INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN (IEP) FOUNDATION OF A QUALITY INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Children with disability deserve equal access to quality education which enable them develop into useful member of the society and contribute to the economic growth of their immediate community irrespective of their areas of special needs. The Individual Education Plan (IEP) is a written document specifically developed for students with disabilities in inclusive education. The main goal of this article is to present a checklist of the essential elements required for an IEP and it is intended that these will form the basis for good inclusive practicein the future. The IEP is a working document and should be useful, available and comprehensible to all those dealing directly with the student. It needs to be considered in the context of home, school and classroom organisation.Effective individual education plans have key characteristics: Individualised and child-centred, Inclusive, Holistic, Collaborative and Accessible.
Key words: Individual Education Plan (IEP , inclusive education, collaboration, individualization

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners and can thus be understood as a key strategy to achieve Education for All (EFA) – educational systems that would benefit from differences, in order to build a more just, democratic society (Acedo, 2008). As an overall principle, it should guide all education policies and practices, starting from the fact that education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just and equal society. The major impetus for inclusive education was given at the World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality, held in Salamanca, Spain, June 1994 (UNESCO Report, 1994). Thus, the fundamental principle of inclusive education implies respect of diversity in human society and includes identification, challenge and overcoming barriers in participation, caused by the social, cultural, ideological and physical factors (Jachova, 2004).

This vision was reaffirmed by the World Education Forum meeting in Dakar, April 2000, held to review the progress made since 1990.

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The Forum declared that Education for All must take account of the needs of the poor and the disadvantaged, including those with disabilities or special learning needs. Inclusion is thus seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all children, youth and adults through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing and eliminating exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision that covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children (UNESCO, 2003b).

Inclusive schools have to be well-equipped in all aspects to cater and deliver quality education for all children. This includes having a balanced curriculum that is appropriate for all categories of children, teachers who have the ability to handle the individual needs within the classroom and thereby promote an environment where personal development, social skills and student participation are strongly encouraged (Jacob&Olisaemeka, 2016, p.192)There is a growing recognition that including students with disabilities in general education can provide them with the opportunity to learn in natural, stimulating settings, which may also lead to increased acceptance and appreciation of differences (Ajuwon, 2008).Creating a learning environment for inclusive classrooms that is well managed with clear structures and routines is of the utmost importance for student success "School must be a safe and protected environment, where a student can come and learn without fear" (Wong & Wong, 2014, p. 11)

Effective educational system should respond to the needs of children who need an organised support from the community, educational institutions and society as a whole, in order to achieve the guaranteed right to accessible and quality education under equal conditions. Creation and maintenance of inclusive culture in school environments is a process, especially because the inclusion itself requires transformation of attitudes of people, schools, the system and the society as final (Jachova, 2008).

COLLABORATION IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

An important role in supporting inclusive education is therefore played by teamwork, exchange of experiences, partnership in schools and developing positive relationships between all educational actors (Mărgăriţoiu, 2010). This means that "all team members need to know what should be achieved jointly, and be given clear information on what can be solved collectively. Researchers have highlighted various obstacles – both structural and cultural in nature – to collaboration between professionals from different sectors of society. In a review of the relevant literature, Widmark et al. (2011, p. 2) stressed that "the structural barriers include differences in the regulatory, financial, and administrative boundaries, and the cultural impediments consist of the various ways that the needs of individuals are considered, which are often a product of educational and organisational cultures." Rose (2011) has identified problematic power dynamics, poor communication patterns, and a poor understanding of roles and responsibilities as obstacles to successful interprofessional collaboration, resulting in boundary infringements and conflict due to differences in approaches. Igrić (2015, p. 302) points out the problem of lack of expertise in assessing and providing support to children with disabilities in elementary schools, which leads to a lack of understanding of the child's needs, to the denial of the right to development and education under the same conditions as their peers.

If mainstream teachers do not accept the education of these pupils as an integral part of their job, they will try to ensure that someone else (often the special education teacher) takes responsibility for these pupils and will organize covert segregation in the school (e.g. the special class) (Mutasa, Goronga, & Tafangombe, 2013). Salisbury (1994, by Atta et al., 2009, p. 281) suggested that "collaborative problem solving to promote inclusive education is typically carried out between teachers and other support professionals who get together to solve specific problems, usually concerning a student or group of students, focusing on classroom-based interventions increases the students' chances for success (Bouillet, 2013, p. 97)."

Teachers' positive attitudes towards inclusion depend strongly on their experience with learners who are perceived as 'challenging'. Teacher education, the availability of support within the classroom, class size and overall workload are all factors which influence teachers' attitudes. Negative attitudes of head-teachers, inspectors of education, teachers and adults (parents and other family members) are major barriers to inclusion. Teachers, other educators and non-teaching support staff need to be trained and ready to assist children, youth and adults in their development and learning processes on a daily basis (UNECSO, 2009).

Collaboration with the parents is very important for the progress in the process of education.

The parents have to be involved in the all phases like identification of the special needs, assumption specific educational utility till Comission evaluation. A well thought and established partner relation between teacher and parent is a solid ground for gradual raise of the quality of educational work in those segments that are accessible for the parents and the students and it should be nourished and consistently promoted (Jachova, 2011, p. 452).

The SEND Code of Practice is underpinned by a number of principles made explicit in Section 19 of the Children and Families Act 2014 whereby regard must be given to: the importance of the child or young person, and the child's parents, participating as fully as possible in decisions, and being provided with the information and support necessary to enable participation in those decisions; the need to support the child or young person, and the child's parents, in order to facilitate the development of the child or young person and to help them achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes, preparing them effectively for adulthood (Frederickson & Cline, 2015, p. 60). One of the priorities in education policy framework refers to the improvement educational system through the provision of a quality, equality, fairness and accessibility of education for all students according to their abilities and skills. Index for Inclusion offers schools a supportive process of self-assessment and development, which draws on the views of staff, governors, students and parents/carers and other community members. Index includes detailed study of ways by which to reduce barriers to learning and participation of all students in the school (Jachova, & Kovachević, 2015, p. 901).

PREPEARING EFFECTIVE INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN (IEP)

This appropriate education is implemented through each child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP), the legal document in which parents and school personnel determine specific supports and services the student will need to access general education. This IEP process is one of the most powerful aspects of the student's education and therefore the IDEA mandates that parents are equal members in the creation of the IEP (Yell 2012). The Individual Education Plan is developed through a collaborative process involving the school, parents, the student (where appropriate) and other relevant personnel or agencies. It refers to the adapted or modified aspects of the educational programme and focuses on priority learning needs, although the student may also have other learning needs that will not require the same intensive degree of planning and monitoring. Not every aspect of

the curriculum and school life needs to be modified for every student with special educational needs - only those areas of identified need arising from assessment should be covered. The amount of adaptation and support will vary according to the individual learning needs of each student. Some students with more complex needs may require significant educational modifications (NCSE Report, 2006, p. 4).The five strongest points of the IEP (individual education plans) are: based on the true knowledge of the student;they are made according to the true abilities and interests of the students;predict real time limits;related to the resources of the school; andat a certain stage of their work include parents (Jachova, 2002, p. 8).

IEP learning outcomes are often described as goals and objectives. An IEP must have one or more of the following: the goals or outcomes set for that student for that school year where they are different from the learning outcomes set out in an applicable educational program guide; a list of the support services required to achieve goals established for the student; a list of the adaptations to educational materials, instructional strategies or assessment methods. An IEP should also include the following: the present levels of educational performance of the student; the setting where the educational program is to be provided; the names of all personnel who will be providing the educational program and the support services for the student during the school year; the period of time and process for review of the IEP; evidence of evaluation or review, which could include revisions made to the plan and the tracking of achievement in relation to goals; and plans for the next transition point in the student's education.(BC Ministry of Education Manual, 2016, p.16)

In Serbia the individual educational plan contains: personal data and a brief description of the development and educational situation of the child or pupil; the goal of educational work orchange that needs additional support should be achieved in a subsidiary where additional support is planned, operational description of the support through a series of individual activities or steps and their order in the educational group and classes in the department, as well as the description and schedule of work outside the group or classes when it is necessary; specific attainment standards and adapted standards for particular activities in pre-school institutions, for particularor all subjects in schools or outgoing activities that go through a process to the next additional support;persons who will provide support during realization of individual planned activities, he timing, duration, or frequency for each support measure during the planned activities (Pavković & Kovačević, 2017).

Where it is decided to provide a pupil with SEN support, the parents must be formally notified, although parents should have already been involved in forming the assessment of needs as outlined above. The teacher and the SENCO should agree in consultation with the parent and the pupil the adjustments, interventions and support to be put in place, as well as the expected impact on progress, development or behaviour, along with a clear date for review. All teachers and support staff who work with the pupil should be made aware of their needs, the outcomes sought, the support provided and any teaching strategies or approaches that are required. This should also be recorded on the school's information system. The support and intervention provided should be selected to meet the outcomes identified for the pupil, based on reliable evidence of effectiveness, and should be provided by staff with sufficient skills and knowledge. Parents should be fully aware of the planned support and interventions and, where appropriate, plans should seek parental involvement to reinforce or contribute to progress at home. (SEN and disability Code of practice: 0 to 25 years, 2015, 101).

In Republic of Macedonia there is no system solution for adapting the IEP according to the abilities of the children with disabilities, based on the barriers that have to be conquered, it is prepared with an agreement between the parent and the teachers. Accurate information therefore cannot be obtained of whether the children receive the best education according to their abilities and whether they are motivated to reach their full potential. Although the majority of the parents are satisfied with the results achieved at school, almost all of them believe that it is a result of the additional work that the parents invest with these children in the home (Report of Ombudsmanin Republic of Macedonia, 2016, p. 45).

The IEP should only record that which is additional to or different from the differentiated curriculum plan, which is in place as part of provision for all children. The IEP should be crisply written and focus on three or four individual targets, chosen from those relating to the key areas of communication, literacy, mathematics, and behaviour and social skills that match the child's needs. The IEP should be discussed with the child and the parents (SEN Code of Practice, 2001).

In Croatia after the designed student support plan and setting those goals aimed at student progress, special education teacher provides support in developing an individual educational program (IEP). The form of IEP (Ivančić & Stančić, 2015) encompasses initial assessment, curriculum areas and topics to be taught by student, goals to be adopted, student activities, support strategies, accomplished tasks, reports on co-operation with parents, teaching assistants, progress report and suggestions for further work. Special education teacher and student's teacher agree on a work plan. After providing support in writing and implementing IEP, special education teacher, a mobile expert team member arranges meetings with teachers, parents and teaching assistants to establish a student's progress for further assignments and plans. An example of good practice are meetings of teachers, teaching assistants, parents, and members of a mobile expert team. At that meeting, a member of a mobile expert team is the leader of the meeting and moderates it by directing the participants to what is important and by gathering information and giving advice on progress.

The perceptions from the experiences so far show that the IEP should:are considered working documents; be of interest to all interested parties; promote effective planning by teachers;be the result of serious preparations and action by staff and lead to the achievement of certain learning objectives;enable inclusion in the assessment of the success of all students in the school, including students with SEN (special educational needs);provide access to the curriculum and efficient realization of the content;are linked to the school's strategy (Jachova, 2013, p. 18).

Individual Education Plan (IEP) for deaf pupils should enable: teacher of the deaf staff to identify the approximate number of sessions needed by particular pupil for tutorial work with the teacher for deaf; the pupil to be involved in target setting and reviews where appropriate; mainstream teachers and teachers of the deaf to jointly plan the programme of lessons; parents of deaf pupils to be regularly informed about progress, difficulties and/or strategies recommended for their child; parents to contribute insight the knowledge of and aspirations for their child in drawing up of the IEP (RNID Education Guidelines, 2001, p. 19).

In Serbia IEP is developed according to the educational needs of the child and the student: adaptation of the way of work, as well as the conditions in which the educational work is performed (IEP1);the adaptation and modification of the content of the educational work, the outcomes and the standards for achievement (IOP2);enriching and expanding the content of educational work for talented children and students (IOP3). The preparation of IEP2 precedes the preparation, application and evaluation of IEP1, as well as providing an opinion from an interdepartmental commission to assess the need for additional education, health and social support for the child and the student.

In particular, for students who acquire education through the implementation of IEP2, the curriculum can be changed, based on the opinion of the interdepartmental commission for assessment of the need for additional education, health and social support for the child and the student (Kovačević & Arsić, 2017). According of the Report of Ombudsman in Republic of Macedonia (2016, p.46) the IEP, prepared by the parent, teacher, pedagogue and the special education teacher. The IEP highest goals are set for one trimester and if the child is successful in achieving these goals in the foreseen period, then they are upgraded by setting even higher goals for the next three months. If the set goals are not achieved in the foreseen period, in accordance with the abilities of the child with disabilities, then they are downgraded for the next three months. The evaluation is a separate problem, according to both the teachers and the parents. Once again, the teachers insist on the existence of standardized templates that will allow them to evaluate the children with disabilities, rather than giving a grade which measures the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Both the teachers and the parents perceive evaluation and all types of testing, the external testing as well, as a separate issue in the process of inclusion. according to the teachers, the approach to adjusting the testing is individual and situational.

IEPs should be reviewed at least twice a year. Ideally they should be reviewed termly, or possibly more frequently for some children. At least one review in the year could coincide with a routine Parents' Evening, although schools should recognise that some parents will prefer a private meeting. Reviews need not be unduly formal, but parents' views on the child's progress should be sought and they should be consulted as part of the review process. Wherever possible, the child should also take part in the review process and be involved in setting the targets. If the child is not involved in the review, their ascertainable views should be considered in any discussion (SEN Code of Practice, 2001, p.54).

Accordingly, it is clear that should pay particular attention to IEP and anticipate their strategic role in schools. However, it is necessary to clearly specify the basic content of the IEP, define the relationship between the IEP and the planning of curriculum content, to provide teacher education in order to help the student progress to clearly defined goals in education, to pay attention how the action plans of the school fit into strategies related to inclusive practice. The success of IEP is undoubtedly dependent on the environment in which effective and detailed planning exists as a segment of the overall assessment and recording strategy. The main objective of the IEP is to indicate what needs to be done in the near future to help the student and the inclusive team achieve success.

Accordingly, it can be used in the procedures of the local institutions for providing documentation during revision. However, their main goal remains to be a way to help teachers and students strive to achieve the key goals in the learning process. Finally, we can conclude that IEPs contribute to raising the standards of students with SEN (special educational needs) and maintaining the positive climate in inclusive practice.

CONCLUSIONS

Inclusion is arranged through network coordination and persons centred system.Support of parents of children with SEN enable increased active participation of inclusive educational access and higer standards for all children. Inclusion involves different participation of the individual or the group in the social processes, respecting the difference, the individual possibilities and desires (Jachova & Stojkovska Aleksova, 2013, p.13).The responsible inclusion means net creating for coordination between the involved parties; Establishing a system of mobile special teachers' net; Well-designed IEPs; Development of service for expertise and supervision; Overcoming of architectonic barriers (Kovachević, & Jachova, 2015, p. 935). According to Bartolo, Blake and Jachova (2007), the structure for a successful inclusion underlines:appropriate support and specialized services for the pupils,well designed IEP,professional development of the teachers in the regular and special education,time for the teachers for planning, meetings, creativity and evaluation of the pupil with all team members,reducing classes and precise the pupil's needs,professional development of skills in the frames of cooperative learning, peers tutoring, curriculum adaptation, different learning styles, cooperation between parents and teachers (Jachova, 2011, p. 456).

The IEP is a working document and should be useful, available and comprehensible to all those dealing directly with the student. It needs to be considered in the context of home, school and classroom organisation.Effective individual education plans have key characteristics: Individualised and child-centred, Inclusive, Holistic, Collaborative and Accessible.

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