

CONNECTING CLASSROOMS

Media Lab

**An experience that challenges
exclusion**

Jeeja Ghosh

**Head, Advocacy and Disability
Studies**

Swati Chakraborty

Head, Information and

Communication Technology





"Do you get the feeling that, in educational workshops, there are way too many buzzwords thrown around?"



COMMUNICATION

Why is it important?

- It is the essence of being human
- We use communication to get what we want
AND avoid what we do not want
- It is always a two way process
- It includes expression and understanding
- Reading, writing, drawing are all forms of communication



Communication is a human right

Communication abilities are most crucial for a student to participate in any educational programme and social interaction



Paradigm shift in the area of disability

- Changing perspective of understanding disability
- From the medical model to the rights based approach and social model

- The UNCRPD advocates for inherent dignity of the individual and respect for human diversity and accepts
- Addresses Rights of 650 Million Persons with Disabilities
- Impacts 2 Billion Persons including Family Members of Persons with Disabilities

India is a signatory of this declaration



UNCRPD reaffirms that persons with disabilities enjoy the same human rights as everyone. The specific rights stated below are recognized in the Convention:

- Right to communication
- Right to education
- Right to work
- Right to an adequate standard of living
- Right to participate in political, cultural and public life



The Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995

- We, in India considered the rights based approach and the act stressed the right to access, to communicate, to be educated and to be included in the society.
- A new bill conducive to UNCRPD is still in the pipeline
- The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009



Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy (IICP)

IICP is a specialist resource centre for cerebral palsy working since 1974 for the rights of persons with disability, particularly cerebral palsy. IICP is based in Kolkata but works on a national level in partnership with a close network of NGOs in many districts of West Bengal and 11 other states of India. It has vast international linkages and is working with advocacy groups nationally and internationally for the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.



Our Mission

Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy seeks to bring about positive changes in the lives of all people with cerebral palsy through a range of policies and service provisions designed to enhance their individual skills and knowledge and give them opportunities to exercise their constitutional rights and fully participate and contribute to the community and country.



Our Vision

- A future where persons with all types of disabilities are fully included in the community in which they live, in terms of education and employment opportunities
- Ankur, the Advocacy Group of IICP that include young adults with multiple disabilities and people who cannot use speech as their primary mode of communication advocates this mission and vision



ANKUR believes

- All children and adults are equal if they are given the opportunities to explore and articulate their creative self
- We worked around this idea and encouraged a creative space where students and young adults with multiple disabilities and complex communication needs come together to express their imagination freely.



Media Lab: A concept and a space

- Space for expressing creative ideas for the person's own satisfaction
- Platform for experimentation with a variety of text and art forms including audio and visuals to shape creative expressions
- An unstructured yet a potential instrument for generating awareness for the purpose of advocacy or raising voice on issues related to human rights



Media lab – how did it evolve?

It evolved from two rounds of intensive workshops on exploring and using different forms of art and media, creative processes and practices, conducted by a resource person with vast experience in writing, film making and sound designing.



Media lab – outcome of the workshops

- The participants learnt to explore and thus give a new flavour to their ideas by working with text, visuals, sounds, music, audio-visuals and other creative forms and options.
- This opened a horizon in expressing imaginations and ideas for the members and motivated them to think and discourse in a non-judgmental way.



People at Media Lab

Students, trainees and staff

- There are 20 members in the team
- 11 of them are still studying in school and preparing for class X or XII examinations
- 10 of the members cannot use speech as their primary mode of communication and cannot write manually, they use AAC to express themselves
- 10 members including 5 facilitators can use speech



Augmentative Alternative Communication

‘AAC is a term used to describe a broad range of communicative behaviours and methods which support and enhance speech attempts of people who are unable to talk clearly’

Warrick & Kaul 1999

AAC includes methods ranging from simple techniques to hi-tech software and devices.



Media lab & Roshni

- Roshni, the National Resource Centre for AAC at IICP is a symbol of light, the light of knowledge that will enable persons with complex speech and communication disorders to break away from the shackles of silence. This is the only specialized centre, first of its own kind in the eastern region of the country to cater to the needs of users with complex communication needs.
- The media lab uses the lo-tech and hi-tech resources of Roshni.



Media Lab – A concept and process

- The media lab thus aims to be an active hub of creative practices that develops through collaboration between technology, media and creative expression.
- It is an ever-evolving dynamic space that can accommodate various creative forms and processes.



Media lab: A process

- The group explores existing creative material through listening, viewing and reading practices
- Such practices include reading from famous authors, viewing photographs, paintings, or clippings from films
- They learn to critically appreciate these material and develops compositions around these



Media lab: A process

- This enriches their socio-cultural exposure and understanding
- Triggers their imagination
- Develops analytical skills
- Motivates development of both receptive and expressive language (textual and audio visual) and style
- Sustains and develops literacy skills



Media lab: A process

- Members choose topics for original compositions
- They decide whether they wish to work individually or in groups
- The writings are critically analyzed by the fellow group members
- The members question the author regarding the idea, logic and/or the style of writing



Media Lab: A process

- Every author has to try to defend and explain her / his own composition to the team
- However the author has the supreme authority to accept or dismiss critique or suggestions
- They learn to question, debate and discourse not being judgmental in any way
- There is nothing labeled 'good or bad' in creative endeavour. Freedom of expression is held high
- The discourse helps the group to sharpen their analytical and logical skills



Media lab: A process

- The authors decide on the format they wish to present their compositions
- The different form of presentations may range from paintings, poster presentation, collage, power point presentations with audio recordings and sound effects, audio plays, animations, videos



Media lab: A process

- The pictures are sometimes selected from magazines, photo albums and internet to match with the text. They also use cameras to take still photographs.
- Audios are downloaded from the internet. If any specific voice, sound and music is required to match the text, then it is recorded.
- They get as much technology input as required from Roshni. The IT team facilitates the group.



We will now try out
a simple process of
working with text.



Media lab

Use of Assistive technology(AT) and AAC

- Use of regular and assistive technology is crucial to to provide access to expression
- Members who cannot write manually use computers for writing, using regular or special keyboard and mouse
- People who are cannot use these use special software in English and vernaculars with switch adaptations to access the computer



Training and practice

- The team members irrespective of their disabilities get exposure to and learn a range of regular software (such as MS-Word, Powerpoint, Photoshop etc)
- All the members learn the essential skills to search internet for ready resources
- Some of them also learn and use advanced software for editing audio, video and animation



Media lab

Use of Assistive technology(AT) and AAC

- AAC members are an integral part of the team
- Some of them use low tech communication aids in the form of alphabet boards or phrase-message boards
- Others use window based tablets to store their messages and compositions and 'talk' to others
- Role of the communication partners with peer facilitation is a practice - they interpret what the AAC user says
- The AAC users are in complete control of the situation and in-command of their creativity



Let us show you some of the
AAC and Assistive Technology
aids used in the Media Lab



Media lab: The group dynamics

- Team work and sharing is another important practice
- Each member with a specific talent helps fellow members to give shape to her/his creativity
- The lab evolves as a collaborative space where people exchange their ideas and skills



Present and Future

- The team had mini exhibitions and posted presentations in the web media
- The team plans to bring forth audio plays, small videos, animations, stories, poems, mini exhibitions and online radio-programmes.
- They also plan to use the social media to propagate its work



Media lab: Learning

- Expose the members to a wide range of literature, film, music, paintings, photographs
- Encourage the members to think out of the box – moving away from text books
- Enrich language and analytical skills
- Promote an environment of mutual respect
- Acknowledging each other's area of strengths
- Embodies concepts and processes of expression that are continuously evolving, where everybody learns through the journey



Towards self-satisfaction, self-empowerment and inclusion

- A fascinating platform that cuts across the notion of “disabilities” - it is important for all
- A space where everybody can enjoy the flight of imagination
- All can explore and express their own creativity and dare to dream.



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ANKUR
The Advocacy Group
And
ROSHNI
National Resource Centre for AAC



Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy



CONNECTING
CLASSROOMS



Contact us at

Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy

35/1 , Taratala Road

Kolkata 700 0088



Phone: 24013337, 24010240, 24013488

Fax: 033 2401 4177

website: www.iicpindia.org

email: mail @iicpindia.org