—whether in community centers, residential care, or specialized school programs—using continuous personal interaction to model positive behavior and build long-term social skills. Beyond individual support, social educators play a critical role in fostering social inclusion and systemic advocacy. They are frequently tasked with supporting individuals facing acute social exclusion, such as children with special educational needs, at-risk youth, or marginalized communities. By identifying institutional barriers and designing targeted pedagogical interventions, they ensure that these groups gain equal access to social and educational opportunities.

In this capacity, the social educator serves as both a protector of human rights and an architect of an inclusive society. Beyond theoretical frameworks, the effectiveness of a social educator depends heavily on the practical methods and innovative tools they bring into their daily practice. Rather than relying on traditional lectures, these professionals design interactive, participatory experiences to engage individuals and break down barriers to communication. For instance, they frequently implement structured gamification tools—such as adaptive team challenges, role-playing scenarios, or collaborative communication exercises—to teach emotional regulation and conflict resolution in a low-pressure environment. Additionally, social educators utilize targeted



frameworks like the SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) tailored for personal development, allowing individuals to actively map out their own goals and obstacles. By integrating these interactive platforms into their routines, social educators transform abstract social skills into tangible, lived experiences, providing individuals with practical coping mechanisms they can immediately use in their everyday lives.

The primary focus of the **social educator** is directed toward the socio-emotional well-being of students, making the classroom environment inclusive, and developing school-community collaboration. Their responsibilities include the following: **Shaping the Classroom Environment:** The social educator helps establish a positive and supportive environment based on the principles of justice, equity, respect, and participation among students. This involves fostering socio-emotional inclusion. **A Holistic Approach to the Child:** Focuses not only on the academic but also on the social, emotional, and personal development of the student. This includes eliminating social barriers that prevent students from fully participating in school and society.

Developing Relationships: Enhances students' social skills by strengthening teacher-student relationships, organizing group activities, and encouraging collaborative practices.

School-Community Collaboration: Ensures the active involvement of families and the local community in the educational process by establishing and strengthening connections with them.

The roles of the social educator and the resource teacher encompass distinct yet complementary dimensions of inclusive education. Understanding their specific differences and complementary features is essential for shaping effective inclusive practices.

Core Focus: The primary focus of the social educator is centered on students' socio-emotional well-being, the classroom environment, and strengthening school-community partnership. They strive to ensure justice, equity, respect, and participation for all students. Conversely, the resource teacher focuses on the academic success of students with special educational needs, their mastery of the curriculum, and the achievement of individual learning goals.



Core Tools and Strategies: The social educator utilizes more relationship-based, group-oriented, and collaborative approaches to develop social skills. On the other hand, the resource teacher employs specialized educational tools such as Differentiated Instruction (DI), Universal Design for Learning (UDL), assistive technologies, and Individualized Education Programs (IEP).

Target Group: The scope of the social educator's activity is broader, encompassing all students, particularly vulnerable groups facing social barriers. The resource teacher serves specifically identified students with special educational needs who, despite studying in general classrooms, require targeted academic support.

To see the distinct role of the social educator in action, one can look at practical, interactive interventions designed for group settings. Unlike a traditional classroom lesson that tests academic memory, this activity focuses entirely on **self-awareness, peer support, and resilience.**

Target Group: At-risk youth, students navigating school transitions, or inclusive classrooms.

Primary Goal: To help individuals identify personal strengths, recognize external challenges, and build collaborative problem-solving skills through peer interaction.

In conclusion, while the responsibilities of teachers, social workers, and social educators frequently intersect within community and educational frameworks, the distinct value of the social educator lies in their holistic, relational approach to human development. Rather than focusing strictly on academic metrics or administrative case management, they dedicate themselves to the social-emotional well-being and autonomy of the individual. As educational systems globally shift toward more inclusive and comprehensive models of care, the role of the social educator remains indispensable in bridging the gap between formal instruction and systemic support, ultimately ensuring that no individual is left isolated by society. Ultimately, the distinct roles of educators and social professionals shape how a society cares for its most vulnerable members. While a teacher focuses on what a person knows, and a social worker manages the system that protects them, the social educator focuses on how that person lives,



grows, and connects with the world. By turning daily interactions into moments of therapeutic growth, social educators provide the relational glue that holds inclusive communities together. Recognizing and elevating this unique role is essential for building a more empathetic, supportive, and truly inclusive educational landscape. As inclusive education strives to provide high-quality, personalized learning for all students, the roles of these two specialists become increasingly vital. The research findings demonstrated that the social educator's main task is geared toward students' socio-emotional well-being, rendering the classroom environment inclusive, and fostering school-community collaboration. They enhance the participation of all students by promoting socio-emotional inclusion, strengthening relationships, and ensuring a holistic approach to the child. In contrast, the resource teacher specializes in providing targeted academic support to students with special educational needs. They ensure students' academic success through differentiated instruction, universal design, assistive technologies, and Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

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