

Creating Individual Education Plans

Module

5



A manual for teacher trainers

Prepared for:

Ministry of General Education, Zambia
The Norwegian Association of Disabled

Developed by:

Enabling Education Network, December 2019



NAD – The Norwegian
Association of Disabled



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Introduction

The overall aim of this module is to support teachers' understanding of what an individual education plan (IEP) is, its characteristics, and the reasons why schools develop and use IEPs. Teachers will look at some of the benefits of IEPs and discuss which learners can benefit from having an IEP. The module also provides details about the IEP development process and looks at important factors to consider when developing an effective IEP (such as collaboration and parent/guardian/care-giver and learner participation). The module offers practical suggestions for planning and facilitating IEP meetings.

It is assumed that teachers will have already taken part in inclusive education training and have a clear understanding of: the theory and concepts of inclusive education (see **Module 1**); the roles of the school inclusion team (SIT – see **Module 2**); how to locate out-of-school children (see **Module 3**); and how to screen learners and identify and assess their specific learning needs (see **Module 4**). If teachers have not received this previous training, for example if they are not aware of the twin-track approach, then they may not be ready to join in this training module. Note that the module on **Including Learners with Additional Needs** contains further information about different additional needs. This includes advice and guidance on identifying additional needs, how additional needs can exclude learners, and practical tips and ideas for teachers on supporting learners with additional needs in the school and classroom environment. This supplementary material can support the development of IEPs.

Duration of training

Trainers should adapt this training to suit the local context and the time available to them for training. Trainers may decide not to use all of the activities, or to shorten some activities if time is limited, or to expand activities if teachers need more support with understanding a particular topic. If all activities are used, without significant adaptation, shortening or lengthening, this module requires approximately 15 hours of training over 3 days, depending on the preferred length of training days, number and length of breaks, and so on.

Session 5.1: What is an IEP and who is it for?

This session will help teachers to reflect on what they already know or think they know about an individual education plan (IEP) and will give the trainer an indication of existing knowledge or misunderstandings. The session will enhance teachers' understanding of what is meant by an IEP, why it is needed, and who can benefit from it.

Main

Activity 5.1a: Hot potato



50 minutes

Teachers should work in small groups. Each group is given a sheet of flipchart paper and asked to write the following statement at the top of it. They must then complete the statement by filling in the blanks.

An IEP is _____ and it is useful for _____

Each member in the group takes a turn to complete the statement, without discussing it. They are given one (1) minute each. The trainer gives a signal when this time has passed, and the teacher who has been writing their answer passes the flipchart paper to the person on their right. The next teacher has to write their response, without repeating what has already been said, and when instructed by the trainer, passes the paper to the person on their right. This continues until everyone in the group has written a response, and/or until there are no more answers. The paper must be passed in the same direction each time.

Teachers can then be given a few minutes to discuss their group's responses before sharing some of their thoughts in plenary.

One group should be asked to present one idea, and then another group presents another idea, and so on. Groups can also feed in additional thoughts.

The trainer should write key points on a flip chart/board. Where teachers disagree with each other's views of what an IEP is and why it is useful, or where they state clear misunderstandings, the trainer should intervene to clarify.

The trainer should highlight that the majority of learners achieve what is expected of them simply by the teacher using good teaching and learning strategies including differentiating activities for their mixed-ability classrooms. These teachers use a variety of teaching and assessment strategies and materials to teach students who have different learning styles, different multiple intelligences and experience different barriers to education.

However, those learners who need additional support, especially learners with disabilities and/or special educational needs (SEN), will benefit from an IEP.

The trainer should then give out **Resource 5.1** and ask if there are any questions.

Resource 5.1

Individual education plans

Notes

Activity 5.1b: Additional information

Main



20 minutes

The trainer hands out **Resource 5.2** and discusses this additional information with teachers.

Resource 5.2

Individual education plans – additional information

The presentation and discussion should cover:

- What is meant by an IEP?
- What are the reasons for developing and implementing an IEP (legal and educational reasons)?
- Who can benefit from an IEP?
- What are the advantages of having an IEP?

Notes

Activity 5.1c: What is an IEP?

Extra



20 minutes

Resource 5.3

What is an IEP?

This activity can be used to strengthen and check teachers' understanding of IEPs. In groups, teachers are given a set of cards (cut out from [Resource 5.3](#)). They must decide if each statement about 'What is an IEP?' is true or false. A plenary discussion of the answers is then facilitated by the trainer.

As an alternative, this activity can be played as a movement game. The trainer reads out each statement and teachers move to stand on one side of the room if they think it is true or the opposite side if they think it is false. They can debate with each other if they disagree with their answers.

Notes

Session 5.2: Components of an IEP

This session will help teachers to identify the key features or components of an IEP. IEP formats vary from country to country, and if a country does not have an IEP format standardised nationally, then IEPs may vary between districts and schools. There should not necessarily be a nationally standardised IEP, as the plan supports individual learners and does not seek to measure them against each other. However, there are key areas of information that all IEPs should aim to cover.

Main

Activity 5.2a: What makes up an IEP?



30-40 minutes

The trainer gives each group a list of headings that might appear in an IEP. The teachers need to brainstorm in their groups the types of information that might be gathered and recorded under each of these headings.

The headings are:

- learner identification information,
- current level of performance in different areas,
- identification of priority needs and performance goals and indicators,
- identification of instructional and assessment strategies,
- implementation time frames,
- progress report,
- team members signing off section, and
- monitoring, evaluation and review.

(Note: trainers may wish to change these headings if there is a specific IEP format that is used in their school or district, etc.)

After 15 minutes the trainer should give the groups **Resource 5.4** to read and compare with their ideas.

Resource 5.4

Components of an IEP

After reading and digesting the hand-out, teachers then share in plenary:

- Which of their responses coincided with the ideas in the handout?
- Which ideas had they missed in their brainstorm that appear in the handout?
- Are there any points they raised in their brainstorm that are missing from the handout that they think should be in an IEP?

Notes

Activity 5.2b: Evaluating IEP formats

Main



60 minutes

Teachers should work in pairs. The trainer gives each pair some samples of IEP formats, from different places/countries (one may be a Zambian IEP format if this is available). **Resource 5.5** provides an initial sample for the trainer to use.

Resource 5.5

An IEP sample

Teachers should read and check if the IEP samples have all the important components that were discussed in **Activity 5.2a**. **Resource 5.5** also contains a checklist reminder of key components.

The pairs are guided to discuss:

- Is anything missing?
- Are there any extra components needed?
- What are their overall opinions of the samples?

Pairs can then discuss their thoughts with others in their group.

A plenary discussion can be facilitated to share teachers' opinions, and for the trainer to address any remaining misunderstandings.

Note for the trainer

The trainer will need teachers to bring with them any existing IEPs that they use with their learners.

They will need to be notified of this request before the training starts. If teachers do not have any existing IEPs, the trainer may be able to bring one or more samples of existing forms from another school/area/country.

Session 5.3: The IEP process

This session will help teachers to understand what should be done in the different phases of the IEP development and implementation. It potentially involves a lot of presentation by the trainer and so activities are suggested to help make the session more interactive and reflective. The trainer may also wish to create additional activities (e.g., based on local case studies) and use energisers to break up presentation-focused activities.

Main

Activity 5.3a: Bingo game – putting the IEP process in order



25 minutes

The trainer asks teachers to work in groups. Each group is given a set of cards cut out from [Resource 5.6](#).

Resource 5.6

IEP development process stages

On each card is written a stage of the IEP development process. The groups have to organise the cards into the order that they think the stages happen – as quickly as they can. When a group has finished they shout ‘bingo’! Once the remaining groups have completed their arrangement of the cards, the trainer can check if they have got them right. The trainer may want to offer a reward for the group that finishes fastest, the group that gets the most accurate answer, etc.

The groups can then be asked to stick the cards onto a flipchart sheet to illustrate the process. They can draw lines in between the cards to show movement through the process, etc. [Note: it is hoped that some groups may present this as a cycle rather than as a straight line, but the trainer should not guide them as to what format to use.]

The trainer should then present a broad overview of the phases involved in developing an IEP. At this stage this should just mention the different phases, as details of each phase will be discussed in the next session.

The trainer can highlight – using the diagram in **Resource 5.7** – that the process is cyclical in nature, not linear. That is, the process may happen more than once with a learner, to keep checking and ensuring her/his learning needs are being addressed.

The stages are:

- gathering information about the learner,
- developing a statement on the learner's level of performance, including strengths and needs,
- identifying the learner's priority learning needs,
- setting annual objectives and performance goals for the learner,
- identifying strategies for supporting the learner towards these goals,
- implementing the plan,
- reviewing and revising the plan.

Notes

Activity 5.3b: Starting the IEP development process

Main



10-15 minutes

The trainer should use **Resource 5.8** to explain to teachers about how the IEP process usually starts. She/he should ensure they stress the central role for teachers in this, and the facilitation nature of the role for specialist staff.

Resource 5.8

Starting the IEP development process

The trainer should invite questions. She/he may need to respond to any uncertainty around the division of IEP roles and responsibilities between the teacher and any specialist staff (especially if teachers feel unsure about taking on the responsibility, or if any specialist staff feel worried that empowering teachers in the IEP process means that they [the specialists] will lose power).

Notes

Activity 5.3c: Stage 1 – Gathering information about the learner

Main



15-30 minutes

The trainer should start this activity by presenting the information from Box 1 in **Resource 5.9**.

Teachers are then asked to work in small groups. Each group has a sheet of flipchart paper divided into 2 columns:

Sources of information about the learner	Methods we can use to obtain information from these sources
--	---

The groups need to brainstorm the potential sources of information about the learner, and then work out any particular methods that could be used to collect this information. The trainer may need to give an example, for instance:

Source of information = parent/guardian/care-giver. Method = informal interview.

Source of information = learner's class work. Method = classroom observation, review learner's portfolio of work

After 15 minutes, the trainer can ask groups to feed back in plenary and develop a joint list of potential sources of information, and methods for gathering information from these sources. The trainer can also refer to the information in Box 2 of **Resource 5.9** to check that nothing vital has been missed, and to present anything that has not yet been mentioned.

Teachers can then receive a copy of **Resource 5.9**.

Resource 5.9

Stage 1 – Gathering information about the learner

Key areas that should be covered in this brainstorm and discussion include:

- reviewing the learner's available records,
- consulting with parents/guardians/care-givers, the learner, school staff, and other professionals,
- gathering information through observing the learner,
- conducting additional assessments, if necessary, and
- summarising and recording information in a useable format.

Notes

Activity 5.3d: Stage 2 – Preparing a statement on the learner’s level of current performance

Main



10-15 minutes

The trainer highlights that once the information has been gathered about the learner, the ‘inclusion’ team should discuss, agree upon, and summarise it so as to create, revise or update the learner’s profile. They then need to determine the learner’s current level of performance in the different learning areas. Both strengths and areas of need should be identified and recorded. A description of all this information should be short and to the point.

Resource 5.10

Stage 2 – Form for documenting a learner’s profile and performance

The form in **Resource 5.10** may be useful for presenting the information about the learner and making a statement about her/his performance levels. The trainer may wish to let teachers review the form for a few minutes and then facilitate a discussion or answer questions relating to it.

Notes

Activity 5.3e: Stage 3 – Identifying the learner’s priority learning needs

Main



5-10 minutes

The trainer needs to convey the following:

Once the ‘inclusion’ team has documented the learner’s profile and performance, this information can be used to identify and prioritise the areas where the learner needs support. These priority areas should be grouped into different functional areas.

An example that the trainer can use:

- **Learner:** Thomas
- **Functional area:** Language/social skills
- **Current achievement/functioning:** Thomas dominates a conversation. He talks to or at his peers rather than talking with them.

A priority learning need for Thomas is to learn skills for engaging in conversations and listening to and responding to what other people say.

The trainer can choose to add more or different examples to help illustrate this stage of the process, particularly if the teachers need extra inputs to help them understand.

Notes

Activity 5.3f: Stage 4 – Setting annual learning outcomes and performance goals

Main



40 minutes

Resource 5.11 will provide the trainer with information for this presentation. The trainer should start by presenting the information in Box 1.

Resource 5.11

Stage 4 – Setting annual learning outcomes and performance goals

Using Box 2 from **Resource 5.11**, the trainer then presents information about the importance of breaking longer-term learning outcomes into smaller, more achievable, shorter-term performance goals.

The trainer should ask teachers for any questions and then give out **Resource 5.11**. After checking that teachers understand the process and details, [Resource 5.12](#) can be used for the next activity.

Resource 5.12 contains a list of learning outcomes that have been set for learners in their IEPs. Note that these outcomes are too vague.

Resource 5.12

Stage 4 – Creating SMART goals

The trainer gives out page 1 of **Resource 5.12**. Working in pairs, the teachers need to suggest how to turn them into SMART outcomes instead. The trainer can either check teachers' understanding by walking around the room and checking their answers, or can facilitate a plenary feedback session. Page 2 of **Resource 5.12** gives the trainers some answer ideas.

Activity 5.3g: Stage 5 – Identifying and selecting teaching and assessment strategies and learning materials

Main



20 minutes

The trainer needs to convey the following information on the stages involved in the development of the IEP process:

- identifying teaching strategies that will be used to assist the learner to achieve the learning objectives,
- identifying and selecting materials and other assistive devices that will be used to support learning,
- identifying assessment strategies that will be used to assess the learner's progress,
- determining the timeframe for reviewing the learner's progress and the reporting procedures, and
- allocating responsibilities to the various people involved.

During this training we cannot tell you exactly which teaching and assessment strategies you will need to use for which situation, as every learner's situation and needs are unique. However, a major part of deciding on the strategies will depend on collaboration between the teacher and other people involved in the IEP development (other teachers, specialist staff, parents/guardians/care-givers, etc). One teacher on her/his own cannot be expected to have all the answers to every teaching challenge. Equally, an external expert cannot tell a teacher everything they need to do, because the expert is not in the class with the learner every day. Therefore, strategies are best developed as a combined effort, bringing expertise and suggestions from all angles.

Resource 5.13 can be given to teachers.

Resource 5.13

Stage 5 – An example of documenting performance goals, teaching strategies and learning materials

The handout shows how performance goals and strategies for achieving these goals could be documented. The assessment strategy section of this table is blank. The trainer asks teachers to work in small groups to discuss what might be appropriate assessment strategies for this particular case. A brief plenary feedback can be facilitated to share ideas.

Notes

Activity 5.3h: Stage 6 – Implementing the IEP. Stage 7 – reviewing, evaluating, and revising the IEP

Main



10 minutes

The trainer should hand out **Resource 5.14**, present the information on it and have a short discussion with questions if needed.

Resource 5.14

**Stage 6 – Implementing, reviewing, evaluating.
Stage 7 – revising the IEP**

Notes

Session 5.4: Developing an IEP

This session gives teachers an opportunity to apply practically some of the training so far. It gives the trainer a chance to observe if teachers have understood the input and are able to put into practice.

Main

Activity 5.4a: Case study analysis



3 hours

The trainer gives each group of teachers a copy of the case study to read – **Resource 5.15**.

Resource 5.15

Case study for IEP development

This is a story of a particular child. Using what they have learned so far, and using the various handouts, forms, etc. so far received, the teachers' task is to create an IEP for this child – or at least to fill in as much information as they can, based on what they know. They should remember to also use the twin-track approach to learning; identifying system challenges as well as individual learner's needs.

The trainer needs to stress that, of course, unless they speak to everyone else involved (learner, parents/guardians/care-givers, teachers and non-teaching staff, specialists, etc) they cannot be sure they have **all** the necessary information, and their IEP will therefore be just a draft set of ideas.

Alternative activity



3 hours

To make this activity relate more directly to the teachers' own experiences, the trainer may ask the groups to create their own case study on which to base the IEP. This can be facilitated as follows:

- In small groups the teachers take it in turns to tell the story of a learner in their class (past or present) who has experienced difficulty in achieving learning objectives, despite being helped with flexible and

creative teaching methods.

- Within the group they then have to discuss and negotiate which one story to use as the basis for developing an IEP. They should probably choose the story about which there is the most background information.
- They should then write down the key elements of the story, if possible, using the various forms already shared for recording the learner's profile and performance.
- Once the details are documented, the group can begin creating an IEP for the learner, although they will note that this remains only draft ideas, as the full range of stakeholders have not been consulted.

NAME: THANDIWE MALUMBE
 GENDER: F
 DOB: 15/06/2001
 SCHOOL: SHANGU COMB. SCH.
 SRN: 1082/SH/ZM
 GRADE: 11
 P/G NAME: MALUMBE. O.
 ADDRESS: HOUSE 18 CHAMBA STREET MALOTA CAMP.
 Phone #: 0975 8235 27.

SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT DATA

Information	Date	Summary of Results
EDUCATION	20.11.2017	- Reading (GR 6) - Maths (GR 11) - Natural Science (GR 5)
PSYCHOLOGICAL	13.11.2017	- Above average intellectual functioning - Behaviour difficulties - Indication of Autistic behaviour
Speech and Language	17.11.2017	- Some language difficulties and Poor use of Language in social situations

Summary of Student Strength and needs

Areas of Strength	Areas of need
- Mathematics	- Learn to work on her own
- Spelling	- Work on listening skills - To understand what she reads
- Enjoys Reading	- Work on her temperament

Example of an IEP flipchart sheet prepared by teachers in Zambia, based on Thandiwe's case study

[Image description: a flipchart sheet on which is written details of Thandiwe, her assessment data, strengths and weaknesses.]

After the case study analysis and IEP drafting has been completed, the trainer can facilitate a plenary feedback session. She/he should highlight key features of the IEPs, invite other groups to comment, and clarify any misunderstandings.

Following the IEP presentations the trainer should make sure that the teachers understand how they are used in the school. She/he should reiterate the following:

Once the IEP has been created it needs to be implemented – the nature of the implementation will depend on each unique plan. The learner’s progress towards achieving the plan’s goals is also monitored.

The IEP can and should be reviewed and revised depending on the learner’s progress. Sufficient time should be given to see if a particular strategy is helping the learner (i.e. don’t revise the plan and change direction before there has been a fair chance to see if it is helping the learner). But equally, the plan should not stay unchanged for a long time if it is clearly not helping.

Notes

Session 5.5: Collaboration

The aim of this session is to introduce and discuss the concept of collaboration and highlight its importance for the effective development and implementation of an IEP. The session also should help teachers enhance their understanding of some of the important principles that should guide collaborating team members.

Main

Activity 5.5a: Understanding collaboration – who collaborates and what does it mean?



30-40 minutes

Who collaborates?

The trainer should remind teachers of the different role players in the IEP development and implementation process, as discussed previously.

A quick brainstorm or discussion may be appropriate, covering:

- Who are the main players in the IEP process?
- What roles do or could they play?
- Why is it important for them to be included?

The trainer can supplement this brainstorm or discussion with information from [Resource 5.16](#). The trainer needs to highlight that it is important for these role players to work collaboratively for the effective development and implementation of an IEP.

Resource 5.16

IEP team members

What is collaboration?

In pairs, teachers should discuss what they think collaboration means, in the context of education and developing an IEP. They should write down some ideas. The trainer then gives out [Resource 5.17](#), which contains some definitions of collaboration.

After teachers have read this, they should create a definition of collaboration that they would follow (and ask others to follow) when supporting IEP development processes.

In plenary, teachers can then share their definitions and discuss them – highlighting common elements between the definitions, or any points where there is disagreement.

Notes

Activity 5.5b: Understanding power relations during collaboration

Extra

The trainer may wish to run an activity to help teachers reflect on how power issues affect us, especially how the power relations between people can affect how they participate and collaborate as a team. A suitable activity is provided in [Session 2.3](#) of [Module 2](#) on school inclusion teams.

Notes

Activity 5.5c: Key principles for an effective collaboration process

Main



20 minutes

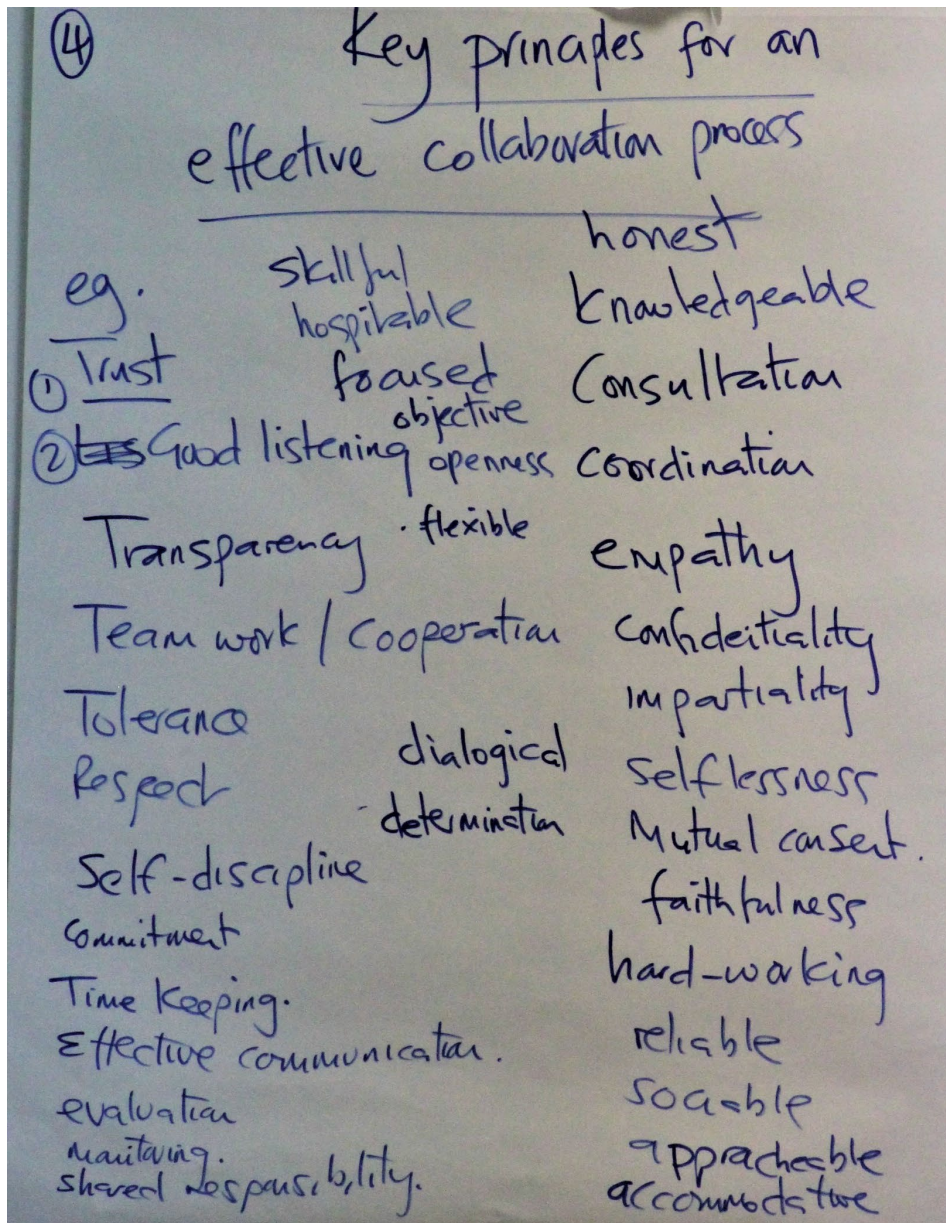
The trainer asks teachers to work on their own. They should read Activity A in **Resource 5.18**, and then answer the question which follows. (The trainer may choose to use a different example here.)

Resource 5.18

Key principles for collaboration

When teachers have completed this task, they should discuss and compare their answers with other group members. Then they can give feedback in plenary. The trainer notes down the key points, and also provides her/his own ideas for the key principles that contribute to a successful and effective collaboration process. The list should include, but is not limited to:

- respect for diversity,
- trust,
- accessible and transparent process,
- responsibility, and
- accountability.



Example of a flipchart sheet containing a list of key principles for collaboration, created by teachers in Zambia

[Image description: Flipchart list of key principles for effective collaboration containing the words: trust, good listening, transparency, teamwork/collaboration, tolerance, respect, self-discipline, commitment, time-keeping, effective communication, evaluation, monitoring, shared responsibility, skilful, hospitable, focused, objective, openness, flexible, determination, honest, knowledgeable, consultation, coordination, empathy, confidentiality, impartiality, selflessness, mutual consent, faithfulness, hardworking, reliable, sociable, approachable, accommodating.]

Activity 5.5d: Implementing these key principles in the IEP process

Main



30 minutes

Teachers should work in groups and read Activity B in **Resource 5.18**. In their groups they then need to think about and discuss in more detail how each principle can be implemented during the IEP development and implementation process by role players.

When the groups have finished, they should form 'super-groups' (i.e., two groups join together). The trainer gives them **Resource 5.19** and they discuss how their ideas for implementing the collaboration principles compare (i.e., they compare the two groups' ideas and they compare these ideas with the ideas in **Resource 5.19**).

Resource 5.19

Key principles for effective collaboration

After this 'super-group' discussion, a further plenary discussion can be facilitated with the whole group.

Notes

Session 5.6: IEP meetings

The aim of this session is to give teachers some ideas on how to prepare and facilitate an effective IEP meeting. Teachers will also be given an opportunity to consolidate what they have learned about collaboration and the IEP process.

Main

Activity 5.6a: Overview of IEP meetings



30 minutes

The trainer first highlights the importance of having an effective IEP meeting. **Resource 5.20** provides useful information that can be presented and discussed, covering:

- what an IEP meeting is and its purpose,
- preparing for an IEP meeting,
- parents/guardians/care-givers preparation for an effective IEP meeting,
- facilitating an IEP meeting,
- ending the meeting,
- after the meeting,
- encouraging parents'/guardians'/care-givers' participation in IEP development and implementation, and
- facilitating learner participation in an IEP process.

Resource 5.20

IEP meetings

Notes

Activity 5.6b: Role-play an IEP meeting

Main



60 minutes

The trainer divides teachers into 3 groups. The groups will have different roles:

- Group 1: Read the role-play script outline and then role-play an IEP meeting using Thandiwe's case study ([Resource 5.15](#)).
- Group 2: Check if the role players **used some of the principles that guide collaborative work**.
- Group 3: Check if role players **prepared and ran the meeting effectively**.

Group 1 instructions

Give the group the script ideas for the role-play ([Resource 5.21](#)).

Resource 5.21

Script outline for role-play

Allow them 10 minutes to read it, allocate roles and become familiar with the main tasks set for each character.

Instruct them to role-play an IEP meeting. They should use what they have learned so far about collaboration and organising meetings, unless the script outline instructs them to do something contrary to 'best practice'.

Group 2 instructions

While Group 1 is preparing, Group 2 should become familiar with their observation checklist ([Resource 5.22](#)) and discuss the kinds of things they will be looking for.

Resource 5.22

Role-play observation checklists

Observe the meeting proceedings. Use the checklist to check if role players are using some of the principles that guide collaborative work. They should not just tick but identify the principle and explain how it was used.

They should be ready to make suggestions for how the situation should be improved, such as focusing on the collaborative process, the meeting process

and the learner and parent/guardian/care-giver participation, after the role-play.

Group 3 instructions

While Group 1 is preparing, Group 3 should become familiar with their observation checklist ([Resource 5.22](#)) and discuss the kinds of things they will be looking for.

Observe the meeting proceedings. Use the checklist to check if role players are using the meeting guidelines as discussed during the presentation. They should not just tick but identify some of the guidelines and explain how they have been used.

They should make suggestions if and when necessary, such as focusing on the collaborative process, the meeting process and the learner and parent/guardian/care-giver participation.



A group discussing the role-play in Zambia

[Image description: 3 women and 3 men are sitting around a table talking. There are lots of papers and booklets on the table. Another group is sitting around a table behind this group.]

Following the role-play, the trainer should facilitate a plenary session, with a focus on the collaborative process, the meeting process and the learner and parent/guardian/care-giver participation.

During their observations and feedback, Groups 2 and 3 should suggest improving parent/guardian/care-giver and learner participation. If they don't

make this suggestion, the trainer should highlight it. If the groups do mention this suggestion, the trainer should build on this and present some activities that can be done to improve learner and parent/guardian/care-giver participation in IEP meetings.

The trainer can use some of the information from [Resources 5.23](#) and [5.24](#) for this presentation, and following the activity share the hand-outs with the teachers.

Resource 5.23

Encouraging learner participation in the IEP process

Resource 5.24

Improving parents'/guardians'/care-givers' participation in the IEP process

Notes

Activity 5.6c: Encouraging learner and parent/guardian/care-giver participation

Main



60 minutes

The trainer divides teachers into small groups. The number of groups will depend on the number of teachers.

Half of the groups should discuss and come up with practical strategies for how they could improve Thandiwe's parents' participation in the IEP meeting. Information in [Resource 5.24](#) may be useful. They should prepare a quick (5 minute) role-play to present this information.

The other groups should read what is said about Thandiwe in [Resource 5.25](#) and come up with how they could use the 'feeling dice' game (explained in [Resource 5.23](#)) to address Thandiwe's screaming at the meeting. They should also prepare a short role-play to show this.

Resource 5.25

Thandiwe and the 'feeling dice' game

Following the two role-plays the trainer should facilitate a plenary discussion and conclude the session.

Alternative activity

Each group could prepare a role-play on how they could improve Thandiwe's mother's participation and address Thandiwe's screaming using the 'feeling dice' game. The groups can role-play and observe one another.

Action research tasks

The trainer should prepare teachers for the following action research tasks that they will need to complete before returning for the next training of trainers/trainers.

- Meet with your School Inclusion Team (SIT). This should include all the SIT members including teachers, perhaps the deputy head teacher or other senior teachers, four (4) learners plus the community members.
- Firstly, you will remind the SIT members of **Module 4's** screening and identification action research tasks 1, 2 and 3, which they previously completed. Look again at the completed table.
- Secondly, you will remind the SIT members of the two interesting case studies which they thoroughly researched; one is a child with intellectual impairments and the second is another child who does not have a disability or SEN. Look through the two case studies.
- Using the information gathered during Module 4's action research, the SIT members should create an IEP for the learner with intellectual impairments.
- Reiterate the action research task making sure that the teachers understand what they have to do before the end of the training. It may also be useful to do a recap about what action research is.
- You will need to practice this with the teachers. Once you have delivered **Module 4** they will then have a few weeks to create their IEPs.
- You will then collect their completed IEPs at the next training.

Notes

Resources

Module

5

Resource 5.1: Individual education plans

An individual education plan (IEP) is a process in which learners, teachers and other relevant stakeholders, including parents/guardians/care-givers, but also sometimes other specialists where they exist, are involved in discussions about an individual's strengths, areas for development and goals for self-improvement.

An IEP:

- is used for learners who have been identified as experiencing, or likely to experience, difficulties with accessing school, participating and learning/achieving. These learners may have disabilities, but IEPs may also be used with learners who have no disability but who experience other difficulties,
- is a tool for helping to plan a learner's education. It may also include plans for rehabilitation activities linked to education,
- is individual for that learner and fully takes into account her/his abilities and needs,
- is a guide for teachers to help the learner in her/his learning,
- is a guide for the inputs that will be given by other specialist support staff, where they exist,
- sets targets and milestones against which the learner's progress can be tracked, and
- allows teachers to collaborate with the learner and parents/guardians/care-givers.

An IEP could include:

- a summary of the learner's strengths and interests,
- a description of the difficulties faced by the learner and her/his preferred learning style,
- a plan of action to overcome the stated difficulties,
- explanations of roles and responsibilities for supporting the learner (things the teacher will do; things other specialist staff will do, where they exist; things parents/guardians/care-givers will do, and so on),
- clear goals for the learner to achieve and a time frame,
- specific activities and actions to help the learner achieve the goals,

- ideas for how the learner’s teacher(s) can adapt the curriculum,
- details of ‘reasonable accommodations’/adjustments that need to be made in the school environment, or with equipment and materials, and
- ways to evaluate or assess progress, and information on whether or how standard tests or exams will be adapted for the learner.

IEPs should be regularly reviewed and updated, with involvement from the learner, parents/guardians/care-givers, teachers and other relevant stakeholders. In some countries the Ministry of Education provides a standardised format and process for creating and monitoring an IEP. In some countries the IEP is a legally binding document – the school, teachers and other specialists are legally obliged to provide the support outlined in the plan. In other countries, IEPs are created differently in different areas or schools and do not have the same legal status.

Resource 5.2: Individual education plans – additional information

1. What is an IEP?

- An IEP is a planning tool specifically created for those learners who present with particular educational needs that cannot be addressed by regular classroom teaching and support. These are learners who, despite differentiated classroom teaching and support from teachers, do not achieve the set learning area outcomes as expected for their grade and age.
- It gives direction on how these learners' educational needs will be addressed.
- It is specific to the learner for whom it is designed and cannot be used for other learners. It is therefore based on a thorough understanding of educational strengths and needs of that particular learner.
- It can be revised depending on the learner's performance and needs. It is therefore a working document, not set in stone.

An IEP is not:

- a lesson plan,
- developed for the whole class,
- to be used for learners other than the learner it was created for,
- a description of everything that will be taught to the learner,
- a list of all the teaching strategies used in regular classroom instruction, and
- just a static plan that is used over and over.

2. Who needs an IEP?

An IEP is a learner-specific plan that is developed for a particular learner who has been identified¹ as requiring additional support.

Most learners achieve what is expected of them with the help of good teaching from their teachers. Good teachers use a variety of teaching and assessment strategies and materials to teach learners who have different learning styles and needs.

However, for some learners, this varied and targeted instructional support is still not enough to help them achieve the learning outcomes. These learners are identified as experiencing learning challenges that require additional support, and they are likely to benefit from having an IEP.

Some countries have laws that require an IEP to be developed and implemented for every learner who has been identified as having learning challenges that require additional support, beyond general good quality classroom support.

Some countries do not have these laws yet, but their governments have nevertheless adopted international laws, agreements and other instruments that demand that *all* learners – including learners who require additional support such as those with disabilities and/or SEN – are included in the learning process and are supported in achieving their learning potential.

Some of the international instruments were discussed in the inclusive education concepts and theories training module (see [Module 1](#)).

They include the following:

The World Declaration on Education for All and Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs, 1990

This is a global commitment to provide education to all. It outlines an agreement among participating countries to adopt an expanded vision of basic education and a renewed commitment to ensure that the basic learning needs of *all* children, youth and adults are met effectively in all countries.

¹ Identification does not necessarily mean being formally identified using specialist assessment teams, although this is the case in some countries. In many countries identification of learners' support needs is done successfully by the teacher in collaboration with education colleagues, the child's parents, etc.

The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action 1994

This arose from a world conference on special needs education. The Statement notes that inclusive education is a fundamental component of the global commitment to provide education for all. It outlines principles, policies and practices that countries should use in providing quality education for *all* learners including learners with disabilities.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), 1989

It has a commitment to uphold and protect rights of children in the country, including those with disabilities.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD), 2006

This is a landmark international treaty that impacts upon people with disabilities. Article 24 of the UNCRPD requires that signatories to the Convention ensure an inclusive education system at all levels, and lifelong learning, directed to:

- the full development of the human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth of people with disabilities,
- the development by persons with disabilities of their personality, talents and creativity to their fullest potential, and
- enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society.

In realising this right, States Parties shall ensure:

- that persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability,
- that persons with disabilities can access inclusive, quality, free primary and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live,
- reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements, and
- that persons with disabilities receive the support required.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 2015

The SDGs are 17 global goals that were agreed in 2015. They outline vital changes that the world needs to achieve before 2030. SDG 4 focuses on education and states that stakeholders must "...ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning".

Bearing all this in mind, schools have a responsibility to develop and implement IEPs for learners who require additional support or who have been identified as having special educational needs.

Very often teachers are concerned about the time and effort that is needed to develop and implement an IEP. However, research shows that only a small percentage of learners will need an IEP. Most learners will achieve the set learning outcomes and will not need an IEP, **if they receive good teaching from teachers who use differentiated instruction and assessment strategies.**

An IEP is a very useful tool that can help schools to achieve what every school is required to do by law – ensure that **all** learners learn. It is vital, however, that IEPs are not seen as a substitute for ongoing efforts to improve the quality and flexibility of all teaching for all learners.

3. Advantages of IEPs

The IEP provides several advantages to the national education system and the learner. IEPs are designed to address some of the exclusion practices of national education departments. Learners who do not respond to general classroom teaching and support are often viewed as not capable of following a national curriculum and are not assessed on this national curriculum. They are often put on alternative curricula, which very often are deficit driven and fail to use the learner's full potential. These alternative curricula may not prepare learners for adult life, as their learning outcomes are limited and do not correspond with the world of work. Governments may not be held so accountable for learners following alternative curricula who do not participate in national assessments.

IEPs are one of the strategies used to give life to the concept of inclusive education and inclusion principles. They:

- promote a single inclusive education system through the use of a common curriculum,
- allow all learners to be included in the same national curriculum and assessment processes,
- ensure that national governments are held accountable for learners, irrespective of who they are and their abilities,
- move away from the deficit model and make sure every learner is supported to reach their full potential,

- prepare learners for life beyond formal schooling,
- prepare learners to contribute to a country's economic and social development,
- encourage teachers and parents/guardians/care-givers to view all learners as needing support to achieve outcomes of the general curriculum,
- facilitate the working together of special education and general education teachers to ensure that learners achieve the national curriculum outcomes,
- ensure greater consistency across schools, regions and districts, and
- encourage higher expectations for all learners.

Resource 5.3: What is an IEP?

The trainer should **ONLY** print and cut up sets of these cards for teachers. The true/false answers are for the trainer's reference, not for showing to the teachers!

True

False

An IEP is a planning tool created for learners with particular educational needs that cannot be addressed by regular classroom teaching and support.	An IEP is similar to a lesson plan.
An IEP is a tool to help learners who do not achieve the set learning outcomes expected for their grade and age, despite differentiated classroom teaching and support from teachers.	An IEP can be developed for the whole class together.
An IEP gives direction on how specific learners' educational needs will be addressed.	An IEP is created for one learner but can be used for others after that.
An IEP can be revised at any time.	An IEP describes everything that will be taught to the learner.
An IEP is specific to the learner for whom it is designed and cannot be used for other learners.	Once an IEP has been written and approved by the necessary stakeholders, it cannot be changed.

Resource 5.4: Components of an IEP

An IEP has the following components or characteristics:

Learner identification information

This section outlines learner identification information and some background information. These include:

- learner name,
- date of birth,
- learner number,
- parent/guardian names and contact details,
- learner's home language and other languages that the learner uses,
- learner's school name and address,
- learner's current grade,
- schooling history,
- details of any previous interventions, and
- medical history, if any.

Current level of performance in different areas

This includes:

- a list of all subjects/courses in which the learner requires support,
- the learner's current level of achievement in each subject or course that he/she needs support on,
- the strengths and needs that relate to the learner's learning, and
- relevant assessment data supporting the decision that the learner requires support.

Identification of priority needs and performance goals and indicators

This includes:

- prioritised learning needs,
- description of annual programme goals and learning expectations for each learning area in which learning support is required, and

- description of benchmarks or performance objectives for each annual programme goal; the goals should be specific, measurable and achievable.

Identification of instructional and assessment strategies

This includes:

- description of the teaching and assessment methods that will be used to teach the learner and assess her/his achievement,
- resources that will be required to implement the IEP, and
- roles and responsibilities of different role players.

Implementation time frames

- This states when implementation will start and when progress will be reviewed.

Progress report

- This gives a clear indication of the way in which the learner's progress will be reported to parents/guardians/care-givers and other officials, the dates on which reports will be issued, and the frequency of reporting.

Team members' signing off section

- The names and positions of the IEP team members are given.

Monitoring, evaluation and review

This includes:

- how the IEP will be evaluated, and
- dates and times of review.

Resource 5.5: An IEP sample

Reason for developing the IEP

Learner profile

Name _____

Gender _____

Date of birth _____ Age _____

School _____

Learner registration number _____

School year/grade _____

Parents/guardian's name _____

Address _____

Telephone number _____

Summary of assessment data

List relevant educational, medical/health, psychological, speech and language, occupational, physiotherapy and behavioural assessments

Information	Date	Summary of results

Summary of learner strength and needs

Areas of strength	Areas of need

Support targets

Annual objectives and goals

Area: Reading comprehension

Annual goal: By the end of the school year Edwin will improve reading comprehension and increase his understanding of vocabulary by 80%.

Goal	Provider	Evaluation method	Monitoring		
			Initial date	Check date	End of goal date
Edwin will read a short paragraph and correctly answer 2 out of 3 questions by the end of the first 9 weeks		Work samples Observations			

Teaching strategies:

Resources:

Assessment strategy:

Annual objective and goals

Area: Language/social skills

By the end of the year Edwin will be able to maintain a conversation through at least 3 exchanges of information 75% of the time.

Goal	Provider	Evaluation method	Monitoring		
			Initial date	Check date	End of goal date
Edwin will maintain a conversation through 3 exchanges of information by asking questions		Observation			

Teaching strategies:

Resources:

Assessment strategy:

Supplementary support

Related services	Provider	Hours per week	Location
Language therapy	Mr Nyoni	1.5	Therapy room

Progress report

Parents/guardians/care-givers will be informed of their child’s progress towards annual goals using same reporting methods as other learners.

IEP team signatures

Name	Title	Signature

IEP components checklist

Component	Yes	No
Learner information		
Name		
Date of birth		
Learner number		
Parent/guardian names and contact details		
Learner's home language		
Learner's school name, address		
Learner current grade		
Date of eligibility meeting		
Date of initial IEP meeting		
Date of IEP review		
Current level of performance in different areas		
Information organised by functioning area/domain		
Current level of performance written in precise measurable goals		
Learner's needs identified and prioritised		
Learner specific annual objectives		
Objectives based on learner's current level of performance		
Objectives stated in positive		
Number of objectives achievable and manageable		
Achievement indicators included		
Performance goal (PG)		
PGs linked to annual objectives		
PGs are presented as small achievable steps		
Time when PGs are achieved indicated		
Instructional strategies		
Instructional strategies outlined		
Resources to be used stated		
Assessment process indicated		
Team members		
Implementing team members indicated		
Evaluation and review		
How the IEP will be evaluated is noted		
Dates and times of review indicated		

Resource 5.6: A Zambian IEP sample

SCHOOL BASED INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLAN

1. CHILD'S BIO DATA

Name of Child: DOB: Gender:
 School: Year entered school:
 Grade/Level:
 Place of Birth: Number in Family: Position:
 Name of Father: Occupation:
 Mother: Occupation:
 Residential Address: Phone:

Nature of Disability:

Previous Assessments:

2. IEP FOCUS AREAS (Domains/ Subject areas):

3. IEP PERSONNEL/STAFF (Multi-Disciplinary Team):

4. PRESENT LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE

a) Strengths (abilities): Child is able to:

b) Emerging skills/abilities: Child has difficulties with:

c) Weaknesses(deficits/needs): Child is not able to:

5. OBJECTIVES

• Long Term Objective:

• Short Term Objectives:

6. Resources/Materials needed :(Equipment or materials needed are):

7. Teaching context :(where will the teaching take place):

Criterion of success: Prompts:

Rewards (Reinforcements):

How often to practices (teaching):

8. Date of initiation of programme: Expected review dates:

9. Key IEP Teacher: Sign:

10. Programme Schedule Details:

Date Initiated	Date achieved	Specific Teaching objectives (Targets to be achieved)	Activity	Evaluative comments

11. Date programme ended:

12. Evaluation:

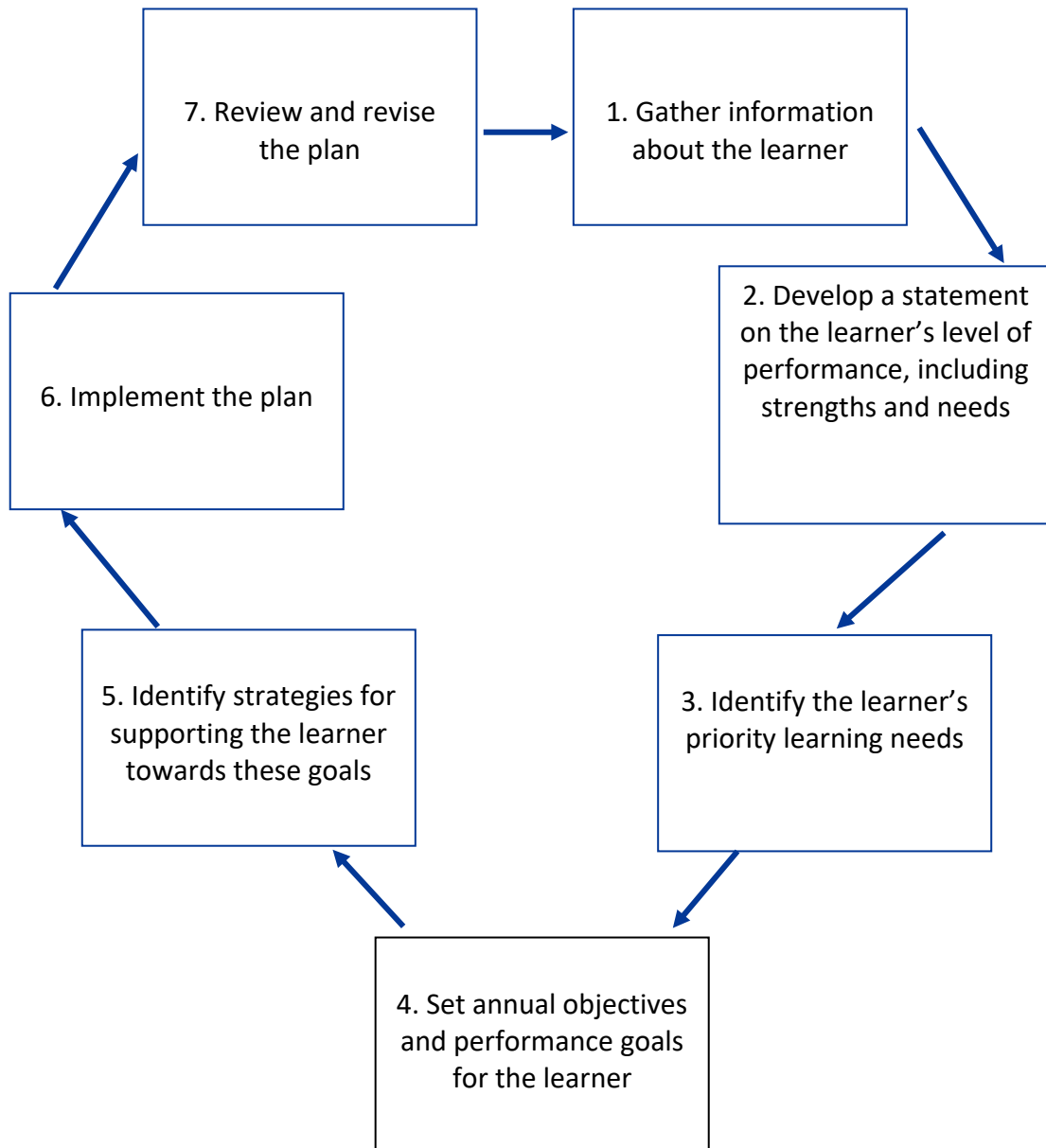
13. Signed:

Resource 5.7: IEP development process stages

The trainer should cut out these cards and mix them up before giving them to teachers.

Gather information about the learner	Develop a statement on the learner's level of performance, including strengths and needs
Identify the learner's priority learning needs	Set annual objectives and performance goals for the learner
Identify strategies for supporting the learner towards these goals	Implement the plan
Review and revise the plan	Additional tasks

Resource 5.8: The cyclical nature of the IEP development process



Resource 5.9: Starting the IEP development process

Developing and implementing an IEP is a process that involves collaboration among different role players. These include the school, parents/guardians/care-givers the learner, and other relevant professionals and agencies. The nature and quality of this collaboration process contributes to the quality and effectiveness of the IEP.

The IEP involves a continuum of strategies used to assist the learner to achieve curriculum outcomes. The process therefore begins in the classroom. Teaching and learning should always be a collaborative process involving the teacher, the learner and her/his parents/guardians/care-givers. A teacher uses a variety of teaching instructions and assessment strategies to facilitate learning. Parents/guardians/care-givers play a role in supporting the teaching and learning process. Most learners will respond well to this learning facilitation support and achieve the expected curriculum outcomes. A few learners may not respond well and may require more support. The teacher may request additional help or advice from colleagues to help them teach these learners. In many cases, this will be enough to help the teacher successfully address the learner's needs.

However, a few learners will still find it difficult to achieve the learning outcomes even with skilled classroom instruction and with the teacher receiving additional support from colleagues. The class teacher, learner, parents/guardians/care-givers, and other teacher(s) may then decide it is appropriate to request the involvement of other people to help them deal with the learner's difficulties. This might mean a school inclusion team (if one exists), or an itinerant support team based outside the school, etc. These additional workers help to gather more information about the learner and offer advice for improving the support she/he receives with learning in and out of school. If the learner still experiences difficulties achieving the desired learning outcomes, the various people involved may eventually decide that the learner's support needs can best be addressed through the development and implementation of an IEP.

At this point the teacher, with the support of other people with various expertise and experience, co-ordinates the development and implementation of an IEP. It is important for the teacher to play a central role in the IEP process

because it is the teacher who carries the responsibility of teaching, assessing and reporting on the learner's progress, so she/he needs to be informed and empowered to do that.

In some countries, the IEP process is led and dominated by specialist staff, who – in effect – dictate to the teacher what she/he should do. This often leads to resentment by teachers and a lack of 'ownership' of the plan by the teachers, despite the fact that they are the ones who need to do the work to implement it in the classroom. In Zambia, therefore, it is vital that an IEP process evolves that supports and empowers the teacher, as well as enabling other key stakeholders (the learner and parents/guardians/care-givers being the main ones) to be involved. The role of any specialist becomes facilitator and capacity-builder, rather than sole expert and top-down director.

Resource 5.10: Stage 1 – Gathering information about the learner

Box 1

Once the school has agreed on the development and implementation of an IEP for a particular learner, the team of people who will be working on the IEP should make sure they have a learner profile that enables them to thoroughly understand the learner.

The learner profile is an important basis for effective IEP planning and implementation – an IEP will not work well if those involved do not understand the learner and her/his strengths, weaknesses, interests, abilities, etc.

The team may already have some of the information for the learner's profile. To ensure that the information is as complete as possible, the team should ask:

- What do we need to know about the learner?
- What information do we have?
- What additional information do we need?
- How do we get this information?

Box 2

Depending on the information required, the team can get information about the learner from different sources. Some of the sources the team can use include:

- learner's school/classroom file,
- parents/guardians/care-givers and family,
- the learner,
- class teacher,
- school pedagogue,

- psychologist,
- speech and language therapist,
- occupational therapist,
- medical staff,
- social worker,
- IEP team members, and
- learner work portfolios.

This information can be obtained using a variety of methods including:

- Discuss on a one-to-one basis with the learner about his or her learning preferences, personal perceptions of own strengths and needs, what makes him/her happy or unhappy in school, etc.
- Use class activities to raise these issues (e.g., what we like and do not like in school), and record the learner's opinions during these activities.
- Discuss with parents/guardians/care-givers to learn their view of their child's development preferences, strengths, needs and aspirations.
- Discuss with previous teachers about strategies that have been effective or ineffective with the learner.
- Review the learner's file (if the school keeps files for all learners).
- Review the learner's portfolios and work samples gathered from all classes and subjects.
- Review current classroom assessments and performance records.
- Conduct focused observations that provide objective information on how the learner functions in a variety of situations.
- Use formal assessment tools.

Resource 5.11: Stage 2 – Form for documenting learner’s profile and performance

Background information

1. Early intervention

(Possible sources: parents/guardians/care-givers, therapists, pre-school, medical professionals, social workers, IEP team members)

Nature of support	Name of provider	Contact details

2. Family and home situation: include information on family structure and function

(Possible sources: family, parents/guardians/care-givers)

3. Parents’/guardians’/care-givers’ understanding of the learner: how parents/guardians’/care-givers understand their child’s strengths, challenges and aspirations

(Possible sources: parents/guardians/care-givers)

4. Learner’s preferences and learning styles

(Possible sources: teachers, learner, parents/guardians/care-givers, siblings, peers, observations)

5. Diagnostic summary

Adaptive, medical, social, cognitive functioning

6. Current levels of performance: state both strengths and challenges

Area 1 e.g., Communication

Strengths	Needs

Area 2

Strengths	Needs

Area 3

Strengths	Needs

7. Summary of enabling factors (that could help the learner overcome challenges) and barriers (that could hinder progress in overcoming the challenges)

Enabling factors	Barriers

Resource 5.12: Stage 4 – Setting annual objectives and performance goals

Box 1 – setting objectives

Once learning needs have been grouped and prioritised under learning areas, objectives can be set for the learner, relevant to these learning needs. These objectives should be short and specific and say what the learner will do at the end of a specified period, which is usually a school year.

An example:

- **Learner:** Thomas
- **Functional area:** Language/social skills
- **Current achievement/functioning:** Thomas dominates a conversation. He talks to or at his peers rather than talking with them.
- **Learning objective:** By the end of the school year Thomas will be able to maintain a conversation through at least 3 exchanges of information, 75% of the time.

For the plan to be effective the IEP team should not identify too many annual objectives. The number should be relatively easy to manage.

Each objective should:

- address a priority learning need identified in the learner profile,
- be linked to the learner's current level of performance,
- challenge the learner, but not so much that the learner fails to achieve the outcome,
- be achievable,
- focus on what the learner will learn (rather than on what teachers will teach), and
- identify what the learner will *do* (rather than what he or she will stop doing).

It is often said that effective learner-specific learning objectives should be written following the SMART principles:

Specific – written in clear and non-confusing language

Measurable – can be easily described, assessed and evaluated

Achievable – realistic for the learner

Relevant – meaningful for the learner

Time-related – able to be achieved within a specific time period

The learner specific planning should say:

Learner X will (action) (how/what) (where) (by what criteria) (by what date)

Example of SMART learning objective

Caroline will read half a page from one of the “Children’s Adventure Stories” books in class with 95% accuracy by November 2018.

Example of broad and vague learning objective

Caroline will improve her reading.

Box 2 – breaking objectives into smaller goals

The time frame for achieving a learning objective is usually a year. It is therefore important that the IEP team breaks the objective into smaller steps that can be more easily managed, observed and measured in a shorter time. These steps are sometimes called performance goals or benchmarks. The learner’s achievement of these smaller goals will eventually result in the achievement of the bigger annual objective.

The writing of performance goals involves breaking down the overall annual objective into manageable chunks. These performance goals should also provide greater detail regarding the what, where, and how of instruction and assessment.

The IEP team prepares the small achievement goals by:

- identifying the components or steps involved in achieving the learner-specific outcome
- organising and ordering these component tasks into a logical sequence

- describing how the learner will show that the performance objective has been achieved
- identifying the date when achievement is expected
- specifying the conditions under which the learner will perform the task (e.g., relevant environmental factors, level of assistance required, equipment needed)
- determining the criteria (e.g., accuracy, duration, rate, standard of performance) for attainment of the performance objectives.

Because performance goals are small steps towards the annual objective, they should be achieved within a reasonable period of time. This could be within weeks, depending on the complexity of the goal. The learner's progress on achieving the performance goal should be reviewed, assessed, and revised regularly. It would be helpful and be inclusive if the learner's progress is timed to correspond with the school reporting period.

Resource 5.13: Stage 4 – Creating SMART goals

Specific – written in clear and non-confusing language

Measurable – can be easily described, assessed and evaluated

Achievable – realistic for the learner

Relevant – meaningful for the learner

Time-related – able to be achieved within a specific time period

Broad/vague goal	Possible SMART goal
Collins will become more sociable	
Beverly will get better at maths	
Limpo will stop being naughty	

Ideas for answers are given below [this should be kept by the trainer, not given to teachers as part of Resource 5.12].

Broad/vague goal	Possible SMART goal
Collins will become more sociable	By the end of June, Collins will play with other children during the Friday 'toy session' for at least 5 minutes without becoming upset.
Beverly will get better at maths	Within 4 weeks, Beverly will demonstrate improved understanding of subtraction, by getting at least 50% of the sums correct.
Limpo will stop being naughty	By the end of the term Limpo will have received one gold star for good behaviour, demonstrated by being able to do a 10-minute task without shouting or running around the room.

Resource 5.14: Stage 5 – An example of documenting performance goals, teaching strategies and learning materials

<p>Annual objective Edwin will read from one of the “Children’s Adventure Stories” books in class with 95% accuracy, within the Grade 3 language class, by November 2018</p>		
<p>Performance goal 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edwin will instantly recognise frequently occurring words in class, with 98% accuracy, by the end of 8 weeks. The words are [list the words] <p>Performance goal 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edwin will be able to decode words when reading, using various strategies, 95% of the time when reading in class, within 8 weeks 	<p>Review date</p>	<p>Review comments</p>
<p>Teaching strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Precision teaching methods, sight words on flashcards and reinforcement at home Chart to monitor in-task behaviour and playground Phonemic awareness training and phonological awareness training Reward 		
<p>Materials / resources / games</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ‘Alpha to Omega’ (Hornsby) Games: word jumping game, word pop up game, Hangman ‘Phonological Awareness Training Programme’ (Wilson) ‘Sound Linkage’ (Hatcher) 		
<p>Support services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr Nyoni class teacher Remedial teacher 2 X 30 minutes sessions per week 		
<p>Parents/guardians/care-givers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reinforce flashcards with first 100 words Paired reading 10 minutes every evening 		
<p>Assessment strategy <i>Write your ideas here:</i></p>		

Resource 5.15: Stage 6 – Implementing, reviewing, evaluating. Stage 7 – revising the IEP

Once the IEP has been documented it needs to be implemented. The nature of the implementation will depend on each unique plan – each individual educational plan is **specific to the needs of one learner**. The learner’s progress towards achieving the plan’s goals is also monitored.

The IEP can and should be reviewed and revised depending on the learner’s progress. Sufficient time should be given to see if a particular strategy is helping the learner (i.e., do not revise the plan and change direction before there has been a fair chance to see if it is helping the learner). But equally, the plan should not stay unchanged for a long time if it is clearly not helping.

Those involved should keep a record of any review activities and decisions, for later use. A simple record form, like the one below, can be used to record parent/guardian/care-giver–teacher interactions and review processes.

Date	Activity (indicate parent/guardian/care-giver–teacher interaction; other consultations)	Outcome	Signatures
12.01.2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learner performance review meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learner to continue with the programme Support teachers to increase number of sessions per week from 2 to 3 	Teacher..... Parent/guardian/care-giver Learner..... (Others as appropriate)

A simple tool can be used to check or evaluate if the learner has reached the desired outcomes. Information obtained from this evaluation can be used to report the learner's progress. As learning is a process rather than an absolute act, this tool should be able to report on the degree or scale to which the learner is able to show the performance objective. Progress should not be recorded as 'all or nothing'.

For example

If the targeted performance goal is:

Edwin will instantly recognise frequently occurring words in class with 98% accuracy by the end of 8 weeks. The words are [list the words]

After 8 weeks the learner's actual performance could be recorded as:

Edwin is able to instantly recognise frequently occurring words in class with 70% accuracy.

The wording of this record is positive. This is better than recording progress from a negative perspective, such as "Edwin is not able to recognise frequently occurring words...."

Positive reporting is encouraging to the learner and shows progress towards reaching the ultimate goal.

Resource 5.16: Case study for IEP development

Thandiwe is a 16-year-old female learner. She is currently enrolled in Grade 11 of high school. Thandiwe shares her home with her mother, an older brother, and a younger sister. The family is not well off but is very loving and supportive of each other.

Thandiwe has some strengths. They include 'on-grade' level maths skills and 'above grade' level spelling skills. Thandiwe enjoys reading, although very often she does not understand what she is reading.

At times she shows inappropriate behaviour. For example, other learners do not like interacting with her because she talks a lot in a group and wants everyone to listen to her. When others try to talk she gets very upset and tries to injure herself and hit others. She also repeats questions she is asked and finds it very difficult to work on her own.

These behaviour difficulties make it hard for Thandiwe to participate in class and socially. She has recently been assessed by different professionals and the assessment results show the following:

Assessment date	Area	Results
20.11 2017	Educational	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reading – Grade 6• Mathematics – Grade 11• Natural science – Grade 5
13.11 2017	Psychological	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Above average intellectual functioning• Behaviour difficulties• Indications of autistic behaviour
17.11 2017	Speech and language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some language difficulties and poor use of language in social situations

Resource 5.17: IEP team members

Different countries use different names for the team that is responsible for developing and implementing the IEP. Whatever name they are given the team should be made up of people who have the knowledge and skills to identify the learner's needs and to develop and implement a plan to address those needs. Therefore, who is included in the team will largely depend on the needs of each learner and the availability of human resources in that particular school, district and province.

The IEP team members are likely to include:

The learner

Learners as young as primary school age can be involved in their educational planning. It is imperative that older learners should participate in the IEP development and implementation. Learners can play a role in providing information that will assist the teams in understanding them. They can provide information on:

- their interests,
- their preferences,
- their learning styles and needs,
- the strategies and activities that enhance their learning,
- what interferes with their learning, and
- things that they do not like, etc.

Learners are not just a source of information; they are central in the whole IEP process. They have a role of taking ownership of the IEP process and making sure they benefit from it.

Parents/guardians/care-givers

Parents/guardians/care-givers know their children more than any other team member and can therefore provide valuable information. This includes information about their children's:

- interests,
- aspirations,
- strengths, and

- learning styles and needs.

They can provide other information that helps the team to avoid potential problems with their children.

Parents/guardians/care-givers can provide information that is not often observed at school. They have the role of supporting their children's attempts to reach targeted learning outcomes by reinforcing at home some of the activities carried out at school. They can also give feedback on their children's progress and advocate for their children.

Teachers

Teachers have the legal responsibility of teaching all learners and helping them achieve the curricula outcomes. In the IEP process they play a role in providing information about the learner. They can provide information about the learner's:

- strengths/needs,
- interests,
- specific difficulties in different learning areas, and
- teaching and assessment strategies that the learner responds to, etc.

Teachers also provide details about previous educational interventions and how the learner responded to these interventions. From teachers the team can get information on how the learner performs in relation to other learners of the same age/class,² and school records on the learner's educational history. Teachers play a role in implementing and reviewing the IEP. They have a role of endorsing IEP decisions, because eventually they are the ones who have a legal responsibility of teaching, assessing and reporting on the learner's progress.

IEP co-ordinator

The IEP co-ordinator (for example, the school inclusive education co-ordinator, IECo), or whatever the person is called in each context) oversees the work of the team. Their role includes:

- co-ordinating the development of the IEP,
- co-ordinating the ongoing IEP implementation, review and revision,

² However, it must be stressed that an IEP is **not** about making all children do and achieve the same things at the same speeds, so comparisons of one child with another should not be a key part of the IEP process.

- ensuring that a process to monitor learner progress and achievement is established,
- facilitating group decision-making,
- co-ordinating communication among team members,
- organising, chairing and facilitating learner-specific planning meetings,
- managing the meeting process such as;
 - preparing and distributing a written and timed agenda prior to the meeting
 - ensuring meeting minutes are kept and distributed to team members on time
 - documenting and distributing revisions of the IEP
 - initiating and maintaining contact with external agencies, as required

Other professionals

Other professionals can form part of the IEP team, depending on the nature of support required by the learner. Other professionals might include:

- speech and language therapist;
- psychologist;
- physiotherapist;
- specialist needs teacher;
- social worker;
- remedial therapist;
- special educator;
- medical staff;
- remedial therapist;
- learning support teacher;
- occupational therapist.

These professionals can play a role in assessing and making available additional information on the learner. The information provided by such professionals may include information about:

- the learner's medical needs,
- physical or sensory development,
- cognitive functioning,
- emotional and/or behavioural development,
- speech and language,
- communication, and

- hearing and/or vision.

They play a role in providing additional support to the learner to help them achieve the IEP goals and objectives.

However, a cautionary note needs to be made at this point. In some instances, there is tendency to over-rely on these professions in driving the IEP process. Very often reliance on these professionals has created a belief among teachers that, as teachers, they are not capable of facilitating the process of providing the support their learners require. Teachers often view these professional as experts and as the only people who can drive the process and provide specialised support.

When this happens, teachers become disempowered and forget that, in fact, they are the professionals who have the skills and knowledge as well as legal responsibility to teach learners the knowledge and skills required by the curriculum. The other professionals play a *supportive role* to teachers. Therefore, teachers have to take a leading role in any process that ensures learners achieve the curriculum outcomes; this includes the developing and implementing of an IEP.

As earlier noted, the way these team members interact contributes to the effectiveness of the IEP development and implementation. Power play and cultural, educational and social differences can create some tension that can make the team less ineffective.

Very often the team members perceived as less important than others will feel excluded and their contributions in the IEP process will be minimal, if any. This group includes parents/guardians/care-givers, learners, teachers (perceived as lower than professionals who are the 'experts'), and women in relation to men. Age, racial, linguistic and cultural differences also often interfere in the IEP process if not managed properly.

Therefore, team members should make a conscious effort to create an environment where every team member is sensitive to such difference and tries to make others feel comfortable, included, welcome and understood. There needs to be an environment where all team members can participate meaningfully and feel their contribution is valued.

Resource 5.18: Collaboration

Definition 1

“Collaboration is a structured process where two or more people work towards a common goal by sharing the knowledge.”

(Teacher in a previous workshop)

Definition 2

Collaborative work is a shared problem-solving strategy where collaborating partners agree to work as equals. The key characteristics of collaborating work are that the role players:

- have different expertise,
- share responsibilities,
- share outcomes of the intervention whether positive or negative,
- respect each other,
- welcome and use differences to come up with solutions, and
- consult each other for solutions.

(Taken from a South African training manual)

Definition 3

“Collaboration: in inclusive education we should view parents and students as important and necessary partners who need to be listened to.”

(Teacher from a workshop in Swaziland)

Our definition of collaboration

Resource 5.19: Key principles for collaboration

Activity A

You are a teacher who is working as part of a team to build/open a new pre-school in your community. In your team are some important officials from the Ministry of General Education.

You have a thorough knowledge of the community and the community respects you.

The officials have a very high level of technical knowledge.

What are some of the key principles that will make working with these important officials effective?

Write them below:

e.g., trust

Activity B

How can each of the principles be implemented in practice during the IEP development and implementation process by the role players?

Principle	How it can be applied in an IEP process
Respect	e.g., Using input from parents/guardians/care-givers no matter how basic we may feel it is e.g., Listening and input from those whose cultural beliefs do not concur with ours
Trusting and welcoming	
Responsibility	
Accountability	
Accessibility	
Transparency	

Add other principles on another sheet of paper if you want to

Resource 5.20: Key principles for effective collaboration

Respect

Applied in the IEP process this could mean:

- acknowledging, accepting, embracing and valuing differences,
- respecting the differing opinions of others, irrespective of who they are,
- showing consideration of differences and diversity,
- respecting and accepting cultures and backgrounds different from your own,
- not judging others because of their differences, and
- team culture that shows respect and acceptance.

Trust

Applied in the IEP process this could mean:

- trusting other people's judgment and decision,
- believing in others,
- having faith in the IEP process and in all the collaborating partners,
- the IEP team creating an atmosphere and feeling of being able to rely on each other, and
- trusting and having high expectations of the process and from team members.

Accessible and transparent process

This could mean:

- creating a team culture where everything is done 'above board',
- creating a working environment that is physically and emotionally accessible,
- using communication methods that are sensitive to different cultures and are accessible to all, and
- team members creating an inviting and accessible aura around them.

Responsibility and accountability

This may entail creating a working culture among team members where each team member takes her/his responsibility seriously, is reliable and diligent; a working culture where each member shows pride in their contribution.

These principles should not merely be mentioned for the sake of being mentioned. Their use can play a critical role especially in creating a welcoming environment for parents/guardians/care-givers, learners and for people with different cultural, ethnic or linguistic backgrounds.

Resource 5.21: IEP meetings

Reasons for holding IEP meetings

There are several reasons for having an IEP meeting. An IEP meeting is held:

- for the initial development of the IEP by the IEP team,
- to review the learner's progress, and this usually happens once a year,
- when there are changes that require the team to meet (for example, if the learner is changing schools),
- when there are some concerns that need to be discussed by the team, and
- to discuss the learner's transition to adulthood.

A parent/guardian/care-giver can also request a meeting of the IEP team.

Quality facilitation of IEP meetings, as well as the nature of interaction among team members, contributes to the effectiveness of an IEP. This includes the manner in which the meeting is planned and facilitated and the follow-up after the meeting.

Planning an IEP meeting

If you want a meeting or an event to be successful you have to plan and manage it accordingly. Like any other meeting or event, an IEP meeting needs time for planning.

Planning includes:

- selecting the date, venue and time and checking these with all team members,
- inviting relevant team members. It will help if you include a short explanation of the IEP with the invitation for parents/guardians/care-givers. For learners, depending on their age, you may have to sit and explain to them what will happen at the meeting, and
- preparing documents for the meeting. This could include current information on the learner with current levels of performance, and an agenda.

You could put these documents in a folder.

Make sure the sitting arrangements do not create an intimidating environment or feelings of isolation. You could do this by removing barriers between team members; a circle sitting arrangement communicates equality.

You may pre-arrange the seating by placing document folders together with name labels where you want each team members to sit. Make sure you use name labels that everyone can see so that people can refer to others by name depending on what has been agreed on. Try to avoid professional titles as they may intimidate others and may unintentionally reinforce problematic power dynamics.

Prepare the meeting venue

The venue should be:

- easily accessible to all,
- large enough to accommodate all team members,
- well ventilated and comfortable,
- adequately lit,
- free of clutter,
- clean, and
- and there should be water for drinking.

Make arrangements to meet parents/guardians/care-givers and make them feel welcome. It may be advisable to wait until the parents/guardians/care-givers arrive before seating everyone, as they may feel intimidated if they walk into the room and find everyone is sitting. Make sure there is adequate stationery including paper, pens and flipchart paper where you can write key decisions for everyone to see, in order to ensure a transparent process

Facilitating the meeting

The IEP co-ordinator (for example, the school inclusive education co-ordinator, IECo), should set a positive tone and direction by welcoming everyone and thanking every member for making time for the meeting. The rest of the agenda can be facilitated by:

- explaining the purpose of the meeting and the expected meeting outcomes,
- outlining the time allocated for the meeting,

- explaining the meeting rules, e.g., not taking phone calls, how to reach agreement by consensus, etc.,
- introducing and discussing each agenda item,
- encouraging collaboration and consensus,
- facilitating problem-solving,
- making sure that discussion and required follow-up are recorded,
- being open and encouraging discussion,
- remaining calm and maintaining harmony when things become heated,
- reminding team members about the shared goals and appropriate meeting behaviours,
- not using the facilitation chair to dominate the meeting,
- making sure all role players especially the parents/guardians/care-givers are actively involved not just as observers but as decision-makers and information sources,
- ensuring that there is equity among team members, and
- encouraging team members to convey information in an accessible manner.

Ending the meeting

When ending the meeting, it is important to bring proper closure to the decisions made by:

- summarising decisions and follow-ups,
- making sure that every team member understands their responsibilities,
- encouraging the parents/guardians/care-givers to look at the IEP decisions upon receiving the documents and call if they have any questions,
- identifying and recording items for the agenda of the next meeting, and
- setting the date, time and location of the next meeting.

End the meeting by thanking the parents/guardians/care-givers and team members for making time for the meeting and for the contributions they have made.

After the meeting

The IEP co-ordinator, such as the school IECo, should:

- make sure that a record of the meeting and decisions made is prepared and distributed to all team members,
- monitor implementation of decisions,
- stay in touch with team members,
- facilitate communication between team members, and
- ensure records of the IEP process are well kept.

Resource 5.22: Script outline for role-play

Remember Thandiwe is a 16-year-old female learner. The IEP team is meeting for the first time to review her progress.

Meeting venue and setting

The meeting is held in an empty store room next the school's sports ground. There is a lot of noise. There are chairs arranged around a rectangular table. The place is dusty because it is hardly ever used.

IEP co-ordinator (such as the school inclusive education co-ordinator (IECo))

You are the school's identified person who coordinates the IEP process in school. Your role in the IEP meeting is to chair and facilitate an effective IEP meeting. After the meeting you have to take your son to see a doctor as he is not well. You have about 30 minutes for the meeting. You are a bit anxious about your son and it shows in the way you facilitate the meeting, but at the same time you want the best for Thandiwe.

You do the following:

- You don't take note that the venue is very noisy and it is difficult to follow the meeting proceedings.
- You don't take note that most of the professional staff arrive early and are sitting on their own, while Thandiwe and her mother are sitting on a different side of the table.
- You begin the meeting by just getting to the point without giving everyone a copy of the IEP and getting people to introduce themselves.
- You use big/complicated words very often during the meeting.
- You state the purpose of the meeting and request feedback from the teacher and speech therapist.
- Once the feedback is given you ask them what the way forward is.
- You ask the mother if the way forward is fine with her.
- You completely ignore Thandiwe until she bursts out in anger.
- You ask the teacher to calm her and continue to end the meeting.
- The whole meeting takes about 20 minutes.

Teacher

You report that Thandiwe is doing well with the reading comprehension. She is able to read a short paragraph and correctly answers all 3 questions. You have also noted that her vocabulary is improving. You mention that Thandiwe's mother is very quiet today and looks a bit upset. You make a comment about it and acknowledge the support she and her family give to you and Thandiwe.

Speech therapist

You report that there is a bit of improvement in Thandiwe's social interaction, as she is able to take turns when she is with a communication partner. However, you note that during these interactions she does not ask questions, she only conveys information to the communication partner. You have tried hard to get her to ask questions but you are not succeeding. You are not sure how to get her to ask questions. You ask the mother if she observes the same at home and if so, how she deals with it. She shares with you some of the things that she does and you thank her and promise to include it in your therapy with Thandiwe.

Thandiwe's mother

At the beginning of the meeting you feel completely excluded from this meeting. The sitting arrangement makes you feel physically unwelcomed. The meeting room is too noisy and you can barely hear what is being said. What is worse is that the words the principal uses are too difficult. She does not seem to be interested in your input. Your response to this situation is to remain quiet and just listen to what the professionals are saying and only respond to questions. Your mood changes a bit when the teacher and the therapist acknowledge your input to your child's IEP implementation process.

Thandiwe

You watch everyone talking about you. You have a lot to say about yourself and you are not given a chance. You have been holding your mother's hand while all of this is unfolding. You feel you cannot take it anymore and start squeezing your mother's hand and scream for attention.

Resource 5.23: Role-play observation checklists

Checklist for collaboration

Observe the role-play and check if the following principles were implemented or not implemented during the IEP meeting role-play. Comment on how it was implemented or not implemented.

Principle	Yes / no	Comment
Respect		
Trusting and welcoming		
Responsibility		
Accountability		
Accessibility		
Transparency		

IEP meeting process checklist

Meeting process	Comment
<p>Meeting venue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff physical appearance • The setting • The sitting arrangement 	
<p>Opening of meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome • Introduction • Stating purpose of meeting • Reviewing agenda and making changes as required • Selecting recorder • Encouraging teachers to contribute openly and respectfully 	
<p>Move through the agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussing each agenda item • Encouraging collaboration and consensus • Facilitating problem-solving • Recording the discussion and required follow-up 	
<p>Closing meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarising decisions and follow-ups • Identifying and recording items for the agenda of the next meeting • Setting date, time and location of meeting • Thanking the teachers for their contribution 	

Resource 5.24: Encouraging learner participation in the IEP process

Introduction

Learners' meaningful participation does not only contribute to the success of the IEP process, it also helps the learners develop skills that will assist them to become independent and productive adults. It helps them become adults who can communicate their needs, wants, strengths and challenges, set own goals, make choices, problem-solve and work with others. Learners' participation in the IEP process also promotes ownership of the IEP. Therefore, it is important that all learners of all grades and abilities participate in the IEP process. Participation should not only be limited to older learners and those without intellectual disabilities.

However, the nature of learner participation in the IEP process will depend on several factors, including age, previous experience, communication abilities, disability-related issues, and socialisation. For example, a 7-year-old learner who comes from a home where he is not given an opportunity to express his opinion and discuss with adults, a learner who has communication difficulties, and a 13-year-old learner with good communication skills who has had an IEP for the past 3 years cannot all be expected to participate in a similar manner in the IEP process. Learner participation in the IEP is a process and cannot just happen without some form of support.

Schools and parents/guardians/care-givers have a responsibility to help learners develop skills that they can use to participate meaningfully in the IEP process. They also have a responsibility to create an environment that encourages learner participation. This handout offers some suggestions that teachers and parents/guardians/care-givers can use to encourage learner participation in the IEP process.

Learners can be assisted in providing information about the following issues. This information is used by the team to better understand the learner's strength and challenges.

This information includes:

- how they feel about having an IEP,
- likes and dislikes,

- what makes them sad and happy,
- what they are good at and what they find challenging,
- their dreams,
- their expectations, and
- their learning preferences.

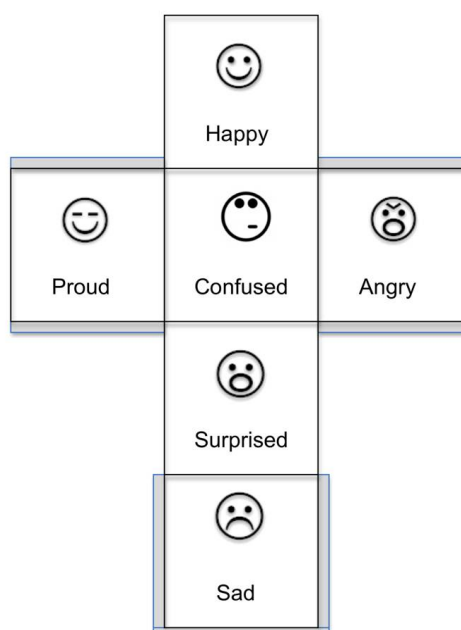
Strategies for helping learners to participate and have a voice

Learners should be assisted in helping the team set their learning goals. Various strategies can be used to help learners share this information depending on the learners' age, previous exposure, socialisation, disability, grade level and communication skills. These strategies include the use of games, pictures, verbal communication, photos, checklists, choice-making activities, drawing, writing, etc.

The 'feeling dice' game

One game that can be used is the 'feeling die'. This die can be used by learners to communicate how they feel, which actions evoke certain feelings, what makes them sad and happy, etc. It can also be used to help learners identify and communicate their learning strengths and challenges.

A six-sided die, each side representing an emotion, is created like the example below.



Any emotion can be depicted on the die. You could have several dice available with different sets of emotions depicted. However, there should be a balance between negative and positive emotions.

Images

Another strategy that can be used to help learners communicate their aspirations and dreams are pictures and photographs. Different pictures showing people of different professions can be shown to the learner and discussed with them. After discussion of what the different professions do, the learner can be asked what he/she aspires to be. From this discussion learners can share their likes, dislikes, strength and challenges through the teacher/adult asking them questions such as:

- Why do you want to be in profession X and not Y?
- What are good things that profession X does that you are also good at?
- What are some of the things that can make it difficult for you to be profession Y?

Familiarity with the process

Many people find it difficult to participate productively in formal meetings and need to be helped. This is no different for learners involved in an IEP process. Learners need help with different aspects of the IEP meeting process. They need help with understanding the meeting process. This includes explaining, in a way that will help them understand, why they should be part of this meeting, the purpose of the meeting, who will attend, why they are attending, what will happen and what is expected of the learner. Again, how this information is communicated to learners depends on the various factors that have already been mentioned. Teachers can communicate this information using a variety of strategies. These include pictures, verbal communication, photos, drawing, writing, videos, etc.

Learners may need assistance in understanding the sequence of the meeting, words that will be used at the meeting and their meaning. A video recording of an IEP meeting or sequence drawings could be used to facilitate this. A video of a previous IEP meeting can help to show the learner who will participate in an IEP meeting, what they will do and the meeting process and etiquette. It is important that this process is facilitated with the learner (i.e., do not just leave them to watch the video).

Chance to prepare

Learners should be helped to prepare what they want to say in the best way that suits them. They should be given an opportunity to practise. This can be done through role-play with other learners. The teacher could prepare a mock IEP and have different learners play different roles. In this mock IEP meeting the learner is given a chance and support to practise her/his contribution to the meeting and meeting manners.

Allow flexible participation modes

Learners' participation at the IEP meeting should be seen in a continuum, as not all learners are the same. As earlier noted, their participation in the IEP meeting will vary depending on various factors. One learner can feel confident to participate verbally throughout the meeting process. Another learner may just feel comfortable introducing speakers. Another learner may feel comfortable only communicating his or her IEP goal. All learners should be encouraged to participate in the best way they can by the IEP team.

Direct interaction

IEP team members should make an effort to interact directly with the learner in a way that encourages her or his participation. For example, instead of talking to the learner through a parent/guardian/care-giver or teacher, team members should talk directly to the learner. For example, instead of looking at the teacher or the mother and saying "does X like sport?" they should interact directly with the learner and say "do you like sport?"

Effective follow-up

After the meeting the teacher can meet with the learner to discuss and reflect on what happened at the meeting. The teacher can find out from the learner how they feel about the meeting process and the decisions made at the meeting, what they liked and did not like. The learner should be encouraged to monitor their own performance. Simple progress charts (both written and in a drawing format) with achievable performance landmarks and created by the learner can be used to encourage them to monitor their performance.

Parental support

In addition to the role played by schools, parents/guardians/care-givers should play a role in helping their children participate in the IEP process. The way parents/ guardians/care-givers interact with their children can indirectly build

their confidence, assertiveness and collaborative approach to issues – all required for participation in the IEP process.

Parents/guardians/care-givers should help by:

- modelling willingness to consult and work with others,
- modelling self-worth and assertiveness,
- modelling respect for others, listening to opinions of others and taking responsibility and accountability for ones' actions,
- encouraging their children to have a say and opinion and to challenge opinions,
- providing opportunities at home where children can make decisions, choices and problem-solve,
- praising their children not only when they have done good work but also if they have put effort into what they are doing,
- discussing with the children their dreams and aspirations, and
- instilling in their children that weaknesses are steps toward growth and should be viewed in a positive manner, not as failures.

Parents/guardians/care-givers can also directly help their children participate in the IEP process. Some of the things that parents/guardians/care-givers can do to help their children participate actively in the IEP process include:

- discussing with their children about their school interaction in general,
- discussing with their children about their learning strengths, challenges, and how they plan to deal with the challenges,
- allowing their children to be part of meetings where their performance is discussed, and modelling good meeting behaviour at these meetings. This will give them an opportunity to observe meeting processes and manners,
- helping their children prepare their learning goals,
- discussing and monitoring their performance,
- creating opportunities to reinforce what is done at school,
- helping their children prepare for the IEP meeting by helping them rehearse what they want to say at the meeting,
- helping their children develop meeting manners/etiquette, and
- discussing and reflecting on IEP meetings process and decisions.

Ideas from other places

Ontario Ministry of Education (2004) *The Individual Education Plan (IEP): A Resource Guide* makes the following recommendation to teachers about improving learner participating in the IEP process:

- “Children can be encouraged to write their targets on or attach targets to an appropriate book or folder.
- Targets can be shared with children using visual strategies such as symbols or photographs.
- Children can have pre-printed target monitoring forms attached to a subject exercise book – they can then record their responses to targets set.
- Children can have a time set to discuss their progress with staff (e.g., in tutorials or during PSHE [Pastoral, Social and Health Education] time).
- Older children can be invited to all or part of a review meeting to discuss their progress and give feedback on their SEN provision.
- Where peer support is part of the IEP, children providing support can be invited to all or part of a review meeting.”

The New Mexico State Department of Education, *Technical Assistant Manual: Developing Quality IEPs*, proposes the following activities that can be done by educators and/or parents/guardians/care-givers to help a learner prepare for his or her IEP meeting:

- Spend time allowing the learner to think about what he or she wants from education.
- Fully explain the purpose of the IEP meeting and who will be present.
- Review the parts of the IEP and what each one means.
- Share information that others will have, such as the past IEP, and be sure the learner understands what it says.
- Share with the learner the kinds of conversations that might occur at the IEP meeting.
- Have the learner(s) role-play an IEP meeting to practice.

Some parents/guardians/care-givers may not be aware of the important role they can play in helping their children to participate in the IEP process. It is therefore the school's responsibility to bring this to parents'/guardians'/care-givers' attention and help them develop the necessary knowledge and skills that they can use to assist the learners. Help provided to parents/guardians/care-givers by schools can be given indirectly, by referring them to organisations or agencies that can provide the necessary support; and directly, by sharing with parents/guardians/care-givers the required knowledge and skills they need to assist their child.

Resource 5.25: Improving parents’/guardians’/ care-givers’ participation in the IEP process

The Manitoba Education 2010: Student Specific planning: A Handbook for Developing and Implementing Individual Education Plans, makes the following suggestions to parents/guardians/care-givers on how they can improve their participation in the IEP meeting:

“Parents are valuable members of this process. You have the right to participate in the individual education planning process for your child. As a parent, you provide a unique understanding of your child’s past experience and his or her interests, goals, and aspirations. The work you can do with your child at home is often important in meeting the outcomes identified in the individual education plan (IEP).

As a parent, you can take part in the student-specific planning process by having regular contact with the school taking an active role in the decisions made for your child asking about the services and resources available.

Before going to a student-specific planning meeting:

- You may want to ask the case manager for a copy of the meeting agenda
- Ask how your child may be a part of the process of planning the IEP
- Write down the thoughts and questions you want to talk about in the meeting
- Think about your goals and hopes for your child
- Think about the concerns you would like to address
- Consider inviting someone to assist you with this process—if you invite someone, inform the case manager

At the student-specific planning meeting:

- Feel free to make it clear how long you can stay for the meeting
- Provide information about your child and how he or she learns and behaves outside school
- Ask questions if anything is unclear
- Ask how you can help work on some of the outcomes of the IEP at home

After meetings:

- You can help by keeping in touch with the teacher(s) and/or case manager working on the outcomes of the IEP at home
- You can help by telling the teacher(s) of any change at home that may affect your child at school”

The Manitoba Education School Programs Division also makes the following proposal to schools on how they can promote parent/guardian/care-giver participation in the IEP process:

“Parents are more likely to participate actively in student-specific planning when they understand the process and are equal team members. The in-school team can encourage the participation of parents by:

- Providing a comfortable, welcoming, non-intimidating environment
- Establishing and maintaining communication
- Valuing parents’ contributions and priorities
- Arranging meetings when it is possible for parents to participate
- Discussing the purpose of each meeting and providing an agenda
- Avoiding jargon and explaining all terms and data clearly”

The Bright Futures tool for families makes the following suggestion to schools on how they can encourage parents’/guardians’/care-givers’ participation in the IEP process:

(See www.brightfutures.org/mentalhealth/pdf/families/mc/iep.pdf)

“Parents have important knowledge and information to share about their child and can give vital support at home to their child in achieving their targets. It is important to establish what parents see as priorities for their child. It may be appropriate to include out of school targets that can support the achievement of outcomes. Communication is vital – it should be:

- Non-threatening and jargon-free
- Clear about how parents can help
- Encouraging and promising, emphasising any extra attention that will be given to their child.

Consideration needs to be given to parents who may have difficulty understanding written information, because of literacy difficulties or because English is their second language.

Parents can be supported by receiving basic information on what an IEP is prior to visiting school for a review meeting or parents' evenings. This will give parents more confidence and make them better able to understand the process.

Make them feel included but this should be done in a way they don't feel you are over bearing.

Emphasise that their contribution is valued.

Parents should be invited to attend and contribute to more formal reviews.

Additionally, informal comments from parents should be recorded against targets on the IEP.

These comments may come from a variety of sources, e.g., telephone conversations, home school day, brief after school meetings."

Below are recommendations from reviewed literature for strengthening the IEP process and promoting a positive experience for all stakeholders; taken from J.W. Reiman, L. Beck, T. Coppola, and A. Engiles (2010) *Parents' Experiences with the IEP Process Considerations for Improving Practice*, J.D. Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education (CADRE) Eugene, Oregon

"For Schools and Educators

Esquivel, Ryan, and Bonner (2008) recommend that professionals improve parents' experiences in school-based team meetings by sharing their knowledge of the child as an individual with unique interests, strengths, and weaknesses and avoid discussing the child in ways that suggest he/she is defined by her/his disabilities. The authors further suggest that schools apply creative solutions to problems and remain open to alternatives when current solutions aren't sufficient.

Fish (2006) asked parents what school districts could do to improve IEP

meetings. Answers included:

- Making the meetings more democratic so that parents feel they are equal contributors
- Being open to parental input regarding placement, discipline, and instruction
- Being friendly
- Valuing and listening to parental input
- Being flexible and more willing to adjust to student needs; and, educating parents about the IEP process

Fish's 2008 study were generally satisfied with their child's IEP meetings, but they still believed that educators could improve the process. Their suggestions included:

- Allowing sufficient time for the meetings
- Creating a welcoming atmosphere
- Encouraging parents to bring an advocate familiar with the IEP process
- Using common terms instead of jargon to lessen confusion
- Refraining from completing IEP forms in advance of parental input
- Involving parents in the writing of goals and objectives
- Providing parents with a copy of the IEP objectives a few weeks before the meeting to allow time for review and preparation of questions

Simon (2006) suggests that educators provide parents with IEP forms in advance and ask them to think about issues to be discussed at the meeting. This can enhance parents' sense of ownership of the process as team members and foster good communication with them during and after the IEP meeting. Soliciting parents' feedback on their child's progress toward reaching her/his goals and welcoming their post-meeting feedback can help to identify points of weakness in the implementation of the IEP, which can then be addressed through professional development or in-service opportunities as needed.

Stoner et al. (2005) developed recommendations for professionals based on the findings of their study that include:

- Preparing parents for the IEP meeting by informing them about

procedures, their legal rights and related services

- Being flexible in discussions about location and duration of IEP meetings (to equalize the roles of team members and reduce the power of educators and other professionals)
- Strengthening trust by listening to parents, welcoming their input and, following through on promises.

For Parents

Fish (2006) asked teachers what parents can do to improve the IEP process. Responses included:

- Becoming knowledgeable about special education law and the parameters of the IEP process
- Taking the initiative to educate themselves about special education issues
- Being persistent in requesting needed services for their children

For Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families

Cho and Gannotti (2005) reported that all of the mothers interviewed for their study agreed that their limited English ability was not a barrier as long as professionals were willing to take the time to communicate with them by listening carefully and rephrasing the parent's words in correct English to clarify and avoid misunderstandings.

They also expressed the need for better translation and interpretation services and for more support and information from professionals.

The authors stated that disagreements with education professionals can be a major source of stress for Korean parents because respect for authority is highly valued in their culture and conflict with authorities is viewed negatively. Consequently, having to make requests repeatedly is very discouraging and stressful for these mothers.

The authors also recommended connecting parents with community, service, or parent-to-parent groups that target the needs of Asian/Korean families for support and information immediately after diagnosis.

Lo (2008) identified several ways that professionals can improve the IEP process for parents, including:

- Meeting with interpreters before each IEP meeting to provide them with the terminology that will be used in the meeting
- Speaking to parents in short sentences and pausing regularly to provide the time needed for note taking and interpretation
- Working with local community organizations to develop training programs in the parents' native language to educate families on how best to prepare for and be involved in the IEP process.

Lo (2009) made additional recommendations for improving the IEP process for CLD parents, including:

- Providing parents with information about their child's disability in their primary language
- Having a second reader proofread translated documents before sending them to families
- Taking time to determine the dialects that the families speak
- Locating qualified interpreters who speak the same dialects. It is important to find out if translators and interpreters have expertise in special education and, if not, to provide the common terms that will be used during the meeting and instruction on how to provide interpretation during the meeting.
- Educators supplement written progress reports by dedicating a portion of the IEP meeting to teaching strategies that families can use to instruct their children at home. Children's skills can be reinforced when the same methods are used by both teachers and parents
- The need for schools to identify and collaborate with community organizations to provide parent education related to the special education process".

The National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health and Georgetown University provides a guideline on how parents can improve their participation in the IEP meeting. (Individualized Education Program (IEP) Meeting Checklist; 2003: National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health and Georgetown University)

Resource 5.26: Thandiwe and the ‘feeling dice’ game

Remember Thandiwe is a 16-year-old female learner in the role-play. Remember she has social communication difficulties. She finds it difficult to take turns when communicating.

Let us pretend Thandiwe is a little bit younger, maybe 9 years old. The IEP team met for the first time to review her progress. At that meeting, although Thandiwe was prepared and wanted to contribute, she was not given a chance to make her contribution. Her reaction to the situation at the meeting was this: she squeezed her mother’s hand and screamed.

How could you use the “feeling dice game” to help Thandiwe express how she felt at the meeting and the reason why she felt like that?

You will be asked to demonstrate how you could use the feeling dice game.

Notes