CHAPTER - 4

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM AND GROUP TEACHING

An Individualized education program (IEP) is a written statement that describes what teachers and other professionals will do to meet the special learning needs of a student who is intellectually disabled. An IEP is written for one particular student, and at any time only one IEP is used to guide the special education of that student. The main purpose of individualized education program is to provide appropriate education and training to every child with intellectual disability. Therefore, development of IEP depends on the needs of the child with intellectual disability. In order to establish specific instructional objective, it is necessary to acquire information that is instructionally relevant. This is obtained by assessing the child's current level of performance. The major components of an IEP are general background information about the child, the current level of performance in specified skills, goals and short term objectives, methods and materials required to achieve the objective, time required, the person assigned in training the child to achieve the objective, and evaluation to assess whether the objective has been met or not.

A well planned IEP should have information on the programming for the child by the various specialists who are part of the team of experts and who provide services for the child. For example, the IEP should contain programs in physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy and behavior management, in addition to special education, according to the needs of the child. Hence a good IEP is evolved in consultation with a team of specialists and with whom the special educator coordinates.

Before planning of an IEP, general background information on the child is to be collected. The information includes the child's family background, number of siblings, socioeconomic status, prenatal, natal and postnatal history, developmental history and any other data to get a clearer picture of the child and the environment in which he has been brought up. For example, if the details show that the child belongs to a rural family having parents without formal education, the IEP should contain more drawing sketches and less of written
matter, and the materials used should be that which is available in a rural setting. If the history shows that the child has epileptic fits, which has not been attended to, he would have to be referred to doctors for medical attention. The various details must therefore be collected to understand the child as a whole, before planning any program for him.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment is one of the most important aspects of IEP. The entire program depends on the correct assessment. The special educators must have a basis for selecting instructional goals and objectives. To establish the objectives, it is necessary to acquire instructionally relevant information.

This would include details on:

1. What the child already performs, that is, current level of performance.
2. The effective sensory channel through which the child shows his ability to learn.
3. The behavior problems that the child presents that may deter his progress in learning and which needs to be modified.
4. The effective reinforcement system to motivate the child's behavior.

The basic principle of special education is to accept the child at his level and frame objectives accordingly. But most of the educators are not adequately informed, on how to determine the specific point at which to begin the instruction. Information needed for instruction should consist as mentioned above of specific description of current level of performance and social behavior, learning channel and the reinforcers. These are instructionally relevant. The teachers must be able to differentiate between educationally relevant and instructionally relevant information. Educationally relevant information is needed for placing students in groups, planning school curriculum and developing long term objectives for a group of children. Instructionally relevant information provides details on the child's strengths and weaknesses of the skills to be taught and thereby facilitate development of the training program with realistic goals.

ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT LEVEL OF FUNCTIONING

The teacher observes the child performing a specific activity and then notes down exactly what he does without adding any interpretation to it. For
instance, if a child removes his clothes when unbuttoned, but does not wear or button/unbutton, the teacher must note it down as it is, rather than just writing 'dressing skills inadequate' or 'needs help'. These do not say exactly the level at which the child performs. Similarly, if a child is observed to be attending to activity for 1 to 2 minutes and starts to run around the room after that, the teacher must note it down as observed and not simply 'short attention span' or 'hyperactive'. Likewise, in all the areas of development the skills acquired must be noted as observed. This requires the skill and efficiency of the teacher. If the assessment is wrong, the goal set will also be wrong, either too high or too low for the child. Therefore it is necessary that the teacher develops competency in precisely assessing the current level of functioning and this comes by practice.

A complete assessment of the child may take a week in a natural setting. Certain types of information such as those on the child’s toilet habits and on grooming may have to be gathered from the parents. Here again the precision with which the information is noted down depends on the efficiency of the teacher to initiate and analyze the information.

The assessment of current level of functioning of the child must include his performance on skills in motor, self-help, socialization, language areas, the child’s response in following single and multiple instructions, to identify objects used in everyday life, and concepts of color, size, number, shape, sex, time and money.

If the child is going to normal school and has been referred due to poor scholastic performance, he should be assessed for his grade level functioning using the class books of a regular school, starting at the lowest class. His reading and comprehension ability, writing ability which includes copying, dictation and writing on his own, and arithmetic ability, must be assessed as per grade level.

Assessment of prevocational skills must include his current interest in various works, in and outside the home, sense of responsibility, ability to take care of personal belongings and so on. In each of the above skill areas, the level of functioning of the child should be accurately observed and noted. All the available information on the child should be analyzed in detail before setting annual goals.
SETTING GOALS

An annual goal represents the achievement anticipated for a child in an academic year. This is a prediction, which depends on the sequences of instructions to be carried out during the year. To make such a prediction, the teacher must take into consideration the following:

1. The child's past achievements.
2. Present level of performance.
3. The practicality of the goals chosen.
4. Priority needs of the child.
5. The amount of time to be devoted in training the child towards the particular goal.
6. Parental involvement.
7. Teacher's skills in innovation and use of strategies.

The record of past achievement of the child should show the pattern of progress made till then, or the lack of it through training. By analyzing the earlier schooling instructional methods, child's achievement records and his behavior patterns, the information on past achievement can be studied and conclusions drawn. These cannot be obtained from just I.Q. or achievement tests and the teacher must make it a point to get the relevant data or information from the necessary sources. It is also possible that the rate of progress at certain times may be due to certain specific variables. This must be taken as an important consideration while evolving the IEP.

The current level of functioning of the child is obtained by an assessment of his performance in the skills he has already been training.

Practicality of the annual goals set is important. Goals set too high or the too low will not benefit the child. A child, who has not learnt to use the toilet independently, must not be given academics as his goal. The goals chosen must match the child's current performance level, his needs and the level to which he can be taken. Each child may have different annual goals.

When there is more than one goal to be achieved, they must be prioritized. A child who is not independent in bathing, toileting, feeding, and
dressing, will have, as priority goal, toileting, followed by feeding and other skills. Likewise, the priority goal for a child who has destructive and self-injurious behavior, and also inability to take care of his personal needs, will be control of self-injurious and destructive behavior before training in self-help skills. In an IEP, the annual goals must be written in a sequence as per the priority. The goals must be from simple to complex and ensure that the prerequisite skills are taught before the complex skills.

The priority goals set for home based training may differ from the goals set for the school program, as the functions of the child differs in school and home. The perceived needs of the student will vary in the two environments. Therefore, in the IEP, the goal for school and home must be specified. Feeding skills usually will be a goal to be achieved both at school and home, while teaching to read the name, is a goal for the school. There should be coordination between school and home programs and active participation of the parents must be ensured.

The amount of time necessary to attain a goal influences the number of goals to be selected as annual goals or terminal goals. Therefore, IEP must clearly estimate and mention the instructional time necessary according to the goal. Many goals cannot be achieved in just one year. It should not be mistaken that the setting of annual goals in the IEP means that they should be attained in the same year. The instructional time specified in the IEP to teach a skill is estimation by the special educator. Actual time taken for the teaching may be more or less. For instance, teaching to count meaningfully up to 50 is a goal that may require more than a year's training time. Therefore, the annual goal should be teaching to count meaningfully up to ten. Keeping these points in mind, once the annual goals are specified, the short-term instructional objectives can be selected from the annual goals.

SETTING SHORT TERM OBJECTIVES

The short term objectives, simply means the breaking down of annual goals into smaller units, so that specific strategies can be worked out to meet these objectives in a given period of time. In order to train the child to move from one level of performance to the next level, the IEP should have the short term objectives which would sequentially describe skills between where the child
currently is and where he should move in one year. That is from the current level to the level to be reached within the annual goal. Therefore, the short-term objective must be sequential, with specifically stated desired behavior and criteria, and role of the teacher and the student in achieving the objective within a prescribed period.

The objective stated must be in behavioral terms specifying observable behavior and criteria for mastery. This helps the teacher to clarify exactly what is expected of the student and what he will do. For example, a short-term objective could be, ‘Able to give up to 5 numbers of objects correctly when asked’. By the end of 3 months of training the child will be able to give objects up to 5 numbers when asked, 8 out of 10 times correctly. This is totally observable and measurable.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Sequencing the objectives is one of the key factors in successfully planning for a child. The skills can be broken into smaller parts for ease of teaching. For teaching a child to brush his teeth, activities like, taking the brush, applying tooth paste, holding the brush in an appropriate position and so on, are taught.

The process by which tasks are broken down into sequential components is known as task analysis. This involves isolating, describing, and sequencing the entire necessary sub-tasks, which when mastered will enable the student to perform the annual goal. The process of task analysis is necessary for the development of systematic instructional strategy. Systematic identification of short-term objective involves beginning at the current level of functioning of the student, proceeding forward, identifying each subsequent skill and reaching the final yearly goal. Thus the last short-term objective will be the same as the final goal for the year in the particular skill.

It has to be kept in mind that though skill development follows a broad sequence, many skill areas are not bound by any one strict developmental order. For example, if five teachers are given the job of developing task analysis for a particular skill, they might come up with five different sequences. All may be appropriate procedure to follow. As long as each objective follows the preceding skill in a logical, sequential order, the task analysis can be considered to represent an appropriate teaching strategy.
Many teachers have problems breaking skills into smaller units. It is essential that skills be reduced to minute details, so that the goals can be attained. Though initially it is a tedious process, it is less difficult with practice. It also helps to check if the short term objective set for the child is realistic and manageable.

Optimum opportunity should be provided to the child for a wide range of learning experiences. The materials used must be appropriate to the child and his environment. As the IEP represents the basic plan and skill program to suit the students need, it must be explicitly written.

THE FORMAT FOR WRITING I.E.P.

The educators use a specific format to write the programs which include the demographic data, associated conditions, goals, task / activity, current level, objectives, materials, procedure and evaluation. It is written in two parts: Part-A and Part-B.

Part-A

Demographic Data: - It includes the child's name, age, sex, education, mother tongue, address, parent's name education, occupation, income.

Associated Conditions: - Apart from a specific disability some children will have an additional disability. For example, a child with intellectual disability may have visual disability or hearing loss or a child with cerebral palsy may have intellectual disability or epilepsy.

General Background Information: - The information is collected on child's family background (number of siblings, socio-economic educational status of family members), birth history, developmental history (developmental milestones), school history (previous schooling) and occupational history (previous record on vocational training and work). This information helps in planning IEP. This information is written very briefly focusing on educationally relevant details only.

Documentation of Present Level Performance (Assessment): - This is an important component of I.E.P. planning. Before teacher decides what content to be taught, assessment of current level performance of student is important. Comprehensive data is collected applying available behavioral scales.
Setting Goals: - After completing assessment the next step in planning is selection of annual goals and short-term goals.

Annual goals are the curricular content which a teacher expects her student to achieve over a period of one academic year.

Short-term goals are the specific curricular area selected from the annual goals which a teacher expects her student to learn over a period of short duration.

For each short-term goal separate plan is written for intervention. The content of the format (Part - B) is as follows:

Part-B

Goal: - The content which a teacher expects her student to achieve over a period of time. The teacher may write goals annually or term wise.

Task/Activity: - It is the specific statement of what task/activity to be taught.

Current Level: - The performance of the student with reference to the task/activity to be taught is noted under current level.

Specific Objective: - It is the statement, which specifies what the student learns (content), what the student does with the content (behaviours), how well the student does it (criteria), under what circumstances the student does it (condition) and after what period of teaching the student will achieve the task (duration).

Teaching/ Learning Aids: - An instructional planning is incomplete without selection of appropriate learning aids required for instruction. Learning aids make learning more meaningful and facilitates learning of a task/activity. The teaching aids used with one student in teaching an activity may not be effective with another student in teaching the same activity. Therefore, the teachers need to prepare / select a learning aid to suit an individual student's mode of learning.

Procedure: - The details of how a task/activity will be taught are described under procedure. The procedure includes the strategies to be employed and reinforcers to be used to make learning effective.

Evaluation: - After completion of the training/teaching up to the desired level, the effectiveness of the training/teaching is evaluated. The rate of students achievement in a particular task against a set criteria after teaching is noted under evaluation.
While evaluating the child on his progress, the following must be kept in mind:

1. There should not be bias on the part of the teachers.
2. The analysis of response must be quantitative and qualitative.
3. There should be provision for written and verbal reports of the results.
4. The evaluation must be continuous and should lead on to further planning of programs for the child.

Parents must be consulted at each stage of planning and implementing the IEP. The cooperation of parents is one of the most essential components for a successful training program.

GROUP TEACHING

Sequential instruction and/or concurrent instruction are used while teaching groups of students. In sequential instruction, the teacher rotates from one student to another briefly teaching each student individually. The students in the group may be taught the same or different skills. Alternatively the teacher may sometimes give general instructions or demonstrations at the same time to all students in the group before beginning sequential instruction. Usually, sequential methods of group instruction are more suitable to students functioning at a low level of ability.

In concurrent group instruction, several students are grouped close together. All students are taught by the teacher at the same time. This is the usual form of group instruction. The following points should be kept in mind when the teacher plans concurrent instruction:

(a) Students in the group must be at the same range of general level of achievement.

(b) They should be able to learn from the same methods of teaching and they must have relatively well developed language skills (verbal or manual) and they must be able to imitate a teacher's demonstration.

Depending upon the group and ability of students, the teacher can practice either sequential instruction or concurrent instruction.
Before planning lessons for instruction the teacher carries out an educational assessment. Based on the performance of the student, the teacher selects the content to be taught in each area. Following which the teacher plans each lesson at great length to instruct the student in the classroom.

A lesson plan is the blueprint for all that will be taking place within a given period of time for teaching a particular skill or concept. A lesson plan is prepared for the whole class by considering modifications according to every individual child’s level. Suppose, it is a mathematics class having five children, and the teacher intends to teach number values. The teacher may find that all the children of the class are at different levels:

- One may not have any number concept at all.
- One may be able to count up to 3.
- One may be able to count up to 5.
- One child may be able to write numbers 1 and 2 but have not developed the concept of numbers 1 and 2.
- One child may be able to give 2 objects.

Here we see that if a teacher goes into this class to teach number value without planning and preparation beforehand, she will be at a total loss as to what to teach each child or may land up teaching the same concept to all the children, which may go above the heads of some children and create boredom for the others. The lesson plan is a useful tool in this situation. The lesson plan will help the teacher to visualize the situation in the class and to be ready beforehand. To teach Mathematics to the group of children noted above, the teacher will have to develop a lesson plan considering the educational levels of the students, so that all the students are benefited from the class. Initially the teaching to this group should begin with sequential instruction and they should be brought to more or less equal level before introducing concurrent instruction.

The lesson plan must contain the following information / strategies for teaching the students in a group situation:

- What she will be teaching?
- What is the classroom arrangement needed for that type of group of children?
- What will be the starting point of the lesson?
- What are the teaching/learning aid and methods that will be used?
- How will she be teaching, what strategies she will adopt and so on?
- What reinforcers she will use?
- How she will evaluate the lesson?
- How she will conclude the lesson?

This lesson plan should be ready before the start of every class. This will not only help the teacher to teach systematically, but also improve student's achievement by enabling the teacher to teach an entire class keeping in mind the individual levels of all children. Lesson plans prepared before hand also enable smooth handling of the class by another teacher in case of absence of the class teacher.

Advantages of Writing Lesson Plans

- Teacher will know precisely what she/he is going to teach.
- Writing of the goals and specific objective helps the teacher in determining the activities, material, and testing procedures to be used in evaluating the students' progress.
- It helps the teacher to teach the lesson systematically.
- It helps in the presenting of the learning material and activities effectively.
- It provides an opportunity for the teacher to self appraise her own teaching in terms of student's performance.

Format for the Lesson Plan in Classroom Teaching (Group Teaching)

Area - The area under which the content for teaching is selected - (Self help/Preprimary/Primary etc.).

Task/Topic - The topic selected for teaching - (specify).

Current Level - The performance of students with reference to the topic selected - (state the current level of all the students of the group).
Specific Objective - A statement which hypothesizes what and how much the students should learn under certain given conditions - (write briefly).

Motivation - It is an important factor for learning. Before beginning of instruction, the teacher has to motivate the students by asking / relating the current topic to the previous learning. Mention how motivation is given.

Classroom Arrangement - The physical arrangement of the classroom varies from activity to activity. Hence, specify what sort of seating arrangement is needed for that activity.

Materials - Specify the material to be used for instruction.

Procedure - It is written in terms of the teacher's activity (what the teacher does in teaching), and learner's activity (how the students are expected to react to what the teacher teaches).

Evaluation - After teaching, the teacher is expected to evaluate the student as well as her own teaching (self-evaluation). Self-evaluation is very essential as it helps teachers to visualize the drawbacks in their teaching.