

Effective educational services for a child in need of Individual Education Programme (IEP)

(overview essay)

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Abstract: *This study reviewed the role of team members in developing individualized education program (IEP) for persons with special needs. In order to accomplish the objective of IEP, the researchers discussed the meaning of Individualized Education Programme (IEP) as a legally binding document provided by the Federal Law, for children with special needs. And listed what the committee should do to develop IEPs that are linked to standards. The paper discussed importance and functions of IEP as well as the components of IEP. Also, highlighted the role of students (learners), teachers, parents and other professionals as members of IEP assisting students with special needs. Thus, IEP can be made functional and beneficial to the special need child in Nigeria through appropriate legislation, designing appropriate instruction by professionals/experts, use of technology and modification of teaching methods. The paper concluded with an advice that if every member of the team is considered equal to other members, IEP shall be effectively developed.*

Keywords: *Educational services for a child in need, Individual Education Programme (IEP)*

1 Introduction

The success of our lives in school settings is what we achieved as an individual. This is because we understand the teaching that is being touched. Due to differentiated learning abilities teachers have experience with special needs children, their educational safety can be improved through Individual Education Program (IEP) alternatively called an "Individualized Education Plan. An IEP is a legally binding document provided by the Federal Law, for children with special needs. It is a legally binding document that spells out the type of special education services a special child will receive.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2006 advised that it includes the child's classification, placement services, therapies, behavioural goals, a behaviour plan if needed, the percentage of time in regular education, and progress reports from teachers and therapist. The individualized part of IEP means that the plan must be tailored specifically to the child's special learning needs, not to the needs of the teacher, or the school, or the district. Goals, modifications, accommodations, personnel, placement, all should be selected to enforced and improve the learning needs of a child in mind to make the service appropriate. (Kauffman, McGee, & Brgham, 2004).

University of the State New York, State Education Department (2010) affirmed that IEP is a document developed by a team of people for students attending school system who have a direct relationship of helping students with special needs to be able to reach their full potentials. It is used for better understanding of how and what a student needs to succeed in his or her education.

It can also serve as a roadmap to address the student's goals, progress, and services needed. It is also a legal document that is required for each student.

IEP is the cornerstone of the special education process for each individual student. It is the tool to document how student's special needs related to his/her disability will be met within the context of an educational environment. This guidance document provides important information for Committees on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) and Committees on Special Education (CSE) in developing IEPs that are reasonably calculated to result in educational benefit to a student.

The IEP is planned at an IEP meeting. In developing a student's IEP, it is the responsibility of the Committee to recommend goals and services that will assist the student to be involved and progress in the general education curriculum or for preschool students in appropriate activities. This means that members of the Committee will need to consider both the State's learning standards as well as the school-based instructional curriculum, which should be aligned to the State's learning standards. They will need to know the expectations of the general education classroom for the corresponding age of the student both in terms of what learning is expected (general curriculum) as well as how the students are expected to access/demonstrate that learning. This information will assist the Committee in determining if the student needs adaptations, accommodations, or modifications of the general curriculum for all or part of his/her learning. It is essential that the student's general education teacher(s) participate in the Committee meetings for them to be knowledgeable about the general education curriculum.

To develop IEPs that are linked to the standards, the Committee should:

- i. Review the content as well as the expectations of how the student will learn or demonstrate knowledge and skill in the content areas.
- ii. Identify the strengths and challenges of the student in relation to those expectations in the present levels of performance section of the IEP.

- iii. Identify how student's needs are linked to the general curriculum (e.g. a student's difficulty with visual processing may affect graphing skills required to achieve the math standards).
- iv. Identify the goals that the student will be expected to achieve in one year and, when appropriate, short-term instructional objectives or benchmarks that are the intermediate steps to reach those annual goals.
- v. Identify the special education services, including the adaptations, accommodations or modifications to the general curriculum, and/or instructional environment and materials, as needed by the student to reach those standards.

Importance of IEP

- i. Support a student to participate and progress in general education curriculum.
- ii. Incrementally prepared the student for adult living.
- iii. Ensure a strategic and coordinated approach to address student's needs.
- iv. Identify how the resources of the school need to be configured to supports the student's needs.
- v. Guide the provision of a specially designed instruction.
- vi. Provide an important accountability tool.
- vii. Persistently support the student's personal learning process.
- viii. Positively express the student's improvement and development.
- ix. Provide positive learning experiences.
- x. Result in successful organisation of teaching and modes of action.

The functions of IEP

U.S. Department of Education (2007), explains the functions in the following ways:

- 1. The IEP is not only a good resource and guideline to assisting students; it is also a link that educators and parents of the child can have a base information sharing document that will help to work at home, school and within everyday life.
- 2. The IEP is a working document that is to be assessed and upgraded on a regular basis for it to be of value to the educator, parent and for the child.
- 3. There are sample copies of IEP's guideline, but each child will need recommendations that will be developed for the individual needs and distinct learning styles.
- 4. The IEP allows for a broader explanation of the student's strength, capabilities, weak areas, social balance, behaviour needs, and adjustments needed for the education and personal growth of the child.

5. The information on the IEP can direct the teachers, parents and other professionals to compile the information that will give the student a distinct advantage in reaching his/her requirements (Friend, 2008).
6. It also allows a clearer understanding of the individual's personal needs. IEP can change many lives of an individual, family, and other students.

2 Components of IEP

An IEP should be arranged by schools for every child that is eligible to receive special education services, unique learning needs and regular progress measure (Gargiulo, 2009).

It is mandatory to provide everything promised in an IEP document by law. The IEP should contain the following:

a) A child's present levels of academic and functional performance

There should be current information of not more than a year. Here, a description of the child's abilities, skills in academic and functional levels are presented. All areas of development that the child needs support is addressed. The academic subjects covered the general core curriculum like sciences, education, arts and social sciences. However, the functional skills include daily living skills, social skills, behaviour, mobility skills, vocational skills, etc (Lewis 2007).

b) Specific and annual goals

The law requires every IEP document to contain annual educational goals for each child. These goals should be written in a specific realistic and measurable manner because they will ensure a child is making good progress. An example of a specific goal is: at the end of the lesson, term, and year the pupil should be able to accomplish the goal.

c) A child's eligibility

Merely having a disability is not sufficient for eligibility. Before IEP, the school must first determine whether the child qualifies for special education services. To qualify or to determine eligibility, the school must conduct a full evaluation of the child in all areas of suspected disability. The disability must have an adverse effect on the child's educational progress. I.e. there must be the presence of disability/disabilities. The school, therefore, must conduct a full evaluation for a child in all areas of development (functional vision or colour perception, general intelligence, motor ability, communication, etc).

Based on the results of the evaluation, the school along with the parents must meet to review the results and the child's current level of performance and to determine

whether special education services are needed. If the child is found eligible for IEP services, the school is required to convene an IEP team and develop an appropriate educational plan for the child. The IEP should be developed or implemented as soon as possible after the child is determined eligible.

d) Members of IEP team

The IEP team must include student and student's parent(s) or guardians, a general education teacher/case manager, at least one regular education teacher, a representative of the school or district who is knowledgeable about the availability of school resources and an individual who can interpret the instructional implications of the child's evaluation result(s) such as the school psychologists.

The parent or school may also bring other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the child for example, the school may invite related service providers such as speech and occupational therapists. The parent may invite professionals who have worked with or assessed the child or someone to assist the parent in advocating for their child's needs such as parent advocate.

e) Appropriate placements

The IEP should be completed before placement decisions. After the IEP is developed, the placement can be done depending on the degree and nature of disability. The examples of placement are regular classes, special schools, resource room, inclusion, home school (Deno, 1970) etc. A location to receive therapy must be known. The IEP team determines the placement in the environment in which the child's IEP can be implemented (Weishaar, 2001) (Kamens, 2004).

f) Related services and supplementary aids.

Spencer (2005) admitted that the IEP must indicate the kinds of support and services the child will receive, the related services include slate and stylus, adaptive technology, functional life skills, therapies (speech therapy, occupational/physical therapy, computer instruction, etc).

There are also supplementary aids to help the child learn in the general education classroom such as accommodations, transportation (wheel chair) and assistive technology (soft wires).

g) Programme modifications

Modifications are changes in what is taught or expected of a student. The IEP must explain what types of testing adaptations and modifications will be used for the child and why they are necessary. They include assignments, assistive technology, environment, seating position, extra time for test or examination, etc. They can help a child to be accommodated and work around to pursue his/her education (Clark, 2000).

h) Progress report

A child's progress should be measured and reported to the parents, especially progress towards the annual goals. On the other hand, the child's strengths and weaknesses should be observed and considered in all areas of cognitive, social and psychomotor development.

i) Transition plan

Transition planning includes services and support to assist a child who graduates from school in getting an instruction and related services, career interest, community activities, daily skills, adult services and employment services.

Parent Role

According to Lewis (2005), the role of the parent is:

- i. Verify the accuracy of personally identifying information.
- ii. Provide information and observations about the child's level of functioning in the home and community.
- iii. Provide information regarding the child's medical status.
- iv. Provide information on the child's ability, interests, performance and history.
- v. Provide information on instructional strategies and if appropriate, behavioural supports that have been successful.
- vi. Assist in developing educational goals, objectives and benchmark.
- vii. Assist in identifying the special education and related services to be provided.
- viii. Assist in determining the appropriate educational plan and the least restrictive environment.
- ix. Provide input on the vision statement.
- x. Assist in all decisions made during the IEP meeting.
- xi. Express concerns when developing and reviewing IEP.

Benefits of Parents Involvement in IEP Development

The involvement of parents in the IEP process has many benefits:

- Increase the teacher's understanding of the child's environment
- Add to parents' knowledge of the child's educational setting
- Improve communication between parents and the school
- Increase the school's understanding of the child
- Increase the likelihood that, with an improved understanding between home and school, mutually agreed upon educational goals will be attained.

Role of Regular Teacher

- i. Provide information regarding the child's current level of performance in the regular education environment
- ii. Provide information on the general education standards, curriculum and expectations
- iii. Assist in determining appropriate positive behavioural interventions and strategies
- iv. Assist in determining supplementary aids and services
- v. Assist in determining program modifications and support needed for school personnel.

Special Education Teacher

For effective educational services, the special education teacher is expected to:

- i. Conduct academic and behavioural assessments to acquire baseline data on the child before the meeting.
- ii. Gather input from other team members before the meeting.
- iii. Develop draft goals and objectives and share them with team members including the parent before meeting.
- iv. Identify instructional strategies that would meet the needs of the child.
- v. Discuss how to modify the general education curriculum to help the child learn.
- vi. Identify the supplementary aids and services that the child may need to be successful in the regular classroom and elsewhere.
- vii. Describe how to modify testing or to provide the test with individual appropriate accommodations so the child can show what he/she has learned.
- viii. Describe how instruction can be individualized and how the program will be implemented throughout the course in the school.

Role of the Related Service Provider

The following are the roles of related service providers

- i. Identify the child's present level of performance by contributing performance statements, data and baseline information related to the child's academic and functional performance
- ii. Identify the child's needs related to academic and functional performance
- iii. Contribute to the development of goals and objectives for parents and team members
- iv. Recommend and describe the nature, frequency and amount of related service to be provided once the child's goals and objectives have been established.

- v. Identify instructional and environmental modifications or accommodations that would assist the child in benefiting from special education.

Role of School Representative

- i. Ensure that the services will be provided for the student
- ii. Ensure that legal requirements of federal and state laws and operating standards are met
- iii. Assist the team in identifying the variety of service delivery and placement options available.
- iv. Coordinate the acquisition of needed services.
- v. Clarify questions regarding curriculum adaptations and modifications.

The Child's Role

- i. Provide input on interests and preferences
- ii. Provide input on future planning
- iii. Participate in decision-making and goal-setting
- iv. Cooperation with the team members

How to Make IEP Functional

For IEP to be made functional and beneficial to the special need child in Nigeria, the following must be in place:

- i. Legislation: According to Lewis (2005), for IEP to be made functional and beneficial to the special needs child, the legislation made by the federal government be given a top priority and be followed practically.
- ii. There should be respect for one another, therefore keeping to IEP meeting time is important to every member of the team. And no one claims superiority over another, hence there are equal rights for speech making for every member.

3 Summary and conclusion

In summary, the development of a comprehensive programme, with goals and objectives that are relevant and acceptable to parents, regular teachers, and special education teachers is very important. For IEP to be functional and beneficial to the special needs child, all the stakeholders in education must be effectively involved. These include the government, parents, teachers and caregivers, professionals and the special needs persons themselves. Training a child in IEP can be time-consuming. Therefore, teachers and caregivers should be patient and tolerable in performing their duties. Based on individual differences among special needs learners, every child can be saved from

being illiterates by gaining the right educational services and practice. When learners have the privileges of appropriate educational placement they will have success.

Recommendations

Looking at the different steps IEP team members go through in this paper, one wonders about the financial implication it may cause. It is therefore recommended that:

- Every individual, groups and government should show concern and intervene by contributing to help the programme to be a success.
- Special education teachers and other related services specialist need more of government support for adequate job motivation.
- Special needs learners should be well considered in terms of appropriate educational placement that will suit their learning abilities.
- Financial allocations for IEP should be properly utilized. It should not be diverted to other educational programmes.

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