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IEP AND CURRICULUM ADAPTATIONS



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Abstract

The inclusive school should promote opportunities and attend to diversity. To do that, organisational and pedagogical changes are necessary.

The aim of this study is to review the concept of the IEP and its importance, as well as to clarify the idea of “curriculum adaptations”.

1. Defining the concept of IEP

An IEP is a written plan developed for a pupil who has been identified as having a problem (physical, sensory, intellectual, emotional, social, or any combination of these problems) which affects the learning and which leads to the need of a special or modified curriculum or conditions of learning specially adapted. This means a working document is the main tool for collaborative planning between the school team, the parents and the pupil.

- IEP development

In order to know if a pupil needs an IEP, a multidisciplinary team of professionals evaluates him based on their observations, the pupil’s performances on standardised tests and daily work.

Afterwards, when the pupil has been identified as having special needs, another team should be formed. The members of this team should be chosen on their ability to provide information or support the pupil’s programme.

The participants usually include: a regular teacher, a specialised teacher, other professionals (a psychologist, different therapists), parents and, sometimes, the pupil.

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Parents should be encouraged to be actively involved in decisions regarding educational services for their children. They provide a unique perspective about the pupil's personality, development and learning. Open communication and cooperation between home and school increases the opportunities for pupils with special needs to experience success.

When the IEP team is formed, a member of the team should be assigned as the coordinator, in order to lead its development and implementation.

This important document should contain:

- essential information about the pupil, including relevant medical, social and educational background information;
- degree of participation in the regular programme;
- the areas in which the pupil needs programme adaptations and/or modification goals:
- required classroom accommodations;
- adjustments in the evaluation processes;
- individual plan considering transition into active life;
- IEP evaluation (criteria, tools, timetable and review).

Usually the services and goals outlined in an IEP can be provided in a standard school environment. They can be done in the regular classroom or in a special resource room in the regular school. The resource room can serve a group of pupils with similar needs who are brought together for help.

2. Curriculum adaptations

- Concept of curriculum

Roldão (1999) considers the curriculum as a process of construction, management and reflexive training focused on school. The right of everyone, without exception, to a quality education makes it necessary to reinvent the school so that it can offer and build

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a differentiated and meaningful curriculum that allows the realisation of such an “Inclusive School, School for All”.

According to Bertram, Fotheringham and Harley (2000), a curriculum could be understood in the following two ways:

- first, ... as a plan (which may be written as a document). This plan reflects the knowledge, skills and attitudes that any society chooses to pass on their pupils.
- second, ... as the learning and teaching experiences that happen in any site of education.

Therefore, a curriculum is a carefully planned and well written document which explicitly reflects the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes of societies that are intended to be passed to or mediated to the future generation, comprising both the old and the young.

As we believe that everybody has the right to attend school and develop different skills, we have to pay the same attention to everybody. So, we need to adapt curricula according to the special needs of all the pupils.

- Curriculum adaptations

Curriculum adaptations are modifications related specifically to instruction or content of a curriculum. They are not intended to lower the education standards. The curriculum is thus adapted to make education accessible to everyone.

The scale and extent of curriculum adaptations and modifications will only be determined after a thorough assessment of an individual pupil.

An individualised learning programme and work schedule with its related lesson plans should be devised on the basis of the needs of visually impaired pupils. Adaptation at lesson plan level will be required for all pupils in a class who need specific additional support because of their disabilities. Those involved in this process must include the teachers, parents, school team and relevant professionals.

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There are different types of curriculum adaptations:

- Quantity: adapt the number of items or the number of activities;
- Time: individualise a timeline for completing a task;
- Level of support: increase/decrease the amount of personal assistance;
- Input: adapt the way instruction is delivered to the learner;
- Difficulty: adapt the skill level, problem type or rules;
- Output: adapt the way the pupil can respond to instruction;
- Participation: adapt the extent to which a pupil is actively involved in the task;
- Alternative goals: adapt the goals or outcome expectations while using the same materials;
- Functional curriculum: provide different instruction and materials to reach a pupil's individual goals; this is only for pupils with moderate to severe disabilities.

Certainly curriculum adaptations are not intended the education standards. Curriculum is adapted to make education more accessible and to ensure that pupils with special needs do not face prejudices or are treated unfairly. Learning problems, working schedules and lesson plans can be modified and adapted to respond to the individual needs of pupils.

The scale and scope of curriculum adaptations and modifications will only be determined after an assessment of one individual pupil. An individualised learning program and work schedule with its related lesson plans should be devised on the basis of need for visually impaired pupils. Adaptation at lesson level plan will be required for all pupils in a class who need specific additional support because of their disabilities. Those involved in this process must include teachers, parents, school-based and district-based support teams (when they exist). Other relevant professionals from the community can be consulted too.

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3. Collecting some ways of working in these areas:

In Catalonia

A pupil who has difficulty learning and functioning and has been identified as a special needs pupil is the perfect candidate for an IEP, for reasons such as:

- learning disabilities
- attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- emotional disorders
- mental retardation
- autism
- hearing impairment
- visual impairment
- speech or language impairment
- development delay
- ...

In most cases, the services and goals outlined in an IEP can be provided in a standard school environment. This can be done in the regular classroom (for example, a teacher helping a small group of pupils who need extra assistance while the other pupils in the class are reading with the regular teacher) or in a special resource room in the regular school.

The resource room can serve a group of pupils with similar needs who are brought together for help.

However, pupils who need intense intervention may be taught in a special school environment. These classes have fewer pupils per teacher, allowing for more individualised attention. In addition, the teacher usually has specific training in helping pupils with special educational needs. The pupils spend most of their day in a special classroom and join the regular classes for non-academic activities (like music and gym) or in academic activities in which they do not need extra help.

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In Austria

A pupil who has difficulty learning and functioning and has been identified as having special needs has to have an Individual educational plan (law from November 2008) for reasons such as:

- learning disabilities
- attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- emotional disorders
- mental retardation
- autism
- hearing impairment
- visual impairment
- speech or language impairment
- development delay
- ...

In most cases, the services and goals outlined in an IEP can be provided in a standard school environment, some of them (e.g. speech therapy ...) are held in a special resource room in the regular school.

Since November 2008 rough guidelines exist for the development of an individual educational plan for pupils with SEN.

Those guidelines encompass:

- Collaborative planning (parents, teachers, other professionals ...) based on the assessment
- Regular evaluation
- Curriculum adaptations

There are no STANDARDS for Individual Educational Plans yet in Austria but experts are already demanding such standards.

The classroom teacher is responsible for the IEP – in regular classes this is the regular teacher and in integration classes it is the teacher for special needs education.

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Curriculum adaptations and individualisation however are a major issue in the regular curriculum in Austria in order to attend to the needs of the individual pupil. It is mandatory for every teacher to adapt the curriculum and the planning to the needs of all pupils in a class.

However, pupils who need intense intervention may be taught in a special school environment. Parents in Austria can choose between integration and segregation in special schools.

Special classes have fewer pupils per teacher, allowing for more individualised attention. In addition, the teacher usually has specific training in helping pupils with special educational needs.

In Belgium

A pupil who has difficulty learning and functioning and has been identified as a special needs has to have an Individual educational plan (law from 2007 March 3rd)

Definition of the IEP in Belgian French speaking Community:

I.E.P.: (In French: Plan individuel d'apprentissage (P.I.A.)): It is a methodological tool written and designed for each pupil and adjusted throughout his schooling by the Staff meeting, on the basis of the observations provided by its various members and data communicated by the organisation of guidance of the pupils. It enumerates particular objectives to reach during one given period. It is starting from the data of the IEP that each member of the multi-field team implements the work of education, rehabilitation and training. Through the IEP the pupil and his parents can be associated with his development.

The mission statements for the staff meeting in charge of the guidance of the pupils are as follows:

1. to work out and adjust for each pupil, an individual plan of training which coordinates the teaching activities, ancillary medical, social and psychological;
2. to evaluate progress and the results of each pupil in order to adjust the individual plan of training;

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3. the members of the Staff meeting ensure the weekly management of the individual plan of training of each one of its pupils during the periods of staff meeting envisaged in their grid-schedule.
4. to evaluate each pupil in a formative way and continue with regard to the understanding of the pupil in order to adjust the individual plan of training as required;

The director of the class ensures the weekly management of the individual plan of training of each one of his pupils during the periods envisaged in his schedule.

The team work allows the coordination and the exchange of information between the various members of the ancillary medical, social and psychological team. For their participation in the staff meeting, part of this time is reserved for the preparation of these meetings and the drafting or the adjustment of the individual plan of training of the pupils of which they have the responsibility.

In Portugal

The organisational model of care for children with specific educational needs recently implemented by the Ministry of Education, centred on the so-called CIF, is nothing more than a return to the medical model abandoned as inefficient in the 80s; here, the attendance is determined from a list of illnesses which, if existent, may not require any educational intervention and will leave a significant number of pupils without but requiring educational intervention.

However, every pupil who has been identified as a special needs pupil requires an IEP which is coordinated by the director of the class.

The services and goals outlined in an IEP are provided in a standard school environment, in a regular classroom or in a special resource room.

This new law has launched the reference schools for special disabilities (deafness, blindness, autism ...). Specialised professionals and specific resources are gathered at these schools.

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In the United Kingdom

In the UK all pupils have a Personal Education Plan (PEP): pupils identified as requiring statutory assessment where their needs are greater will have an IEP. This is reviewed annually by the team of professionals involved with the pupil. The IEP contains goals and measurable targets which can be added by the class teacher. Where the IEP has no direct relationship to a particular subject area some pupils will be given an individual IEP for that subject and it will contain more meaningful targets.

Pupils will discuss their PEPs with the class teacher either as part of the class day or in some schools on 'Mentor Day' on a termly basis. The latter enables the class teacher to have longer to talk with the pupil to understand the pupil's perception of his work compared with the teachers. Together they agree a minimum of three goals to be achieved in the term.

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Nemours foundation

<http://kidshealth.org/parent/growth/learning/iep.html>

Ministry of Education – British Columbia

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