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**Study on the Collaboration Process of  
Individualized Education Plan**

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This dissertation is submitted in part-fulfillment of the MA/Mgr. in Special Education  
Needs of the Charles University in Praha.

**Statement**

I, Karchung, Student of Charles University in Prague, would like to declare that I have developed my Dissertation to study the Collaboration Process of Individualized Education on my own using the resources as per the list of bibliography.

### **Abstract**

Individualized Education Plan is an educational document designed and developed to meet the individual educational needs of the children with special education needs. It contains the details of present status of the child's performance, goals, objectives, activities, additional supports and services for the child and also the criteria for determining his progress (Lee-Tarver, 2006).

Collaboration between teachers, parents and professionals play a vital role while designing, developing and implementing the Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

The study attempts to gain insights into the roles of IEPs in promoting the teaching and learning process in general and further focus on the collaboration process IEP in particular.

The collaboration process requires the involvement of parents to take an active role in decision-making for the education of their child with disabilities (Smith, 2001). The collaboration meetings are a communication vehicle between parents and schools. This allows them to work as equal partners collaboratively to discuss and decide the educational needs of the child, plan and strategize services to meet those needs, and work collectively for anticipated outcome (Heward, 1996).

On a closer look, the outcome of the collaboration process of IEP is the expected outline recommendations for appropriate plans and strategies to promote inclusive education in Bhutan.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The roles of the Individualized Education Plans have become vital and crucial to ensure the provision of education to children with special educational needs (Drasgow et al., 2001). It is an important educational document and has enormous potential to help children with special educational needs to get their education. Therefore, the main aim of the study is to gain insight into the collaboration process of Individualized Educations Plans so that ideas and skills acquired will be able to enhance my knowledge.

The most important characteristics of Individualized Education Plan (IEP) documents is the description of detailed plans and programs of the child's educational needs covering a wide range of areas such as spelling out the specific aims and objectives of the program, outlining the modalities of evaluation and measurement procedures, strategizing the means to follow up with the plans developed during the process of IEP planning meeting (Drasgow et al., 2001, p. 359). Indeed, they further stress that the IEP documents and processes are very crucial in ensuring the formalization of the Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to special needs students (Yell, 1998).

The development of Individualized Education Plans is a rigorous process. The planning and preparation process requires the active involvement of the IEP team which should consist of a parent who has a child with disability, one regular education teacher, one special education teacher, one representative of a local education agency who is qualified to provide specially designed instructions to meet the needs of the child,(at the discretion of parent or agency), one additional official who is knowledgeable or has special expertise regarding the child and related service personnel and the child whenever appropriate (Guerin & Marry, 2006).

The development process of Individualized Education Plans has two end results known as a product and a process (Kaye & Aserlind, 1979). As a product IEPs provide clear cut guidelines and roadmaps to the stake holders including teachers and parents to monitor the progress of the child regarding the development of social skills, and or adaptive domains. It also provides detailed description of the present status of the child's performance. It has detailed goals, objectives, additional supports and services for the child and also the criteria for determining his progress. As a process, IEPs promote the provision of avenues for collaboration between teachers, administrators, parents and even the child when appropriate, in determining goals and objectives. The processes promote the reflection of the IEP development, review and revision of the educational program.

Dragow et al. (2001, p. 361) explain that one of the important requirements of the IEP is that all schools are required to follow certain guidelines when developing and implementing the IEPs. These set of procedures safeguard and protect the interests of the students with disabilities (Tucker & Goldstein, 1992). Such procedures could also provide avenues for the school and parents to resolve any disagreement if they should encounter any.

Firstly, schools should ensure the initiation of a collaboration process amongst the IEP team members. The collaboration process within the team is mandated to ensure the planning and preparation of individualized education plans, carrying out the assessments, and deciding the placement needs of the students is done collectively involving the members of the IEP team.

The other aspect of the IEP requirement norm is the substantive processes. The substantive processes demand that the schools ensure the provision of education that offers meaningful education to the children with special education needs. Provision of meaningful education for special needs students include planning IEPs with goals, spelling out specific objectives, outlining appropriate methods of implementation and

carrying out assessments. The schools should therefore, abide by these requirements to ensure that students receive education that are appropriate to their needs (Drasgow et al., 2001, p. 361).

The whole process of IEP starts with a referral of a student with a suspected disability for a possible evaluation. Thereafter, final step of the planning process is reviewing and revising the IEP. Therefore the collaboration process of IEP plays a very significant role. In order to promote better collaboration, IEPs meetings are one of the best avenues and serves as a communication vehicle between parents and schools. This helps them to work as equal partners by collaboratively discussing and deciding the educational needs of the child, plan and strategize services to meet those needs, and work collectively for anticipated outcome (Heward, 1996).

Although the IEP seems to have become a very vital tool for the implementation of Special Education the processes seem to face challenges in terms of how efficiently they are organized and managed especially in ensuring the up to date reporting system of educational performance (Drasgow et al., 2001). There are also indications that key professionals or stake holders seem to fail to ensure their attendance in the IEP meetings. Hence, the placement decisions may not necessarily be based on the IEP (Huefner 2000; Lynch & Beare, 1990; Martin, 1996; Smith, 1990b). Organizational and managerial aspects of IEP seem to inevitably play an important role in the development and successful implementation of the IEP. These are yet again important factors that contribute towards planning, implementation and follow up of the whole IEP.

### **1.1 The scope for use of IEP in Bhutan**

The role of IEPs in Bhutan is likely to be important where the modern system of education is still very young compared to many other countries. The development of modern system of education began only in the early 1960s with the beginning of the First Five Year Plans (Education Division, 1999). The document Bhutan 2020 prepared

by the Planning Commission of the Royal Government of Bhutan (1999), is a Vision Document for Peace, Prosperity and Happiness for Bhutan. It states that “access to basic education has become an inalienable right of all Bhutanese and it is the key to most of the nation’s ambitions” (p. 52). The provision of wholesome education to prepare every Bhutanese child to face the challenges and demands of the ever changing Bhutanese society at the national and global arena is one of the key pillars of the concept of Gross National Happiness. Such a policy initiative geared towards making education accessible to all children moves very well in tandem with the right of every child to education as proclaimed in the 1984 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the World Declaration on Education for All (UNESCO, 1990).

Further, the Education Sector Strategy document prepared by the Policy and Planning Division (2003) for realizing the Vision 2020 states that “All children with disabilities and with special educational needs – including those with physical, mental and other types of impairment – will be able to access and benefit from education” (p. 34). It also states that children with disabilities and those with special needs will to the greatest extent possible receive quality education alongside their non-disabled peers.

Initiatives to include children with special educational needs and disabilities have been made with the introduction of a pilot school for multiple learning disabilities and deaf children in two of our Bhutanese schools in 2001 in addition to the National Institute for the Disabled in Khaling which was established way back in 1973 (National CRC, 2000).

All such initiatives from the Ministry of Education, which are rights-based approach for developing the education system can directly contribute in making our schools not just a place of learning but also a place where our children feel included and respected as individuals. A place where they can develop love of learning and are able to relate to one another for friendship and support, and a place where children feel safe

and secure in the company of their peers and teachers. Such positive developments and educational reforms served as an inspiration for me to take up a research study to investigate the perspectives of school teachers on this seemingly new concept of Inclusive Child Friendly Schools in Bhutan.

Although concerted efforts are being made to promote the inclusion of children with special educational needs into the main stream schools, however none of the official document strategies have specified the methods of how the provision of education to these children will be ensured. Although the education policy documents guide the schools, there are no legal legislation documents where the roles and responsibilities of teachers, school as a whole, local education authorities and parents are mentioned to enable them to collaboratively work towards educating the children with special educational needs. Till date, the Ministry of Education, Royal Government of Bhutan does not have an Education Act.

Therefore, the main purpose of my dissertation is to help me gain insight into the collaboration process of Individualized Education Plans. While the process of the study is expected to provide adequate exposure to gain experience to further enhance the understanding on the roles of IEP and the collaboration process amongst IEP team members, the out come of the study is aimed at equipping me with ideas and skills that will be useful to up date my skills to improve the delivery of education services to the children with special education needs. At the same time, the study will immensely enable me to come up with recommendations for improvement in the collaboration process of Individualized Education Plans. Finally the ideas and skills gained through reflective and experiential learning processes (Kolb, 1984) during the study will help me to develop appropriate strategies to initiate collaborative process of IEP to promote inclusive education in Bhutan.

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With the above aims in focus I have attempted to cover chapters in my dissertation that include the discussion on the literature review on IEP, Case study as a method of qualitative research for the study, data analysis, evaluation and finally drawing the conclusions of the study.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Overview

The main purpose of the literature review on IEP is to explore the structures, processes, controversial issues, challenges and problems of the over all process of IEPs and further look at the collaboration process of IEPs. This is keeping in mind that all these factors have direct and significant bearings on the academic performance of the children with special educational needs. The ultimate outcome of the review is to serve as a basis which will lead to provide some solutions in striving towards improving the education services to the students of special educational needs. With these intentions in mind, the review of the literature on IEP is carried out. The review also attempts to gain insight into the roles of IEPs in promoting the teaching and learning process of children with special educational needs. It becomes imperative for me to consider the review so that the review will provide the general understanding of what has been achieved especially in terms of the collaboration process of IEP team members.

The laws and education acts have ensured the realization of rights of children with special educational needs to education. It has also specified the rights and responsibilities of parents and teachers and professionals involved in the provision of education. And most importantly the laws have attributed towards innovating strategies such as 'Individualized Education Plan' as an important tool to educate the children with special educational needs. For example, the teachers in the USA involved in teaching of children with special educational needs have to plan, prepare and use the IEPs in accordance to the Education for All Handicapped Children Act that was enforced in 1975. This law was amended and renamed as Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990. In 1997 additional amendments were made in which the roles of parents were strengthened mandating enhanced opportunity for an active role in decision-making concerning the education of their child with disabilities (Smith, 2001).

IDEA 1997 mandates additional requirements of the IEP team members. According to the requirement IEP team must document a student's strengths as well as disabilities, provide regular progress reports to parents, involve general educators and provide measurable short-term objectives (Huefner, 2000).

Since then the role of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) has been vital to ensure the provision of education to children with special education needs (Dragow et al., 2001).

In the UK, institutionalization of IEP in providing the education to the special educational needs was launched in 1994 with the introduction of code of practice for special education needs (Tennant, 2007). The uses of IEPs in ensuring the provision of education to the students of special education needs are also popular across the western world.

The roles of IEPs in the schools in Czech Republic have also been inevitably important in educating children with special educational needs since the introduction of the Disability Act in 1998 which was later amended in 2001; an important strategic Government document in the area of disability. The popularity on uses of IEPs in schools seems to have picked up momentum after the establishment of Special Education Centers in 1990. Since then, the role of Special Education Centre has been vital in ensuring the provision of professional support to special schools. With the government policy to integrate children with intellectual disabilities (Siska, 2005), the roles of IEPs will significantly be strengthened.

The "National Program for the Development of Education in Czech Republic" 2001 has empowered parents with rights to choose any school they find most appropriate for their child (Siska, 2005). With the rights to choose any school of their choice, they also have the right to participate in the collaboration process of IEPs.

The implementation of plans and programs to provide education to children with special educational needs who are integrated into the main stream schools were mainly possible with the extensive use of Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Therefore, the role of IEP has become inevitable in catering to the education needs of children with intellectual disabilities. The study attempts to understand collaboration processes IEPs has also becomes even more important.

## **2.2 The IEP; roles, process and how they are perceived.**

The IEP is an important educational tool that caters to the children with special educational needs. It contains detailed plans and programs with clear direction and mechanism of monitoring the education program designed to be offered to the child with special education needs. It describes the child's educational needs, spelling out the specific aims and objectives of the program, outlining the modalities of evaluation and measurement procedures, strategizing the means to follow up with the plans developed during the process of IEP planning meeting (Dragow et al., 2001, p. 359). Indeed, the IEP documents and processes are very crucial in ensuring the education to children with special education needs. The IEP documents and processes are important in the formalization of the Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to special needs students (Yell, 1998).

It is important to understand that the whole process of IEP has two end results: product and a process. The IEP as a product provides clear cut guidelines and a roadmap especially to the stake holders which include teachers and parents to monitor the progress of the child in his academic performance, development of social skills, and or adaptive domains. It also provides a detailed description of the present status of the child's performance. Most importantly it includes goals, objectives, additional supports and services for the child along with a criterion for determining his progress. As a process, the IEP is an avenue for collaborative means among teachers, administrators,

parents and even the child (when appropriate), in determining goals and objectives. The process involves the provision of reflection of the IEP development, review and revision of the educational program so that the needs of the child with disabilities are catered to appropriately (Lee-Tarver, 2006).

Another way of understanding the process of IEPs is based on the description Drasgow et al. (2001), made which ascertains that “one of the most important pillars of special education has been the IEP. According to the IEP requirements, there are two important processes important for the schools to consider. They are (a) procedural and (b) substantive processes of the IEP. The procedural requirements oblige the schools to consider important aspects such as the mandatory involvement of parents to collaborate with teachers on the education program. The collaboration with the parents is mandated to make sure on the conduction of comprehensive individualized education assessments, and also to decide on the placement needs of the students. The other aspect of the IEP requirement norm is the substantive processes. The substantive processes demands the schools to ensure the provision of education that offers meaningful education to special needs students. The provision of meaningful education to special needs students include planning IEPs with goals, spelling out specific objectives, outlining appropriate methods of implementation and carrying out assessments. The schools should therefore abide by these requirements to ensure that students receive education that are appropriate to their needs. IDEA 1997 further reinforces these requirements for all schools.

Therefore, the roles of IEPs are very important in providing education to children with special educational needs. A survey conducted by Aleada (2006) indicated that the majority of regular education teachers perceived IEPs as useful tools in providing education to the children with special education needs and they actively participated in the IEP process. The respondents however, strongly indicated that

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additional training would be highly essential for the successful implementation of the IEPs.

The study was conducted with the aim of investigating the perception of the regular teachers on the utility of IEP in a Regular Education Setting for children with disabilities within an inclusive classroom. The sample of the study consisted of one hundred twenty three teachers. They belonged to the regular education teachers from Alabama and Georgia. They comprised of 26% of participants from African American origin, 72% Caucasian, and of 2% of the respondents ethnicity was not known.

The result of the survey seems to be highly indicative that IEPs are useful tools to carry out preparation of curriculum for children with special educational needs. Teachers are also motivated as the survey results indicate that the teachers were actively involved in the process. From the recommendation of the respondents, it seems to me that given the adequate and appropriate training, the IEPs would be useful and crucial to provide education services to the students with special needs. Therefore, it makes me feel that during the preparation of teachers, we should ensure that every teacher gains ideas and skills of planning and preparation, the methods of implementation, monitoring and carrying out the evaluation of the IEPs (Lee-Tarver, 2006).

It is motivating to know that there are enthusiastic educationists involved in catering to educational needs of special education. They are looking for innovative methods of using technology as an appropriate tool to develop IEPs. For example, Tim (2005) expresses that, "Throughout his involvement of 30 years in education, he had always been dreaming to provide every student an individualized education plan that provided detailed information on academic strengths and weaknesses of each student, and prescribed instructions to either enrich or remediate. He feels that today's instructional software programs make those IEPs possible."

He cites an example from a lesson segment of a social studies class in grade 7. Here in the example, “the teacher helps her students use wireless computers to locate specific websites (for example [www.ikhowthat.com](http://www.ikhowthat.com)) that contains map creation activities for Asia, Middle East and Africa. The website provides labeled puzzle pieces that present mini-map of these countries. Students click and drag the pieces into the appropriate area of the continent. This enables them to learn about the region” (Tim, 2005).

Tim’s piece of quotations and citation of examples, surely serves as a kind of basis to believe that IEPs could be motivating, and beneficial to the students.

### **2.3 The IEP and its Procedures**

The IEP process guide by the Massachusetts Department of Education 2001 suggests that the IEP team follow three important and integrated steps that focus on reaching improved outcomes for students with special education needs. The process is critically important to children with disabilities and must be carefully managed. This will ensure that the unique needs of the student are addressed. It will also ensure full compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements of IEP.

Firstly, the responsibility of the IEP team is to determine whether a child is eligible for special education services. This determination starts with the careful and thorough evaluation of the child in all areas of suspected disabilities.

After determination of the eligibility of a child, the team is required to discuss and carry out the planning of IEP in collaboration with parents, the student, the general educators and the special educators which therefore becomes the basis for service contract and contains high expectations for a student. This contract serves as guidelines for the student’s special education services for the next year.

Finally, placement decision is made after determining all the elements of the IEP including services, supports and placement options. The first placement should generally be in a general education classroom with the provision of the needed aids and services. It is also important that the team members consider the unique needs of the student before making the final placement.

#### **2.4 The Collaboration Process of IEP**

According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, the meaning of collaboration is a recursive process where two or more people work together towards an intersection of common goals by sharing knowledge, learning and building consensus. Collaboration does not require leadership and can sometimes bring better results through decentralization and egalitarianism. In particular, teams that work collaboratively can obtain greater resources, recognition and reward when facing competition for finite resources.

Therefore collaboration in this context should be understood as a team working collaboratively towards achieving common goals. It helps to come up with collaborative goal-setting and the most important feature of it is that the goal relates to one child as a whole rather than each professional working independently of the others and focusing on one part or function of the child (Foreman, 2007).

The collaboration process of IEP happens mainly with its team members. The process of the IEP is important for the members of the team to discuss and decide the IEP for the child with the special educational needs. The team members may consist of parent of the child with disability, one regular education teacher, one special education teacher, one representative of the local education agency who is qualified to provide specially designed instructions to meet the needs of the child, (at the discretion of parent or agency), one additional official who is knowledgeable or has special expertise

regarding the child and related service personnel and the child whenever appropriate (Guerin & Marry, 2006).

The IEP process demands active collaboration amongst the members of IEP in order to discuss and decide education programs for the children according to their needs. Therefore the IEP meetings are very important. They are the communication vehicle between parents and schools and thus help them to work as equal partners, to collaboratively discuss and decide the educational needs of the child, plan and strategize services to meet those needs, and work collectively for anticipated outcome (Heward, 1996). The discussions should focus on the present status of the child's performance, goals, objectives, activities, additional supports and services for the child and also the criteria for determining his progress (Lee-Tarver, 2006).

Parent involvement in the collaboration process of IEPs is very crucial. Studies have shown that parents and other members of the families know certain aspects of their children better than any one else. They have better understanding of their child in relation to interest, motivation, habits, fears, routines, pressures, needs and health. Thus, listening to the parents may help the teachers and professionals from special education centers know the child better (Giangreco et al., 1993) since the parents spend more time with their children than the teachers.

The involvement of parents improves academic work of students, develop positive attitudes to school, raise their aspirations and develop other optimistic behaviors if they have parents who are aware, knowledgeable, encouraging and are involved as partners with schools (Epstein, 1992). In the same line, Henderson (1987) asserts that parental involvement as partners with the school improves student achievement. She says children whose parents are involved as active partners with the schools perform well in school than children whose parents are not involved.

The study carried out by Stevenson and Baker (1987) in regard to parental involvement indicated that children's school performances were higher where parents were involved as compared to performance of children whose parents were not involved in the partnership with the schools.

Heward (1996) also contends that parents have a greater vested interest to see their children's progress in their daily lessons in the school. Sometimes, educationists and professionals in their eagerness to help children learn, however, convey wrong messages to parents regarding the amount of care they cater to the children almost indicating that they provide better care than the parents. Such mistakes are not realized. Further, he stresses that families are only a group of adults who are involved in the life long education of the child. The teacher may be involved for a few years. The special education representative may be there for a few hours. However, the families will be there throughout the entire life of the child. Hence, they have the ability to positively influence the quality of educational services provided in their community. He further emphasizes that parents must live with the out comes of decisions made by the IEP team members. Many do not like the decisions taken without their participation and consent. Therefore, if the parents are actively involved in the planning and preparation process of IEPs, the impact of collaboration process is likely to be better.

In order to promote better partnership between the school and parents, it is important to develop effective forms of communication. According to Sanders (2001), two-way communication between parents and teachers is one of the best ways of communicating and promoting children's progress. This helps collaborating partners discuss their ideas, and broadens opportunities to better understand how students can be helped in the class as well as at home with their academic decisions, homework, and curriculum-related activities.

The development of trust and respect between families and school personnel is also considered as an important ingredient of collaboration process of IEP. It highly attribute towards creating and maintaining sustainable relationship between the partners (Adams & Christenson, 2000). Skillful employment of communication skills is yet another factor that influences the relationships between teachers and parents. Better relationships are likely to sustain and improve when communications between the partners include, active listening, speaking honestly, sensitively, respectfully and being consistently aware of the child as a whole person (McClain, 2006). Other significant characteristics of communication skills include ensuring that the messages of the conversations are clear and consistently focused on the child. While doing so, attempts should be made to avoid the comparison of the child with other students (Davern, 1996).

The collaboration process of IEP seems to have a vital impact for both the teacher as well as the parents. Researches have found that the lives of teacher are made easier if they work collaboratively with parents in doing their job. On the other hand, parents involved in the collaboration with teachers tend to develop more positive views of teachers as professionals. Further, teachers who meaningfully involved parents were rated higher in overall teaching ability and interpersonal skills by their administrators. Finally, involving parents in the collaboration process makes them feel a sense of belongingness to the school. Hence, they form pivotal and powerful pressure groups which lead to stronger political support from the society when the schools require their support (Epstein, 1992).

#### **2.5 How are IEPs planned, implemented, monitored and evaluated?**

The main aim of closely looking at the process of planning, implementing, monitoring and carrying out evaluation is to get an insight into the whole process of how IEP Programs are planned, implemented, monitored and evaluated. In order to do so, a brief explanation on the process and strategies of IEP has been provided.

One of the important requirements of IDEA 1997 is that all schools are required to follow the law when developing and implementing the IEPs (Drasgow et al., 2001). These set of procedures safeguard and protect the interest of students with disabilities (Tucker & Goldstein, 1992). Such procedures could also provide avenues for the school and parents to resolve any disagreement if they should encounter any.

The whole process of IEP starts with a referral of a student with a suspected disability for a possible evaluation. And the final step of the planning process is reviewing and revising the IEP.

#### **2.5.1 The Referral and Evaluation process**

The process of IEP begins at this stage called the referral and evaluation process. It is a very important stage of the whole IEP process. When the stake holders such as teachers, parents, or other professionals suspect that the student may have a disability, the child is referred to the school's multidisciplinary team (MDT). The MDT consists of an administrator, a special education teacher, a general education teacher, and a school psychologist.

The main function of Individualized Education Plans team members is to coordinate the referral and evaluation of the child. They collect the necessary information of educational relevance related to the student who is referred. The other vital responsibility of the team members is to determine whether the student has a disability, as covered by IDEA. The determination should be based on the information they have collected. Then, they have the mandate to determine whether the student requires special education and related services. Finally, they are required to determine the educational needs of the student based on the legal principles of IDEA (Tucker & Goldstein, 1992).

The processes carried out by the multi-disciplinary team are recorded and retained part of an information document for evaluation. The evaluation of the IEP

process is the most important educational and legal requirements. This is because the information collected during the evaluation serves as a baseline for the IEP team to assess educational progress of the student. In the absence of the baseline, it may not be possible for the IEP team to show whether the student has benefited from the educational service.

Another requirement of the IEP team is to conduct the follow up of the IEP. The IEP teams who have legal mandates; have an intra-individual focus, thus the responsibility to evaluate, identify, and document the details of information of students with special education needs are required. Besides this, they also have the mandates to develop and re-evaluate individual education plans for students with special educational needs and determine appropriate placements for these students (Tucker & Goldstein, 1992).

#### **2.5.2 The IEP Meeting**

Upon completion of eligibility determination of a student for special education services by the multi-disciplinary team, the IEP team organizes the IEP meetings. The roles and responsibilities of the IEP team culminate to discussions and decisions on special education program and related services for the student. Thus, the IEP planning processes for a special education program is provided. The whole processes are documented in an IEP. Therefore, the IEP has all the written documents and description on the educational needs. It also has details of the special education and related services that the district will provide to address these needs (Bateman & Linden, 1998).

According to Bateman & Linden, (1998) the team members of IEP are guided by two major mandates during the meeting of IEP. First, they are mandated to ensure that they develop the IEP documents that fulfill the needs of the student. The next mandate is to determine his/her placement according to his/her IEP.

### 2.5.3 IEP Development Process

According to Drasgow et al. (2001, p. 364), the IEP document must have the detail outlined program of special education of the student. Throughout its developmental process it is important to consider the IDEA 1997 regulations. The inclusion of the eight components of the regulations must be considered during the development process of the IEP. The IDEA 1997 regulations cover the following:

“... (a) Statements detailing a student's present levels of educational performance, including how the disability influences progress in the general education curriculum. (b) Measurable annual goals, including benchmarks and short-term objectives, that detail strategies to address needs that emanate from a disability, thus enabling participation and progress in the general education curriculum. (c) Statements that detail the special education and related services, supplementary aids, and program modifications or supports to be provided. (e) An explanation that specifies the extent to which a student will not participate with non-disabled peers in the general education environment. (g) Statements that detail individual modifications to statewide or district wide assessments e.g., administration in small-group setting to allow for student participation. (i) The projected date to implement the services and modifications, as well as their anticipated frequency, location, and duration. (k) Statements specifying measurement of the annual goals and strategies for informing parents about their child's progress on a regular basis. (l) Statements detailing the transition services needs of a student, if appropriate, that focus on the student's courses of study at age 14 and interagency responsibilities at age 16.” Source: Table 3 Page 364

The IEP meetings are mandated to discuss all the components of the regulations and ensure the inclusion of the components in the document.

The IEP team during the meeting also needs to consider keeping in mind that one of the first steps in the IEP process is the requirement of the team to carry out evaluation of the student. Thus, the IEP team can use the evaluation as a basis to

determine the implications on instructions of the evaluation results. Based on this determination development of goals, benchmarks, objectives, and educational services could be considered (Drasgow et al., 2001).

The other tasks that the IEP team carries out are the determination of annual goals and short-term objectives or benchmarks for the student. The team determines the present level of educational performance of the student. The goals and benchmarks help the IEP team to find out if there is any educational progress of the student. It also helps the team to assess whether the special education program provided to the student is appropriate for meeting his or her educational needs.

#### **2.5.4 Placement Determination**

The result of the whole IEP process is the placement of the student. It is immensely important that the placement of the student is done based on their educational needs. Prior to the placement determination, it is crucial for the IEP team to ensure that goals, benchmarks, special education, related services, and supplementary aids and services are in place before making any decision. This will ensure that every facility is in place after the placement. Thus, the student receives education based on his/her needs.

#### **2.5.5 Reviewing and Revising the IEP**

The final and very important stage of the IEP appears to be the review and revision of the IEP process. As required by the mandates of IDEA 1999, IEP needs to be reviewed. It is also mandatory to revise IEP annually if necessary. The key points to consider during the review includes; "... (a) any lack of progress towards the annual goals and in the general education curriculum where appropriate, (b) the results of any re-evaluation, (c) information about the child provided by the parents, (d) the student's anticipated needs, and (e) other considerations, as deemed appropriate."

## 2.6 IEPs and Controversies

While the fact that the IEPs play a crucial role in the provision of education to the children with special educational needs cannot be denied, they seem to have their own share of criticism. Several researches show that there have been challenges, problems, and criticism in the process of planning and implementation of IEPs. Drasgow et al. (2001, p. 539), provides a detailed account on how the IEPs have evolved since the inception of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was enforced in 1975 in the education system of the United States of America. Although the IEP seems to be a vital tool for the implementation of Special Education since then, however, there seems to be enormous problems, challenges and criticisms too. The authors quote such important challenges encountered during the implementation of IEPs;

“... IEPs have been fraught with problems (Huefner, 2000). For example, Smith (1990a) identified a number of problems with IEP development, including a lack of adequate teacher training in developing IEPs, poorly developed team processes, mechanistic compliance with the burdensome paperwork requirements, and excessive demands on teacher time. Additional problems with the IEP requirements are minimal coordination with general education (Lipsky & Gartner, 1996), the failure to link assessment data to instructional goals (Smith & Simpson, 1989), and the failure to develop measurable goals and objectives to evaluate student achievement (Yell, 1998). Furthermore, the IEP process has been replete with such legal errors as failure to report current levels of educational performance; lack of appropriate goals, objectives, and evaluation procedures; absence of key personnel at the IEP meeting; and placement decisions that are not based on the IEP (Huefner, 2000; Lynch & Beare, 1990; Martin, 1996; Smith, 1990b).”

Interestingly, the above quotation indicates a huge amount of problems and challenges facing the preparation and implementation of IEPs. More importantly, it is

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evident that all these challenges mostly revolve around the procedural and substantive requirements. As such, the most important problems facing IEPs range from the development processes to the implementation processes. The development processes involve equipping teachers with adequate ideas and skills on the development of IEPs. The report clearly indicates that teachers do not have adequate training to develop IEPs. The other factor that provoked the cause of the criticism and other controversial issues seems to be due to the inefficient organization of team processes. Bureaucratic procedures accompanied by huge amount of paperwork requirements that demands excessive teacher time was also seen as another issue. Lack of efficient collaboration amongst the team members seems to be yet another obstacle in the IEPs process. The other hurdles include the requirement to fulfill lots of paperwork and too many expectations from the teachers. It also seems to indicate that the whole process of developing and using the IEPs was not built on a holistic method where proper linkage between assessment of data and instructional goals could be considered. Lack of proper coordination amongst professionals was another associated problem with the requirements that IEPs demanded. During the process, it appears to indicate that there were lapses from the lack of attendance which attribute towards failure in developing measurable goals and objectives to evaluate student achievement. To make matters worse, it seems that the IEP process has been subjected to a lot of loopholes and legal errors as a result, it fails to provide authentic reports on the current levels of educational performance; lack of appropriate goals, objectives, and evaluation procedures; absence of key personnel at the IEP meeting; and placement decisions that are not based on the IEP.

The challenges reflected above, pertain to important issues such as inadequacy of teacher preparedness, the composition of professionals related to IEP development and implementation processes. Hence, the issues help us to understand what attributes to successful planning, implementation and follow up on the IEP. Such issues become

an exceedingly important basis for me to understand the background of all the issues revolving around the IEP.

Another interesting example Drasgow et al. (2001) explicitly shows is the organizational and managerial aspects of IEP. They quote;

“... Furthermore, the IEP processes seem to face challenges in terms of efficient organization and management especially in making the up to date reporting system of educational performance including inappropriate and inadequate goals, objectives, and inexplicit methods carrying out in evaluation. To make it worse, key professionals or stake holders seem to fail to ensure the attendance in the IEP meetings. Hence the placement decisions may not necessarily be based on the IEP (Huefner, 2000; Lynch & Beare, 1990; Martin, 1996; Smith, 1990b).”

Organizational and managerial aspects of IEP seem to inevitably play an important role in the development and successful implementation of IEP. These are yet important factors that contribute towards planning, implementation and follow up of the whole IEP.

The document presented on “Developing Legally Correct and Educationally Appropriate IEPs” indicate yet another dimension of challenges schools face as a result of changes in legislation (Drasgow et al., 2001). According to it, the schools face more daunting challenges due to changes in legislation. This was the result of the amendment the federal government reauthorized. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 1997 (IDEA, 1997) and the regulation was published by U.S. Department of Education on March 12, 1999 (IDEA Regulations, 1999). Therefore, the re-authorization of IDEA 1997 has brought drastic changes and challenges to federal special education law since the original passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) in 1975 (Eyer, 1998). These changes emphasize accountability

in special education and thus hold the schools to a higher level of responsibility for developing and implementing valid and beneficial IEPs than in the past.

Another interesting research shows how parents have been deprived of their participation from the IEPs process (Salas, 2004).

The research to explore the relation between Mexican American parents and the special education system was conducted with a special focus on the meetings of IEP (Salas, 2004). In order to carry out the research, ten Mexican women were interviewed throughout a school year to find out how they felt about their experiences during IEP meetings concerning their children. Thematic analysis as means of formatting the data was used. The findings revealed that although these women had strong intentions to be involved in the decision-making process concerning their children, they could not participate due to some obvious indications that told them their voices were not valued (Salas, 2004).

The research conducted by Martin et al. (2006) focused on to what extent students were involved in the planning processes of individualized educational programs. Their findings suggest that there is a genuine need to equip students with the ideas and skills on the methods of active and effective participation in the IEP meetings. The development of skills to participate in meetings will not only enhance their participation but also yield results for more effective transition of IEPs.

A research to examine the methods of how IEPs were designed and implemented had indicated that the IEP were not used as a collaborative tool by the parents, teachers and the school (Stroggilos & Xanthacou., 2006). In order to carry out the analysis of IEP documents, semi-structured interviews with teachers, parents and other professionals were conducted. As a part of the study the procedures of the Annual Review Meetings (ARMs) were also observed and the follow-up questionnaires sent to

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parents after the ARM. The study concluded that, parents, teachers and other professional bodies did not use IEPs as a tool to collaborate. Their findings indicate the need for collaborative changes for successful implementation of the IEPs. One of the most important recommendations (Stroggilos & Xanthacou, 2006) made was the need for changes that include the introduction of goals to enable the professionals to ensure the quality provision and evaluation of education of the SEN student with regard to IEPs.

The above examples of studies have been quoted to show the important issues, aspects and factors involved in planning, implementing and carrying out the follow up of IEPs. All these elements play vital roles in attributing towards impacting on the performance of SEN students.

There are also concerns and issues raised by the Special Education Needs Co-ordinating Officers (SENCOs) in three schools in UK. The use of IEP launched to provide children with special educational needs in the 1994 code of practice for SEN and also retained in the 2000 code seem to have received controversial reports and criticism from the SENCOs who feel that IEPs either do not work in mainstream secondary schools or they are recurrent nightmares.

Tennant (2007, p. 204) points out that SENCOs have strongly indicated that 'IEPs in secondary schools don't work and they are recurring nightmares.'

The SENCOs have said that IEPs do not work especially in secondary mainstream schools. The reasons include that writing and implementing IEPs is merely for the purpose of bureaucratic reasons rather than for a professional one. It is also a cumbersome task demanding extra time and energy of teachers (Tennant, 2007).

The report specifically relates to secondary schools and has sparked controversial issues. Many SENCOs report that the writing and implementing of IEPs is nothing more than a bureaucratic hurdle and demands a lot of paper work. At the same time going about the process of writing IEPs in a very different way, report that the process is both manageable and beneficial to the children concerned. Given this contradictory evidence, there is an urgent need for research into this area.

Although the issues seem to be pertinent, the importance of IEPs seemingly remains unchanged even after the introduction of revised code of practices. The report indicates that if SENCOs and others concerned with the education of children with SEN were expecting some concessions in the revised Code of Practice (DfEE, 2000) against this background, they would have been sorely disappointed.

Strogilos & Zanthacou (2006, p. 340) also seem to agree that the whole process of planning and implementation have not been researched especially in the UK, hence the lacked of a comprehensive practical suggestion towards improving the process of planning and of IEPs.

It is extremely interesting to know that there seems to have been several challenges, problems and even criticism regarding the construction of IEPs. However, it appears to me the researches conducted so far seem to have found out that the need for improvement in the process of planning and preparation is inevitable. And none of them seem to have indicated their slightest denial regarding how useful the IEPs are to cater to the education needs of children with special educational needs.

### **Chapter 3: Case Study as a Methodology of Qualitative Research**

The first and foremost skill one ought to have in deciding to take up any study is being able to select the most appropriate method suitable to carry out the study. More than that, being able to ensure the acquisition of the ideas and skills on the methodology before taking up the case study seems to be immensely vital. In order to carry out my research I selected case study as a methodology for qualitative research.

#### **3.1 Why case studies**

The study on collaboration process of IEP team appears to be very important as it attributes towards enhancing the academic performance of students with special education needs. Therefore, in order to take up my study on the collaboration process of IEPs, Case Studies as a Qualitative Research Methodology was used, considering the descriptive and explorative nature of the study. Semi-structured and open-ended interview questions were used to gather the data for this study. The open-ended nature of the interviews offered opportunities to build the interviews based on the responses of the participants and thus I get an in depth insight into the collaboration process of IEPs in their current working conditions (Bogden & Biklen, 1982, p.135).

There are several reasons why case study as a qualitative research methodology was appropriate for my study on the collaboration process of IEPs. One of the most important reasons for opting for such a methodology is that it appears to be a useful tool to carry out the research within a short span of time and with limited resources. The other obvious reason is due to its credibility and validity of the process and the outcome of the research.

Case studies seem to provide enormous amount of opportunities to study a wide range of issues that could include the evaluation of training programs, organizational performances, project designs and implementations. Case studies also seem to attribute towards development of casual relationship. This approach is particularly useful when

the researcher is trying to uncover a relationship between a phenomenon and the context in which it occurs (Gray, 2004).

Case study as a research method seems to predominantly use the observational and interview skills with certain guidance and focus on the subject of study. Although planned and detailed observation was not feasible due to communication barrier in this study, certain aspects of information were collected through some sort of observations. According to Cohen & Manion (2000, p. 185), the researcher in a case study, “observes the characteristics of an individual, a clique, a unit, a class, a school or a community with the aim to find out and analyze the aspects of life cycle of the unit or a community and generalize about the wider population to which that unit belongs.”

Another interesting characteristic of case studies is the provision of opportunities to collect data through personal involvement. This is possible through participant observation and non-participation. Cohen & Manion (2000) suggest, “two principle kinds of observation in a case study; (a) participant observation and (b) non-participation. In the former, observers engage in the activities they set out to observe. Their participation and engagement in the activities indicate that as far as the other participants are concerned they are simply one of the groups” (Cohen & Manion, 2000, p.186).

Participation and total engagement in the work is likely to enable me to be flexible in the process of data collection. Such an opportunity will greatly help me to understand the characteristics and issues of my research work which will in turn promote the authenticity of the data collected.

Further more; case study seems to record and report valid findings. The process ensures more authentic generalization of the facts compared to the researchers using experiment as their method which influence variables and determine their usual

significance or the methods the surveyors use and asks standardized questions of large, representative samples of individuals. This is evident from Cohen & Manion (2000 p. 185), who asserts;

“...unlike the experimenter who manipulates variables to determine their usual significance or the surveyors who asks standardized questions of large, representative samples of individuals, the case study researcher typically observes the characteristics of an individual unit, a child...”

Case studies allow us to understand the effects of any causes using the real context. Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2006) state that “case studies can establish cause and effect, indeed one of their strengths in that they observe effects in real context, recognizing that context is powerful tool determinant of both cause and effect.”

Being able to understand the cause and effect using the real context makes it highly relevant, especially for me since my desire is to find out the impacts of IEP on the academic performances of SEN students. Therefore, the scope of using case study research method becomes an even greater cause for me to carry out the research.

Next, the case study approach seems to be suitable even if the researcher does not have control over events. Cohen et al. (2000) refers to Hitchcock and Hughes (1995: 322) who suggests that “...the case study approach is particularly valuable when the researcher has little control over events.”

Cohen & Manion (2000), provide a wide range of methods and approaches in using case study as a method. Amazingly, their study approaches, describe several important ways to do the research. One of the most popular ones they mention is that, “case study allows a rich and vivid description of events relevant to the case; provides a chronological narrative of events; blends a description of events with analysis of them;

focuses on individual actors or groups of actors and seeks to understand their perceptions of events; highlights specific events; the researcher is integrally involved in the case and an attempt made to portray the richness of the case in writing up the report (Cohen et al., 2000).”

The case study approaches and processes provide suggestions on where and how case studies happen. Therefore, it becomes inevitably vital for a researcher to realize the “how” and “where” aspects of the case study. It also involves skills of writing detailed notes of events which is one of the most important requirements for a researcher using case study must fulfill. All the details will be of utmost use while carrying out the analysis of the data.

Another important feature that appears as result of a case study is the generalization of a theory. Cohen et al. (2000, p. 182) emphasize that “case studies can make theoretical statements but like other forms of research and human sciences, these must be supported by the evidence presented. This requires the nature of generalization in case study to be clarified.”

The most predominant advantage of the case study is that, “the results are self explanatory and hence a wide range of audience can easily understand them. The language used is also simple and non-academic (Cohen et al., 2000).” The style of presenting the results of the case study seems to be unique in several ways. Firstly it favors the promotion of good understanding and better coverage of audience. Ensuring the understanding of audience is particularly important since the ultimate outcome of any research is to make the stake holders understand the findings. If the findings are understood, the scope for dissemination of the findings and the effort to bring about changes in attitudes and ultimately reforms is further enhanced. Secondly, the results are explicitly self explanatory too. Thirdly, case studies record unique features which sometimes are not recorded. Indeed these features may help to understand the

situation better. And finally, they seem to record facts and can be conducted by any individual researcher without any further need to consider the formation of a research team (Cohen et al., 2000).

Considering the significant advantages with negligible disadvantages, I strongly believe that case study as a method for qualitative approach has better opportunity to carry out educational research. It employs the most convenient processes to facilitate the researcher. The processes include casual observations, recording facts and realities of events, embracing and building on unanticipated events and uncontrolled variables and carrying out the study independently without much requirement to pursue the research as a team.

### **3.2 Aim of the research**

The main aim of the study is to study the collaboration process of IEP. While I envisage that the process of undergoing the study would provide adequate avenues to gain insight into the collaboration process of Individualized Education Plans, the outcome would be to draw recommendations to improve the collaboration process of IEP and help me to recommend appropriate plans and strategies to initiate IEP in Bhutan to promote inclusive education.

### **3.3 Research Question**

The process of study on the collaboration process of IEP will be determined with a particular focus on research questions that include, 'How does the process of collaboration amongst the members of the IEP team in planning and preparation of IEP take place?' And 'What role does each member of the collaboration team play while planning and preparing the IEP?'

### **3.4 Methods of carrying out the study**

Most of the data required for my study was collected using semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews provide the interviewer with a fairly open framework which in turn allows for focused, conversational, two-way communication. This further helps the interviewer and the interviewees to give and receive information. The nature of the case study interview is such that it allows the interviewer to probe and get more detailed information about the case. This is done by seeking more clarification from the respondents (Gray, 2004)).

The semi structured interviews starts with more general questions on the collaboration process of IEPs. One of the most interesting characteristics of the semi-structured interviews is that it allows me to create more questions during the interview, which allows both the interviewer and the interviewed the flexibility to probe for details or discuss issues.

### **3.5 Structure of the Semi-structured Interview**

Semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to use open-ended questions based on the areas of topics to cover during the interview. It provides opportunity to focus around key topics and to discuss in more detail in some of the areas of interest. The researcher gets adequate opportunities to explore answers more widely or focus on other areas of discussion introduced by the interviewee (Case, 1990).

In order to conduct the semi-structured interviews several stages of procedures were involved. They consisted of (a) drafting questions, (b) preparation for the interview, (c) familiarizing the methods of conducting the interview, and (d) consideration of the ethical issues on completion of the interview.

#### **3.5.1 Drafting questions**

One of the important elements of semi-structured interview is the drafting of

interview questions. Hence drafting of questions were done keeping in mind that they were suitable enough for the topic of the study; the study on collaboration process of IEP. Attempts were also put to phrase questions in a way the interviewees would understand easily. Prompting questions were also kept in mind in case the interviewee did not understand.

The key areas covered in the questions for semi-structured interview attached as appendix 1 include the important aspects of the topic under study;

1. The roles of students, teachers, and parents, directors, representative from special education center in the collaboration process of IEP.
2. The mechanism of monitoring and follow up of IEP.
3. The significance of attendance of members during the IEP meeting.
4. The participation of parents in the IEP meeting.
5. Frequency of IEP meeting.
6. Opinions of teachers and representatives (from special education center) on the experiences regarding the collaboration process in planning and preparation of IEP.
7. Views of teachers, and parents, directors, representatives from special education centers on the importance of collaboration process of IEP.

### **3.5.2 Planning and Preparation**

The directors were considerate enough to arrange appropriate time and place for the interview considering a location that is comfortable or familiar to the interviewee.

Before conducting the interviews there were few points to consider. It was important to brief the interviewees. The briefing focused on the aims of the interview, the approximate duration needed to complete the interview and how their information will be used. Also the briefing allowed me to ensure that the interviewees had confidence in me.

### **3.5.3 Venue of the Interview**

The venues of the interview were one special school and two mainstream schools. While all three students from special schools were interviewed in a classroom arranged by the director of the special school, directors were interviewed in their offices. And the directors also were generous enough to consider the allocation of suitable venues in their schools to interview teachers and parents in a most convenient way.

### **3.5.4 Method of Approaching Interviewees**

The interviewees were approached with a friendly chat and introduction with the aim of helping them feel comfortable and also to establish better rapport. Then a brief recapitulation on the aim of interview, the purpose of the interview and how their information or views will be used, the duration of the interview, the maintenance of confidentiality of the information to ensure that the interviewees felt relaxed and comfortable with the situation was done.

Another aspect to consider during the interview was appropriate use of body language. It is important to be attentive and comfortable so that interviewees will respond better. Being observant of the interviewee's body language is another important skill one should try to possess as an interviewer. In general, words and body language should not conflict. It was important to bear in mind that if interviewees displayed any darting eyes, tugging ears, and other nervous body signals, the interviewer should look at them in a friendly understanding way, so they remember you're just a person they are having a conversation with. Ask how they felt about the topic and reassure them that their answers are valid and confidential. And consider if there is a more comfortable way to word the approach or redirect the questions if need be (Aitken, 2008).

Attempts were made to speak clearly during the interview. It was important to avoid the use of approving phrases like, 'Yes, That's right, Absolutely, You're not

wrong'. The use of such phrases could lead their future answers. It is also important to avoid asking 'why?' questions. Instead use of alternatives such as, 'What reasons... What made you...' is likely to encourage the interviewees feel more comfortable (Aitken, 2008).

The other key to building rapport during the interview is providing responses to assure that they I heard them, their responses understood and have interpreted the message to my mutual satisfaction.

According to Aitken, (2008) whenever there arise any need to find out more about an issue or explore an answer, the use of phrases and techniques that ask for more information such as: 'Tell me more about that, I'm listening, please go on, Can you explain that to me? You mentioned xxx, what's that about?' instead of using the question 'why?' are likely to help the interviewees lesson the tension of expressing their views and promote the provision of more information.

### 3.5.5 At the end of the interview and afterwards

At the end of the interview, I made sure that interviewees re-assured on what the information will be used for. I also contact details to the interviewee so that they could write me if they have any worries or questions later. I thanked them for their time. Finally I updated the interview notes as soon after the interview, to ensure all the details were not forgotten.

### 3.5.6 Participants

The sample of participants for the interview consisted of three directors, three teachers, three parents and three students.

Details of interview sample

|          | <b>Special School</b> | <b>Mainstream school</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|----------|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| Director | 2                     | 1                        | 3            |
| Teachers | 2                     | 1                        | 3            |

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|          |   |   |   |
|----------|---|---|---|
| Students | 3 | 0 | 3 |
|----------|---|---|---|

Table 1

*3.5.6.1 Age range*

The following tables show the details of age range and experience in teaching of the participants interviewed. According to table 1, the age range of directors is above 36 years to 41 years and above. There were two teachers between the age of 36 to 40 and one teacher above 41 years of age. All the students were between 13 to 15 years old.

Age Range

| Age Range → | 13-15 | 16-20 | 21-25 | 26-30 | 31-35 | 36-40 | 41 and above | Total |
|-------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------------|-------|
| Directors   |       |       |       |       |       | 1     | 2            | 3     |
| Teachers    |       |       |       |       |       | 2     | 1            | 3     |
| Parents     |       |       |       |       |       | 1     | 2            | 3     |
| Students    | 3     |       |       |       |       |       |              | 3     |

Table 2

*3.5.6.2 Teaching experience*

All the directors and the teachers had a very rich experience in teaching. The minimum teaching experience of the directors was 31 years and the maximum was 35. Similarly, the teachers had at least 16 years of experience in teaching.

Teaching experiences

| Number of years → | 10-15 | 16-20 | 21-25 | 26-30 | 31-35 | 36-40 | 41 and above | Total |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------------|-------|
| Directors         |       |       |       | 2     | 1     |       |              | 3     |
| Teachers          |       | 2     | 1     |       |       |       |              | 3     |

Table 3

*3.5.6.3 Criteria for selection of participants*

The study of collaboration process using case study as a methodology involved three cases. Each case comprised of a director, a teacher, a student, a parent and a representative from the Special Education Centre.

One of the most important reason why the above participants were chosen is because the collaboration process of IEPs require the involvement of the IEP team which normally consists of a parent of the child with disability, the director of the school, one regular education teacher of the school the child is attending, one special education teacher, one representative of local education agency who is qualified to provide specially designed instructions to meet the needs of the child,(at the discretion of parent or agency), one additional official knowledgeable or with special expertise regarding the child and related service personnel and the child whenever appropriate (Guerin & Marry, 2006).

The student participant for the semi-structured interview was selected based on his/her age range, the level of his/her intellectual disability and whether he/she has dyslexia. Three interviewees within the age range from 13-15 years were selected considering their maturity level. This was seen as an opportunity to encourage their participation in the collaboration process of IEPs.

After making the summary of the data collected, efforts were made to clarify if the right information were documented. This was done in two ways. In the former, reading out the summary to the interviewees to allow them to find out if the information recorded was expressed according to their wishes and also to encourage them to add or delete any information which was misinterpreted. In the latter strategy of clarification effort, the summary report was sent to the directors for their comments with the same purpose of adding/deleting information if any. The writing of summary sheets and documents sheets seem to be important methods during the collection of data as they

assist in data reduction and are viewed as part of the analysis process (Robson, 2002, p. 477).

Transcriptions of the interviews were done using the recorded conversation during the interviews.

#### *3.5.6.4 Materials used*

The study was carried out using the case study as a method where semi-structured interview was mostly used (Robson, 2002, p. 477). Therefore, the most important tools used were basically the interview questionnaire tool and a recorder.

### **3.6 Method of Analyzing the Data**

The information interviewees provided during the interview were recorded and also noted. Later all the recorded information were transcribed. Where ever possible the transcribed data were e-mailed to the interviewees to cross check with them.

In the process of analyzing the data collected, it is important to use summary and document sheets. This is done at the end of every semi structured interview session where summary sheet containing summary data were maintained to write the summary. Besides having the proper record of necessary information, it helps to contain additional details such as the information of persons who were involved in the interview, issues relevant to research questions, issues that suggests new hypothesis and implication for subsequent data collection with other cases (Robson, 2002, p. 477).

Maintaining document sheets prepared for each document clarifies contexts and significance. Both summary sheets and documents sheets seem to be important methods during the collection of data as they assist in data reduction and are viewed as part of the analysis process.

Another method used to summarize the data was through developing coding categories in which symbols were applied to sections of text to classify or categories them related to research questions (Robson, 2002, p. 477).

Color coded brackets or symbols (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990) were used to mark and highlight the key words and statements. The key statements relevant to the phenomenon under investigation were categorized into different themes and paraphrased to give a clearer picture of the participants' perspectives.

### **3.7 Procedures and ethical issues**

Utmost care during the study was ensured. Strategies were worked out to safeguard the worries, concerns or embarrassment of the children, parents, teachers and the representatives from the Special Education Centers (Fraser et al., 2004, p. 99).

Firstly, the important liaison PhD. Iva Strnadova and PhD. Jan Siska, Charles University established between schools and the students of Erasmus Mundas, Charles University paved our way to schools. Secondly, the letters issued by the International Office greatly helped us to introduce ourselves to the schools. Finally, pre-visits to schools provided great opportunities to explain the objectives, methods, outcomes and other modalities of the study. All these procedures helped me to maintain the code of ethics for carrying out the research.

Furthermore, consents from parents to interview their children were sought through the directors of the concerned schools. In order to seek their consents, detail back ground information explaining the purpose, outcome and the modalities of the study were also explained to the parents through the directors so that, any chances for the creation of misleading feelings amongst the parents were avoided.

The interviews were conducted mainly in two main stream schools and a special school covering three samples each of interviewees. They consisted of directors, teachers, students and parents. The directors were considerate enough to arrange appointments with the interviewees and the logistics which enabled me to carry out the interview.

During the interview special efforts were made to ensure that the interviewees understood the significance of their contributions to my research. Besides making them understand the objectives of my study, I ensured them that their identities would not be disclosed. Even the name of the school may not be important to mention, since I am doing a case study to learn the collaboration processes of IEPs and not carrying out a study to evaluate the schools or the students. Such efforts were made to gain their confidence and also to respect their participation and contribution.

Another important aspect of the ethical issues under consideration during the interview was to ensure that a girl participant was accompanied by some body. The interview involved only one girl child and the teacher was there with her so that she did not feel embarrassed during the interview session. Coincidentally, the translator who was also a lady greatly enhanced the facilitation to make the girl child feel confident and secure.

#### **Challenges during the study**

It is worth mentioning that the director, teachers, parents and students were highly generous in providing their co-operation during the study. However, using the translator was a unique personal experience for me. Although the translator who was recommended by my tutor did a wonderful job, the processes of translation from English to Czech and vice-versa really needed time and patience. Language was the main barrier between the interviewer and the interviewees.

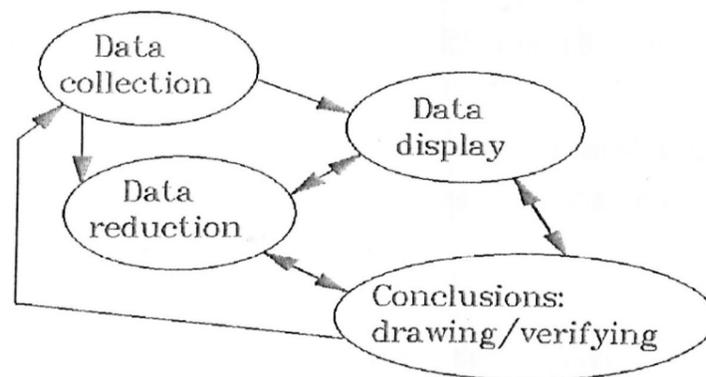
#### **Chapter 4: Analysis**

The study of the collaboration process of IEPs was carried out using case study as a methodology. Three cases were selected and were used during the study. In each case, the participant consisted of a student, a parent of the student with intellectual disabilities or dyslexia, a teacher of the student, the director of the school and a representative from the Special Education Centre. The same interview tools were used in collecting data from the participants of all three cases. However, wherever appropriate, probing questions were used to collect further information. Also the probing questions helped to clarify certain issues and doubts.

The analysis of qualitative data is usually through comprehensive use of words rather than numbers. Words are employed in describing and explaining the purpose, process and out come of any study. They help to project new dimension of perspectives. And words are used in drawing conclusions but words are also ambiguous and difficult to compare objectively. It is never clear how much of a verbal description of one instance carries over to other instances. The description of one observer no matter how precise it may be can never be same with the description of another (Linacre, 1995).

The data for the study were collected interviewing the students, teachers, parents and the directors. Data were recorded and transcribed for analysis. During the collection of data it was important to find ways of keeping data manageable. Although this aspect was considered during the planning and preparation of the interview by deciding the appropriate number of samples and places to visit, the amount of data collected was enormous. Therefore efforts were made to reduce the data by using summaries and abstracts, coding and writing memos. Miles and Huberman (1994) emphasize that this part of the analysis and not a separate activity. The other important element to consider during the analysis of data is to make analytical choices about what to select to make summary and how to organize it.

The analysis of data involved data collection, display and reduction as Miles and Huberman proposed as a methodology for productive qualitative research.



**Figure: M&H's Components of Data Analysis**

Data display is a key element in M&H's qualitative methodology. All displays are designed to assemble and organize information in an immediately accessible, compact form, so that the analyst can see what is happening and either draw justified conclusions or move on to the next-step analysis which the display suggests may be useful.

The summary analysis of data is arranged according to the views from students, teachers, parents and directors on the collaboration process of IEP.

#### **4.1 Views from Students in the Collaboration Process of IEPs**

Three students within the age range of 13-15 were interviewed. All the participants were from special needs school.

The main purpose of interviewing the students was to find out if they knew their IEPs, whether they were involved in the planning and preparation process, and how their interests were incorporated into their IEPs.

All the students said that they do not know about IEPs. They also mentioned that they never participated in the collaboration process of IEPs. However, they indicated that the daily lessons they receive must be part of the IEP.

The findings of the study on the involvement of students in the collaboration process of IEPs show that students are not aware of their IEPs. They also do not participate in any of the IEP meetings.

#### **4.2 Teachers' views on the Collaboration Process of IEPs**

Three teachers were interviewed to collect data on their roles and responsibilities, their views on the mechanism of monitoring and their perception on the importance of the collaboration process of IEPs.

##### **4.2.1 Teachers' Roles**

Interviewing the teachers on their roles and responsibilities in the collaboration process of IEPs, the respondents highlighted that they played important roles in the collaboration process of IEPs. The first and foremost thing they did as teachers was to ensure the establishment of better understanding of the child individually in terms of their educational level and needs. Based on this assessment, they could design lessons and activities for the children so that each child gets the type of lesson he/she can manage and deal with. Such plans help them to consider a variation of strategies while teaching and learning. They also conduct tests and evaluate the skills their children have achieved. For example, activities such as fill in the space/fill in the blanks or examining vocabulary are provided to test their skills of expression in one form or another. Points scored by each child are recorded. Recording point system and informing the children and parents on their scores is one important way of assessing the child's performance.

The other responsibility of the teachers as part of the collaboration process of IEP is planning appropriate strategies in dealing with children who need special education more sensitively and psychologically. They said special efforts are made to help children become less stress out while doing their tasks. In order to help them relax and be comfort while taking up the activities, various options are offered so that they get ample opportunities to choose. They also study the progress of the children and plan their activities for improvements accordingly. Adequate care provided to children are evident from the way children are allowed to read softly if they do not wish to read aloud. This alternative method, one of the teachers said is to help the child feel less embarrassed if he/she is not comfortable to read aloud. And most importantly, respondents insisted that they make efforts to treat all the children same. This is significantly crucial for teachers to consider so that children are not exposed to situations where they feel alienated or different. In order to do so, one of the strategies teachers have been designing is easy and doable task. Lengthy sentences and use of complex vocabulary are avoided and allowing them carry out easier activities is encouraged. They also make and provide remedial lessons and conduct them to help the children improve their performances.

The respondents said that they are required to report to school about the IEP during the IEP meetings. During their presentation they mostly cover issues such as the progress of the children with IEP, feedback and plan of areas for future improvement of the children. Also the respondents said that they are required to make daily reports to parents regarding the progress of the children.

When asked if any students are involved in the collaboration process of IEPs, all the respondents said that students were not involved in the collaboration process of IEPs. They further stressed that although discussions with the students about the daily plans might not happen directly it happens in the classrooms, certain aspects of IEP plans are discussed with them in the class. This happens when they talk about activities

and lessons partially in the class. They however expressed that they do have a system whereby students know the over all IEP plans.

The progress of children is monitored at the end of every lesson. So the evaluation of the progress of the child happens almost every day. The points the child achieves is recorded and also reported to the child.

All the teachers who were interviewed felt that the collaboration process of the IEPs is very important. This is because the collaboration process of IEP provides opportunities to all the members to discuss and focus the needs of the child. Here the child is the main focus of all the team members, which include the school, parents and Special Education Centre during the discussions.

#### **4.3 Views from the Parents on the Collaboration Process of IEPs**

Three parents were interviewed to get their views on the collaboration process of the IEPs. While one parent had a child studying in a main stream school, the two other parents had children who studied in mainstream schools earlier but are now currently studying in the special school where the interview took place.

The main purpose of the interview was to find out parents' views on the collaboration process of IEPs with special focus on whether parents participated in the meeting of collaboration process of the IEPs. Also, if they did whether they were willing to share their views and also to find out how aware they were on the matters related to the IEPs.

Out of the three respondents, one of them said that she was able to participate fully in the planning and preparation meetings of the IEP. She said that her views were accepted by the other members of the IEP team and considered for discussion almost every time she attended the meeting. She also claimed that she was able to recommend

some changes in certain aspects of IEP for improvement concerning her child. She also stated that she signs the IEP after making sure that the incorporation of her comments were made in the IEP of her child.

The other two respondents provided two different explanations. They provided illumination on the situation when their children were in main stream school and also described the situation at the present special needs school where their children were studying presently. The information from both the situations proved useful as both of them generated tremendous amount of information pertaining to the collaboration process of IEPs.

While both the respondents confirmed that they were invited for the IEP meetings when their children were in mainstream schools, they however expressed their dissatisfaction with the IEP team members. The information of this situation made me more curious about the collaboration process of the IEPs especially in main stream schools. On further probing, their dissatisfaction seemed to stem from their views which were not taken into regard by the other members of the IEP team. They further added, that whenever they proposed any changes or suggestions, the members expressed their appreciation about the concerns they raised but hardly incorporated any changes to the IEPs on the basis of their views. Further more, they firmly stressed their grievances that the teachers dealing with their children even said that they could not do much with their children since they had 40 students in the same class to look after. The teachers also explained to them that the parents had to take more responsibilities to educate their children with intellectual disabilities. "All these indications and attitudes of the teachers and other IEP team members have forced us to bring our children to the special school here," they said.

Now their children are in special needs school. They strongly expressed that they were happy to remove their children from the mainstream school and admit them into the special needs school.

In responses to the question on whether they attended the meeting they agreed that they attended the collaboration meetings as per the schedules which were normally three times a year.

In order to get more insight into the issue, I asked them questions on the differences they noticed between the main stream school and the special needs school. They made a strong claim that their children are happy in the special needs school. They get better morale support and their confidence has improved since most of the children around them have similar intellectual disabilities. They also indicated that they did not sign any IEPs with the present school. I found out later on from the director that children with similar intellectual abilities when placed together for education have a general education plan catering to their needs. Therefore, these children had a general education plan with some variations in methods of teaching and so did not officially mandate the parents' signature. The format used besides containing other important details of the child had the provision to include the plan of the child as: "What I can do very well, what I would like to learn and know, what I can improve, and what I can do to improve my skills." Although the format also had a space for the child, the teacher and the parents to sign, it appears that the signing is mostly done by the child and the teachers. Therefore, two parents who were interviewed did not sign EIPS and therefore held strong notions that they do not have to sign IEP as a contract.

The IEPs in the context of special education schools are designed and developed for children with more severe intellectual disabilities. The maximum class size as prescribed by the law explained by the director of the special school is 14 students and the minimum is 6. Such guidelines were put in place to ensure very good teacher

student ratio. It would also provide adequate opportunity to design and develop the IEPs for more severe intellectual disabled children and use general education plans for the category of children with less and similar intellectual disabilities. However, whether it is a general education plan or an IEP, teachers and parents seem to use these tools as a basis to discuss the progress of their child.

When asked whether they got ample opportunity to share their views during the meeting, one of the respondents said that she not only got the opportunities to share her views but that they also valued what she said. She said, "My views were mainly on the goals of the IEP and not on the methods as I believe that the teachers know the best methods which will suit my child." When the teacher provided her a briefing about the child's IEP, she requested the teacher to consider additional activities if she felt the child needed then. She said that the teacher would consider her comments. She also expressed that she was highly impressed with the support and co-operation of the teachers of the school and also the members of the IEP team.

The other two respondents' referring to their experience in the mainstream school had a contrasting story to tell. They said, other than getting a briefing from the teachers on the IEPs and their duties as parents to help the child in their education, they were not provided with enough opportunity to make comments. Even when comments were made, they did not get any positive and encouraging responses from the teachers and other members in their previous main stream schools. But in the special needs school where their children are currently studying their voices were heard and respected. They said that they were morally encouraged.

The common concerns all the respondents expressed was that during the collaboration meetings they were concerned about how well the teachers understood their children. They raised their concerns about whether the teachers understood their child as well as the parent understood him/her?

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When asked whether they had a clear understanding of the purpose of IEP, the participants said that they had a clear understanding of the over all goal of IEP. They perceive IEPs as a sort of a tailor made program for every child to follow in the curriculum. The teacher designs different activities depending upon the intellectual level of student. They also mentioned that different children have different educational needs, hence different plans and educational programs should be designed to cater to their needs.

The respondents expressed that they worked closely with their teachers so they know what has been taught in the class. They also indicated that teachers sent reports regularly and almost sometime almost daily. This enables them to comprehend what has been taught in the class and how their child has performed. Based on the reports from the teacher they carry out the follow up activities at home. They unanimously agreed that they do some sort of revisions of the lessons at home. Such exercises allow the parents to monitor and know the progress their child is making

All the responses who participated in the interview explained that none of the parents discussed the EIP with their children. However, they claim that doing revisions or during follow up activities with them is a kind of discussion on the education plans and progress of their child. They feel that their children also have ample opportunities to discuss the subject and the topic with the teacher which is another way of discussing about their IEPs.

In terms of the evaluation of the children, the parents said that they are not too eager to carry out the evaluation of the child instead they leave the evaluation aspects with the teacher as the teacher knows the best about the performance of their child. They believe that they carry out evaluation in the process of doing revision with their child at home. They also mentioned that the written report of the evaluation on the

progress of the child sent by the teacher serves as evaluation for them. The report has details of the achievements made by the child through out the year. One of the respondents explained that the way the school has sent her the report is very impressive and encouraging. She liked the format and the way the teacher has presented the report.

On the issue of how the respondents felt about the collaboration process, they insisted that the collaboration process of IEP is important and is extremely useful for them. The collaboration process of IEPs involves conducting meetings between various stake holders for at least three times a year. These meetings provide opportunities to meet and share their views.

The respondents felt that the meetings with professionals such as representatives from the Special Education Centers, teachers who have expertise on special education needs, the local authorities who have important roles, and the teacher who deals with the child in the school provide adequate opportunities to have interactions and share views. Through the interaction with such professionals, they see some hope for their children. They added that they feel very happy and motivated.

The collaboration meeting also promotes communications, co-operations, and understanding amongst the team members.

#### **4.4 The Roles of the Director on the Collaboration Process of IEPs**

Three directors were interviewed to study their roles and responsibilities on the collaboration process of IEPs. One director happened to be from a main steam school and the other two belonged to Special Schools.

The main aim of the interview was to collect data on their roles and responsibilities as education planners, implementers, monitors and supervisors in relation to the collaboration process of IEPs in their schools.

The findings from the interview with the directors indicated that they have significant roles to play in the collaboration process of IEPs. According to their responses, the whole business of IEPs starts the day the school admits a child into the school after the decisions on assessment and diagnosis are conveyed to them by the Special Education Centers.

One of the most important roles the directors play in the collaboration process of IEPs is the finalizing and signing of contracts between the school and the IEP Team members on the IEPs of the child. The IEP team members consist of a parent of the child with disability, one regular education teacher, one special education teacher, one representative of a local education agency who is qualified to provide specially designed instructions to meet the needs of the child, and special expertise regarding the child and related service personnel and the child whenever appropriate.

The other crucial role the directors' play is in ensuring that every member of the team understands their roles and responsibilities in the collaboration process of IEP. Since the signing of the IEP contract requires various stake holders to understand the present status of the child with special education needs and design and develop IEP accordingly. They are also required to be accountable to the IEP for the child. The IEPs usually have details on such specific goals and objectives, and other plans and schedules. However, one of the directors indicated that the signing of the IEP contract was just for the sake of formality because he believes that the advisor of the school is the main focal person who takes the responsibility of the whole process of drawing up the contract.

#### **4.4.1 Mechanism of Monitoring and Supervision**

When asked about their involvement in monitoring and supervision of the IEP, all of them indicated that in terms of their roles as supervisors and monitors, they did

not directly involve themselves in monitoring the progress of the children in the class. Instead, they left the monitoring of the child to their teacher since they have full trust in the, and strongly believed that they would follow up seriously with their IEPs. The directors were convinced that during the teacher's involvements in teaching, they get a fair amount of feedback concerning the progress of the child with IEP. As they teach and also evaluate the lessons, they have full access to assess the performance of the student with special education needs and even record and report their performance to the child and also to the parents.

The other source of information to ensure if proper monitoring is happening in the class or not is through the feedback mechanism system the schools have with the school advisors. The schools under study have designated school advisors. Hence, the advisors have very crucial and lead roles to play in supervision and monitoring of the academic activities in the schools.

Besides coordinating the conduction of the meeting amongst the members of the IEP team, the roles and responsibilities of the school advisors include working closely with the teachers of their school to provide professional support during the planning and preparation of the IEP. They also work closely with the representatives from the special education centers. The other major tasks of the advisors is to provide appraisal of progress report of the child to the director and at the same time ensuring the provision of feedback to teachers about the students with special education needs.

On the other hand the professionals who represent the Special Education Centers make visits to the schools annually. The advisor of the school and the professional from the Special Education Centre carry out detailed discussions on the IEP with the team members. The reports of such discussions are presented to the director which is another way of monitoring the performance of the children with SEN.

The directors interviewed, strongly felt that the visit of the professional from the Special Education Centre (SEC) to the schools is very important. They believe that any interaction between the schools and the professionals from the Special Education Centers are of immense importance to create avenues for the professional growth of their teachers. However, they feel that the frequency of visits by professionals from special education centers to schools is too low. One of the directors mentioned that the visit made by the professional from the special education centre once a year to his school was too inadequate. He explained that such a visit does not make much sense especially if assessment of the progress relating to the child using the IEP is to be done in such a short visit. In his opinion, the visit should be once a week for an hour or two for better coordination and impact.

#### **4.4.2 The IEP Collaboration Meeting**

According to the views expressed by the directors, the collaboration meeting on IEP generally happens on two levels: the school level and with the IEP team members. They expressed that both the levels of meetings are vital and play very important roles. The meetings provide schools especially the teachers a forum to discuss and finalize the IEP. Besides discussing the plans, programs and modalities of implementation, the roles and responsibilities of various members such as the teacher, advisor, director and the parents are also discussed and clarifications done during the collaboration meeting.

The collaboration meeting with teachers happen three times a year. In the beginning of the year, the teacher, the advisor and the director discuss yearly plan. During this meeting, the advisor of the school coordinates and provides professional support to the teachers with regards to the planning and preparation of IEP.

During the mid-year meeting, the advisor informs the school about likely new students if any new students have been identified. Then they prepare for diagnosis.

At the end of the year meeting, class teachers present the individual reports of their SEN students. Through this meeting, all the teachers know the progress of every child.

One of the schools that I used for my research through the case study had come up with a new initiative where one of the responsibilities of the school advisor is to write the report of the meeting and submit it to the director. This could be another way of monitoring and carry out follow up on the IEP.

When asked if any ad-hoc meetings were conducted to cater to the needs of the children with special education needs, all the respondents indicated that the three meetings done in the year was sufficient. Therefore, no ad-hoc meetings were conducted.

According to the respondents, the second level of meeting happens with the IEP team members consisting of the parents, a special education teacher, a teacher, and the director of the school. The meetings are coordinated by the school advisors and the frequency of the meeting is done three times a year. Additional meetings if deemed important were conducted with the other members of the IEP.

#### **4.4.3 Importance of the Collaboration Meeting**

The directors of the schools interviewed felt that the collaboration process meeting of the IEP is very important. It helps them to improve the planning and preparation process of the IEPs. It also serves as useful avenues to share the plans and programs concerning the child since all involved must have the actual information of the child.

They expressed that collaboration meetings with parents helped them establish better understanding with the parents and the school. They realized that the relationship

between the teachers working in the schools and involved in educating children with SEN and the parents whose children have such difficulties could discuss many issues related to the child. The establishment of better understanding enables them to discuss expectations the school has from the parents and the parents' expectations from the school. They expressed that when there is a good mutual trust and respect between the parents and the teachers, the collaboration process of the IEPs becomes much easier and fruitful. For example, they understand the usefulness of the IEPs for their child and realize their responsibility in their child's progress.

The respondents strongly stressed that collaboration meetings play noteworthy roles even amongst the teachers of different subjects in the school. They further clarified that different subjects employ different strategies in the teaching and learning processes. Therefore, the meeting helps them to consider the incorporation of appropriate strategies for these children.

The other important issue the interviewees made was that collaboration meeting enhanced collaboration amongst the class teachers. According to their justifications, each class teacher understood the status of their children in academic performance. When the children were promoted to the next grade in the following academic session, the new class teacher will be in a position to design IEPs according to the needs of the child. Therefore, the collaboration amongst the teachers of the school enhanced the performance of the student since every teacher is able to prepare and plan according to the needs of the child when the child is placed in his/her class.

With regard to whether it was important to have the presence of all the members during the coordination meeting, all interviewees felt that it was very important to have the presence of every member during the collaboration meeting. According to their experience, the presence of every member during the collaboration meeting promotes better understanding on any matters related to the IEPs of students requiring special

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education needs. This further enhances their scopes to monitor the progress of the child and enables them to learn what target the child is expected to achieve.

## **Chapter 5: Evaluation**

The findings reported here are exclusively based on three cases selected for the study on the collaboration process of the IEPs. It is worth mentioning that the findings do not necessarily represent the collaboration process of the IEPs in the entire schools in Czech Republic. Although, some of the findings may reflect certain issues and characteristics that are prevalent in other schools thereby providing enabling situation to interpret in a similar manner (Cohen et al., 2006), but they do not necessarily provide opportunities for generalization as a whole. This is one of the constraints of a case study as a method which does not provide opportunities to generalize from a specific case (Gray, 2004). However, the findings may be useful for other researchers who see their applications.

### **5.1 Views from Students in the Collaboration Process of IEPs**

The findings of the study on the involvement of students in the collaboration process of the IEPs show that students were not aware of their IEPs. They also did not participate in any of the IEP meetings.

It appears that students were not encouraged to participate in the collaboration meeting as teachers thought they were too young to be involved. Involving them would only waste time. The findings by Martin E. James et al. (2006) regarding the involvements of students in the planning processes of the individualized educational program suggest that children lacked ideas and skills on the methods of active and effective participation in the IEP meeting.

It appears students were not encouraged to participate in the collaboration meeting as teachers think they are too young to be involved. Some of the teachers even claim that involving them would contribute to waste of time. The findings by Martin et al. (2006) regarding the involvement of students in the planning processes of individualized educational program suggest that children lacked ideas and skills on the

methods of active and effective participation in the IEP meeting. Hence the nonparticipation of students also seemed to be due to lack of skills.

Dycke, Martin & Lovett (2006) explain that students with special educational needs hear their parents and teachers talk about IET meetings. By listening to their teachers and parents they become aware of what plans and services are being offered them. They also become familiar as to who would be involved in providing such services. As IEPs concern them, they expect to participate in the meeting. When they are not invited for the first time they feel that their teachers and parents have forgotten. But when they are not invited for years, they seem to conclude that their participation in the meeting is not so important. Hence they may decide that IEP meetings are for adults to talk negatively about the problems of students with special educational needs and divide up the necessary jobs amongst themselves.

By the time when they become teenagers they feel that IEPs are not important for them as they were not involved in the planning phase from the initial stage of their education. When they reach middle school and finally receive invitation they may not be interested at all as they cannot do much to help themselves (Dycke, et al., 2006).

Hence it appears that the members of IEP team should consider the involvement of students in the collaboration process of IEP from the beginning.

Although it is clear that the participation of students in IEP meetings is crucial, however the issue of how the members of the IEP team could equip the students with skills to enhance their participation is another area of concern.

Torgerson, Miner & Shen (2004) argue that active participation of students in IEP meeting encourage empowerment and ownership of the students towards IEP. One of the important tools they suggest to promote such skills in students is by employing

self-directed individualized education programs which allow them to assume leadership and become actively involved in the decisions made at their IEP meetings. The crucial factor that might attribute to the success of student participation is also the attitude of teachers and support readily available to them.

The provision of training and practice at the right time is likely to enhance the ideas and skills of students to participate in the collaboration process of IEP meeting (Torgerson, et al., 2004). Seemingly, it appears that the participation of students in the collaboration process of IEPs is important and feasible.

Therefore a thorough study on how to promote the student participation needs to be conducted. The study will also enable to find out how participation of students in the IEP collaboration process enhances their education.

#### **5.2 Roles of Teachers on the IEP Collaboration Meetings**

The study indicated that teachers played an immensely important role in the collaboration process of the IEPs. Their roles varied from being able to establish better understanding of the children individually regarding their educational needs to designing and developing appropriate strategies in the IEP with goals, objectives and means to achieve and meet their needs. They played very important role in communicating the progress of the child to the parents and other IEP team members.

Their planning strategies and their inclusion of appropriate methods on how to deal with children more sensitively and psychologically especially the children with special education needs was vital.

Their role in the assessment of performance was also very important. The progress of children is monitored at the end of every lesson. So the evaluation of the

progress of the child happens almost every day. The points the child achieves is recorded and also reported to the child.

The study confirmed that the planning and preparation of the IEP carried out by the teachers is guided by two principles of procedural and substantive processes of the IEP (Drasgow et al., 2001). The involvement of parents in discussing and deciding on the IEP and mode of comprehensive individualized education assessments indicate the fulfillment of procedural norms of the IEP. The other IEP requirement norm of substantive processes seems to be evident as IEPs teachers have prepared specific goals, objectives, and appropriate methods for implementing and carrying out the assessments.

One of the constraints leading to criticism was the failure to develop measurable goals and objectives to evaluate student achievement (Yell, 1998). This seems to contradict with the findings from the study with three cases. Teachers in all the cases had the IEPs with specific goals, objectives, and appropriate methods of implementing and carrying out assessments. They claimed that they did the assessments at the end of every lesson/activity and the scores were recorded and reported to the students as well as the parents.

The findings also suggested that teachers and parents do not have their role in deciding the placement needs of the students. The placements of students of special education needs are solely done by the Special Education Centers without consultation of any professionals from the schools.

Some of the issues with the IEP was lack of appropriate goals, objectives, and evaluation procedures; absence of key personnel at the IEP meeting; and the placement decisions that are not based on the IEP (Huefner, 2000; Lynch & Beare, 1990; Martin, 1996; Smith, 1990b). While the placement decision is one of the important issues facing the schools and the parents in Czech Republic presently, the findings of the study

show that the IEPs did not lack goals, objectives and evaluation procedures. All the members of the IEP team expressed that the attendance of each member is very important. This indicates that each member is genuinely concerned and makes concerted efforts in ensuring their attendance and contribution to the successful planning and implementation of the IEP.

### **5.3 Parents' views on the Collaboration Process of IEPs**

The study confirmed that parents were able to participate in planning and preparation meetings of the IEP. However, the way they took part in the meeting varied from one parent to another. While one parent had the opportunity to participate actively, the other two parents just took part in the meeting to receive the briefing. There was hardly any interaction between these parents and the teachers in the main stream schools where their children studied earlier.

It is important that parents take part in the collaboration process of IEPs so that they develop ownership of it. On the other hand, children are likely to develop positive behaviors if they have their parents involved as partners with the schools (Epstein, 1992). The participation of parents also improves the performance of students and thus helps the teachers to achieve their objectives in the class (Stevenson and Baker, 1987).

However, it was painful and disappointing to find out that two parents did not get adequate opportunity to express their views and more sadly their views were ignored in the schools where their children were mainstreamed earlier. The teachers in the mainstream school even explained that they could not do much with their children having special education as there were 40 other students in the same class to look after. They were also told that the parents have to take more responsibilities to educate such children. This made them feel neglected and they were disappointed to the extent that they decided to withdraw their children from the main stream school and admit them in special schools.

According to Siska (2005), children with disabilities in the schools in Czech Republic are integrated into mainstream schools using the strategies of “group integration” where special classes for students with a particular disability are established within a mainstream school; and through “individual integration” in which children with disabilities are placed with other children without disabilities. The children of the parents who were interviewed seemed to have got their children admitted in the school following the latter strategy of mainstreaming.

If this was the case, schools were not adequately prepared and supported with adequate resources to enable teachers to provide support to the children with special needs because the school funding depended on the per capita normative. The normative for children integrated through group integration is half of that of special school and the normative for children individually integrated is same as for children without disabilities (Siska, 2005). Now with their children in special schools, parents seem to be happy as they get better support due to the fact that the funds allocated in such schools are considerably higher than the other schools.

It appears that there is a lack of proper collaboration amongst the service providers such as the main steam schools, local education authorities, special education centers and special schools while deciding the placement of the children. This has resulted in the placement under the strategy of children ‘individual integration’ category in which their normative is same as other children without special education needs. Instead, strategies should have been worked out to enable group integration which provided better support to the children.

One of the controversial issues and problems facing the IEP requirements is minimal coordination with general education (Lipsky & Gartner, 1996), however, if the professionals from Special Education Centers and schools that main streamed the

children had better collaboration, such issues could have been resolved. Better collaboration lead to better distribution of services as per needs (Foreman, 2007).

While the class size was one of the factors, qualification and competence of the teachers must have also attributed to limit the provision of necessary support. Guerin & Marry (2006) insist that one of the requirements of teachers dealing with the children of special education needs is their qualification. If the teachers had required qualification, the attitude towards such category of children would have been better which would have contributed towards better solutions. Again the improvement of collaboration amongst service providers could easily addressed such issues by employing a qualified teacher.

The findings with two parents reveal a similar situation with the findings of Salas (2004) where 10 women studied had strong intentions to be involved in the decision-making process concerning their children but they could not participate due to some obvious indications that told them their voices were not valued (Salas, 2004). While voices of 10 women were not heard due to the attitude of other members, participation of two parents in this case seems to be purely circumstantial due to the fact that the schools are not ready with required facilities. Therefore, it may not be justifiable to compare the finding and generalize that their views were not valued.

Another interesting finding was that all the parents felt that IEPs were very useful for their children. Therefore, the collaboration process was confirmed to be useful too. It is interesting to note that this finding confirms with the literature review which stresses that IEP documents and the collaboration processes are very crucial in ensuring the education of the children of special education needs (Drasgow et al., 2001).

The parents expressed their genuine concern regarding how the teachers understood their children. The findings indicated that most parents were of the opinion

that the teachers understood their children lesser than them. They insisted that they repeatedly questioned themselves 'Do the teachers understand our children as we do?' On the other hand, when teachers were interviewed on their roles, they said that their first and foremost duty is to understand the children individually so that planning and preparation of lessons are based on their needs. However, Giangreco et al. (1993) explain that parents have better understanding of their child in relation to interest, motivation, habits, fears, routines, pressures, needs and health. One of the reasons why parents have better understanding of their children than the teachers is due to the amount of time the children spend with parents as compared to the time they spend with their teachers. While the teachers understand the children individually, the question still lingers 'do they understand children in the same way as parents do?'

The parents' concern whether the teachers understood their children is relevant as most of the needs of the children could be addressed if their understanding was parallel to the parents. This will help them provide similar support. When children received similar support and reinforcement from parents as well as teachers, they are highly motivated (Patrikakou et al., 2005). Thus, their concerns indicate that the teachers should work more closely with the parents to promote better understanding of the needs of the children.

The study indicated that the parents have clear understanding of the purpose of the IEP, especially the over all goal of the IEP. They perceive the IEPs as some sort of a tailor made education package based on the curriculum for every child. The teacher designs different activities depending on the intellectual level of the students. They also mentioned that different children have different educational needs, hence different plans and educational programs should be designed to cater to their needs.

This indicates that the parents worked closely with the teachers in order to understand what has been taught in the class. On the other hand, they received reports

regularly and almost every day from the teacher. This enabled them to know what has been taught in the class and how the child has performed. Based on the reports, they did follow up activities at home. Revisions of the lessons at home were found to be one of the most popular follow up done by the parents.

None of the parents have carried out discussion about the IEPs with their children. All the respondents believe doing revisions or doing follow up activities with them should suffice.

In terms of parents' involvement in the evaluation process of children's performance, parents were not too eager to carry out the evaluation of their child but left the evaluation aspects of their child solely to the teacher. Instead, they were happy to do the revision of child's work and were of the view that it is part of the evaluation process. They were found to be content with the written report on the evaluation and progress sent by the teacher. According to Darch et al. (2004) some parents and teachers have the feeling that the teacher has the best knowledge about the child's performance which prevents parents' opinions and ideas. Therefore parents leave the evaluation of their children with the teachers while they do their part through revision of activities at home. The obvious reason for such a decision might be due to the fact that evaluation is done by the teachers who teach the child.

#### **5.4 Roles of Directors on IEP Collaboration Meeting**

The findings from the study indicated that the directors have very important roles to ensure the participation of the IEP Team members in the collaboration process of IEPs. Directors are accountable to the local education authorities, parents, teachers and students in relation to any matters concerning their children. Hence, the roles of the directors is in ensuring that the participation of all members promote better discussion and decision in relation to the content of the contract of the IEP document. The process of drawing up the contract and attesting it by the schools, parents and special education

centers are crucial. The contract document makes the team members more accountable on the roles they play for the children with special education needs. This also helps them to focus their efforts on the related future plans and programs. Therefore, the contract agreement serves as a guideline for the school, the parents and the special education centre.

The involvement of all members during the collaboration process especially the parents who have to sign the contract are very crucial. This provides them with the opportunity for an active role in decision-making concerning the education of their child with disabilities (Smith, 2001). And the directors have ensured their participation and decision making.

However, the expression of one of the directors indicating that the signing of the contracts was a formality only, it appears to me that such a remark seems to be sending ambiguous signals to others making him less professional. Such a situation might provide opportunities to the IEP team members to interpret that his role as a director is less significant than the school advisor although the school advisor did every detail work in preparing and planning the contract with the teachers. It will also provide avenues for others to understand that he is less enthusiastic and barely concerned by leaving the total responsibility of developing contract process with the school advisor. This may limit the scope for inclusion of some of the important issues that he might want to incorporate in the contract document. Moreover, the parents should not get any chance to deduce that the director is not keen on the contract of the IEPs. Such a situation contributes towards making parents less confident as they sometimes lack understanding regarding the roles played by all participants in the collaboration process (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Another important finding of the study was that schools under study have a very good mechanism of carrying out the monitoring and supervision of the implementation

process of the IEPs. Firstly, the directors themselves were directly involved in teaching children with special education needs through which they were able to assess the performances of the children. Secondly, their school advisors provided them with periodical feedback on the status of the progress. Besides these, mechanism to access the information on assessment during the IEP meetings especially the mid term and the end of the year meetings gave enough opportunity for the directors to assess the performance of the children with special education needs. During these meetings all teachers presented the report on the status of the children in their class. Thirdly, the directors received the reports of discussion between the teacher and the representative of special education centre. Finally, reports of the meetings submitted by the school coordinators during any meeting with the teachers or representative from the special education centre also covered certain issues related to the children with special education needs.

The study found out that the number of visits by professionals from the Special Education Centre was very less. The visit was mostly restricted to once a year. The schools strongly believe that increase in the frequency visits of the professionals from the Special Education Centers will provide important avenues for the professional growth of their teachers.

There seems to be a lack of frequent and effective collaboration between the directors and the professionals from Special Education Centers. This has greatly attributed towards failure follow the IEP norms of planning, preparation, monitoring and evaluation procedures as in the literature review (Tucker & Goldstein, 1992). One evident reason is due to the lack of proper collaboration is the decision on the diagnosis and placement of students in which the directors or other teachers are not part of the decision making process. Smith (1990a) stresses that poorly developed team processes attribute towards inefficient collaboration process.

However, the official of special education centers could not be interviewed to find out their opinions.

#### **5.5 The Frequency of IEP Collaboration Meeting**

The study found that the collaboration meeting was conducted three times in a year. The first meeting in the beginning of year provided avenue for the teachers, the school advisors and the directors to discuss the whole year plan. It also served as a very important forum for the school advisors to coordinate and provide professional support to the teachers in relation to the planning and preparation of the IEP. The mid-year meeting focused on the reviews of the IEPs plans and discussed the details of new students if identified for diagnosis for further preparation of diagnosis. During the end-year meeting the presentation of reports of their SEN students by the class teachers enabled all the teachers present to know the progress of every child.

#### **5.6 Importance of the Collaboration Meeting**

The study found that the IEP team members including the directors, teachers and the parents consider the collaboration meeting of the IEP as a very important means of communication. This confirms with points made by Heward (1996) as IEP meetings serve as a communication vehicle between parents and school personnel and enables them as equal participants, to jointly decide on what the child's needs are, what services needs to be provided to meet those needs, and what the anticipated outcome will be.

The directors consider the collaboration meeting as opportunities to discuss and decide the content of the IEP contracts before signing them. The discussions help the members confirm the IEP and also the roles and responsibilities each stake holder is expected to shoulder. Therefore, the contracts make the team members more accountable on their roles. Such outcomes as a result of the collaboration meeting for the director are very important to ensure the education of children with special education needs.

The teachers find the collaboration meeting important to discuss and finalize the IEP. The meeting provides them with opportunities to discuss the plans, programs and modalities of implementation. They also are clear on the roles and responsibilities of various members such as the teacher, the advisor, the director and the parents during the meeting regarding the children with special education needs in their classes. They strongly believe that the collaboration process of IEP provides opportunities to all the members to discuss and focus on the needs of the child. The child is the center of discussion for all the team members, the school, the parents and the Special Education Centre during the meetings.

The meetings helped the teachers to improve the planning and preparation process of the IEPs. The meetings also served them as useful avenues to share the plans and programs with other teachers concerning the child. They also provided a good forum for professional development.

The schools also felt that the meeting with parents helped them to establish better relationships between parents and the school. The relationship between them is so important that the teachers working in the schools who are involved in educating children with SEN and the parents whose children have such difficulties could discuss many issues related to the child. As a result of the establishment of better understanding schools were able to clarify certain expectations of the school to the parents and vice versa thereby promoting mutual trust and respect between the parents and the teachers. Such benefits furthered the collaboration process of the IEPs and made them easier and fruitful.

According to teachers, the meeting not only helped the school and parents, but also helped the subject teachers and class teachers to establish better understanding of their children. As a result of the meetings, the subject teachers were able to adapt their

teaching strategies to cater to the needs of the children with special education needs. Similarly, class teachers were able to understand the status of each child in academic performance in advance and were ready to design and develop the IEP according to the needs of the new child during the following year when the child joins his/her class.

Parents considered the collaboration process of IEP as a very important and extremely useful forum for them as well as for all stake holders of the children with special education needs. According to their opinion, the forum provided opportunities to meet and share their views. The two-way communication between parents and teachers with the focus on the performance of children (Sanders, 2001) helps to promote the productive interaction. They also get opportunity to interact with professionals such as teachers who have expertise on special education needs, representatives from Special Education Centers, the local authorities, and the teacher who deals with the child in the school. Through the interaction with such professionals, they feel very happy and motivated. And finally, promotion of communications, co-operations, and understanding amongst the team members are evident. From the findings, parents seem to have good sense of belongingness.

The other factor that attributed to the successful collaboration was the attendance of the members. The attendance of every member in the collaboration meeting was found to be very important. It is evident from the study that the presence of every member during the collaboration meeting promoted the establishment of better understanding amongst the members on any matters related to the IEPs of students of special education needs. The meetings allowed the members to be well informed about the plans and the progress of the IEPs concerning the child.

Although Smith (1990a) stresses that poorly developed team processes, and minimal coordination with general education (Lipsky & Gartner, 1996), as some of the issues of the IEP, the study on the collaboration process does not indicate these

constraints. Indeed, the opinions expressed by the directors, teachers and parents indicated that there is a solid foundation on the development of team process and enhanced collaboration amongst the team members.

### **5.7 Limitations**

The study encountered several limitations which could not be avoided.

1. The research had to be done within a short period time.
2. The interview with the representatives from Special Education Centre could not be conducted as they were too busy with the end of first term break.
3. Due to language barriers it was not possible to access full documents on the education laws of Czech Republic.
4. There were possibilities of misinterpreting certain findings in the process of the interpretation.

### **5.8 Recommendations**

The findings of the study have culminated towards the following recommendations.

1. Based on the concern raised by the parents, there is a need for schools to come up with plans and strategies to encourage teachers to make concerted effort to work more closely with the parents so that their level of understanding of children in relation to their interest, motivation, habits, fears, routines, pressures, needs and health can be enhanced.
2. There is a need to improve the collaboration process amongst the service providers such as main steam schools, local education authorities, special education centers and special schools to work out strategies of group integration and individual integration so that children with special education needs receive adequate support for their education.

3. The inclusion of professionals in deciding the placement of students may be considered. Presently, the decisions of placements are made by special education centers.
4. Schools need to be provided with adequate support to main stream children with special education.
5. The participation of students in the collaboration process of the IEP needs to be studied.

#### **5.9 Recommendations for Schools in Bhutan**

Bhutan is party to most of the international declarations including the Jomtien, Thailand declaration of Education For All in 1990 which identified the need to universalize education and promote the equity that girls, women and under-served groups gain access to education and the World Conference on Special Needs Education at Salamanca in 1994 (UNESCO, 1994). The conference has provisioned the Salamanca Statements on Principles, Policies and Practice in Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994) that provides a framework and guidance on developing inclusive education.

Therefore, the education system in Bhutan has always been guided by this philosophy of inclusion and rights-based approach. In order to further the improvement on its approach especially as the modern education system is at the developing stage, the following recommendations may be useful.

1. The Ministry of Education may consider the incorporation of legislation into the Education Act (when developed) to ensure the promotion of inclusion of all children with special education needs into main stream schools.
2. Plans and programs with appropriate strategies may be put in place to support schools to ensure inclusion and education.
3. Plans and policies to employ the use of the Individual Education Plans in the schools may be considered.

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4. The roles and responsibilities of the members of IEP Team may be specified and legalized.
5. Development of education materials on the IEP based on Bhutanese context may be considered.
6. Training of teachers to equip them with the ideas and skills to use the IEPs and also initiate collaboration processes of the IEPs in their schools may be conducted.
7. Mechanism to promote better collaboration amongst the relevant divisions within the Ministry of Education and also with the Colleges of Education may be enhanced to collaboratively work towards ensuring the provision of education to children of special educational needs.
8. Plans and programs to establish better collaboration within the local community to support the inclusion and education may be worked out.
9. Training of monitors including the Principals, District Education Officers, Curriculum Officers, and Education Monitor Officers may be considered.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

The concepts of the IEP have evolved as a strategy to provide education to children with special educational needs. The implementations of such strategies have been supported by the legislation. The role of Individualized Education Plan has been vital to ensure the provision of education to children with special education needs (Drasgow et al., 2001).

The IEP as an educational tool outlines comprehensive plans and programs with clear direction and mechanism of monitoring. It provides necessary tips on how to include the records of the child's educational needs, aims and objectives of the program, modalities of evaluation and measurement procedures, specifying the strategies and the means to follow up with the plans developed during the process of IEP planning meeting (Drasgow et al., 2001).

The ultimate outcome of IEP is the provision of clear cut guidelines and roadmap to teachers and parents on the methods of educating and monitoring the academic performance, development of social skills, and or adaptive domains. The process of the IEP provides avenues for collaboration between teachers, administrators, parents and even the child when appropriate, in determining goals and objectives. Further, it involves the provision to reflect, review and revise educational program so that the needs of the child are met accordingly (Lee-Tarver, 2006).

The IEP requirement norm demands two important processes (Drasgow et al. 2001), in which collaboration with parents is one of the most important requirements to ensure the participation of parents on the education program to conduct comprehensive individualized education assessments, and deciding the placement needs of the students. Striving towards making education more meaningful to the children of special needs is another important norm. The important strategy to make education

more meaningful is carrying out comprehensive planning of the IEPs with goals, objectives, methods of implementation and evaluation.

For the successful implementation of IEP, the Collaboration Process of IEP plays a very important role. It helps to come up with collaborative goal-setting. The most important feature of collaborative-goal setting is that the goal relates to one child as a whole rather than each professional working independently of the others and focusing on one part or function of the child (Foreman, 2007).

The IEP requirement norm demands that the IEP team members discuss and decide the IEP for the child with special education needs with a particular focus mainly on the present status of the child's performance, activities, goals, objectives, additional supports and services for the child and also the criteria for determining the child's progress (Lee-Tarver, 2006).

When schools follow the IEP requirement norms while developing and implementing the IEPs, the procedures safeguard and protect the interests of students with disabilities (Drasgow et al., 2001). Such procedures also provide avenues for the school and parents to resolve any disagreement if they should encounter any (Tucker & Goldstein, 1992).

The involvement of parents in the collaboration process of the IEP is very important considering various reasons. Their understanding of their children in relation to interest, motivation, habits, fears, routines, pressures, needs and health is better than teachers (Giangreco et al., 1993). Their involvement is also likely to improve academic work of students, develop more positive attitudes to schools, rise their aspirations higher, and develop other positive behaviors if they have parents who are aware, knowledgeable, encouraging and are involved as partners with schools (Epstein, 1992).

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The involvement of parents in the collaboration processes is also very important as they have greater vested interest to see how their children progress in their daily lessons in the school. Also families are only the group of adults who are involved in the life long education of the child. And most important parents must live with the outcomes of decisions made by the IEP team members (Heward, 1996).

One of the most important skills to promote better partnership between the school and parents is the communication skills. Two-way communication between parents and teachers is one of the best ways of communication and promoting children's progress (Sanders, 2001). Better communication skills help collaborating partners discuss ideas, and broadens opportunities to better understand how students could be helped in the class as well as at home with academic decisions, homework, and curriculum-related activities.

All efforts need to be made to develop trust and respect between families and school personnel in order to carry out effective collaboration process. This important ingredient of collaboration process of the IEP highly attribute towards creating and maintaining sustainable relationship between the partners (Adams & Christenson, 2000).

The ultimate outcome of the collaboration process of IEP is that both the teachers and parents are mutually benefited. As per Epstein (1992) the lives of teachers were made easier if they worked collaboratively with parents in doing their job. In return the parents involved in the collaboration with teachers tend to develop more positive views of teachers as professionals. Further, teachers who could meaningfully involve parents were rated higher in overall teaching ability and interpersonal skills by their administrators. Finally, involving parents in the collaboration process makes them feel a sense of belonging to the school. Hence, they form pivotal and powerful pressure

groups which lead to stronger political support from the society when the schools require their support.

A critical look at the controversial issues of IEP also attributed towards promoting better understanding of collaboration process of IEP. The issues and controversies are so complex that they demand thorough research. The whole process of planning and implementation of IEP have not been researched especially in the UK, hence it lacked comprehensive practical suggestions towards improving the process of planning and of IEPs (Strogilos & Zanthacou, 2006, p. 340).

The study was carried out in a short period of time. Case study, considering the fact it can enable the study to take place in a short time and limited resources (Gray, 2004), was a very useful method to conduct the study. Also the process did not involve enormous amount of resources and team work.

The finding of the study on the collaboration process of IEP from three cases show that each member of the IEP Team play a pivotal role in ensuring the provision of education.

Directors consider their roles in the collaboration process of IEP immensely important since they are accountable to the local education authorities, the parents, the teachers and the students in relation to any matters concerning their children. They consider contract agreements of the IEP as a guideline for the school, the parents and the special education centre. Monitoring and supervision of the IEP follow is another area and they feel very important.

Teachers played extremely important roles in the collaboration process of the IEPs. Their main roles included designing and developing appropriate strategies in the IEP with specified goals, objectives and means to achieve the objectives to meet the

needs of the children. They played very important roles in communicating the progress of the child to the parents and other IEP team members.

Teachers and parents do not have their role in deciding the placement of the students. The placements of students of special education needs are solely done by the Special Education Centers without consultation with any professionals from the schools.

Directors, teachers and parents consider the collaboration meeting of IEP as a very important means of communication. This confirms with points made by Heward (1996) that IEP meetings serve as a communication vehicle between parents and school personnel and enables them as equal participants, to jointly decide on what the child's needs are, what services need to be provided to meet those needs, and what the anticipated outcome will be.

One of the important outcomes of the collaboration process is the signing of the contracts. Directors, teachers and parents felt that signing of the contracts made the IEP team members more accountable on their roles.

Teachers found out that the collaboration meeting did not only help the school and parents, but also helped the subject teachers and class teachers to establish better understanding of children. Hence, subject teachers were able to adapt their teaching strategies to cater to the needs of the children. Similarly, teachers considered the design and development of the IEP according to the needs of the child during the following year when the child joins his/her class on up gradation.

Parents considered the collaboration process of IEP as a very important and extremely useful forum which provided them opportunities to meet and share their views. They also felt that this was the opportunity to interact with professionals such as

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teachers who have expertise on special education needs, representatives from Special Education Centers, the local authorities, and the teacher who deals with the child in the school. Thus this meeting helped the promotion of communications, co-operations, and understanding amongst the team members.

The parents' concern whether teachers understood their children in a similar way as they did is relevant as most important. This will enable the teachers to work out strategies to fulfill the needs of the children if their understanding of the children parallel to the parents. When children received similar support and reinforcement from parents as well as teachers, they are highly motivated (Patrikakou et al., 2005).

The finding indicated that students were not able to participate in the collaboration process of IEPs.

Although findings of the case study of three cases may reflect certain features in general, however they do not provide adequate information to generalize the findings with the schools as a whole (Gray, 2004).

Finally, the study on the collaboration process of the IEP has not only provided me with enormous experience into the ideas and skills of planning and preparation of IEP but also greatly helped me to achieve my aim of understanding the significant roles that each member of IEP team plays in the collaboration process.

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## Appendix 1

### Interview Protocol

#### Title of research

Study on the Collaboration Process of IEP

#### Aims

The main aim of the research is to study the collaboration process of IEP.

#### Research Question

How does the process of collaboration amongst the members of the IEP team in planning and preparation of IEP take place?

#### Sub-questions

What role does each member of collaboration play while planning and preparing the IEP?

#### Methodologies

Case study as a method of qualitative research will be used. The specific method will mainly be conducting semi-structured interview and document analysis.

#### Sample for study

1. Three children with special educational needs, concretely dyslexia or intellectual disability aged 13 – 15 years.
2. Three teachers
3. Three representatives from Special Education Center
4. Three parents
5. Three directors of school

**1. Interview questions for the children**

1. Do you know your IEP?
2. Where you involved in preparation of it?
4. How does IEP reflect your interest?
5. What would you like to include in IEP?

**2. Interview questions for the Teacher**

1. What is your role in planning and preparation of IEP?
2. How often do you monitor the progress of children on IEP?
3. What are your roles in the planning process of IEP?
4. How important is the collaboration process amongst the IEP team members in planning and preparation of IEP?

**3. Interview questions for representative from Special Education Center**

1. What is your role in planning and preparation of the IEP of the children for special educational needs?
2. Do you monitor the progress of the children? If so, how often do you monitor the progress of children on IEP?
3. Would you describe your experience regarding the collaboration process in planning and preparation of IEP?

**4. Interview questions for parents**

1. Do you participate in the planning and preparation process of IEP?
2. Where you able to participate in all the IEP meetings so far?
3. Do you get enough chance to share your views during the meeting?
4. What concerns do you usually share during the meeting?
5. Do you have clear ideas on the purpose of IEP?
6. How do you ensure that the IEPs are implemented?
7. How often do you discuss IEP with your child?
8. Does the child like to discuss about his/her IEP?
9. How do you as a parent monitor the progress of the child?

10. Do you think that collaboration process in planning and preparation of IEP is important? If so what are some of the reasons?

**5. Interview questions for the Director of the School**

1. What is your role in planning and preparation of the IEP of the children for special educational needs?
2. How do you ensure that your teachers monitor the progress of children on IEP?
3. How often does the collaboration meeting happen?
4. Do you sometimes conduct ad-hoc meeting or do you always stick to the schedule of the meeting?
5. Do all the members attend the meeting?
6. How important is the presence of every member?
7. In your opinion, how important is the collaboration process in planning and preparation of IEP?

**6. Other information**

1. Brief performance history of the child on his previous level academic and present level will be collected.
2. The other important information needed will include the future plan for the child.

## Annexure 2

### Procedure for conducting the interview

#### Opening:

Introduce and start with chat as;

Thank you for making time to attend the interview. I am a student pursuing MA in Special Education in Charles University.

The main objective of the interview is to collect data on the collaboration process of IEP, the roles and responsibilities, your opinion on the importance of collaboration meeting and other comments whenever you feel. The information you are going to provide will be useful for my study.

#### Getting permission

How do you want me to record the information? Is it alright if I use a recorder and record your answers which will save my time or do you want me to just write notes?

Your identity will not be revealed to any one.

#### During the interview

1. Ask questions one by one using translator.
2. Record as well as note down the information.
3. Ask other questions if there comments or answers deal with other issues.
4. While asking question make the interviewee feel relax and comfortable if they are not.
5. Maintain good rapport with the interviewees.

#### At the end of the interview

1. Thank the interviewees for their genuine contribution and participation.
2. Reassure them about the confidentiality of their identity.
3. Give them e-mail address and explain them to write me in case they do not want me to include certain aspect of information.

### Annexure 3

#### Responses form Student

1. Do you know your IEP?  
Yes All the students said yes
2. Where you involved in preparation of it?  
No
4. How does IEP reflect your interest?  
No idea
4. What would you like to include in IEP?  
n/a

#### Annexure 4

##### Responses from the Teacher

1. What is your role in planning and preparation of IEP?
  - To understand the children individually.
  - To plan lessons catering to levels of children with special needs with specific objectives.
  - Conduct test such as fill in the space or fill in the blanks.
  - Examining vocabulary.
  - Recording point system and informing the children on their scores of the points.
  - Help them to be less stressful in their tasks.
  - Study their progress and plan their activities for improvements.
  - Not to force them to read aloud to the class if you find they do not feel comfortable.
  - Treat them same like other students as they might find themselves indifferent.
  - Design easy and doable task, avoid sentences and use of vocabulary.
  - Collaborate the involvement of parents, teachers, head teachers and representatives from special education centers.
  - The diagnosis of difficulties of the is done by the CEC child.
  - Report to school about the IEP.
  - No students are involved in the planning and preparation of IEP.
  - Make remedial lessons and conduct them.
  
2. How often do you monitor the progress of children on IEP?
  - Progress of lessons is always checked at the end of the lessons. So it is almost every day.
  - The points the child achieves are recorded and also reported to the child
  
3. How important is the collaboration process amongst the IEP team members in planning and preparation of IEP?
  - The process of planning and preparation amongst the team members is very important.
  - The collaboration provides opportunities to all the members to discuss and focus the needs of the child.
  - Here the child is the center of focus of all the team members, the school, parents and Special Education Centre.

## Appendix 5

### Responses from parents

1. Do you participate in the planning and preparation process of IEP?
  - The parents did participate fully in the IEP planning and preparation meetings.
  - One parent was able to recommend for improvement for the next.
  - One parent signed the IEP after incorporation of her comments.
  - Two parents did not adequate opportunity to express their views. Their views did not make any difference in the decision of the members in the school where their children studied in the main steam schools.
  - Their views were noted but were not incorporated and did not have any impact on any decision.
  - They expressed their disappointment to the main stream school where their children studied earlier.
  - They complained that the teachers had even told them that the parents had more responsibility than the teachers as teachers had 40 students in class to take care of.
  - So they decided to withdraw their children and brought them to special school.
  - They were very happy with the special school.
  - They attended all the meetings in the special school.
  - They said their voices are heard.
  - The difference they found between the mainstream and the special school was that they did sign the IEP after discussions.
2. Where you able to participate in all the IEP meetings so far?
  - The parents attended all the meeting.
  - They attended 3 to 4 times a year.
3. Do you get enough chance to share your views during the meeting?
  - Yes.
  - She shares her views mainly on goals but not methods as she believes that teachers know the best.
  - The teacher provides her briefing about the child's IEP and after that she comments on what additional activities teacher could provide.
4. What concerns do you usually share during the meeting?
  - The main concern they shared so far is how do teachers understand their children as they would understand?
  - How do we decide the IEP for the child?

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5. Do you have clear ideas on the purpose of IEP?
  - They understand the over all goal of IEP.
  - One parent explained that it is a tailor made like activity for every child to follow the curriculum.
  - Different children need different plan as per their needs.
  
6. How do you ensure that the IEPs are implemented?
  - Parents the reports from the school every day.
  - They do follow up at home based on the report from the teacher.
  - They also revise the lessons at home and are able to know the progresses of their children.
  
7. How often do you discuss IEP with your child?
  - Never.
  - The parent discusses about the topics and subjects.
  - They also believe children discuss the subject and the topic with the teacher.
  - They believe that the discussions of topics and subjects are part of IEP.
  
8. Does the child like to discuss about his/her IEP?
  - n/a
  
9. How do you as a parent monitor the progress of the child?
  - The parents leave the evaluation of the child with the teacher as the teacher knows the best.
  - They carry out revisions which they believe is part of evaluation.
  - They get written report about the child from the teacher. The report has all the details of all the achievements of the year.
  - One parent explained that she liked the format and the way the teacher has presented the report.
  
10. Do you think that collaboration process in planning and preparation of IEP is important? If so what are some of the reasons?
  - Definitely.
  - In the collaboration process they are able to attend meetings.
  - Lots of communications happen, improve co-operations.
  - They are able to establish good relationship with other members.
  - They gain ideas and knowledge from other members during the meetings.

## Appendix 6

### Responses from the Director of the School

1. What is your role in planning and preparation of the IEP of the children for special educational needs?
  - Be involved in the process of drawing up and signing contract on the IEP.
  - One Director felt that it is only a kind formal signing contract between the school, parents and the special education center.
  - Ensure that members follow up the IEP.
  - Accountable to parents, students and local authority about the progress of children.
  
2. How do you ensure that your teachers monitor the progress of children on IEP?
  - All the directors feel that it is the responsibility of the teachers to ensure that the IEPs are followed up seriously.
  - The school has designated advisors with specific roles and responsibilities
    - i. Coordinates the meeting of the members of the IEP team
    - ii. Preparing ensure the preparation of IEP
    - iii. Work closely with the representatives from the special education centers
    - iv. Work with the teachers
    - v. Report to the director about the progress of the children
    - vi. Providing teachers information a regarding the students with
  - They are involved in teaching and hence are able to assess the performance of students with SEN during their teaching.
  - One professional who represent from the Special Education Centers make visit once a year.
  - The advisor of the school and the professional from the Special Education Centre carry out detailed discussion on IEP. The reports of such discussion are presented to the director which is another way of monitoring the performance of the children with SEN.
  - However the directors feel that the visit of the professional from the special education centre to have professional interaction and to assess the progress relating to the children using IEP once a year is far too less. In their opinion the visit should be once a week for an hour for better coordination and impact.
  
3. How often does the collaboration meeting happen?

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- The collaboration meeting happens three times a year. In the beginning of the year, the teacher, the advisor and the director discuss the whole year plan.
  - During this meeting the advisor of the school coordinates and provides professional support to the teachers in relation to the planning of IEP.
  - This meeting also provides the school as an important forum to discuss and finalize the IEP.
  - The roles and responsibilities of various members are also discussed.
  
  - During the mid-year meeting, the advisor informs the school about new students if any new students are identified. Then they prepare for diagnosis.
  
  - At the end of the year meeting, class teachers present the individual reports of their SEN students. Through this meeting, all the teachers know the progress of every child.
  
  - One of the school has initiated a new innovation where one of the responsibilities of the school advisor is to write the report of the meeting and submit to the Director. This seem to be another way of monitoring.
4. Do you sometimes conduct ad-hoc meeting or do you always stick to the schedule of the meeting?
- No ad-hoc meetings in relation IEPs.
  - The Directors feel that the meeting for three times a year is enough hence does not conduct ad-hoc meeting.
5. Do all the members attend the meeting?
- During the three meetings, all the teachers attend. The meeting for other members of IEP is coordinated by the advisor whenever necessary. At that time the members of the IEP team including the teacher, parent, and the advisor attends the meeting.
6. How important is the presence of every member?
- All felt it is very important to have presence of every member.
  - The presence promotes better understanding of IEPs and also the progress the children make and also how far the child is expected to make.
7. In your opinion, how important is the collaboration process in planning and preparation of IEP?
- Very important.

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- It is important because all involved must have the actual information of the child.
- Collaboration with the parent is important to let them know the plan as well as the progress of the child.
- It is more important amongst the teachers of different subjects as different subjects employ different strategies in teaching and learning process.
- The collaboration with different class teachers is important as they have to be informed about the performance of the student so that the teacher is prepared to plan according to the needs of the child next year when the child is placed in her class.