

# Exploring The Role of Special Education Teachers in The Process of Preparing and Implementing Individual Education Plans in The Special Education Integration Program

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## Abstract

They investigated the involvement of special education teachers in developing and executing individual education plans within the Special Education Integration Programme in Malaysia. What sets apart good IEP implementation is the preparation and execution of the IEPs for students with special educational needs. However, the implementation of IEPs is still considered lacking in achievement. This qualitative study was conducted simultaneously on ten special education teachers who have specialized in special education and engaged in the Integration Special Education Programme for six years or longer. Interviews were conducted to assess the special education teachers' knowledge level and the procedures for developing and implementing IEP under the Special Education Integration Programme (SEIP). The data analysis results have been evaluated thematically. Special education teachers need continuous training on preparing and implementing IEP and collaborating throughout the IEP preparation at SEIP, supported by study income. Hence, it is essential to fully execute these monitoring techniques for Individualised Education Plans, particularly targeting special education teachers and parents of students with special educational needs, who play a crucial role in implementing the IEP.

**Keywords:** Individualised Education Plan (IEP), Special Education Teachers, Special Education Integration Programme (SEIP), Student with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

## Introduction

The concept of individual education plans (IEP) originated in the United States under the Education for Disabled Persons Act (IDEA), a federal law safeguarding special education services for children with disabilities from infancy through high school. The Act was enacted by the United States Congress in 2004 and led to a significant transformation in the provision

and execution of special education nationwide. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law that mandates establishing official procedures for assessing students with disabilities and offering specialized programs and services to support their academic success (Siegel, D. J., 2009). According to the 2004 IDEA, the programs and services needed for children with disabilities will be established through the Individualised Education Programme (IEP).

The IEP in Malaysia is based on the Education (Special Education) Regulations 2013 and is a formal written document. It is tailored for a student. It is also created to record all changes and implementations made to the learning programs and services offered. It is a continual evaluation program designed for students and is the foundation of educational planning in a special education curriculum. Special Educational Students (SEN) require an IEP to ensure their educational requirements are addressed. The IEP is implemented to meet MOE's goal of offering high-quality education to all students with special educational needs throughout all school levels. An IEP assesses cooperation and collaboration among schools, parents, SEN, and mentoring teachers, counselors, and district educational supervisors when necessary. The plan emphasizes utility, academics, and career transition. Functionality encompasses self-management, behavioral control, emotional regulation, communication, social skills, and fine and gross motor skills. Academic pertains to fundamental literacy, numeracy, and vocational disciplines for high school students with special educational needs. The career transition emphasizes skill development and assistance for individuals with special educational needs (SEN) based on their talents, strengths, interests, and prospects for employment and maturity.

### **Problem Statement**

Special education in the Malaysian Ministry of Education has three branches: special education schools (SPK), Special Education Integration Programs (SIEP), and inclusive education programs. Manisha & Norizza (2016) stated that SEN have difficulty absorbing, retaining, and storing material because of their lack of focus, which sets them apart from typical primary school pupils. Exceptional education teachers face the difficulty of aligning their instruction with the established curriculum and modifying it to suit the individual cognitive skills and capacities of each student with unique needs (Gee & Gonsier-Gerdin, 2018).

However, to meet the diverse and different needs of SEN students, the implementation of IEP on SEN students with a focus on the needs and functionality of the involved SEN students' needs to be emphasized to enable the needs and access of SEN students' education to be met. Special education teachers are crucial in developing and enhancing the success of IEP for SEN within the educational system. They are responsible for creating and executing tailored IEPs based on the student's skills and requirements. Siraj (2000) found that implementing IEPs in Malaysian schools was unsuccessful due to teachers not following the requirements, which require planning IEPs with parents and council members. Nasir (2010) found that new teachers and those without special education training lack skills in creating IEPs for SEN. Some special education teachers also do not prioritize the IEP as a crucial document for assessing SEN achievement.

This study examines special education teachers' understanding and knowledge of IEPs, the process they follow to develop IEPs, and their role in implementing IEPs for SEN students. Recommendations were made to enhance the quality of IEP development and implementation at SIEP. Special education teachers are crucial in developing and improving

the success of IEP for SEN in schools. They are responsible for creating and executing IEPs tailored to SEN students' specific abilities and requirements. This study aimed to investigate the level of comprehension among special education teachers at SIEP during the development and execution of IEP for SEN. Special education teachers are crucial in developing and enhancing the educational system's attainment of Special Educational Needs Individual Education Plans (SEN IEPs). They are close to SEN in schools and are vital in devising and executing successful IEPs tailored to their skills and requirements.

## **Literature Review**

### *Implementation of the IEP*

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law that outlines the procedures for evaluating disabled students and offering specialized programs and services to support their academic success in school (Siegel, 2009). IDEA mandates that the programs and services needed by children with disabilities will be established under the IEP. Disabled students are entitled to free and appropriate public education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Public schools must offer free special education tailored to each child's specific needs until they reach age 21. The significance of the IEPs for students with special educational needs is widely acknowledged globally and mandated by legislation in most nations (Prunty, 2011). IEP objectives for students with special educational needs are created to guarantee equitable access to the least restrictive educational setting (Kurth & Mastergeorge, 2010).

In Malaysia, IEP for SEN is a personalized written document. The IEP documents any alterations and implementations made to the educational programs and services offered (Ministry of Education, 2016). This IEP serves as a document for each SEN to plan, intervene, and report to reduce significant learning obstacles. (Book Guide for Individual Education Design Second Edition, 2023). This IEP is a tool to establish collaboration among the school, parents, children, district educational officers, and individuals from other agencies or support services. IEPs are created by establishing goals and developing solutions for functional, academic, or career transition issues. The IEP evaluation is conducted continuously based on the SEN's level of competence. SEN necessitates various services that schools must offer to address specific learning requirements.

Hence, the IEP should detail the services provided and incorporate specific, attainable, and measurable yearly goals. (Kurth & Mastergeorge, 2010). Kurth et al. (2021) state that the IEP should include the SEN grade level, aligning with the Educational Curriculum and Content Standard. It is important to address the needs of different SENs by ensuring that IEP clearly outlines educational objectives and how the curriculum can be tailored to meet the unique learning requirements of each SEN. Each SEN should have an IEP that details their current achievements, levels of progress, and how their specific challenges impact their academic success. King et al (2018) define the IEP as a written document outlining the educational goals of challenged children and the necessary learning techniques, tools, and facilities required to fulfill those goals within specific timeframes. Weishaar (2001) emphasized the crucial role of teachers in the IEP team, highlighting their involvement in developing, implementing, and reviewing the IEP. Their contributions in determining suitable strategies, behavioral interventions, individual learning outcomes, and curriculum modifications for each disabled child are significant.

### *Role of Special Education Teachers in the Preparation and Implementation of IEP in Malaysia*

Special Education Teachers play a crucial role in implementing IEP in Malaysia as mandated by the special education legislation of 2013, which requires special education services to be available in every state and district. This regulation is a highly effective approach to promoting special education. This approach has allowed SEN individuals to obtain education in schools. (Othman et al., 2022). Trained special education teachers are assigned to schools to assist SEN. Furthermore, the IEP has been created under this law to address the needs of students with SEN. Manisha & Norizza (2016) stated that SEN have difficulties comprehending, retaining, and encoding knowledge because of their difficulty maintaining focus, distinguishing them from typical primary pupils. Exceptional education teachers face the problem of aligning their instruction with the curriculum while adjusting it to accommodate the individual cognitive abilities of each student with unique needs. (Gee & Gonsier-Gerdin, 2018).

Special education teachers with the necessary training and extensive experience are essential for developing and executing skills-based IEPs for students with special educational needs. These teachers must employ specific curricula, like the Standard Curriculum of Special Education, to help students achieve their grade level. SENs must be given the required facilities and support to demonstrate their comprehension of reading, writing, counting, speaking, and listening skills and to satisfy curriculum criteria in this area (Caruana, 2015). According to Greene (2017), a strong commitment by special education teachers to implementing the IEP is crucial for the success of SEN.

Sacks & Haider (2017) identified various obstacles that hinder teachers from effectively executing IEPs. These include inadequate teacher-parent communication, shortage of special education teachers, influence of family backgrounds and cultures, parents feeling isolated in IEP meetings, and insufficient teacher training. This is a crucial aspect that hinders the execution of the IEP. Furthermore, special education teachers in many schools have extra responsibilities to manage simultaneously (Gaad, 2006). The ambiguity around teachers' duties in gathering IEP data impedes their capacity to create and execute IEPs (Swain, Hagaman, & Leader-Janssen, 2022).

#### *Objective characteristics of quality IEP*

The IEP document contains accommodation, curricular adjustments, and individual annual goals that must achieve the SMART goals: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound, as stated by Dodge (2018). The IEP must involve a member of the IEP committee comprising teachers, school administrators, parents, and other professionals involved in the child's education. Furthermore, it is necessary to participate in a specific IEP meeting that outlines the conversations and enhancement strategies for each SEN. Additionally, all members of the IEP committee must always possess a signed copy of the IEP (Gaad, 2019). Boavida et al. (2010) suggest that child development can be improved by achieving IEP objectives through a structured evaluation process closely connected to intervention.

The Dubai KHDA Inclusive Education Policy Framework (2017) states that a comprehensive IEP should include various elements, such as a detailed description of the student's special educational needs. This encompasses the student's academic performance level, specific SEN diagnosis, learning strengths and challenges, areas of interest, and preferred learning style. The second crucial element is adjusting accommodation and curriculum and implementing initiatives by special education teachers and parents to improve student academic achievement and address any existing academic disparities.

The IEP objective should adhere to the SMART acronym for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. This means setting a specific goal for how the targeted skills will be taught, defining measurable learning outcomes to track the child's progress, establishing achievable goals, specifying relevant and realistic objectives based on age-appropriate factors, and determining a time frame for achieving the objective. The high-quality IEP aim must prioritise parental involvement and support to achieve the approved IEP goals and meet SEN issues effectively. Analyzing the linguistic objectives for parental comprehension to meet the desired goals is crucial.

### *Collaboration in IEP*

Collaboration among classroom teachers, subject teachers, student management assistants, school officials, and parents is crucial for the success of the special education system. This occurs because disseminating knowledge is not just the teacher's responsibility. Parents are the primary educators of children, particularly those with special educational needs, as they have more time at home than at school. However, there are still many parents of children with special educational needs who are less attentive, ashamed, or neglectful of their disadvantaged children's educational rights compared to children without special needs. (Siti Muhibah & Zetty, 2018). The Second Edition (2023) of the Individual Education Plan Guidebook outlines specific roles for parents and guardians of SEN during the development and execution of the IEP. Parents or guardians must attend the school's initial assessment sessions to provide information, identify obstacles, and develop IEP goals for their kids. Furthermore, they are involved in giving consent for implementing IEPs, collaborating with the school on established goals and strategies, sharing information with relevant multidisciplinary groups, and facilitating parental involvement in programs and activities to support their child's development.

According to Prunty (2011), parental involvement in developing and carrying out the IEP is crucial for its success and for enhancing their comprehension of the educational setting where their child will learn. The SEN must be involved in the IEP process to maximize the chances of attaining IEP goals and demonstrating progress through awareness of the intervention process. Multiple factors improve best practices in creating and executing IEPs for kids with disabilities. Hurley et al. (2017) discovered that parents play a crucial role in developing and implementing IEPs for their children. Thus, their input is essential in implementing the IEP, recognized as both a best practice and a significant component in enhancing their children's education. Parents can provide crucial details regarding their child's medical background, daily schedules, and requirements. Parents must participate in the IEP process to ensure that they understand the goals and strategies the school will employ to meet their child's needs as specified in the IEP (Villa & Thousand, 2016).

### **Methodology**

The study is qualitatively done via interviews due to the chosen case study design, which aims to provide a detailed description of a specific event or topic (Chua, 2022). This case study entails gathering comprehensive data about individuals, groups, organizations, or events using interviews, observations, and document analysis. The researcher examined the initial and subsequent versions of the IEP manual, focusing on formality, execution, obstacles, and other related factors. The researchers used the interview method as the primary approach to gather information and meet the specified objectives. The researcher utilizes the semi-

structured interview method to collect information from the participants in a population and sample study.

This instrument comprises two sections, specifically the demographic section. Sampling involves selecting a subset of individuals from a specific group to participate as respondents in a study. The study sample included 10 special education teachers with expertise in special education and a minimum of five years of experience teaching in the SEIP. The researcher ensured that the survey participants were special education teachers who had worked at SIEP for at least six years by sending them a demographic questionnaire through Google Forms. Distributed demographic information encompasses specific factors such as knowledge of service location, teaching background, and specialization in special education. Individuals who meet the specified criteria will be emailed asking them to participate in the interview. This section discusses interview questions on the development of IEPs by special education instructors for SEN in the SEIP. The researcher articulates the study's purpose and investigation technique before conducting the study. The researcher shall guarantee the confidentiality and recording of the study for all survey respondents for information collection, research, and supervision.

### **Data Collection and Analysis Procedures**

Data collection and analysis procedures must align with the study's objectives and questions to ensure the research goals are effectively met (Hafizah, 2019). This study utilized a qualitative approach using a case study design, where the researcher employed interviews as the method of data gathering. Yin (2003) defines a case study as a qualitative research design that examines contemporary occurrences through detailed analysis of real-life situations. Noriah, Siti Fatimah, Mohd Izham, and Siti Rahaya (2010) asserted that conducting multi-case research can enhance the validity and trustworthiness of a study. Data is gathered using a triangulation approach that combines in-depth interviews, document analysis, and observations. Chua (2021) suggests that confidence in qualitative research might be increased by employing triangulation approaches. It involves conducting surveys with various respondents at various times and locations. The researchers who applied this strategy have achieved high credibility for their study.

### **Validity, Data Collection, and Reliability**

Validation of study instruments involved consulting two specialists in special education to assess the study's feasibility and enhance the effectiveness of the research tools. This groundbreaking investigation aims to assess its validity and make necessary adjustments before the research is conducted to ensure the achievement of study objectives. The study involved conducting interviews with ten people, transcribing the interviews, and analyzing the findings.

### **Research Findings**

#### **Background of Participants**

Next, examine the discoveries based on the topics elaborated in the find section. Ten participants were included in the study, and their demographic information was collected before the interview. The participants are instructors who have specialized in special education and have been involved in the SEIP for five years or longer. Furthermore, the survey participants shared details regarding gender, age, race, educational attainment, teaching experience, and state of employment. The participants were assigned codes PK1 through

PK10. The income generated from the interviews in the study has been thoroughly evaluated and categorized based on the study's objectives.

Table 1

*Participants' demographics*

Participants	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Education Level	Teaching Experience	State of Service
PK1	Female	30	Malay	Degree	7	Kedah
PK2	Male	29	Malay	Degree	6	Selangor
PK3	Female	29	Chinese	Degree	6	Johor
PK4	Female	34	Malay	Degree	11	Perak
PK5	Female	35	Chinese	Master's degree	12	Terengganu
PK6	Female	52	Malay	Degree	25	WP Kuala Lumpur
PK7	Female	40	Malay	Degree	14	Selangor
PK8	Female	30	Malay	Degree	7	Sabah
PK9	Female	41	Indian	Degree	10	Melaka
PK10	Male	30	Malay	Degree	7	Johor

*Special education teachers' knowledge of IEP*

The study in this section aimed to assess special education teachers' knowledge regarding IEP. Participants were questioned about the objectives of an IEP, and six participants (PK2, PK3, PK6, PK7, PK8, PK9, and PK10) indicated that the goals were consistent with those detailed in the 2023 edition of the Individual Education Plan Guidebook.

*"According to my understanding, this IEP is a written document, designed for special education students. This IEP serves as a tool, to determine the cooperation between the school, parents, and teachers in making the planning of the learning program and evaluation to students with specific problems that exist in the pupils."* - PK2.

*"This IEP is a written document for the teacher to plan some strategy and objectives for a SEN in a certain period in a year, the planning of planned activities must coincide with the objectives for the student. Planning also needs to track the challenges faced by the students and the interventions carried out to overcome the challenges that the students face."* – PK6.

PK1, PK4, and PK5 stated that IEP is a plan or plan that teachers feel is suitable for SEN according to their needs and capabilities; turning to the purpose of building IEPs and target groups, research finds that PK1 to PK10 have stated unanimously that these IEPs are built specifically for all categories of SENs studying at their schools.

*“This IEP target group is built for students, especially students with special needs such as learning, vision, and hearing disabilities.” - PK5*

*“..the purpose or objective of an IEP is to make a continuous evaluation of a person, in particular, to further improve the skills or performance of the student not only from the cognitive aspect but from all aspects, especially from the self-management, emotional and behavioral aspects, so that this SEN can adapt when in society.”- PK7.*

PK6 stated that in addition to SEN, parents are also the target of this IEP because this is one of the documentation and evidence to parents in conducting interventions at home. According to PK3, the IEP is constructed as a reference to parents, teachers, and the administration to see the development of the SEN throughout the implementation of the IEP. Overall, all participants in the study have basic knowledge of the IEP as well as the purpose of IEP and the target group of an IEP built in the school.

### **Skills and Training**

Skill training followed. Switching to training or courses accompanied by study participants, the researcher found that ten participants had been informed about these IEPs, PK1, PK2, PK7, PK8, and PK9 participants were spread at the school level. While PK5, PK6, and PK10 were at the district level, the rest of the PK3 and PK4 were spread at the state level.

*“At that time, I got a disclosure about IEP from JU district organized by the District Education Office to spread widely to the special education teachers in my district teaching.” – PK5.*

In addition, PK6 stated that the dissemination and related guidance was received continuously by the District Education Office officers and the *main coach teacher* who would come to the school on a scheduled basis to assist teachers in the implementation of the IEP in the school. Almost the same statement as PK3, all teachers who implement IEP in each school will attend IEP introduction and guidance by the State Department of Education in collaboration with the District Education Office every year to ensure the continuous dissemination of IEP and teachers will be present at the workshop bringing the IEP that has been built for guidance and reference.

*“Nearly every year, there must be an upcoming workshop on IEP. JPNJ (Johor et al. Office) officers will visit each district to provide an overview and guidance on implementing the IEP. He will provide a comprehensive explanation covering all aspects. This year, he invited a teacher from JB to transition into a fiction writer. The teacher serves as our mentor and has a template that he created. He instructed us on strategies for achieving a certain goal through intervention.” – PK3.*

Meanwhile, PK1, PK2, PK7, PK8, and PK9 were informed about the current IEP details at the school level by student management assistants and teachers serving as school-level IEP



instructors. PK2 mentioned that, aside from consulting a senior assistant at the school, they had also gained knowledge and insight on IEP through online sources. PK1, PK2, PK7, PK8, and PK9 require training and guidance from external entities like the District Education Office and State Education Office to enhance their understanding of IEP. This will also enable them to share experiences with fellow educators.

*"If I get the chance, I would like to take a course outside of school to add my input on this IEP. Because as long as I teach, I've never attended any course." - PK1*

*"For me, I need a course outside with a main coach teacher or an experienced resource teacher as a supplement to my knowledge. During my service, the courses I received from P.C. and teachers who hold IEP only, sometimes if you take courses outside can also open your mind by meeting expert teachers as well as teachers from other schools. But I noticed also, close to two years of District Education Office I rarely do this chapter IEP course" - PK2.*

All participants in the study received IEP-related exposure, but the participants PK3, PK6, and PK10 received continuous and periodic guidance from the main coach of the district and District Education Office through workshops held every year, besides also in the PK6 area. JU also attended schools for direct guidance to special education teachers. At the same time, PK3 and PK6 all teachers are guided in one workshop by bringing their real SEN IEP and guided to make IEP objectives and appropriate intervention measures.

#### *Collection of Information Related to SEN*

SEN-Related Information Collection In implementing the IEP at SEIP, special education teachers collect information related to the relevant SEN. Participants said some procedures were performed in the IEP building process. Among them are the personal records of the SEN relating to the functionality and ability of the existing SEN, as well as the IEP records and the previous SEN Classroom-based assessments records and discussions with the teachers who taught the MBPC. In this section, all study PK1 to PK10 participants performed the same procedure.

*"In terms of initial filtering, the checklist may not exist. The initial filter is in place to assess past students' classroom-based assessment records in the student's workbook to identify areas for improvement and repair to enhance the student's performance and prospects." – PK2.*

According to PK5, PK8, and PK9, filters are applied to newly enrolled SENs, while existing SENs are evaluated based on their old IEPs and achievements in the classroom-based assessments. New students are subject to a separate filter. the existing SEN at school have not been screened or assessed because their SEN achievements are already known. PK8 mentioned relying on the student's medical records, previous IEP and Classroom-based assessment records, discussions with colleagues, observational surveys, and written records to plan effective IEPs. PK5 and PK9 will contact parents of newly enrolled students to gather their input for IEP planning. PK7 mentioned contacting parents of students with SEN to update information about the SEN at home to assess the IEP progress.

Additionally, PK7 reached out to a new student's mother via WhatsApp to gather information for the IEP. This information provided by his mother was very beneficial for me

in creating the IEP because the student has not yet displayed his true behavior at school. In this section, the findings indicate that all participants in the study collected information related to special educational needs by examining student health data, student Classroom-based assessment records, and making observations. Additionally,

*“I also communicated with the parents of other students via WhatsApp to gather information about the students, particularly regarding their behavior at home, and conducted supplementary surveys in the study to identify the primary issues of SEN.” – PK7.*

These surveys provided a more comprehensive understanding of the capabilities, functions, and challenges of SEN compared to mere observation. PK5, PK7, and PK9 have implemented additional measures to reach out to parents of SEN to gather more information before creating their IEP. Contacting parents has proven to be beneficial in determining the goals of the students' SEN IEP.

### **Objectives in IEP**

The discussion started with utilizing the most recent IEP Form issued by MOE 2023. All participants utilized the 2023 IEP form following its distribution to special education teachers. In an IEP, the precise determination of objectives is crucial. All participants in the study concur that a well-defined objective can positively impact or enhance SEN. PK1, PK4, PK5, PK6, PK8, and PK9 indicated that the planned objectives were formulated following discussions with the class teacher, subject teacher, and the student management assistant.

*“During the session, we will review the abilities of each student and select a primary challenge to focus on. We will thoroughly analyze all aspects of this challenge and then determine one objective to include in the student's IEP” -PK6.*

PK2, PK3, PK7, and PK10 noted that objective planning and framework for the IEP were established after gathering information before the session began. PK10 created a draft in formula form based on the student's functional information to enhance communication with the senior assistant teacher and other teachers. This method aims to save time and allows for adjustments if needed. When asked about the criteria for determining SEN objectives, participants emphasized objectivity by evaluating the primary challenges SEN faces. PK2, PK3, PK7, and PK10 mentioned that objectives are tasks SEN can accomplish during the IEP implementation period. PK2 prioritizes measurable objectives that demonstrate progress and align with kids' skills. PK1, PK4, PK5, PK6, PK8, and PK9 objectives are chosen based on SEN criteria but may be challenging to incorporate in the initial IEP session.

*“..because it is typically the same goal I set for my students, as it cannot be accomplished during the initial IEP session.” – PK1*

Participants were also questioned why their established IEP goals were not met within the designated timeframe. PK1, PK2, PK4, PK5, PK6, PK8, and PK9 reported that due to time constraints and the absence of students with special educational needs (SEN), it was not possible to meet the IEP objectives.

*"My student who has not met the objective rarely attends school, despite parental involvement." -PK1*

*"There is a student I have difficulty creating and implementing an IEP with as I only teach them twice a week." -PK8*

The researcher inquires about objectives or SMART goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely. In this part, PK3, PK4, PK5, PK7, and PK10 acknowledged awareness of the topic and were utilized as factors influencing the chosen target. PK7 mentioned receiving advice from a previous course, not from the IEP course on successful Lesson plan creation and attempting to implement it in constructing this IEP. When developing an aim, PK1, PK2, PK6, PK8, and PK9 are unsure about the SMART concept. Five participants evaluated the objectives they built based on the SMART concept, while five did not use the concept in constructing their IEP objectives.

### **The process of implementing an IEP under the MOE guidelines**

Participants were questioned on the execution of an IEP in their schools following the MOE principles. PK1, PK2, PK3, PK4, PK5, PK8, and PK10 said that their school administration has adhered to the standards outlined in KPM 2023. This includes information collection, identifying the target audience, conducting initial meetings, implementing, and documenting the IEP, and holding evaluation sessions. PK6, PK7, and PK9 mentioned that their schools conducted internal meetings to gather information and plan initiatives for IEP for SEN. In contrast, participants PK2 stated that they managed the process during the lesson in the classroom, as the SEN aimed to acknowledge the use of open vocabulary. PK9 additionally intervened in the classroom when the classroom lesson encouraged the SEN to achieve academic functioning. PK1, PK3, PK4, PK5, PK6, PK7, PK8, and PK10 implement the IEP both inside and outside the classroom to address the needs of SEN.

Meanwhile, PK6 mentioned using the IEP during meetings, classes, and in social settings due to students' difficulties in social interactions. Participants were informed that the current IEP would be implemented within three months after the initial meeting with parents, followed by an evaluation session to assess the student's progress. The school has established a deadline for implementing the IEP with students, allowing teachers to intervene during this timeframe. In the assessment section, PK1 through PK10 reiterated the importance of involvement from class teachers, subject teachers, and the student management assistant, which was communicated verbally rather than through formal discussion.

*"In this part of the evaluation, I will ask other teachers and student management assistants' opinions about whether the students' behavior or functional changes are positive. Based on the intervention I run, and the opinion given in the discussion from there I see my objective achieved or not."- PK5.*

This part of the evaluation involves an informal discussion between the class teacher, subject teacher, PPM, and senior assistant in evaluating the performance of the SEN involved with the IEP. In addition, all participants recorded SEN achievements in the IEP form periodically.

*Collaboration in IEP*

Collaboration in IEP Participants were asked about the parties involved in planning and implementing IEP in schools. Income found that all participants stated full involvement of class teachers and subject teachers throughout the preparation and construction of the SEN IEP. Senior special education assistants and student management assistants are also involved in giving views and opinions related to the SEN discussed to facilitate teachers in planning and implementing IEPs when the opening sessions are conducted in schools.

"I am a class teacher, my role is to list the strengths and weaknesses of all my students, and that list I will take and discuss with the coordinator and also the student management assistant once. My coordinator will listen and offer advice. *Maybe I think pupil A, is weak in fine motor, but in his view, he says fine motor and gross motor. That is the discussion. He listens to what I have listed, and then he will try to make suggestions to us.*" - PK3

Parental involvement in implementing the IEP was studied. Participants reported that parents were present during the initial IEP agreement meeting at the school. However, some SEN parents were absent from the meeting and only approved the IEP on a different day.

*"I explained what IEP means in detail (to parents) and according to what has been informed to me. Second, I will explain the issue or goal in the IEP that I recommend for the child. And the third, I will explain what's written in each section of the IEP form one by one."* – PK6

According to PK8, parents were not required to sign the IEP before this, and no meetings were scheduled regarding their children. However, when the new IEP is mandatory, parents are contacted by the appropriate assistant to come to school the following day to sign and agree to the IEP for their child.

*"In my school's neighborhood, the village, the parents of the student do not have much involvement, so it is beneficial to inform them."* -PK5

The teacher will discuss the IEP and will then call the parents of new SEN PK5 and PK9 to gather their input on the SEN and involve them in the IEP planning process. PK7 contacted the parents of the SEN to gather current information regarding the home-based behavior management plan as an indicator of IEP development and implementation. Participants were also questioned about whether parents requested alterations to the content or goals of the IEP that had been developed. All participants in the survey confirmed their willingness to adapt based on the appropriateness and needs of the SEN program. They also mentioned revisiting the matter with parents since the teacher's goals and IEPs were formulated through consultations with the class teacher and subject teacher. Parents should be allowed to express their own goals for their children. Teachers can schedule a follow-up discussion to review these goals and determine their appropriateness for the student. In the experience of PK6, over 24 years of working on IEPs, every parent has agreed with the goals suggested by teachers. On the other hand, PK7 believes that discussing parental wishes before the meeting can prevent last-minute changes and allow teachers and parents to focus on intervention activities.

Despite being aware of collaboration with multidisciplinary groups, all participants in the study admitted to never actually collaborating in the IEP process at their school. Despite

intending to invite speech therapy for my hearing students, I have not been able to do so due to time constraints. All participants collaborated internally with various school staff members to implement the IEP for students with special educational needs. However, none of the participants collaborated with a multidisciplinary group during this process. PK7 and PK9 mentioned that parents were consulted before developing the IEP as supplementary resources for their children. The remaining members, PK1, PK2, PK3, PK4, PK5, PK6, PK8, and PK10, convened a meeting with the parents of the student with special educational needs during the initial session to review the established IEP. They are willing to alter the predetermined IEP objectives if parents wish to make changes independently.

## **Discussion**

Level of Knowledge and Training of Special Education Teachers Related to IEP. The survey found that most special education instructors have a high level of knowledge and training related to IEP. Nevertheless, there is a distinction in the methods employed by special education instructors who are trained internally compared to those who receive training directly from the Ministry of Education and the State Department of Education. This is evident when participants utilize an alternative method to gather information or SEN data to aid in developing IEPs efficiently. This item is also included in the techniques for acquiring information in MOE's second edition of the Individual Education Plan Guidebook. Research indicates that special education teachers who effectively implemented IEPs had undergone training and professional development. This conclusion is corroborated by various other studies (Eng, 2015; Flannery & Hellemn, 2015; Tran et al., 2018; Al-Shammari et al., 2019).

Special education teachers receive training and professional development linked to IEPs annually. Some participants in the survey report never receiving support from a local or state coach. Participants from Johor reported that the District Education Office contacts them biannually with the student's IEP for review and support by the main coach teacher of the IEP. This helps the special education teacher understand the structure and idea behind the IEP as it is constructed, and the coherence of each element in the IEP document.

Thus, sharing knowledge and professional development skills throughout schools, districts, and departments or ministries, regardless of location, can enhance the professional development of special education teachers in implementing IEPs to ensure consistency and effectiveness. Offering proactive support to special education instructors, like IEP refinement workshops, can help prevent mistakes in IEPs, such as incorrect field settings or failure to address progress in SEN—access to high-quality professional development to assist in creating high-quality IEPs. According to Yell & Bateman (2018), training for future teachers at college institutes and teachers of special education can focus on the following areas: writing related to the achievement of SEN in the academic performance and functional levels of the current SEN accurately and clearly; writing measurable objectives parallel to the current academic performance and functional levels of the SEN; and practicing the collection of data and monitoring the progress of the SEN continuously.

This study serves as a guide for special education teachers, outlining the steps or initiatives they should take to provide effective IEPs to SEN. It also highlights the fact that these special education teachers, despite their significant tenure in SEIP, do not receive intensive training from outside parties such as the District of Education Office, State of Education Office, and Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education, as a key stakeholder, should act to continuously improve the professional quality of special education teachers.

**Steps taken in the preparation of IEP**

Based on the study findings, special education teachers have theoretically learned the knowledge connected to the purpose, objectives, and compilation of IEP. Special education instructors require further practical and ongoing training to better comprehend IEPs (Shao et al., 2022). The statement was associated with the participants' exposure level, with over half of them only receiving information at the school level from the course reps. There is a distortion of information due to the lack of direct training for special education instructors to properly implement IEPs as instructed by the Malaysian Ministry of Education. Additionally, there is insufficient emphasis on SEN events. The IEP is required in many countries to facilitate personalized planning for students with unique educational needs. (King et al., 2017). The IEP includes various elements such as the student's current performance level, measurable annual goals and short-term teaching objectives, intervention strategies, curriculum modifications and accommodations, evaluations, and career transition plans for ages 14 and 16. (Gargiulo, 2003; Tran et al., 2018; Twachtman-Cullen & Twachtman-Bassett, 2011; Walther-Thomas et al., 2000). The SEN Assessment Forms and SEN IEP Forms in the IEP Guidebook 2023 contain components comparable to those mentioned internationally. Collecting information for the SEN objective decision in this IEP necessitates thorough observation and recording. Special education teachers must also create IEPs for each student. An IEP is a formal document outlining specific medical conditions and educational goals tailored to each SEN, focusing on their functional, academic, or career transition needs. Collecting initial information can assist special education teachers in gaining a deeper understanding of the students with special educational needs. This can involve implementing extra criteria or assessments to aid special education teachers in identifying the aims and targets of the IEP.

Some participants in the study utilized an alternative method to gather SEN information to aid in creating the IEP, focusing on SEN health information and Classroom-based Assessment records. Special education teachers are tasked with creating IEPs for each of their students. An IEP is a formal document that outlines specific medical conditions and educational goals tailored to each SEN, focusing on their functional, academic, or career transition needs. Collecting initial information can assist special education teachers in gaining a deeper understanding of the students with special educational needs. This can involve implementing additional criteria or assessments to aid in defining the aims and targets of the Individualised Education Programme (IEP).

When creating an IEP, it can be challenging to establish clear objectives without precise information about the SEN. A well-crafted objective should be complete, explicit, sequential, practical, suitable, and easy to grasp. Mastura et al (2021) stated that well-constructed and objective writing has strengths that lead to increased organization. Based on the ranking, teaching will prioritize selecting the most suitable and efficient approaches, methods, tactics, and techniques. Utilizing the SMART approach in constructing objectives can enhance clarity and effectiveness in achieving them. This notion should be broadly used to enhance the likelihood of success and ensure that the objectives are clearly defined and attainable. Special education teachers must assess these attributes based on the SEN's function and incorporate advanced elements to enhance SEN development.

The formulation and implementation of quality IEP, tailored to the functionality and capabilities of SEN individually, can help achieve the goal of the special education mission, which is the development of SEN's potential to the optimum level. This not only leads to greater awareness of the role of parents regarding IEP conducted on their SEN children but

also paves the way for future researchers in this field. Implementing this study can bring results that will be valuable contributions, inspiring and motivating future researchers to delve deeper into this crucial area of study, thereby fostering a sense of intrigue and engagement in the field.

### **Implementation of IEP**

Regarding IEP implementation at the school level, the study revealed that all participants conducted IEP within the Ministry of Education's specified timeframe and held various meetings, including inaugural, first, and second hearings. This aspect of teamwork at the school level can be considered successful when the research results conducted by the class teacher, subject teacher, teacher assistant, Right Special Education, and Student Management Assistant align. Sacks and Haider (2017) identified various obstacles that hinder teachers from effectively executing IEPs, such as inadequate communication between teachers and parents, family background and culture, and parents feeling isolated during IEP meetings. This remark aligns with the research's results, indicating minimal parental engagement in the initial IEP development stages. Only two participants in the study reached out to parents to address SEN before the first hearing.

This IEP is a global effort to improve the quality of SEN, and the role of parents in this process is crucial. Their active participation, as the main advocates for their children, is not just important but empowering for the drafting and implementation of IEPs. Enhancing parental duties and responsibilities can improve the effectiveness of educating children with disabilities by including families in their children's education at school and home. (Kervick, 2017). A high-quality IEP must be 'family-centered,' emphasizing the importance of parental involvement and support in accomplishing the specified IEP goals and managing SEN requirements effectively (Boavida et al., 2010). Shailen and Jeffrey (2020) state that successful IEP planning requires collaborative efforts from both parents and school officials. As stated in IDEA (2004), parents are prioritized in forming the team responsible for creating the IEP. Special education teachers should actively engage parents in the IEP process to enhance their understanding and involve them in implementing intervention activities at home. Regular communication should be maintained to ensure progress toward the IEP goals.

Furthermore, there is a lack of coordination within interdisciplinary groups, and special education teachers are not involving them in the design of IEP. This group includes working methods, speech, and audiological therapy, where their expertise can enhance SEN abilities that necessitate this functional need. An IEP is a formal written document that outlines the educational needs of each student as determined by a multidisciplinary team and specifies the necessary support services (Tran et al., 2018; Walther-Thomas et al., 2000).

### **Conclusion**

Special education teachers oversee IEP instead of SEN in all SEIPs. What determines the successful execution of the IEP is how it is executed. Xu and Kuti (2021) state that the IEP was developed as a valuable resource for instructing kids with special education needs. Teachers must possess sufficient knowledge and meet the requirements of IEP processes to create, implement, and assess IEPs as intended effectively. Teachers who play significant roles in the IEP team should possess adequate knowledge of IEP to enhance their performance, necessitating training services to improve their understanding in this area. The commitment and integrity of special education teachers must be strengthened to ensure that IEPs are not merely created and stored but are consistently implemented for students with special

educational needs. Teachers' professional competence is crucial for the successful execution of the IEP. Special education teachers engage in ongoing professional development by participating in IEP training, seeking current information from various sources, collaborating with other experienced educators, actively participating in teaching activities, and reflecting on their teaching practices to improve. A teacher must be truthful in executing these IEPs for SEN and continuously seek to expand knowledge and the standard of the IEP to maximize the abilities and potential of the SEN.

Subsequently, Internal oversight from school administration, senior assistants, and IEP instructors is not prioritized in creating and implementing this IEP. Rotter (2014) states that schools must give explicit instructions to special education instructors for reviewing and carrying out the IEP. The school manages the creation and execution of IEPs, supports teachers throughout the implementation, and ensures that the IEP benefits SEN. Special education schools establish systems to supervise IEPs, clarify different aspects of IEP development and staffing, enhance the IEP processes, and improve their feasibility and effectiveness. Furthermore, the development and execution of the IEP is a collaborative effort involving teachers, parents, and other professionals, rather than solely the responsibility of teachers. Teachers should promptly communicate with parents and other professionals, actively seek assistance, and address any issues promptly—challenges in enhancing the preparation and execution of IEP, as Shao et al. (2022) discussed. Moreover, the matter of parental involvement in IEP implementation can be tackled by educating them about the significance of constructing IEPs. Collaboration among special education instructors, school administrators, parents of students with special educational needs, and interdisciplinary groups in creating and carrying out the IEP can enhance the IEP's efficacy for students with special educational needs.

Further studies can be conducted in a collaborative manner, involving parents to identify their understanding of their child's IEP and their willingness to contribute to the development of IEP. Recognizing parents as the main advocates for their children, their active participation is not just crucial, but empowering for the drafting and implementation of IEP. This research, along with the importance of uniformity of guidance and continuous professional development for special education teachers, can significantly contribute to enacting and implementing this IEP throughout the state, making everyone feel included in the process.

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