



Is an IEP a useful tool to deliver inclusive education? A survey of General and Special Educators' perception of the IEP usefulness within an inclusive private primary school in Dubai

هي أحد الأدوات والوسائل المفيدة لبرنامج التعليم المنفرد (IEP) لتقديم التعليم الشامل، استبيان لتفهم المعلمين والمدرسين العامين والخاصين لفائدة برنامج التعليم المنفرد (IEP) ضمن المدارس الابتدائية الخاصة الشاملة في دبي

By

Student Name: Barbara van Niekerk

Student ID Number: 2014101156

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of
Masters in Education

Faculty of Education

Dissertation Supervisor
Professor Eman Gaad

February-2016

Abstract

This dissertation examines the circumstances under which inclusion has been developed together with its main supporting document, the Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The IEP as a document has been examined from the teachers' perspective and its usefulness for instructional planning and in delivering inclusive education. This small-scale research has been conducted within a private primary school following British curriculum in Dubai.

To obtain data, triangulation of research methods has been chosen - quantitate and qualitative. The findings were based on survey results, lesson observations and interviews with teachers and Learning Support Assistants.

The study found that the IEP as a document is considered as supportive for both SEN students and teachers. School educators refer to this document on regular bases to support their planning, lessen delivering and assessment and the IEP as a process has been identified as a dynamic and ongoing with all parties involved.

Although the research found obstacles with IEP implementation: a lack of training, restricted time for cooperation and curriculum pressure. It has been noticed that inclusive teaching is a standard. Educators use a range of resources, technics and strategies to enable all SEN learners to take part in the learning process and involved them in school life on many levels.

تشير هذه الدراسة إلى الظروف التي تم من خلالها تطور الدمج كما تشير أيضا إلى الوثيقة الداعمة الرئيسية و التي تعتبر نقطة الارتكاز في عملية الدمج ألا وهي خطة التعليم الفردية

(IEP)

حيث تمت معاينة ودراسة خطة التعليم الفردية، كوثيقة، من وجهة نظر المدرسين، ومدى أهميتها وفائدتها في عملية التخطيط التعليمي، وفي توفير عملية تعليم دامج. وقد تم إجراء هذا البحث على نطاق ضيق في مدرسة ابتدائية خاصة تعتمد المنهج البريطاني في دبي.

وبغرض الحصول على البيانات، فقد تم اختيار منهجيات البحث التثليثي، الكمي والكيفي. وقد اعتمدت الاستنتاجات المحصلة على نتائج الاستبيان، والملاحظات الصفية علاوة على المقابلات واللقاءات التي تم إجرائها مع المدرسين ومساعدتي دعم التعليم.

وقد خلّصت الدراسة إلى أن خطة التعليم الفردية باعتبارها وثيقة تقدم دعماً لكل من الطلاب من ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة والمدرسين على حد سواء. وبالتالي يمكن للمدرسين والمرشدين في المدرسة الرجوع إلى هذه الوثيقة على أساس منتظم بهدف دعم عملية التخطيط الخاصة بهم وإلقاء الدروس وإجراء عمليات التقييم، وقد تم توصيف خطة التعليم الفردية، باعتبارها إجراء، بأنها خطة ديناميكية ومستمرة لكافة الأطراف المعنية.

وبصرف النظر عن أن البحث كشف عن وجود عوائق وعقبات تقف في وجه تطبيق خطة التعليم الفردية: مثل ضعف التدريب، والقيود الزمنية للتنسيق والتعاون فضلاً عن ضغط المنهج، فإنه وجد أن التعليم الدامج هو المعيار الذي يتبناه الجميع. كما كشف البحث أيضاً عن أن المدرسين يطبقون نطاقاً متنوعاً من الموارد والتقنيات والاستراتيجيات بهدف إتاحة الفرصة للطلاب من ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة للمشاركة في العملية التعليمية وضمان أداء دورهم بشكل فعال، ودمجهم ضمن الحياة المدرسية على مختلف الأصعدة والمستويات.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background information

The concept of Inclusive Education can be traced to the early 1970's in the United States, principally as a result of parents of disabled children robust concerns regarding their children's quality of and access to education. Theirs and other voices has been taken into account in 1971 within The General Assembly of United Nations issued Declaration on the rights of Mentally Retarded Persons which gave the rights to all children with disability to a public education (Goodman & Bond 1993). This declaration has been the milestone for inclusion and equality within education systems globally. However, the real catalyst for changes in approaches and education of disabled people was the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1980) followed by UNESCO Salamanca Statement (1994) and then finally in United Nations Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities (2006).

“Schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, and children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups... This has led to the concept of the inclusive school” (UNESCO 1994).

These documents have transformed educational systems in many countries, thereby creating the new opportunities for SEN student education. However, these new opportunities for learners have presented policy makers, implementers, school managers, administrators and educators with additional and new challenges.

“These conditions create a range of different challenges to school systems...the term 'special educational needs' refers to all those children and youth whose needs arise from disabilities or learning difficulties...Schools have to find ways

of successfully educating all children, including those who have serious disadvantages and disabilities... children and youth with special educational needs should be included in the educational arrangements made for the majority of children' (UNESCO 1994).

Inclusive education should be based on a flexible and dynamic educational system, which is responsive to the complexity of a child's needs and diverse school communities. For this system to be effective it should be based on inclusion as a main educational goal; be supported by Governments in regards of legislation, funding and resources with well-educated and appropriately prepared leaders and inclusive policy implementers. In addition, parent participation has been stated as an important element of inclusive education and its guarantee for success (EADSNE 2003).

Although there are many variations of Inclusion and definitions of Special Educational Needs, the principle apperception for school systems is based on human rights, social justice and equal opportunities (UNESCO 1994). However, the perception of inclusion and attitudes towards it are very often based on ethnic and societal approaches, understanding of disabilities and the educational needs of disable learners. These attitudes may serve to shape the actions of those responsible for creating and implementing inclusive policies formulated to make education meaningful. Policy makers, school leaders, teachers and parents should consider these factors as inherent within inclusive education.

"The merit of such schools is not only that they are capable of providing quality education to all children; their establishment is a crucial step in helping to change discriminatory attitudes, in creating welcoming communities and in developing an inclusive society. A change in social perspective is imperative. For far too long, the problems of people with disabilities have been compounded by a disabling society that has focused upon their impairments rather than their potential" (UNESCO 1994).

Despite the best intentions in the concept of inclusive education, the early beginnings were not easy. Schools suffered with SEN identification, teacher classroom practices and teaching strategies, restricted involvement of parents, lack of cooperation between general and special educators, funding and resources (Dudley-Marling 1985, Margolis & Truesdell 1987, Smith 1990, Hill 2010). This directly led to parent disappointment in regards to mainstream education of SEN children, and to them putting pressure on school managers and legislators. As a result, another important legislative initiative was decreed, the Public Law 94-142 "Education for All Handicapped Children Act" (EAHCA) (Hill 2010). This act has been seen as the most important legislative initiative, advocating the rights of disabled learners within public mainstream education. To ensure the quality of education and to ensure provisions compliance, EAHCA legalized the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) as a supportive document for meaningful inclusion (Hill 2010). The main purpose of this document was to increase the effectiveness of inclusive education, minimize categorical placement in favor of least restrictive environment, maximize parental involvement, supervise educational goals and finally to provide methods to assess SEN children's progress (Goodman & Bond 1993).

Unfortunately the implementation of the IEP faced huge system and educator resistance, resulting in poor IEP functionality. Problems identified related to its use for planning day-to-day instructions, lack of access to the document by teachers and finally lack of cooperation between general and special educators regarding provisions delivery. Teacher perception of this document as a useful tool to deliver inclusive education has been described as insufficient (Dudley-Marling 1985, Morgan-Rhode 1980, Smith 1990, Lynch & Beare 1990). Although many educators inputted their experience and ideas to develop the IEP, the disappointment related to the document's functionality within general classroom settings was significant and as a result has forced stakeholders in 1990 to announce another legislative initiative called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Smith 1990).

Since the IDEA has been introduced and later the UN Convention on the Rights

of the Child (1980) and UNESCO Salamanca Statement (1994) “the highest priority to inclusive education” over 92 countries have declared to foster inclusive education. This included the United Kingdom and most of European countries, which up to then had based their education systems on segregation (Ardekani 2012 p. 5).

Nowadays most countries make use of an IEP compulsory for school learners with SEN and have incorporated within it: curriculum and assessment modifications, necessary additional resources, goals and ways of achievement evaluation (EADSNE 2003). Its validity has been strengthened by the “No Child Left Behind Act” from 2004, which makes schools accountable for how children learn and achieve. Standard-based education became the catalyst for individual progress within a school year, especially due to the fact that schools not documenting expected learners’ progress were penalised. This forced schools to increase the accountability and focus on SEN children as well as on non-SEN to achieve their progress (Hill 2010).

However, the initial intention of the IEP was never to establish a legal document that diverted teacher attention away from the child’s needs or flexible teaching towards a formalized and law restricting document not always individualized enough and supporting meaningful education (Rotter 2014, Wickenden 2015).

Research conducted in relation to the IEP usefulness within the inclusive environment has shown that this document is perceived by many teachers’ to be more of a legal requirement or necessity rather than as an instructional tool supporting inclusive and dynamic education. But ultimately, their perception of an IEP usefulness and inclusion in general is very important. In policy implementation teachers are a key factor in determining whether the policy will be successful or not (EADSNE 2003). Their beliefs, approach and attitude towards educating children with SEN drives classroom practices and provision delivery (MBRSG 2015). Their prejudice, cultural background, gender, educational level or professional experience may significantly affect the extent to which teachers will; support and adapt inclusive education, use appropriate

teaching strategies and instructions, make necessary accommodations and modifications and as a result allow SEN children to develop their full potential within general classroom settings (MBRSG 2015). A teachers' willingness may enable inclusion but their resistance impedes it.

Research within the U.A.E. school system, which is at the beginnings of the inclusive journey and where policies and procedures are still at the stage of being under development has shown that teachers' play a significant role within this new local inclusive phenomenon (Gaad 2004, AlGhazo & Gaad 2004, Gaad & Khan 2007).

The Education System in the U.A.E., established over 30 years ago, is continuously evolving and is now developing inclusion policy practices. The rights for education of disable people are guaranteed and legalized by the Federal Law 29/2006 (MSA 2006). To ensure that schools recognize and understand this new concept of education, the Ministry of Education released a "School for All" manual, which provides provisions for special education and guidelines for educators (MOE 2010). The manual specifies the importance of the IEP document in enabling inclusive education and ensuring individualized support for students (MOE 2010).

Although the educational targets are strongly related with inclusion, researchers pointed at many variables affect teacher perception of inclusion within the U.A.E., such as: the type and nature of disability, years of teaching experience and experience working with disable children or their level of education. However, the strongest obstacle identified is teacher lack of knowledge and skills to implement inclusion in classrooms, resulting in a conditional belief in inclusion (MBRSG 2015). Unfortunately, the situation of disable people within Muslim world, based on social stigma and prejudice, very characteristic in the Middle East, has slowed the fostering of this new form of education in the region (MBRSG 2015). To change the situation of disable people within society and increase their chances for independent life and employment, the Dubai Government introduced Law No. 2 of 2014 to protect the rights of people with

disabilities and increase their educational opportunities (MBRSG 2015).

The school system in the U.A.E. is very complex considering that in parallel to public schools following a national curriculum there is large and established privet schooling sector, which follows national curricula from United States, United Kingdom, India, Pakistan and many others (MBRSG 2015). This has lead to the quality of and approach towards inclusion education being varied. In 2013 the Knowledge and Human Development Agency (KHDA) identified that the most favorable situation for SEN children in relation to placement and achievement was within International Baccalaureate (IB) and UK schools (MBRSG 2015). However, even these schools are still subject to challenges and shortcomings, particularly in the areas of curriculum modification and teacher training necessary to deliver the necessary provisions or differentiated teaching methods (MBRSG 2015).

1.2 Rational of the Study

Dubai and the UAE have a very unique cultural and national context, which influences the education system. The two coexisting forms of education: public and privet lay the platform for the status of inclusion within mainstream classrooms. This may result in very divergent approaches toward inclusion and IEP documentation. Teacher perception of its usefulness is dependant on many variables, such as: curriculum foundations, country of graduation, cultural background, personal experience, believes and prejudices. However, as has been highlighted in the KHDA report from 2013, the best quality of education in respect of SEN students has been noticed within schools following the UK and IB curriculum (MBRSG 2015). This may be related to the fact, that these schools, independent to the UAE Ministry of Education regulations, follow the British SEN Code of Practice (BSCP), which assures SEN children access to mainstream education, assessment for SEN and provisions necessary to meet their own potential (BDE/BDH 2015). Although the BSCP does not require an IEP as a mandatory document, this document is almost always used in support of education for SEN children.

“High quality teaching that is differentiated and personalized will meet the individual needs of the majority of children and young people... Schools and colleges must use their best endeavors to ensure that such provision is made for those who need it. Special educational provision is underpinned by high quality teaching and is compromised by anything less”... “Early years providers, schools and colleges should know precisely where children and young people with SEN are in their learning and development. They should:

- *Ensure decisions are informed by the insights of parents and those of children and young people themselves*
- *Have high ambitions and set stretching targets for them*
- *Track their progress towards these goals*
- *Keep under review the additional or different provision that is made for them*
- *Promote positive outcomes in the wider areas of personal and social development, and*
- *Ensure that the approaches used are based on the best possible evidence and have the required impact on progress” (BDE/BDH 2015)*

Within the British education system, the person directly responsible for SEN recognition and provision delivery, based on the best practice, is the teacher. Their attitudes and approaches, teaching strategies and techniques together with monitoring and assessment systems are pivotal in deciding the child's placement, progress and achievement (BDE/BDH 2015). SEN children services and provisions are stated in the IEP. In view of this, the extent and importance to which teachers view and acknowledge the IEP as a useful tool for instructional planning and delivering the best inclusive education is vital.

The objective of this small-scale research is to investigate teacher perception of an IEP as an instrument used in their daily planning, lesson delivering, monitoring child's progress and IEP goals attainment. Critical to this, is the IEP as a document; therefore the study will try to establish

- Teacher and other supporting staff perceptions of an IEP as a product, its individualization and specificity.
- To which extend the IEP plays important role in inclusion children with SEN.
- As the IEP should not only be considered as a product, but also as a process. What is the teachers' level of participation within this process?

1.3 Research Questions

To investigate the teachers' perception of IEP usefulness for instructional planning, its utility as a supportive document for inclusion and the extend to which this document is functional within mainstream schools, three main research questions have been established:

- How effective is the IEP for instructional planning?
- What is the perception of the IEP as a process? This question examines teacher's involvement in creating and evaluating IEP
- What is the perception of the IEP as a product? This question examines the IEP perception as a reliable and individualized document

1.4 Limitations of the Study

This small-scale research has been conducted within only one primary, for profit school, school following the British Curriculum. The teacher population count is 100 educators and response to the survey was only 35%. Additionally, lesson observations and six follow-up interviews were only possible within grades 4 - 6, due to school calendar and events at the time of research. This may have affected the external validity of the research in that the responses may not be representative of the whole teacher population.

The majority of enrolled children in this school are expats; predominantly from British, South African, Canadian or European backgrounds. Only a small percentage of children are Indian, Pakistani or Emirati. This may serve to

eliminate problems related to cultural diversity observe within schools where cultural differentiation is more significant (Gaad 2007). Parent-school communication is base on mutual expectations and language barriers are reduced to minimum. Parents and school have a common approach towards inclusion, base on cooperation and good communication.

Participants in the research are General (GE), Special Educators (SE) and supporting staff. This choice of participants may limit this study as previous research have found that perception of inclusion, IEP utility, assessment of goals and possible recommendation for IEP improvements changes as the type of professional preparations is taken into account (Smith1990, Morgan & Rhode 1983, Mills 2011).

The researched school is well funded with good access to resources, specialists and educational aids. Researchers pointed at socioeconomic status of school and families with quality of inclusion implementation, and as a result the perception of an IEP as a supportive document and the teachers' perception of this document utilities (Hammond & Ingalls 2003).

In addition, the researcher is professionally linked with the researched school and persons. The answers, especially during personal interviews are uncertain, as they may be affected by the interviewees' perception of being judged professionally or socially.

Due to above limitations, further research may be necessary to increase this research validity.

2. Literature Review

This chapter analyzes the literature in order to lay the groundwork for answering the research questions. It focuses on inclusion in general and the IEP's place within it. Furthermore, it presents the research in respect of IEP perception by general and special educators for their day-to-day planning and participation in the IEP process; the IEP impact on classroom practices and instructions. Finally, it presents the IEP as a supportive document within inclusion schools in the U.A.E. However, the research is mainly based on US and GB findings, this is due to that within the U.A.E. the IEP phenomenon has had limited research.

2.1. The IEP - Assumptions, Expectations and Principles

When the IEP was introduced in 1970's, the initial idea was to ensure the best services for SEN children based on individualized planning and professional accountability. However, it was lacking in that it did not provide details on teaching methods. The fundamental purpose of the IEP was to offer all involved parties (child, parents and professionals) the opportunity for input, provide the child with a specific program tailored to a child's needs, education within the least restrictive environment, and increase effectiveness of education by periodic evaluation reviews (Goodman & Bond 1993).

Many admirers of the IEP saw this document as a chance to improve the quality of education but there were also some critical voices. Edwin Martin, Acting Deputy Commissioner of the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped and Terrel Bell, the US Commissioner of Education, resisted a common form of the document, he doubted the effectiveness of this document in regards to curriculum modifications and individualization by imposed a standard format and legal requirements (Goodman & Bond 1993). However in 1975 via the Education for All Handicapped Children Act the IEP became law and the IEP evolved into formal and restrictive document (Gallager & Desimone 1995).

After time, explicit instructional objectives, methods of completion, criteria and procedures for evaluation became a legislative requirement and as a result determined and restricted educational curriculum and methods, decreasing teachers' individuality and flexibility (Goodman & Bond 1993). This directed teacher attention away from the students towards procedures and caused unintended influences on instructions and individualization. From this point onwards IEP's became a legislative and bureaucratic requirements rather than an instructional document for real and effective support for teaching (Goodman & Bond 1993). Researchers admitted that the final legal document, which the IEP became, was not related to the primary intention. Gallagher in 1989 called the IEP a "disaster"; Weintraub explained, "It was never supposed to guide day to day classroom activities" and Abeson confirmed, "Nothing turned out the way it was intended" (cited in Goodman and Bond 1993).

2.2. The IEP as a Product and Process

Kaye and Aserlind (1979) have described the IEP as a product and a process. As a product the IEP is child centered, as a process: teacher, parents and administration personnel centered. Both aspects of an IEP are very important to deliver meaningful education for disabled children (Kaye and Aserlind 1979). As a product the IEP gives the teachers and parents guideline to improve child's academic and social functioning, provides evidence of child's current level of performance, goals and objectives and additional services within general class settings (Kaye and Aserlind 1979). As a process the IEP is form of collaboration between teachers, parents, school administration and child if appropriate. This process is very dynamic and extensible to ensure the best services for SEN child (Kaye and Aserlind 1979).

The IEP process requires two main components that enable education of children with SEN: document and team meetings. It is very important that the interdisciplinary team and the written document work together to fulfill students' needs (Simon 2006).

The IEP team may include any of the following participants: teachers, specialists, school counselor, community specialists, case manager, parents or legal guardians, the student if appropriate (BCSSA 2009). The IEP process if conducted well is dynamic and evolving, based on monitoring and evaluating (BCSSA 2009). It important that members of the team work collaboratively, bring new ideas and information necessary to develop a meaningful IEP. Their presence at periodical meetings is not enough (Lee-Tarver 2004).

Regardless of initial intentions, the IEP became formalized a legal document, which must be developed by an interdisciplinary team and must include the following components (Gallagher & Desimone 1995):

1. A statement of child's present level of performance
2. Annual goals and instructional objectives
3. A statement of specific education services to be provided
4. A statement of the extend to which the child can participate in regular education programs
5. The projected date and anticipated duration of the services
6. Objective evaluation criteria and evaluation procedures
7. A schedule for annual review of the child progress

The content guideline has been design to encourage grater accountability for teachers and educational programs and individualize instructional goals to fulfill child's needs and enable learning (Gallagher & Desimone 1995).

Although in principle the IEP is consistent with any curriculum or teaching style, the provisions and stated measurable objectives makes the IEP likely to be used as an instructional document with fairly narrow curriculum goals, encouraging teachers to stick to previously determined objectives and

approaches as opposed to flexibility towards a child with SEN. Research has shown that highly specific objectives makes it difficult for the teacher to avoid conversion into daily lesson objectives and IEP objectives possibly resulting in curriculum goals restriction (Goodman & Bond 1993).

On the other hand, IEP goals and objectives are often limited in presentation, age inappropriate and not specific enough and sometimes nonfunctional (Gallagher & Desimone 1995). Wall in 1978 researched that children receiving more services had clear and detailed stated objectives and goals (Gallagher & Desimone 1995). Additionally, written goals very often are not linked with child's assessment, evaluation mechanisms or classroom settings and practices. Teachers lack the appropriate training to compose and assess interrelated goals and objectives, resulting in a poor link between goals and classroom practice (Gallagher & Desimone 1995).

Wamba and Dunn (2009) researched the IEP as a tool for effective instructional planning. They analyzed existing policies concerning the content of the IEP in respect of instructional planning and its usefulness for day-to-day teachers working within inclusive environments. They also focused on IEP improvements as a document supporting teaching and learning of SEN children. They present the best ways of goals specification and classroom adaptations to make this document more effective and stressed the importance of learning style recognition for better implementation. They considered the IEP as both a process and product, pointing out common mistakes in making this product useful. In process they emphasize teachers approach towards IEP as critical for successful implementation (Wamba & Dunn 2009).

Research into factors affecting IEP functionality has shown missing data and lack of monitoring. Very often the IEP as a document does not contain goals, objectives, and time to spend in classroom or pullout sessions, evaluation procedures, student's current level of performance parent involvement and justification for placement. Together with poor IEP monitoring, it presents a lack

of serious intent on the part of the IEP teams and may be the result of the IEP process perception by educators (Gallagher & Desimone 1995).

2.3. Teacher perception of an IEP

The IEP, as with any type of policy, to be implemented successfully has to be perceived as a useful and meaningful document. Teachers in the process of implementation are the curtail factor, responsible for: planning, implementing on the level of single lesson, assessing and evaluation. Their willingness is a critical and important factor during the IEP implementation process (McLaughlin 1987). Teacher and school administrator attitudes towards inclusion are strongly related to their acceptance and understanding of the needs of children with SEN within general classroom settings (Lee-Tarver 2006). Research has shown many factors affecting teacher attitudes towards inclusion and at the same time the IEP's usefulness, these include; years of experience, gender, and teacher experiences with disable children (Martinez 2004).

They have to understand and be fully convinced that the IEP as a document and process may change the quality of teaching and learning without exposing them and children to unnecessary difficulties and complications. Due to this, it is important that schools provide training, resources and additional time to enable the IEP implementation process, (McLaughlin 1987).

Research has also found a divergence between teacher perception of inclusion and the IEP's usefulness in theory and its expression in practice. Teachers tended to support inclusion theoretically, however they actual practice was less supportive (Praisner 2003).

Schulte, Osborne and Erchul (1998) and Huefner (2000) found that the main obstacles to implement inclusive education and IEP lies in lack of appropriate teacher skills, time availability for instructional planning, difficulty with implementing individualized instructions within large group of students, lack of fanatical compensation for teachers, increased paperwork, lack of time for

additional teacher training and lack of funding for special education programs (cited in Lee-Tarver 2003). Their findings were consistent with McLaughlin's (1987) regarding policy implementation issues, and pointed at inclusion and IEP as legal requirements rather than as an understood and accepted form of quality education for all as factors affecting teacher perception of the IEP usefulness as an instructional tool.

Research carried in United States by Lee-Tarver in 2006 examines the IEP perception by elementary level general educators within inclusive classrooms. The author examined IEP efficiency in delivering special education, particularly in setting of educational goals and ways to assess the IEP attainment. They researched the impact of the IEP for instructional planning in inclusive classrooms and teacher roles in the development and use of IEP for SEN children. The author focuses on the document and process at the same time. Respondents in this study considered the IEP as a real help to deliver special education within their classroom and the use of this document for instructional planning and educational goals implementation. The findings were optimistic about teacher involvement in the process of IEP development, where the majority considered time spent for IEP development and teamwork as valuable and fully justified. However, Lee-Tarver has emphasized the need of additional teacher training to master the ability of instructional planning for SEN children, especially at the level of pre-service training and mentoring. The author analyzed her findings in relation to student and teacher cultural diversity, and noted that this aspect is very important in respect of special needs identification.

Lee-Tarver's research has contradicted earlier research by Dudley-Marling (1985), who discovered that among special educators working with SEN children, an IEP was not considered as a useful tool for instructional planning. However, teacher responses showed some general utilities of IEP and some of them declared that the IEP assisted them to prepare educational programs and will keep writing it even if it is not legal requirement. Dudley-Marling also found, that the preparation process was time consuming and finally the IEP as a product was not accessible for teachers due to "sitting in locked cabinets".

Respondents did not notice significant improvements when teaching within inclusive environments supported by IEP. Their approach towards this document was overall negative. Dudley-Marling focused on special educators only, as at that time IEP implementation was their responsibility. His research showed a significant lack of cooperation between general and special educators on the level of implementing inclusion and IEP.

Similar research was completed in 1978 and 1980 by Morgan & Rhode (1983). The area of interest was restricted to Special Educators as well as their perception of IEP usefulness for instructional planning, IEP accessibility and participation in its preparation. Their findings were consistent with later research by Dudley-Marling describing the IEP preparation process as time consuming. They pointed at lack of relationship between the IEP as a document and day-to-day classroom practice and its perception as a useful tool. Additionally, Special Educators emphasized a lack of support in the development and implementation of the IEP from other teachers and members of staff. Their findings were consistent with Dudley-Marling and emphasized general tendency in lack of cooperation between general and special educators. Further research among general and special educators, indicated a lack of support as a major factor in the perception of IEP usefulness and as a result they concluded that the IEP is a more legislative than practical document.

Inspired by Morgan & Rhode (1983) and Dudley-Marling (1985) findings, in 1987 Margolis and Truesdell (1987) carried similar research in New York City trying to add more external validity to previous researches (conducted in western states Utah and Colorado). The research was designed to find to which extend previous researches were correct and which factors affect the IEP perception and use by Special Education teachers. The Margolis and Truesdell findings were consistent with previous Morgan & Rhode (1983) and Dudley-Marling (1985), and showed that teachers did not make extensive use of IEP's for instructional daily planning, and tend to see it as a legal requirement rather than an instructional tool. A very important part of this research was to establish factors affecting IEP usefulness in teacher perception. The survey pointed at

unrealistic objectives that do not serve a child's needs and inadequate instructional time for children to finish and obtain IEP objectives. This showed clearly that teachers were not taking part IEP preparation, setting of goals and objectives statements and, as a result were convinced to implement a document written by others. This study showed a dysfunctional situation, where special educators were expected to deliver education based on IEP, in which the development of them had no involvement (Margolis and Truesdell 1987).

Another very important problem highlighted by teachers within this research was related to too many IEP objectives, behavioral problems and dissimilar objectives within the same classroom, children's absence or too many pull out sessions. This showed a lack of teacher training in how to manage instructions within a diverse classroom. Teachers pointed at issues related to IEP as a document that omitted important data on diagnosis or assessment. The research also found that providing teachers with opportunity to influence the IEP content and providing them with appropriate resources might increase teacher commitment to implement IEP and use this document to foster inclusive education and as a result close the gap between policy and real implementation.

The Dudley -Marling and Lee-Tarver studies were extended on in 2014 by Rotter, who examined general and special educator perception on IEP usefulness for instructional planning, the mechanisms to measure IEP goals attainment and IEP accessibility. Rotter also examined teacher views on the documents accuracy and reliability.

In the study, Rotter chose both general and special educators working within primary and secondary schools. However, the research was restricted areas of good socioeconomic status. Good practice and available resources being part of the daily routine within the researched schools was common. Rotter also found that schools should consider additional training for teachers in relation to educational goals assessment; most of the participants highlighted a lack of knowledge in this area. This was also consistent with Lee-Tarver.

Rotter's study though very broad was consistent with previous Lee-Tarver researches in respect of usefulness for instructional planning and utility of document itself.

Rotter also researched IEP accessibility and ways of educational goals attainment. She contradicted Dudley- Marling's earlier findings regarding easy access to the IEP as a document and that teachers found this document not useful for delivering special education in inclusive environment.

She also found that a minority of teachers preferred simplicity and clarity in relation to educational goals and services in the IEP document.

Recent research carried by Julia Wickenden (2015), although in small-scale, confirms existing researches in respect of teachers perception of IEP usefulness. Her research found that teachers tend to perceive the IEP as having little usefulness in planning and teaching, restricting its value to a policy requirement. Her research also focused on factors affecting teachers' perception of IEP usefulness, such as participation in IEP preparation, regular revision, reducing the number of IEP to necessary cases only and pupil participation in setting of targets. She found teacher involvement in the IEP preparation process as one of the main factors affecting their perception of the IEP usefulness for daily planning, and found that teachers very involved perceive its usefulness more than less involved. Additionally she found that teachers did not consult the IEP's more often than has been set by schools policies, which may suggest that they do not find it useful for daily planning and may consider it largely to be a legal requirement.

In her research, Wickenden refers to new British Department for Education (DfE) regulations regarding IEP's and its less directed use (DfE 2011).

The DfE decreased the value of IEP as the only possible tool to provide SEN children with inclusive education, and underlined individually set targets, monitoring and reviews of children achievement by schools and regular contact

with parents and their involvement in education process, as being equally effective (DfE 2011). The DfE admitted that in many cases the IEP became only bureaucratic instrument and could easily be replaced by system more effective and less restricted.

The suggestion made by DfE may be justified by field observations; where there is no link or a small relationship between a written IEP and actual classroom practice and impact on instructions.

2.4. The IEP impact on Classroom Practices and Instructions

The written IEP impact on general and special classroom's practices and instructions in relation to students with mild intellectual disabilities and behavioral disorders has been studied by Lynch & Beare in 1990 and revealed that there is little relation between a written IEP and actual instruction. Classroom practice was mainly found focused on the academic skills of children with intellectual disabilities and behavior management for those with behavioral disorders. It was also found that the objectives, although stated properly and based on child's areas of needs, in practice did not allow students to be engaged in learning process fully. They pointed at shortages in the IEP as a document in relation to criteria for successful performance and evaluation, omitting social and life-skills, learning strategies or active teaching. Additionally, in many cases objectives were not age-appropriate that resulted in teachers' lowering expectations. The research revealed other areas affecting utility of the IEP's related to lack of teacher proper preparation to write objectives and implement IEP.

Gallagher & Desimone in 1995 analyzed and presented a literature review regarding problems related to developing and implementing IEP, based on field experience from previous years. They highlighted various reasons, which may affect the perception of IEP usefulness for instructional planning and decrease its value as an instructional tool. The main areas affecting IEP functionality were found to related to its content, IEP development process shortcomings and

outcomes of the IEP execution. In the area of content, research indicated missing data, goals and objectives set inappropriately, lack of links between goals and services delivered and objectives attainment as a direct result of poor IEP execution monitoring. They pointed at fixed IEP goals as a main problem affecting classroom practices and the use of IEP for instructional planning and working against child-sensitive curriculums. I.e. a child must accomplish IEP goals, and the effect on a teacher's classroom success. If the child did not achieve goals in time, the goals are most likely be transfer to another IEP period. Any changes to existing IEP's are time consuming and require established procedures. Teachers tend rather to stick to the objectives once established than be flexible and modify them thereby reducing the IEP's purpose.

Gallagher & Desimone (1995) confirm Dudlay-Marling and Morgan & Rhode's findings in respect to a legislative fulfillment rather educational support. They also emphasized a lack of support for teachers together with a lack of steady and significant parent involvement as important factors in determining the perception of IEP utility.

2.5. The IEP and Inclusion in the Context of the U.A.E.

In the United Arab Emirates, inclusion has been legislated by Federal Law 29 from 2006. One of the key documents recommended in the Ministry of Education guidelines for SEN education is the IEP (U.A.E. Ministry of Education 2010). IEP's use in the U.A.E. is similar to the USA and UK. The document should contain: Child's current educational performance, long- and short-term academic goals, statement of provisions, delivery period for the provisions, evaluation mechanisms and transition planning if required (Wamba & Dunn 2009). The IEP preparation process is as important as its implementation and requires involvement of teachers, educators, parents and specialists to deliver all services accordingly to child's needs (MOE 2010).

The very sensitive area of education is divided between two coexisting systems: public and private. However, the private sector rapidly expanding and overtaking public institutions (Bradshaw et.al 2004). Public mainstream schools with strong Arabic and Islamic culture are designed and restricted to U.A.E. nationals, where education is based on National Curriculum and provided within single gender classes (Bradshaw et.al 2004). Private schools, which follow their own national curricula and SEN Code of Practice, offer education for all nationalities for over 255 thousand pupils (Gulf News 2015). In 2014/2015 the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) inspected and rated 143 schools. Schools from United Kingdom or United States where inclusive education has a long history were rated highest (Gulf News 2015). However there is a lack of research investigating teacher perception of IEP utility within these schools in relation to local conditions and their own experiences from their home countries. This system divergence may cause significant problems with the understanding of inclusion itself and the role of IEP as a supportive document.

Mostly researchers affiliated with local universities have researched this situation within public schools. They found many issues related to implementation of inclusion and, as a result teachers approach towards IEP as an instructional tool.

Ardekani (2012) has researched one public school in Dubai in relation to IEP process and implementation as well, as the relation between theory proposed by "School for All" (2010) and field practice. She found that the gap between theory and practice regarding IEP process is apparent and may be related to inclusion as a relatively new phenomenon within researched school. The IEP document itself, and procedures required for successful implementation, lacking clarity and specificity. However, special and general educators as well as administrators understood the idea and purpose of the IEP. Her findings were consistent with early US researches in regard to the role of Special Educators as the main responsible for IEP process and implementation, which may be related to their professional preparation and trainings needed to successfully

include SEN child within researched school. The input and role of general educators has been described as not sufficient to implement IEP fully.

Although legislation requires inclusive policies and an IEP as the main document to deliver inclusive education, a principle factor determining successful inclusion is teacher approach. In Al Ghazo and Gaad (2004) research into general teacher attitudes towards inclusion within regular classrooms in the U.A.E. it was found that teachers in the U.A.E. tend to have negative attitudes towards children with SEN. The study also noted that the number of years of experience impacts on teacher perception regarding special needs, and that more experienced teachers tend to be more accommodating and open towards inclusion.

Teacher attitudes towards inclusion of children with disabilities, within private primary schools follow Indian and Pakistani curricula in Dubai, were researched by Gaad and Khan (2007). They looked into teachers' perception when working with SEN children, adapting instructions and knowledge of relevant information needed to work with such a students within mainstream classrooms. Their perception of working with SEN children within general classroom was found to be dependent on the type of disability and skills required. Children with Learning Disabilities, Behavioral Disorders, Health Impairments and Physical Disabilities were more accepted than those with Intellectual Challenges, Hearing Impairment, Communication Disorder and Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities. However, the teacher perception is that their inclusion within mainstream schools is associated with excessive work. Teacher ability to adapt instructions according to children's needs and adjust assessments was generally considered as poor. This appears to be related to their lack of knowledge of disability classifications and strategies necessary to manage this within diverse and mainstream classrooms.

Gaad (2004) researched the inclusion of children with exceptional learning needs included in regular primary classes in the U.A.E. and analyzed the existing policies and legal aspects as well as teachers', parents' and school

leaders' approach towards inclusion. This highlighted many deficiencies within the system affecting the inclusion of all learner types. She found numerous problems related to inclusion itself, such as: a lack of tools to recognize and assess children with learning disabilities, lack of proper policies and code of practice including IEP development and implementation, lack of teacher training necessary to handle diverse and inclusive classrooms. Gaad's research emphasizes the problems that affect the newly introduced inclusive teaching, including: lack of resources, trainings and social understanding and awareness.

AlGhazo & Gaad (2004), Gaad (2004) and Gaad & Khan (2007) research showed that teachers' tend to include children with disabilities in special classes rather than in the general classroom and the way to inclusion in its literal meaning is still not established. Teachers and school administrators need to change their attitudes towards disabilities and inclusion to enable this form of education give to all children equal opportunities regardless their needs.

Given that little research has been conducted into private schools within the U.A.E. in regards to inclusion, the most valuable source of information is from the KHDA's Annual Report (2013), which describes the situation as complex and heterogeneous. Private schools in the U.A.E. are for profit models and due to this, tend to be focus on scores and student achievement. This situation effects SEN children admissions, and further inclusion implementation as this form of teaching does not increase overall external exams results which schools are rated on (Gaad 2011 cited in MBRSG 2015). In most local schools following IB and UK curriculums the progress in learning, curriculum modifications and support, parent partnership and quality of SEN provisions has been described as a good or outstanding (MBRSG 2015). However, the strongest challenge was found to be a lack of teacher training in identification and supporting students with SEN and access to specialist staff. For profit schools in general do not provide additional funds for human resources and training (MBRSG 2015).

An important factor that drives outstanding or highly rated schools to foster inclusive education is the school management's commitment to and understanding of inclusion philosophy (MBRSG 2015).

3. Methodology

This chapter justifies the procedures and methods used to conduct this research. The research approach, strategies, participants, choice of data collection and tools used are discussed. Finally, ethical considerations and validity of the research are presented to support the research findings.

3.1 Research Approach and strategy

Qualitative and quantitative research methods are considered as two fundamentally different paradigms, where each is seen to be incompatible with the other (Brannen 2005). This is based on two different epistemological assumptions and research cultures working against convergence and advocates that these methods should not be mixed. These researchers, labeled as Purists, advocate mono-method studies (Onwuegbuzie & Leech 2005). Another group of researchers, Situationists, advocates an approach similar to Purists, however they admit that certain types of studies required qualitative and some quantitative methods, and that both have value and may be justified. The two research paradigms have created two research subcultures, representing from one side, in depth and rich observational data and from the other, hard and generalizable survey data (Onwuegbuzie & Leech 2005).

On the other end of the spectrum are a group of investigators called Pragmatists, represented inter alia by Newman, Benz, Sieber, Miller, and Fredericks, which advocate integrating methods within a single study. They claim that qualitative and quantitative methods have strengths and weaknesses, which should be utilized by the researcher in order to better understand the researched phenomenon (Onwuegbuzie & Leech 2005). Combining these two approaches helps to develop a conceptual framework for the studied phenomenon, to validate quantitative data by referring to information gained through the qualitative stage of study, combining research concerns with participant voices (Onwuegbuzie & Leech 2005).

The research used in this study is Triangulation, one of the commonly used

methods in the mixed-method paradigm. Both quantitative and qualitative researchers use triangulation in an attempt to maximize the internal and external validity of their study (Onwuegbuzie & Leech 2005). This method does not distinguish between quantitative and qualitative research approaches, but rather puts those perspectives into dialogue which leads to better understanding of research findings (Creswell 2009, Mertens & Hesse-Biber 2012).

Triangulation is defined in social science as a mixing of data or methods. It brings together different viewpoints and thus provides depth to the researched problem and is considered to give a better validation. (Olsen 2004). According to Olsen (2004), a more profound form of triangulation is mixing of methodologies such as surveys together with interviews. Researchers have described the methodological pluralism and pointed at its use to access different facts about social phenomenon (Olsen 2004).

Discussion about mixed methods usually contrasts qualitative and quantitative methods, restricting them to “information reach” qualitative samples and “representative” quantitative samples (Collins & Evans 2015). Put simply, the generalization is that quantitative methods give representativeness and qualitative data provides depth (Collins & Evans 2015). However, there are circumstances when quantitative large survey can be obtained by qualitative methods like interview or field observation and is more appropriate when the researched population is “uniformed” (Collins & Evans 2015). Researches defined a “uniformed” population as a situation, where every member is representative for the entire population, due to the fact that a social group shares a form of common life (Collins & Evans 2015). In a “uniformed” society, small-scale quantitative research supports survey methods to obtain representative and in-depth data.

The school chosen is considered to be a uniformed environment in respect to the IEP’s perception. This is based on aspects such as: teacher qualifications,

curriculum thought, language of instruction and approach towards inclusion and IEP based on obtained teaching qualifications. However, this environment is also culturally diverse, with varied years of teaching experience, personal understanding of special needs and individual attitudes towards disability, which may impact on the research findings. Due to this, separate considerations have been taken to establish the general tendency.

3.2 Field Selection

The selected school is a private for profit primary school following the British curriculum with a coed student population of over 1000. This school is located in an area in Dubai which predominately populated by European nationals.

The school has been selected due to it's being considered as inclusive by both school management and parents. Additionally, the KHDA has rated the school as outstanding for the last six years. This school belongs to a private educational chain with practices and approaches common to many others within the group.

The researcher is professionally associated with this school, allowing for simplification in data collection. The researcher also participates within the target group and uses her experience to provide data and evidence, thus giving insight into the researched phenomenon (Collins & Evans 2015).

The school follows British Special Educational Needs Code of Practice requirements, has an Inclusion Department with a Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) who is responsible for overseeing provisions, monitoring pupils progress, cooperating with parents and all involved in child development agencies and institutions. This corresponds strongly with concept of inclusive school and SEN standards in UK (EADSNE 2003).

The school has a strong inclusive character and enrolls children with many types of disabilities. These range from Down syndrome, Asperger, Autism,

Cerebral Palsy, HDAD/ADD, Global Developmental Delay, Dyslexia to Dyscalculia and other learning disabilities. All children with SEN receive an IEP, based on an external assessment. In addition, the school provides internal assessment for dyslexia and dyscalculia, which is a base for additional support within a Dyslexia Unit. This support is based on a specifically prepared IEP, and provides additional Literacy or Math support during general classes. The Early Intervention Program is seen as one of the most important inclusive initiatives within this school.

There two other groups of children receiving additional support, however not based on an IEP: children who are considered as gifted and talented and English Language Learners. These children are provided with additional classes, mainly in small groups or one to one sessions but are not considered as SEN.

Currently approximately 7.5 % of all enrolled students receive support regarding their SEN.

Within this school, the IEP functions as a supportive document, not only among General Educators (GE's) but also among Learning Support Assistants (LSA's) and Special Educators (SE's). This setting can be considered as optimal in researching GE, LSA and SE perception of IEP's usefulness for inclusion.

3.3 Participants

The participants for the research are GE's, SE's and LSA's, all of whom work directly with IEP's. Most of the participants are British graduated, all with pedagogical preparation and at minimum a Bachelor degree. UK graduated educators have basic training during their teaching courses related to SEN, including identification, assessment and delivering provisions for SEN (EADSNE 2003). Teaching Assistants (TA) or Learning Support Assistants (LSA) supports all teachers working within an inclusive environment. (Appendix 1)

The survey has been distributed to all 100 educators who work on daily bases with SEN students and IEP.

To triangulate the quantitate data obtained, three lesson observation have been completed in grades 4 and 6. In addition, three teachers and three LSA's have been interviewed.

Parents have been purposely omitted from this research, as their perception of an IEP is not subject of this study.

3.4 Data Collection

To maximize the research validity and for a better understanding of the researched problem, a mixed method research has been used; both quantitative and qualitative data has been obtained by:

3.4.1 Survey

The quantitative data in this research has been obtained from responses to an online survey. The questionnaire together with covering letter and assurance of confidentiality has been sent to all chosen educators via the schools internal communication system. To maximize the amount of responses the procedure has been repeated three times.

The questionnaire created has been influenced by the methods used by Rotter (2014), Lee-Tarver (2006), Dudley- Marling (1985) and Morgan & Rhode (1979) in their research. This research takes a similar research perspective to these in that it attempts to answer congruous research questions and provide data in relation to the same topic.

A Likert scale based questionnaire contains number of statements to obtain necessary data to answer research question (Appendix 2). Each question was designed with five levels of strength at which the respondents agree or disagree

with given statement. Clarity and simplicity of statements was set as a priority to minimize any misunderstandings from the respondents. However, the researcher acknowledges that respondent's individual interpretation of the questions may affect the survey. In view of this, the most important factor during the analysis of the survey was to determine the majority viewpoint of the problem between the continuum of "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" and to reveal pattern in educators feelings about IEP (Barua 2013).

The questionnaire has been divided into four parts. The first part contained demographic characteristic of participants, position at the school and years of professional experience. The second part contains five questions to establish the level of participation and perception of the IEP as a process. The third part is related to the IEP impact on teachers daily instructional planning and their actual use and reviewing of the IEP. The last part of the questionnaire contains statements related to IEP as a document, its structure, specificity and clarity. One open-ended question has been included in the questionnaire, to allow educators present their individual experience and perception of IEP as a tool to enhance lessons.

3.4.2 Lesson Observations

A qualitative, ethnographic research approach has been chosen to support quantitatively obtained data. In particular to establish the usefulness of IEP for instructional planning and instructions differentiations within general settings by field observation. For this, lesson observations were conducted to find out to which extend the IEP has been utilized. Prior to the observation, the IEP's of students participating in particular observed lessons have been analyzed regarding IEP's goals, modifications or adaptations, which should be included in general settings for particular students.

To ensure fair observations, three Mathematics lessons were chosen in grade 4 and 6. The main area of interest is focused towards instructional strategies. Researchers like Hestens (1987) and Kirschner et.al (2006) pointed at

constructivist instructional strategies supported by direct learning or scaffolding as the most effective with children within inclusive settings. McGhie-Richmond's (2007) research showed that explicit direct instructions are beneficial for children with SEN and together with good classroom management and maximizing instructional time may increase children involvement and response. Moreover, the best instructional approach is the combination of all direct and indirect instructions, peer tutoring, cooperative learning, formative assessment and good time and classroom management (Dixon 1999, Vasquez 2008).

The lesson observations also focused on the IEP implementation regarding: accordingly differentiated instructions, adaptations and modifications during observed lesson. The observation aim was to establish to which extend IEP has been utilized to support learning process.

As recommended by other researchers, lesson observation sheets have been designed, to protocol observational data (Creswell 2009). (Appendix 3)

3.4.3 Interviews

To support data collection in the lesson observations, a qualitative semi-structured interview has been conducted with teachers and LSA's. The purpose was to confirm the observed lesson with teacher opinion of the IEP usefulness within this particular lesson. This method also provided an opportunity to understand the teachers' approach towards the IEP as a tool as well as to allow them to express their own view and opinions (Cohen & Crabtree 2006). The teachers and LSA's interview questions differed in vie of their respective roles within the observed lessons and use of IEP. (Appendix 4 and Appendix 5)

The teacher interviews contained 13 questions, regarding the use of IEP for instructional planning in relation to this particular lesson, teachers' participation in IEP process, their professional preparation for IEP implementation, ways of cooperation with special educators, and their general perception of the IEP's usefulness within day-to-day work and lesson delivered.

The LSA interview contained 12 questions, related to their use of IEP in their day to day work with SEN children, support provided by special educators in case to implement the IEP goals, LSA's participation in IEP process and their general perception of its usefulness in their daily work.

Data collection was by notes taken by the interviewer; all notes were expanded on immediately after the interview to maximize accuracy and precision of given answers as recommended by Boyce and Neale (2006).

3.5 Validity and Reliability

To increase the validity and reliability of the study, methodological triangulation has been used. As recommended by other researchers, triangulation provides multiple ways to established truth in researched problems and improves understanding of findings (Golafshani 2003). This small-scale research has been triangulated with interviews, observations, survey and documents analyses in order to provide range of viewpoints and more complete picture of researched problem.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are an integral part of any research, as they are directly linked with honesty and integrity and serve not only ensure participants of their wellbeing but are also reflected in the results. This becomes more relevant when conducting surveys, one-on-one interviews or when the researcher is professionally involved with the target group.

Due to above, the research has been conducted with a view to respecting all participants, their dignity and anonymity.

All educators and management have been informed upfront of the purpose and objectives of the study. A letter from the University has been presented to assure parties of the intent and manner in which the study will be conducted.

All participation was on voluntary bases. The school and participants were informed about the confidentiality of any obtained data including name of the school, names of participants and observed children. To protect their anonymity, all interviewee's answers were recorded by means of written notes only, interviewees were also given the option to read all notes and add comments.

All participants of the survey were informed of the way the electronically obtained data would be stored and used. In addition, they were assured that after the data was analysed, all survey questionnaires would be removed from the researchers mailbox and destroyed.

In view that the researcher is professionally linked with the researched school and all participants, confidentiality has been expanded to the social environment. The researcher assured all participants no information obtained during any personal conversations would be used within and outside of the researched school.

4. Findings and Discussion

In this chapter both quantitative data obtained during survey responses and qualitative data from lesson observations and semi-structure interviews are presented. Survey findings based on five choices Likert scale present the respondent's attitudes toward IEP and its usefulness for instructional planning. Additionally, the results from lesson observations and semi-structured interviews of teachers and LSA will be detailed.

All results are presented in the form of numbers and percentages characteristic for quantitative data analyses and narrative discussion specific for qualitative data presentation.

The data analysis has been divided into three parts according to the type of data collection.

First, survey findings will be presented based on four main parts of the questionnaire: demographic characteristics, IEP as a process, IEP impact on teachers daily planning and IEP as a document supported by the graphs at the end of the chapter. Additionally, data is presented in relation to the respondents' position within school: Teachers/ Specialist Teachers, Special Needs Teachers, Learning Support Assistants and Teaching Assistants. At the end of the chapter all findings are presented collectively.

The second section presents the lesson observation findings in relation to IEP implementation and its real utilities within general setting.

The third part presents the data obtained during interviews in relation to teachers and LSA's view on IEP usefulness during their daily work with particular children, their involvement in the IEP process and support they receive from special educators and school management.

4.1. Survey Data

4.1.1. Demographic Characteristics

The total number of respondents to the survey was 35, which represents 35% of all distributed survey questionnaires. The vast majority of respondents are

females, 30 out of 35 (86%). 21 respondents (60%) of all responses are Teachers or Specialist Teachers, 10 respondents (29%) are Learning Support Assistants, 3 Special Needs Teachers (9%) of all respondents. Only one Teaching Assistant responded to the survey, which is 3% of all possible responses. 49% of respondents represent educators with 7 and more years of experience, 25.5% of respondents declared 4-6 years of experience. 25.5% have experience of less than three years.

One respondent does not work with children having IEP, the rest declared to have within the classroom IEP's implemented from 1-5 in general settings to 11-18 in specialists classes including Dyslexia or Dyscalculia.

71.5% respondents which includes all Teachers, Specialist Teachers, Special Educational Needs Teachers, one Teaching Assistant and three LSA are United Kingdom graduated. All LSA's are graduates from institutions outside of the UK; India – 4 respondents, U.A.E – 2 respondents and one each from South Africa, New Zealand, Austria and Sri Lanka respectively. (See Appendix 1)

4.1.2. Teachers and Specialist Teachers

4.1.2.1. IEP as a Process (Figure 1)

With the statement: "I review the IEP and assess goals attainment on a regular bases". 86% of teachers and specialist agree (7 strongly agree and 11 agree). Only 10% stated that they disagree and 5% have remained neutral.

With the statement: "I believe that the IEP process is legal requirement and time-consuming, without any significant impact on child's learning process". 66 % disagree (10 strongly disagree and 4 disagree). 28 % choose to be neutral to this question, which may indicate that they do not have opinion about the statement or hesitate to agree with it. Only one respondent agreed with the statement.

With the statement: "I believe that the IEP process is helpful for teachers". 81%

of teachers agree (10 strongly agree and 7 agree). 14% have remained neutral and 5% disagree.

With the statement “I believe that the IEP process is helpful for the child”. 62% strongly agree and 38% agree (13 and 8 respectively). It can be noted that for Teachers and Specialists teachers the importance of an IEP for child’s learning and development is indisputable. However, earlier findings shown that 28% of Teachers are not fully convinced that the IEP is a document which has a significant impact on child’s learning process. This contradiction may be the result of misunderstanding of previous question or be due to uncertainty about the IEP’s function in general and its legal function within education system.

With the statement “I take part in the IEP process”. 86% of respondents agree (15 strongly agree and 3 agree). However, 14% of teachers disagree to taking part in this process, which may be related to their professional position (Music, PE or IT Teachers) within school or lack of children with IEP within their classrooms.

4.1.2.2. IEP Impact on Daily Planning (Figure 2)

With the statement: “In my school IEP is easy accessible”. 81% of teachers agree (9 strongly agree and 8 agree), 5% disagree and 14% have remained neutral. This may suggest educators who do not work with IEP’s or do not use them in their daily work or the accessibility from their perspective is difficult.

With the statement: “I review the IEP at least once a semester”. 71% of teachers agree (8 strongly agree and 7 agree). 14% have remained neutral and 15% disagree (1 strongly disagree and 2 disagree).

To the statement: “I review the IEP at lest once a month”. 57% agreed (4 strongly agreed and 8 agreed). 19% were neutral and 24% disagreed (1 strongly disagreed and 4 disagreed).

The statement: “I review the IEP at least one a week”. 19% agreed (1 strongly

agreed and 3 agreed). 19% have remained neutral and 62% disagree (3 strongly disagree and 10 disagree).

Not surprisingly, the answers to the statements: “The IEP helps me to individualize and adjust assessments accordingly to the child’s needs” and “The IEP helps me to prepare individualized lesson objectives accordingly to the child’s need” were identical. 76% of respondents have agreed (7 strongly agreed and 9 agreed) that the IEP useful to individualize lesson objectives and assessments. 10% disagreed with those statements. 14% have remained neutral.

The statement: “Does the IEP support you to develop meaningful and appropriate planning for children in your classroom”. 76% agreed (4 strongly agreed and 12 agreed). 14% have remained neutral and 10% disagree.

4.1.2.3. IEP as a Document (Figure 3)

With the statement: “The IEP is complicated and time-consuming document” 62% of respondents disagree (4 strongly disagree or 9 disagree). 10% of teachers agreed with the statement. Surprisingly, 28% do not have opinion about the statement. This may be due to the fact that they do not have experience with creating or using an IEP.

With the statement: “The IEP provides me with clear provisions for SEN”. 86% agree (9 strongly agree and 9 agree).

With the statement: “The IEP provides me with clear procedures of goal attainment”. 85% agree (7 strongly agree and 11 agree). 10% have remained neutral and 5% disagreed.

With the statement: “The IEP as a document has a clear structure and form” 81% agree (10 strongly agree and 7 agree). 14% have remained neutral and 5% disagreed.

With the statement: "Goals and objectives stated in the IEP are individualized and provide support for better lesson planning and assessment". 81% agree (10 strongly agree and 7 agree). 10% have remained neutral and 10% disagreed.

4.1.3. Special Needs Teachers

4.1.3.1. IEP as a Process (Figure 4)

With the statement: "I review the IEP and assess goals attainment on a regular bases". 100% of SEN teachers strongly agree.

With the statement: "I believe that the IEP process is legal requirement and time-consuming, without any significant impact on child's learning process". 100 % disagree.

With the statement: "I believe that the IEP process is helpful for teachers". 100% of teachers agree (1 strongly agree and 2 agree).

With the statement: "I believe that the IEP process is helpful for the child". 100% (1 strongly agree and 2 agree).

With the statement: "I take part in the IEP process". 100% of respondents strongly agree.

4.1.3.2. IEP Impact on Daily Planning (Figure 5)

With the statement: "The IEP is easy accessible". 100% agree (2 strongly agree and 1 agree).

With the statement: "I review the IEP at least once a semester". 30% (1) strongly agree and 70% (2) disagree.

With the statement: "I review the IEP at least once a month". 70% agree (1 strongly agree and 1 agree) and 30% (1) disagree.

With the statement: "I review the IEP at least once a week". 33% (1) strongly agree, 33% (1) remained neutral and 33% (1) disagree.

With the statement: "The IEP helps me to individualize and adjust assessments accordingly to the child's needs". 67% strongly agree and 33% disagree.

With the statements "The IEP helps me to prepare individualized lesson objectives accordingly to the child's need" and "Does the IEP support you to develop meaningful and appropriate planning for children in your classroom" were identical. 67% strongly agree and 33% agree.

4.1.3.3. IEP as a Document (Figure 6)

With the statement: "The IEP is complicated and time-consuming document". 100% strongly disagree.

With the statements: "The IEP provides me with clear provisions for SEN", "The IEP provides me with clear procedures of goal attainment" and "The IEP as a document has a clear structure and form". 100% agree (2 strongly agree and 1 agree).

With the statement: "Goals and objectives stated in the IEP are individualized and provide support for better lesson planning and assessment". 100% strongly agree.

4.1.4. Learning Support Assistant

4.1.4.1. IEP as a Process (Figure 7)

With the statement: "I review the IEP and assess goals attainment on a regular bases". 90% agree (4 strongly agree and 5 agree). 10% have remained neutral.

With the statement: "I believe that the IEP process is legal requirement and time-consuming, without any significant impact on child's learning process". 90 % disagree (6 strongly disagree and 3 disagree). 10% have remained neutral.

With the statement: "I believe that the IEP process is helpful for teachers". 90% of teachers agree (4 strongly agree and 5 agree). 10% have remained neutral.

With the statement: "I believe that the IEP process is helpful for the child". 70% agree (6 strongly agree and 1 agree). 30% have remained neutral.

With the statement: "I take part in the IEP process". 80% agree (4 strongly agree and 4 agree). 20% have remained neutral.

4.1.4.2. IEP Impact on Daily Planning (Figure 8)

With the statement: "The IEP is easy accessible". 70% (7) strongly agree. 30% (3) have remained neutral.

With the statement: "I review the IEP at least once a semester". 50% (5) strongly agree. 30% (3) have remained neutral and 20% (2) disagree.

With the statement: "I review the IEP at least once a month". 30% agree (1 strongly agree and 2 agree). 70% (7) have remained neutral.

With the statement: "I review the IEP at least once a week". 60% (6) agree and 40% have remained neutral.

With the statement: "The IEP helps me to individualize and adjust assessments accordingly to the child's needs" 70% agreed (1 strongly agree and 6 agree) and 30% have remained neutral.

With the statement: "The IEP helps me to prepare individualized lesson objectives accordingly to the child's need". 70% agreed (7) and 30% (3) remained neutral.

With the statements: "Does the IEP support you to develop meaningful and appropriate planning for children in your classroom". 60% (6) agreed 40% (4) have remained neutral.

4.1.4.3. IEP as a Document (Figure 9)

With the statement: “The IEP is complicated and time-consuming document”. 90% disagree (6 strongly disagree and 3 disagree) and 10% have remained neutral.

With the statements: “The IEP provides me with clear provisions for SEN”, “The IEP provides me with clear procedures of goal attainment”, “The IEP as a document has a clear structure and form” and “Goals and objectives stated in the IEP are individualized and provide support for better lesson planning and assessment”. 100% agree (7 strongly agree and 3 agree).

4.1.5. Teaching Assistant

Due to the fact, that only one Teaching Assistant has responded to the survey, the significance of the data is minimal. To present the responses in relation to the professional group within research group is impossible, as the sample is too small and does not provide meaningful information. However, TA’s response has been included in the overall findings in Section 4.1.7.

4.1.6. Survey as Overall for all Groups

4.1.6.1. IEP as a Process (Figure 13)

With the statement: “I review the IEP and assess goals attainment on a regular bases”. 85.7% agree (14 strongly agree and 16 agree). 5.7% (2) have remained neutral and 8.5% (3) disagree.

With the statement: “I believe that the IEP process is legal requirement and time-consuming, without any significant impact on child’s learning process”. 74 % disagree (10 strongly disagree and 16 disagree). 23% (8) have remained neutral and 3% (1) agree.

With the statement: “I believe that the IEP process is helpful for teachers”. 86%

of teachers agree (16 strongly agree and 14 agree). 11% (4) have remained neutral and 3% (1) disagree.

With the statement: "I believe that the IEP process is helpful for the child". 91% agree (21 strongly agree and 11 agree). 9% (3) have remained neutral.

With the statement: "I take part in the IEP process". 83% agree (22 strongly agree and 7 agree). 6% (2) have remained neutral and 11% (4) disagree.

4.1.6.2. IEP Impact on Daily Planning (Figure 14)

With the statement: "The IEP is easy accessible". 77% (18 strongly agree and 9 agree). 20% (7) have remained neutral and 3% (1) disagree.

With the statement: "I review the IEP at least once a semester". 60% agree (14 strongly agree and 7 agree). 20% (7) have remained neutral and 20% disagree (1 strongly disagree and 6 disagree).

With the statement: "I review the IEP at least once a month". 60% agree (6 strongly agree and 11 agree). 34% (12) have remained neutral and 17% disagree (1 strongly disagree and 5 disagree).

With the statement: "I review the IEP at least once a week". 31% agree (2 strongly agree and 9 agree). 29% (10) have remained neutral and 40% disagree (3 strongly disagree and 11 disagree).

With the statement: "The IEP helps me to individualize and adjust assessments accordingly to the child's needs" 72% agree (10 strongly agree and 15 agree). 20% (7) have remained neutral and 9% (3) disagree.

With the statement: "The IEP helps me to prepare individualized lesson objectives accordingly to the child's need". 74% agree (9 strongly agree and 17 agree). 20% (7) have remained neutral and 6% (2) disagree.

With the statements: "Does the IEP support you to develop meaningful and

appropriate planning for children in your classroom”. 74% agree (14 strongly agree and 20 agree). 20% (7) have remained neutral and 6% (2) disagree.

4.1.6.3. IEP as a Document (Figure 15)

With the statement: “The IEP is complicated and time-consuming document”. 6% agree (1 strongly agree and 1 agree). 17% (6) have remained neutral and 77% (14 strongly disagree and 13 disagree).

With the statement: “The IEP provides me with clear provisions for SEN”. 91% agree (18 strongly agree and 14 agree). 3% (1) have remained neutral and 6% (2) disagree.

With the statement: “The IEP provides me with clear procedures of goal attainment”. 91% agree (16 strongly agree and 16 agree). 6% (2) have remained neutral and 3% (1) disagree.

With the statement: “The IEP as a document has a clear structure and form”. 91% agree (20 strongly agree and 12 agree). 6% (2) have remained neutral and 3% (1) disagree.

With the statement: “Goals and objectives stated in the IEP are individualized and provide support for better lesson planning and assessment”. 91% agree (21 strongly agree and 11 agree). 6% (2) have remained neutral and 3% (1) disagree.

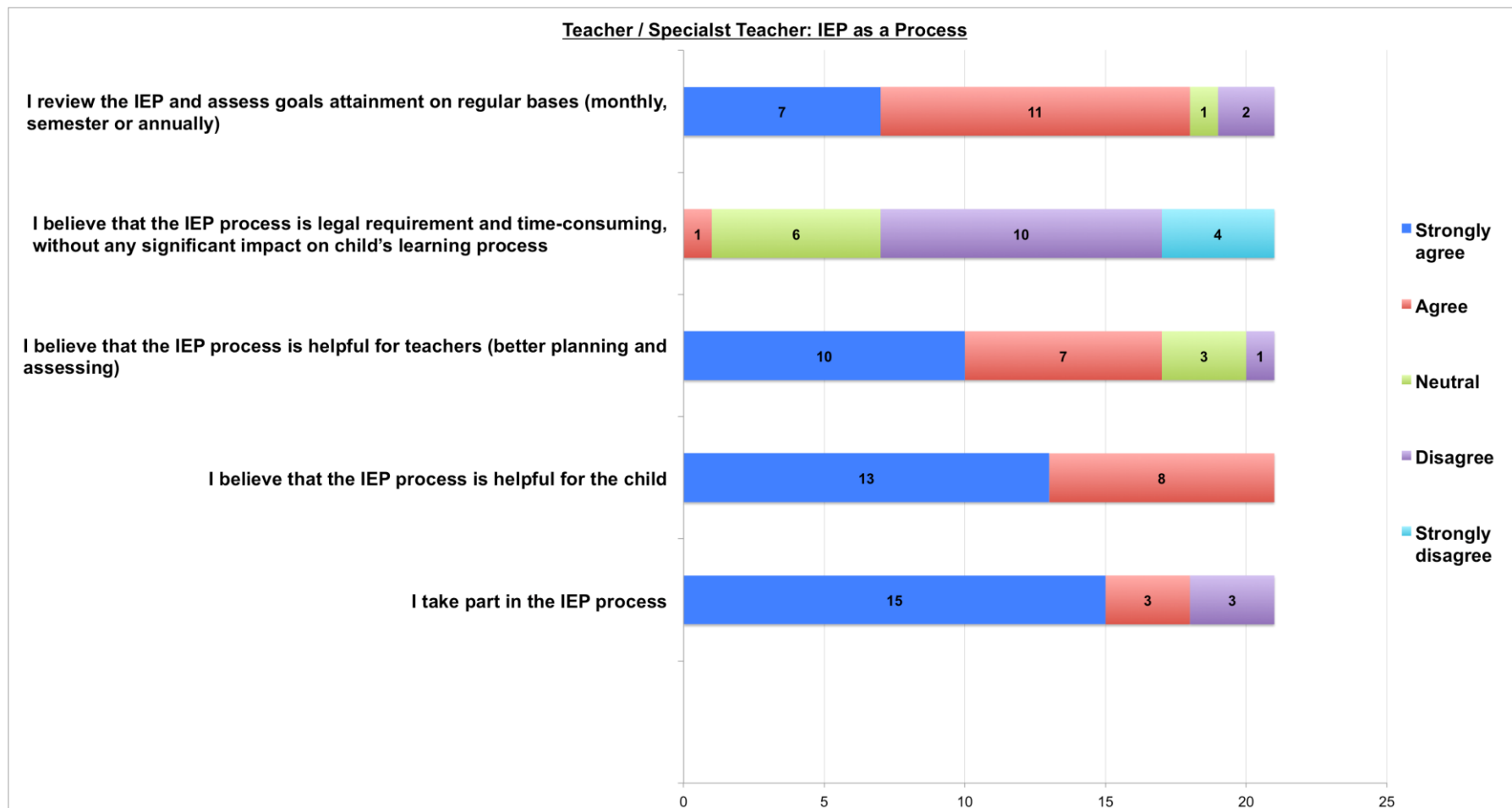


Figure 1: Teacher / Specialist Teacher – IEP as a Process



Figure 2: Teacher / Specialist Teacher – IEP Impact on Daily Planning

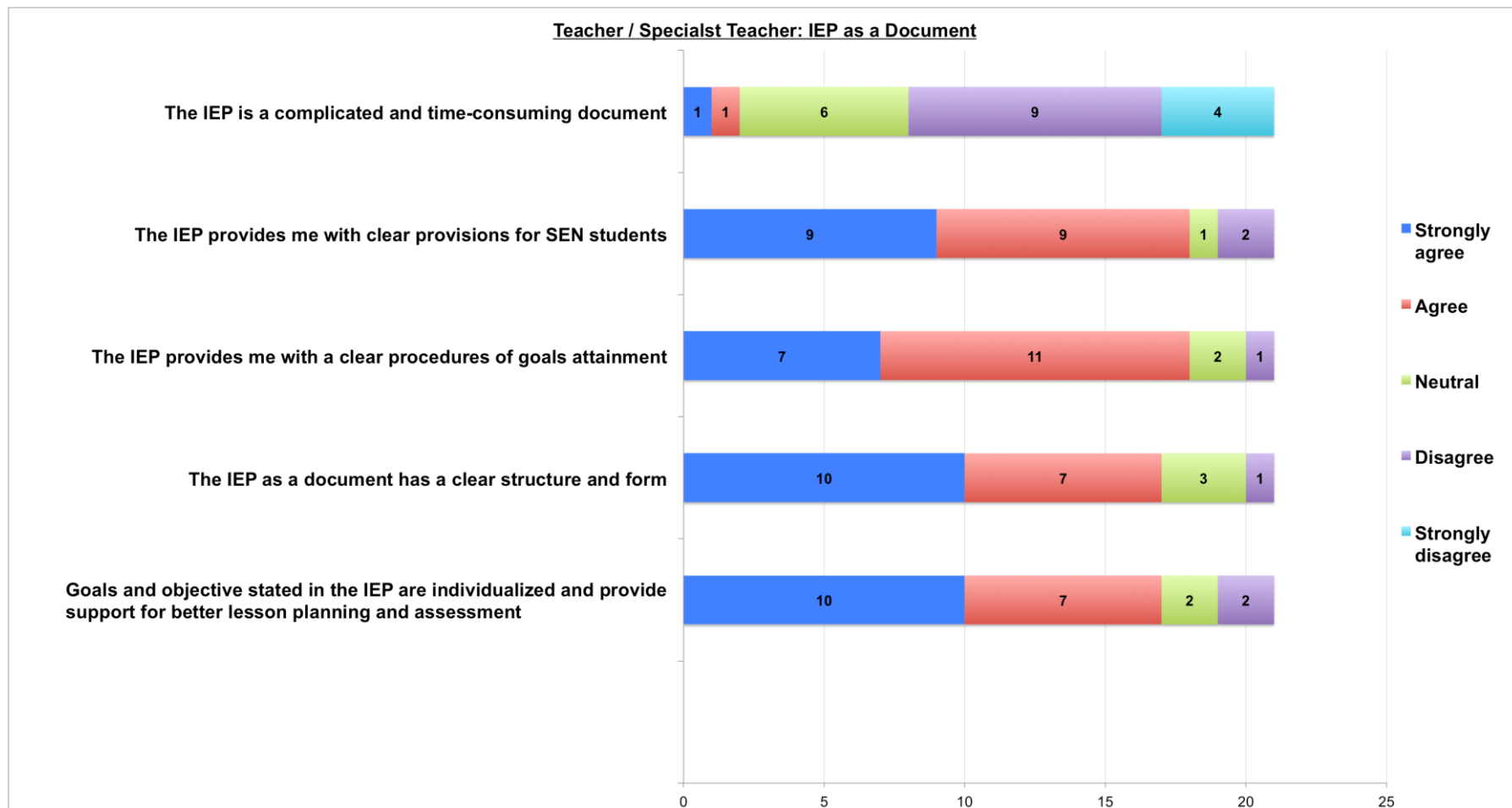


Figure 3: Teacher / Specialist Teacher – IEP as a Document

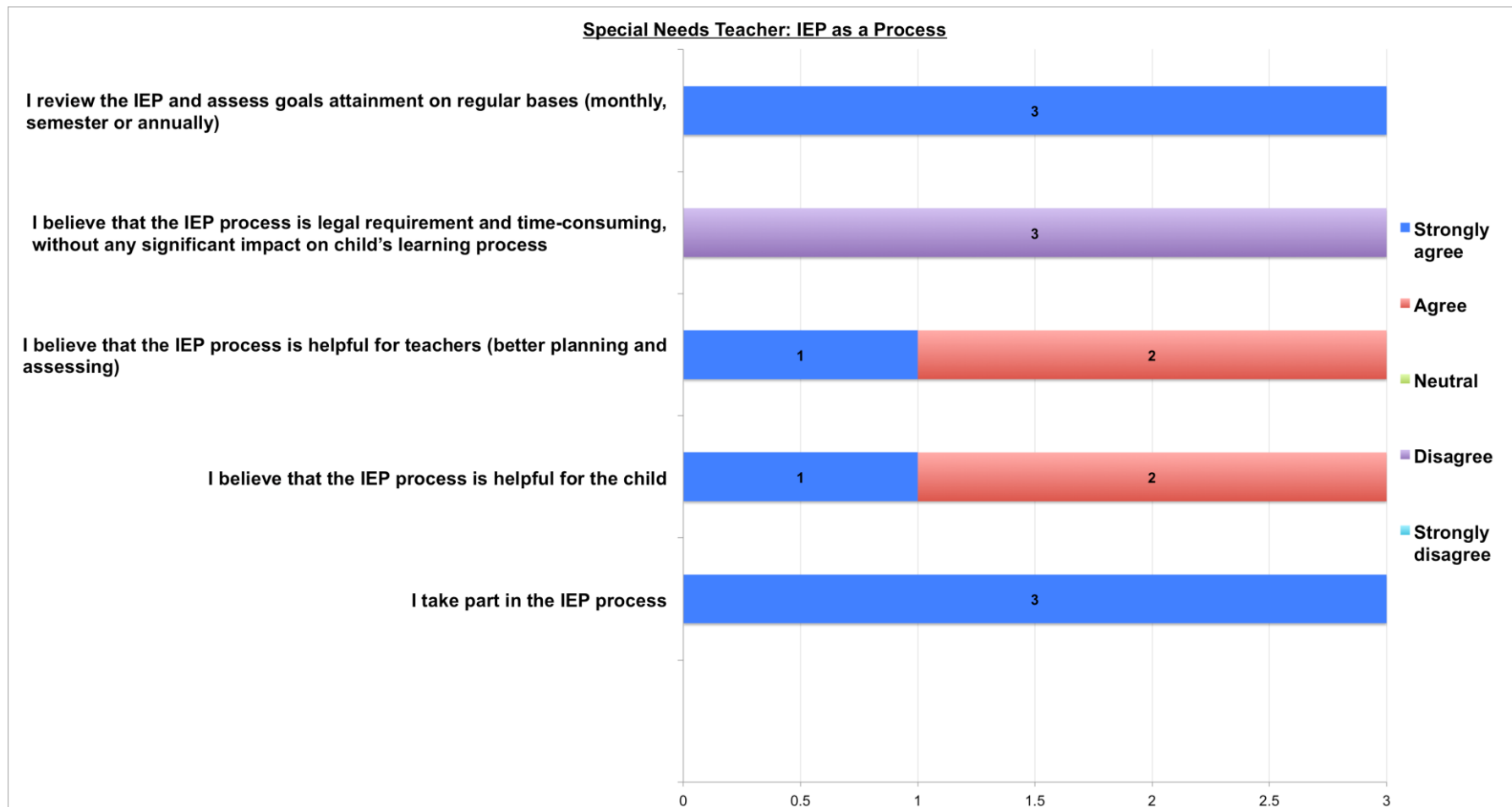


Figure 4: Special Needs Teacher – IEP as a Process

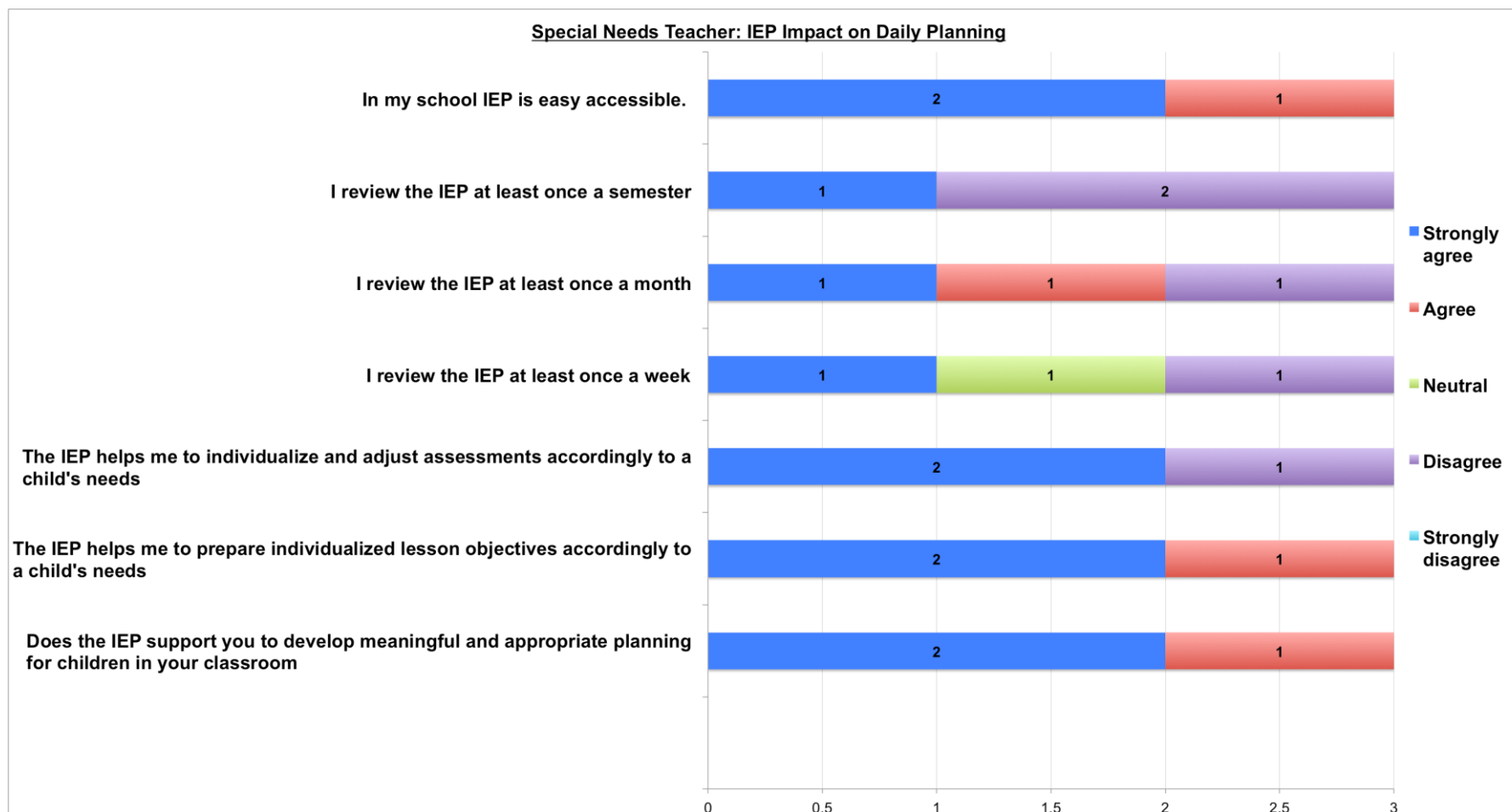


Figure 5: Special Needs Teacher – IEP Impact on Daily Planning

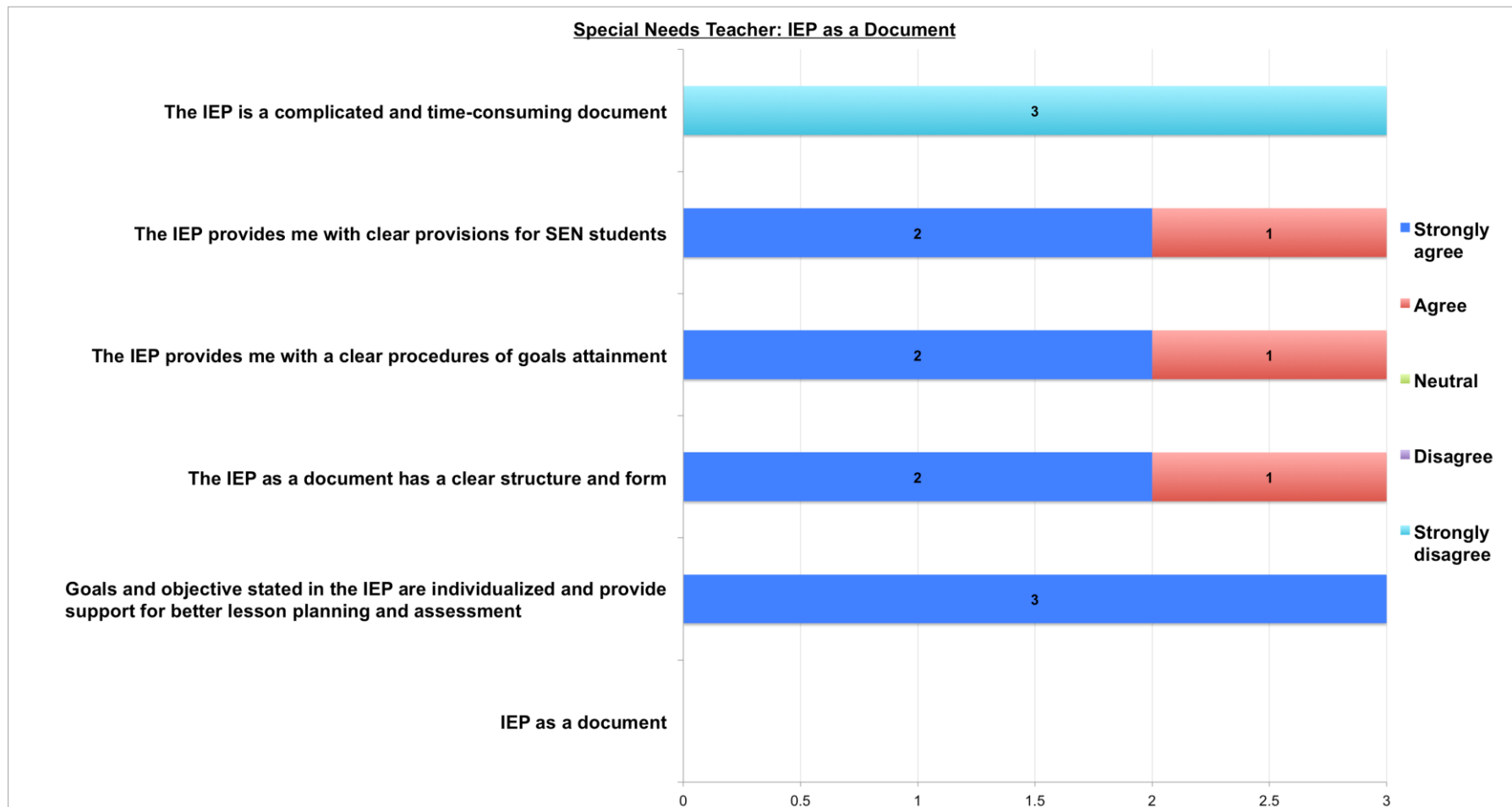


Figure 6: Special Needs Teacher – IEP as a Document

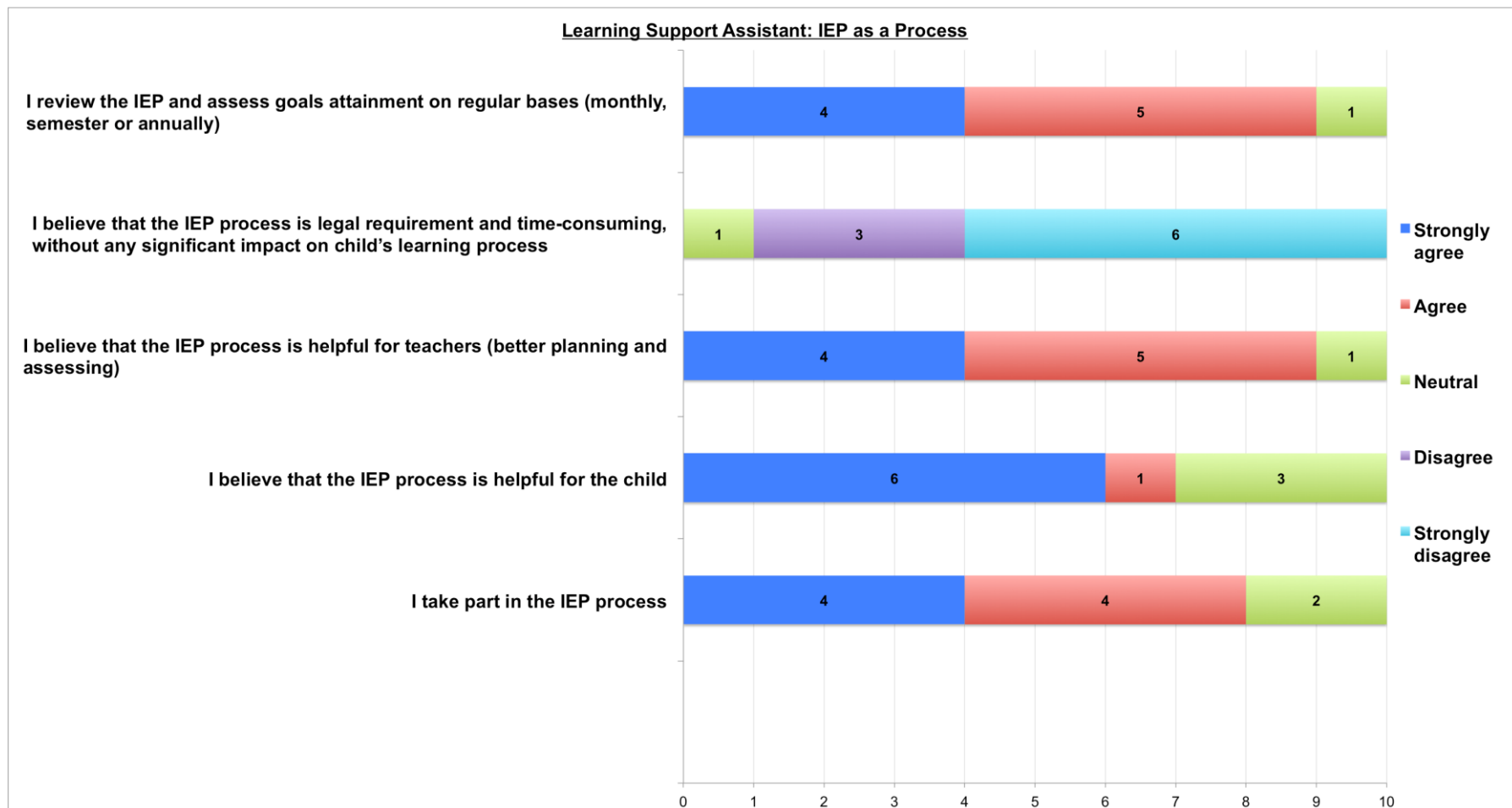


Figure 7: Learning Support Assistant – IEP as a Process

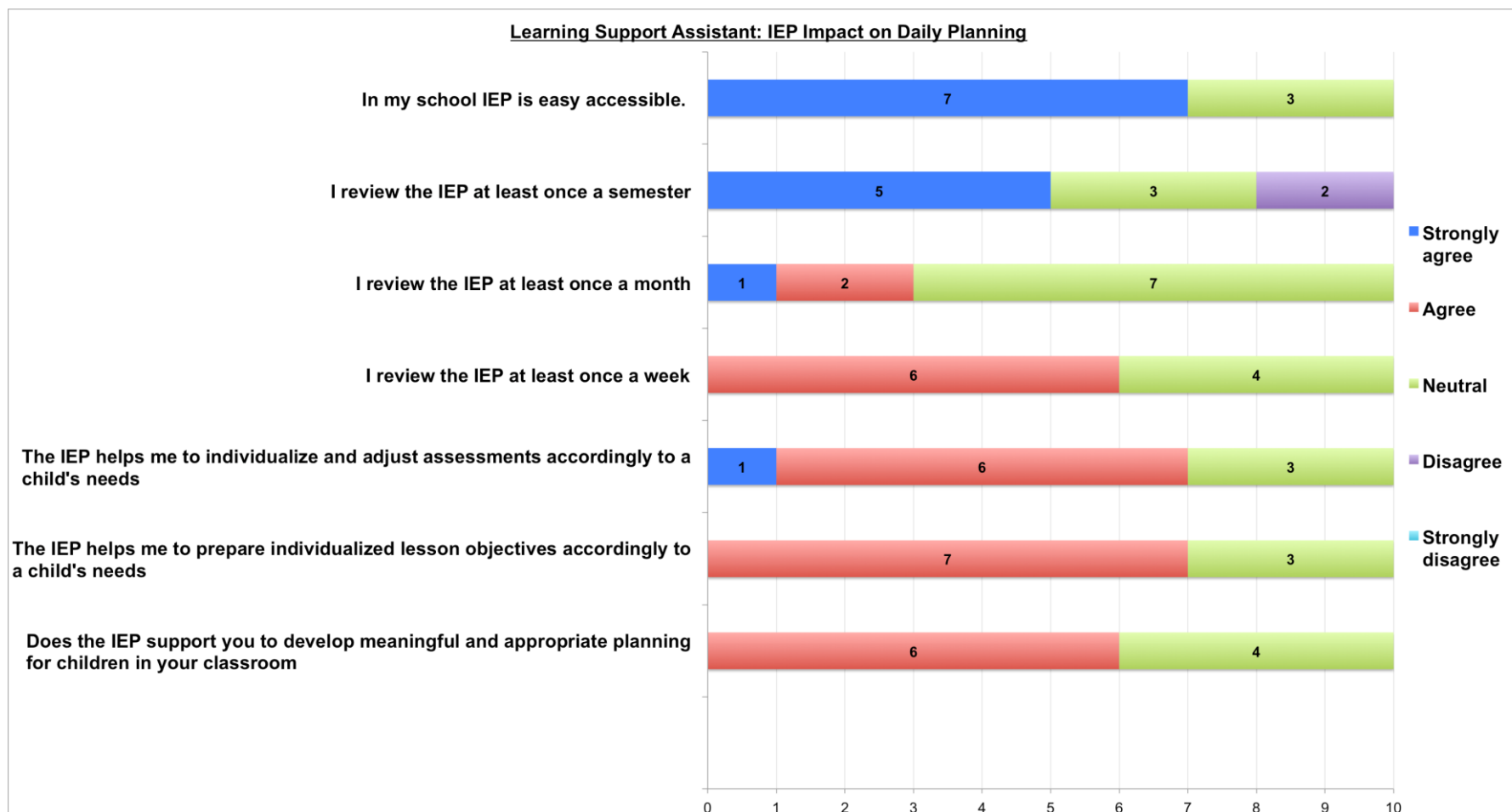


Figure 8: Learning Support Assistant – IEP Impact on Daily Planning

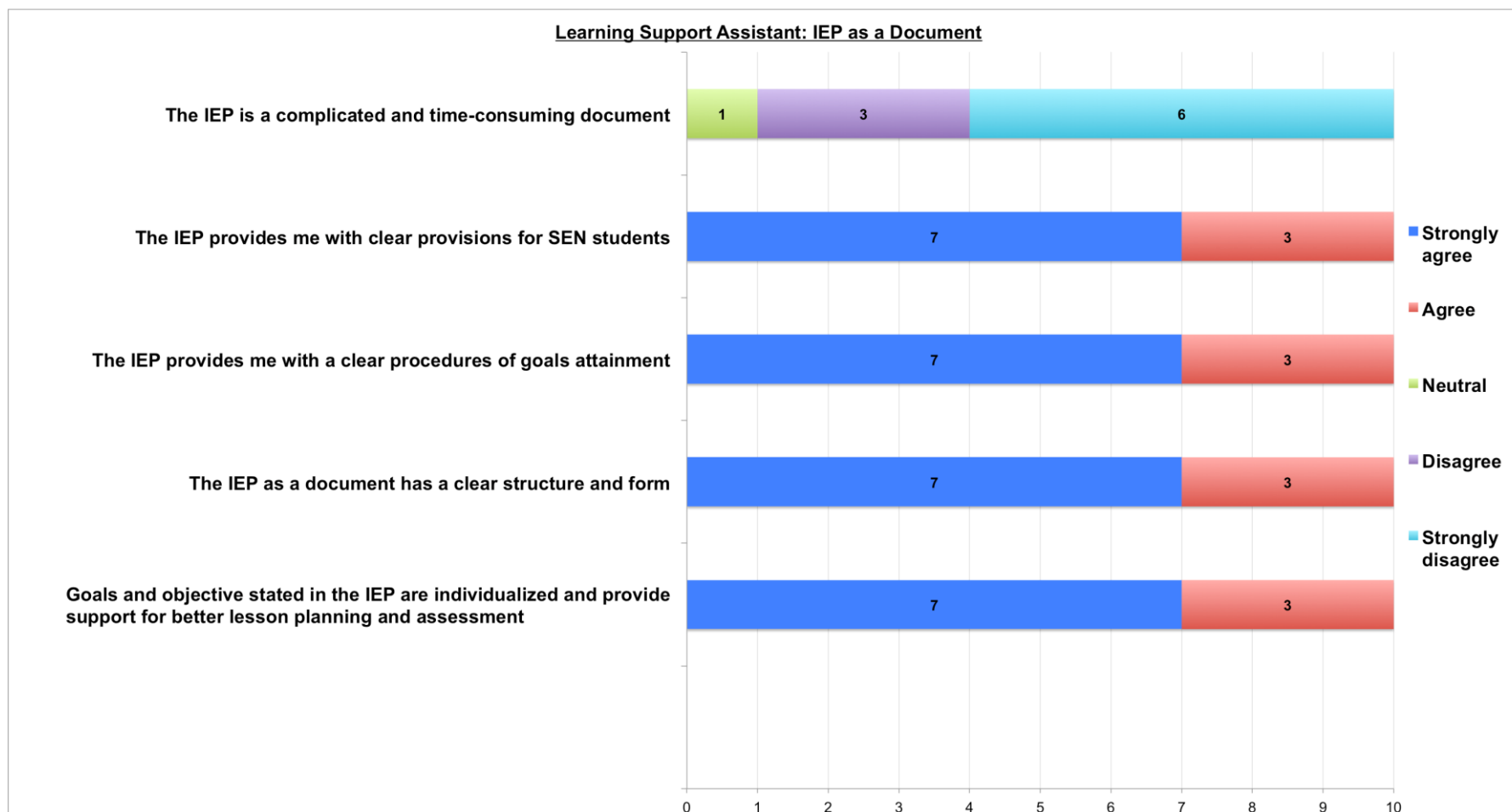


Figure 9: Learning Support Assistant – IEP as a Document

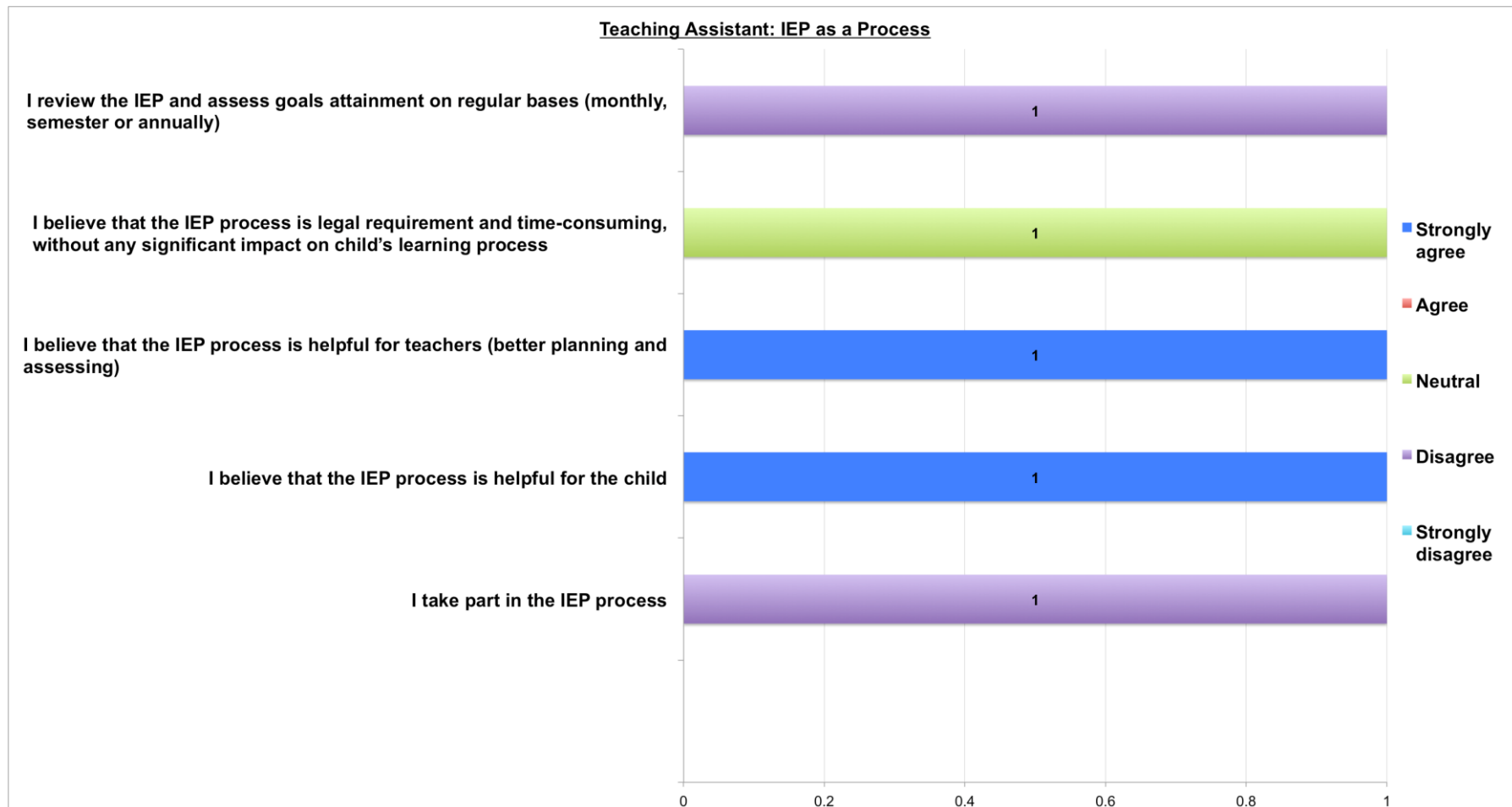


Figure 10: Teaching Assistant – IEP as a Process

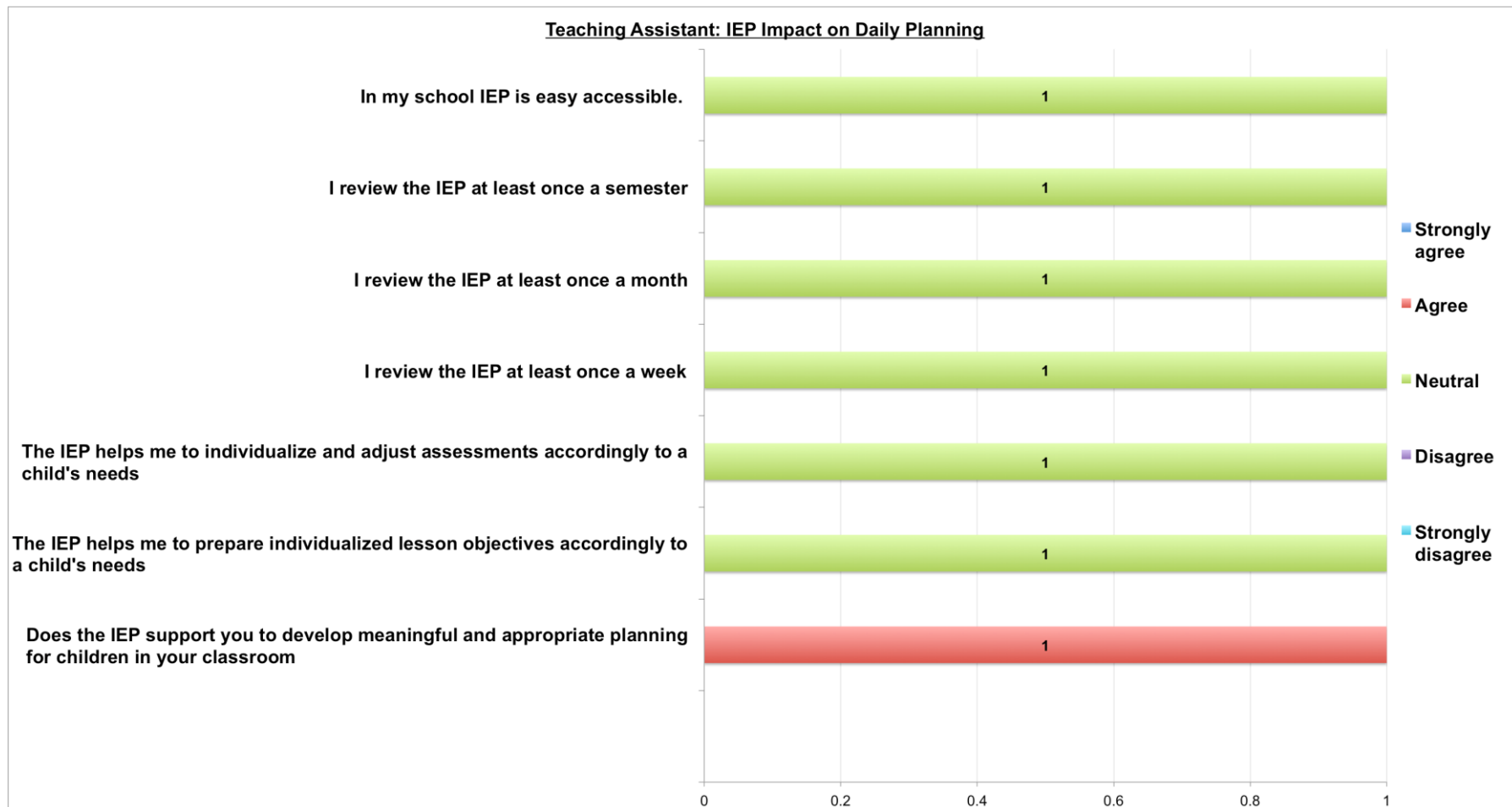


Figure 11: Teaching Assistant – IEP Impact on Daily Planning

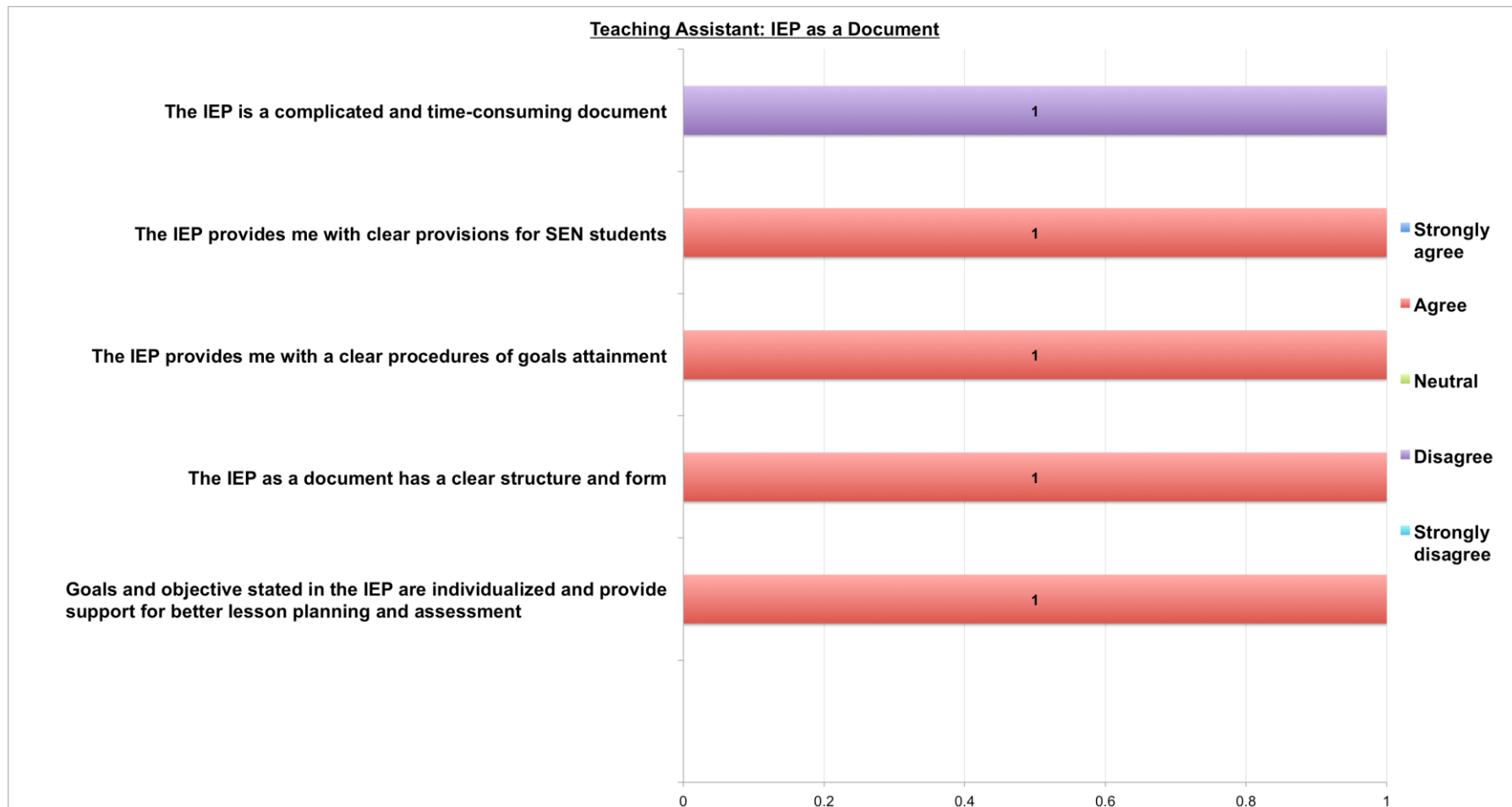


Figure 12: Teaching Assistant – IEP as a Document

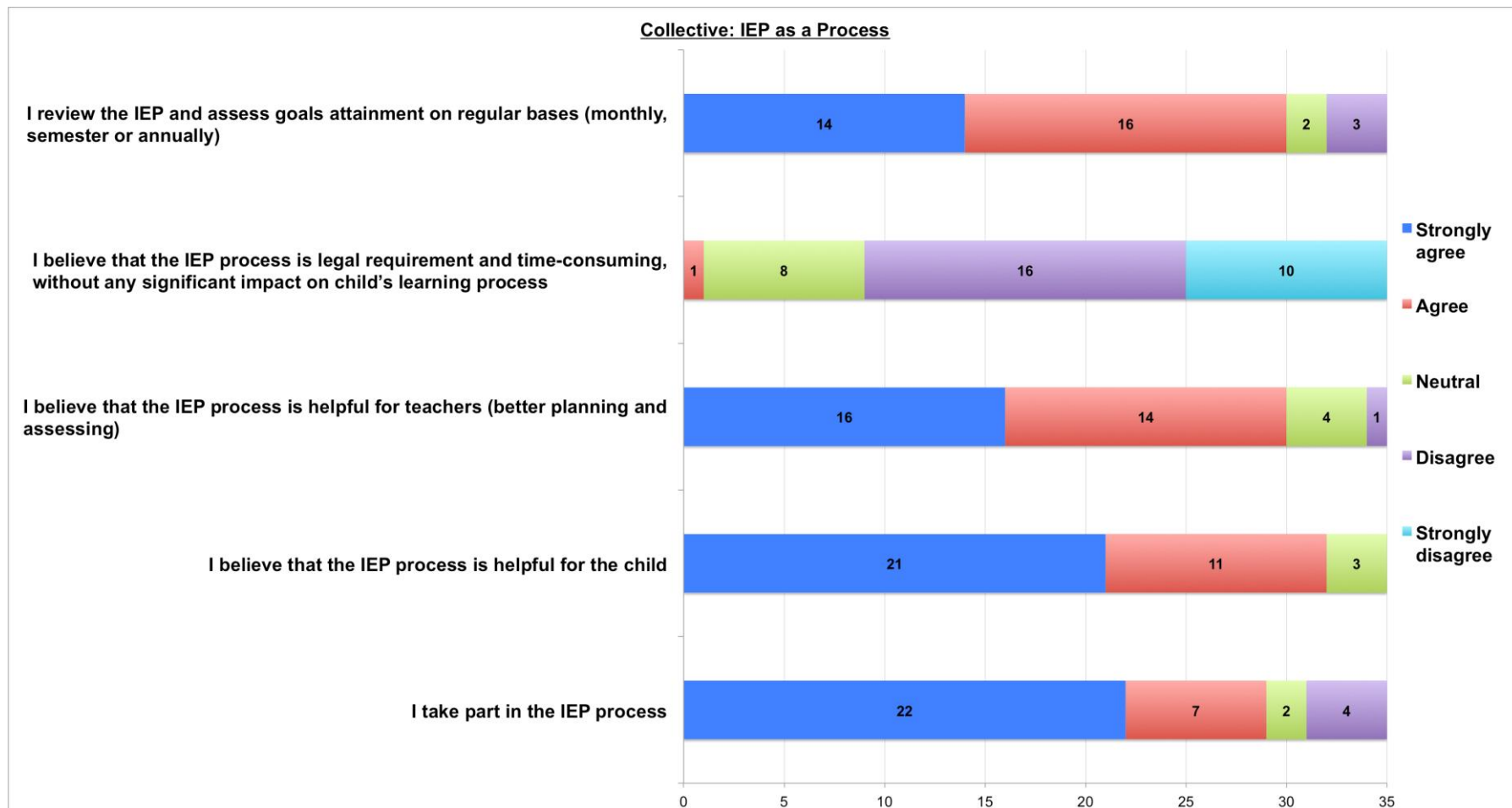


Figure 13: Collective – IEP as a Process

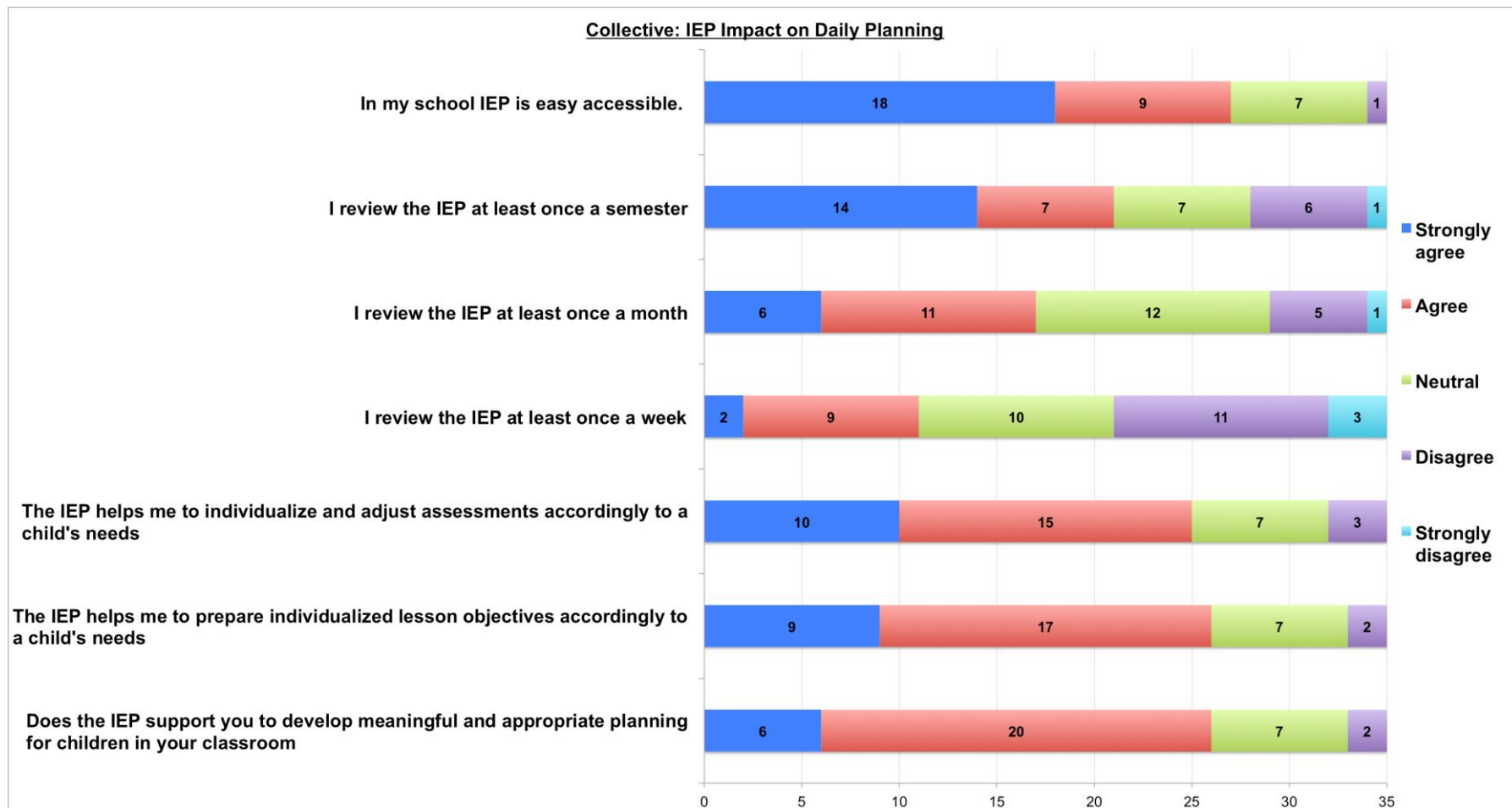


Figure 14: Collective – IEP Impact on Daily Planning

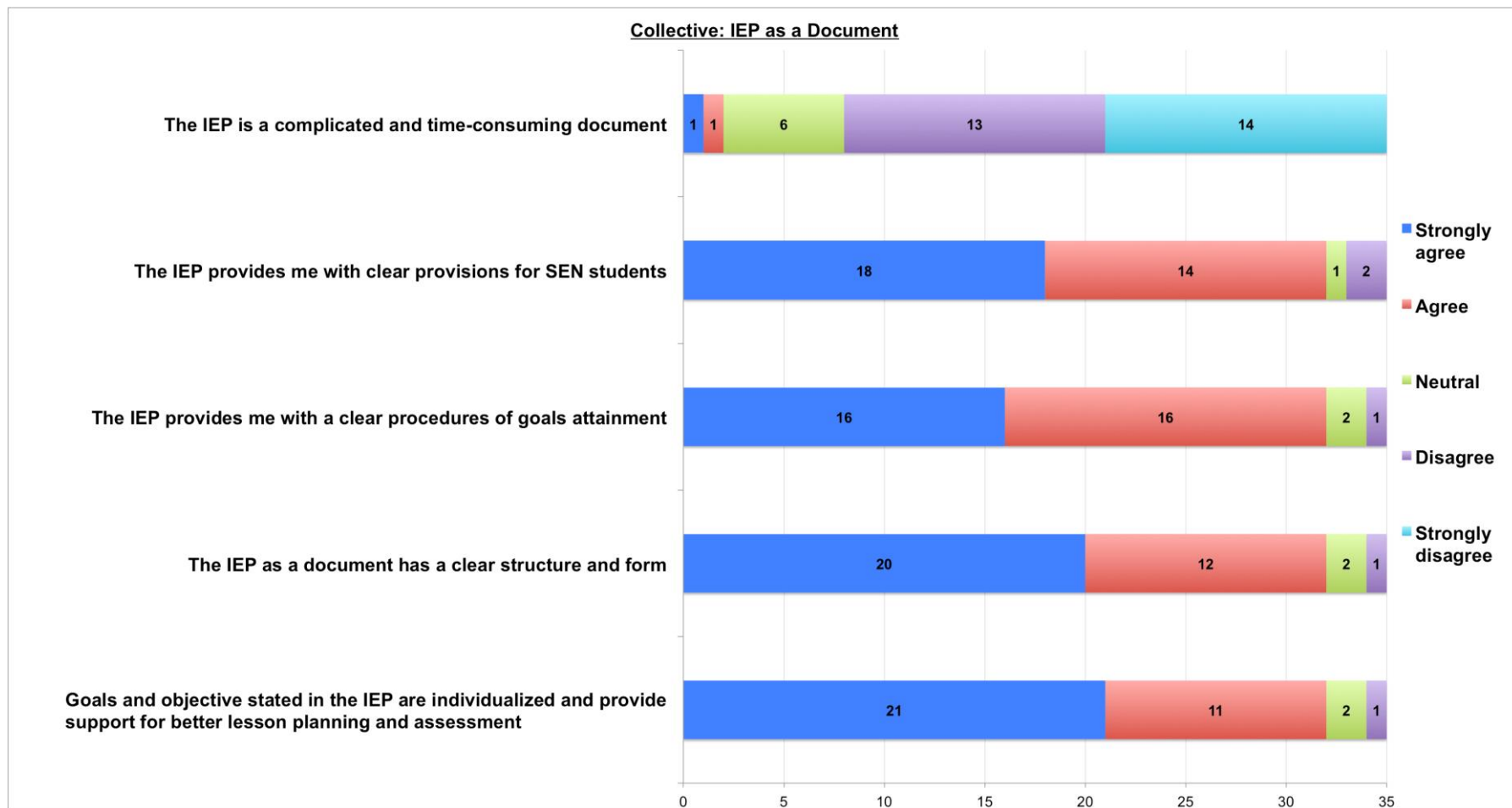


Figure 15: Collective – IEP as a Document

4.2. Open Questions

The last part of distributed survey was one open question, which allowed the respondents to present their personal opinion and experience with the IEP. 25 out of 35 – 71% of educators decided to express their opinion and share experience with the IEP. Some of them had a positive approach and believed that the IEP may impact the child's learning and better teaching:

“Helps the teacher to focus on one particular child who has difficulties and very strongly think about they can support them in the classroom. Without it, it would be too easy to for that child to fall off the radar...”

“I believe IEP's help teachers to structure individual learning for children who need it. It helps break down large targets into smaller, more attainable goals to show progress for children who may struggle to make whole sub levels of progress...”

“The IEP's I work with feed directly into the planning of every lesson that I deliver. They provide the structure for the term and are shared with all stakeholders in the support of the child...”

However, among the very positive view about the IEP, some skeptical voices pointed at the divergence between the theory and the practice:

“The IEP is a necessary document for the students that I teach as they have special requirements. I do however; question the transposition of it into the mainstream classroom and the effectiveness of it as a guide for the parents.”

“I don't really have any involvement with the IEP process. I can see the purpose of it and it is having a positive impact for the specific goals that have been set for the child in my class. However there isn't any real overlap with the planning and assessment that goes with the rest of the class.”

“I find the IEP to be a helpful document in setting goals and assessing progress

however I don't feel the need to document activities I'll need to do to achieve these goals or list the materials I'll need to have. I'm a professional with 20+ years experience. It is helpful to record goals and be able to track progress in a standard manner but the detail is unnecessary. A more fluid, working document might be beneficial to me and the child I'm working with rather than a termly, precise plan that is in place to please inspectors."

The positive and critical voices describe the reality within the school and teachers diversity in sense of the IEP function within inclusive classroom.

4.3. Lesson Observations

Three Math lessons were observed to establish to which extend the IEP is utilized within general settings and how IEP goals and recommended provisions are reflected on instructions and lesson delivery. Prior to this, the children IEP's have been analyzed in relation to the IEP objectives. 10 out of 11 children included within lessons 1 – 3 have targets related to Mathematics, 3 of them directly linked with lesson topic. One child has objectives not related to Math. No classroom settings adjustments or Assistive Technologies were recommended for any of the children. The only provisions are related to curriculum and assessment modifications. All finding were recorded on Lesson Observation Form. (Appendix 3)

All observed lessons were delivered within a low ability classes, however differentiated internally accordingly to the level of performance within particular class. Additionally, all classes are heterogeneous in respect of gender, religion, language or educational and national background. A system of grouping used for Mathematics has been introduced to maximize student participation and involvement in learning accordingly to their abilities and current level of Math. This was considered as supportive for teachers regarding lesson delivering, instructional differentiations and content of curriculum implemented.

In class 1 in grade 4, students numbered 21 with 5 having an IEP. All of whom

are supported by LSA's. In class 2 in grade 6 among 22 students 3 have IEP, however only 2 of these students are supported by LSA's. Within this class, 1 TA supports students regardless their IEP status. Class 3 in grade 6 has 23 students, 3 of which have an IEP. 2 LSA's and 1 TA support them during Math.

All observed lessons were delivered accordingly to inclusive standards, following multi-sensory teaching, differentiated instructions, formative assessment and positive feedback, cooperative learning or peer tutoring. In all cases children with IEP were continuously present during the lesson even when working on personal targets.

All lessons referred to children's prior knowledge, and scaffolding has been build up at beginning of the lessons to support students learning and participation. Warm up games at beginning in lesson 1 and 2 accommodated all pupils regardless their disability.

Teacher 3 accommodated the IEP objectives during warm up session in relation to multiplication and used differentiated set of instructions and worksheets accordingly to children's abilities. During this lesson one child's IEP objectives were directly related to lesson content. This child's worksheets were differentiated accordingly to the child's abilities and time for responses was been extended. This child had support by the LSA. Child 3 has been working with the LSA towards individual goals more than lesson objectives, however the IEP objectives were partly related to the lesson content. None of the targeted children were isolated or worked under expectations and, even though the learners exercises were challenging were achieved. The teacher engaged all students to participate in all activities regardless their IEP. Resources like Pie charts representing fractions and Numicon pieces supported targeted students at all the time.

During lesson 2 in grade 6, 2 out of 3 children's IEP objectives were directly linked with lesson topic. The teacher differentiated instructions and worksheets to enable their learning and participation. Time for responses was extended and

positive feedback encouraged them to present results of individual work to the class. Childs' 3 IEP objectives related to attitudes and answering direct teachers questions has been implemented as well. Teacher 2 has asked direct simple questions and child was been encouraged to answer.

Lesson's 1 in grade 4 objectives were not related to the children's IEP's targets; however during warm up games some of the targets were accommodated. All pupils, regardless there needs, were taking part in the lesson and the teacher tried to engage them all in lesson's activities. Due to the fact, that all students with IEP have additional LSA support, they were more involved in individual work towards lesson objectives than taking part in-group work. The teacher equally allowed them to present results of their work and time for responses had been extended. Additionally, all worksheets were differentiated accordingly to their abilities and needs. To enable all learners, including those with an IEP, Teacher 1 used a ranged of resources and interactive board, followed by multi-sensory teaching strategies including manipulative and visual aids. All children with an IEP were working within classroom; none of them had been isolated or omitted during lesson activities.

All of the teachers used direct teaching strategies, with modeling to create and implement patterns for fractions, however all on different levels and in relation to different area of fractions.

In all cases children with an IEP were fully included within lesson, working cooperatively with other pupils. However, some of them supported by LSA's, at times, were more focus on their personal targets than on work within group. This may be due to their personal targets not being directly related with lesson topic.

In all cases, teachers used differentiated worksheets for children with IEP accordingly to their current level of performance, range of differentiated instructions and resources.

4.4. Interviews

3 Teacher's and 3 LSA's semi-structured interviews were conducted by one to one sessions as an addition to the survey and lesson observations form of data collection. The interviews were directly linked with earlier observed lessons and their main objective was to establish Teacher and LSA's general opinions regarding the IEP usefulness in their daily planning, their participation in the IEP as a process, and their interaction with other members of the IEP team.

Teachers and LSA's were asked similar questions regarding: their participation in IEP team, taking part in IEP meetings, providing feedback of students' progress, the degree to which they provide provisions, cooperation with special educators and training received to implement the IEP's (Appendix 4 & 5). All interviewees agreed that they actively participate in the IEP process, attended IEP meetings on regular bases 3 times a year. All take an active role during those meetings and provide information on the child's progress, suggestions for further provisions and obstacles they met during IEP implementation. All provide detailed feedback regarding IEP goals attainment, however the LSA's stated that they reported principally by writing within the child's daily diary, monthly written reports and termly child's case study. All interviewees agreed that the Head of Inclusion Department is the one who supported them to implement the IEP and they provided feedback as often as necessary. However, teachers and LSA's stated that they are only able to mainly communicate with special educators during IEP meetings and during assemblies or school events.

None of teachers and LSA's have received training in the current school on how to implement the IEP provisions or modified instructions. Teachers admitted that during their professional preparations, basic training has been provided. LSA's within this school do not have pedagogical preparations. Their knowledge and experience on implementing IEP's, modifying instructions or managing behaviour is from external courses done after school hours or from special educators advice when asking.

The question regarding IEP provisions implementation was consistent for all

interviewees; not all and not always. From the teacher perspective the IEP provisions implementation depends on the compatibility between IEP goals and curriculum topic to be cover during delivered lesson. It was not possible to implement all provisions, however they tried to implement at least some of them at some point of the lesson. In this, the Teachers relay on LSA's and their individual work with child. The LSA's stated that the IEP provisions implementation may be difficult due to discrepancy between IEP and lesson objectives, lack of time within lessons and during individual work and to much focus on lesson activities.

Teachers were asked about their input in creating an IEP for a child enrolled to their class, which exhibited a potential for learning difficulties. They all stated that their concerns about child are reported to Inclusion Department on Concern Form and that this is the first instance of their participation in IEP process. After the IEP has been created, the IEP meetings provide a further opportunity for them to discuss their concerns about child's progress or allow them to suggest goals and provisions for new IEP.

The Teachers were asked if they participate in determining the kind of support or technical assistance they need during their work with SEN student. Although, the school provides all necessary resources and aids to support SEN children, they were not consulted in suggestions regarding additional support.

Interviewed Teachers were asked additional questions in relation to the observed lesson and particular children with IEP. To the question if they are familiar with the content of the students' IEP's Teachers replied that they were. However, Teacher 1 who worked with 5 children with IEP maintained that it is not possible in his case to know all IEP goals and provisions in details, especially if they are not always compatible with curriculum.

All Teachers were asked if the children with IEP make progress within curriculum replied, "that not always within curriculum", however, they all made progress, sometimes within their own level of achievement. However they commented that progress against age related curriculum band is not always a measurement of a child's success. What was more important for them was personal progress and IEP goals attainment.

To the question how they implement a students IEP during the observed lesson, common answers were: by worksheets differentiations, lowering of expectations, extended time for responses and use of various resources and techniques to support the children such as multi sensory teaching or peer tutoring. Two of the Teachers pointed out LSA's as an important element during lesson and their individual work with the students to implement IEP's goals. Teachers were asked if the IEP's were useful to deliver observed lesson, 2 replied that not fully, and that is related mainly to the difference between lesson objectives and the IEP goals. However, they did not consider the IEP as a useless document and appreciated the general guideline contained within it. One teacher found the IEP very useful, due to the fact that it was directly linked with the lesson content regarding one of the children. All were consistent in the view that the IEP helped them to differentiate worksheets and plan activities. LSA's were asked additional questions regarding their perception of the IEP as a document and its usefulness for their daily work. Two of them found the document fully useful for daily work and used it as a guideline for planning work with children. They could not imagine working without the IEP support. One of the LSA's was less enthusiastic and pointed at the load of work regarding class activities and curriculum and that due to this limited time was available for IEP goals implementation. The same LSA said that his use of the IEP on the daily bases depends on the teacher's expectations and the amount of work towards curriculum rather than IEP goals. However, all of them appreciate the fact that IEP gives them the outline of their work and even if they are not able to implement IEP goals always, at least they know what to work towards. As a document the IEP was found simple and easy to understand, with clear instruction on how to implement and assess the goals. The LSA's stated that they are able access the IEP at any time. They highlighted to many goals as a main factor, which made the implementation difficult. One of LSA's mentioned that the IEP should be more focused on behavioural and social goals than on educational, however, could not explain fully why this was important for him. In general, Teachers and LSA's answers were very consistent in relation to the IEP usefulness and pointed at its importance during learning process, not only

as a main supportive document, but also as a guideline for effective work with SEN children.

4.5. Discussion

The IEP as a supportive document for inclusion has been described by researchers as a product and process, child centred and teacher centred respectively. To support inclusive education both aspects should be taken into account by policy makers and implementers (Kaye and Aserlind 1979).

4.5.1 IEP as a Process

As a process the IEP requires collaboration between parties, good document monitoring and evaluation (BCSSA 2009). Teachers' participation within this process, active involvement in the IEP goals preparation and attainments evaluation, may have significant impact on later IEP implementation (Wickenden 2015, Margalis and Truesdell 1987).

Within the researched school, 100% of SEN Teachers, 80% of LSA's and 86% of General Teachers declared to have taken part in the IEP process. The reviews revealed, that their participation was restricted not only to participation in termly review meetings. All interviewees stated that they had continuous discussions on the child's needs, goals attainment, and obstacles during implementation. Additionally, during review meetings participants took part in discussing possible provisions and modifications for child's progress within general curriculum and that the reporting system is quite structured and allows for monitoring of a child's achievements and IEP goals attainment.

Good cooperation between General and Special Educators in order to implement the IEP exists. Lack of communication between General and Special Educators is an important factor, which may have a great impact on the IEP implementation (Dudley-Marling 1985 and Morgan and Rhode 1983). However, within the researched school communication does not seem to be an issue, but

time for meetings was described as limited. Teachers and LSA's stated that the only time for meaningful discussion and an exchange of information is restricted to termly meetings, school events or assemblies. All interviewed teachers and LSA's stressed the importance of the Head of inclusion Department as a person who is willing to help them with any issues related to the IEP implementation. LSA's additionally communicate with SEN Teachers and participated within their classes in order to get better understanding of the content thought and the ways to support children outside of the classroom.

The perception of most participants of the IEP as a process is overall positive. 75% of respondents do not consider this process as time-consuming or as a legal requirement only. However, 23% remained neutral and 3% thought that this so. However, one respondent is currently not working with a child who has an IEP. This answer may suggest that not all teachers are convinced about the IEP process to be clearly positive for child's development or time used for the IEP preparation as meaningful. The perception of the IEP as time consuming may affect later implementation of this document (Dudley-Marling 1985, Morgan-Rhode 1983 and Wickenden 2015).

From the other hand, the surveyed educators believe that the IEP as a process is supportive for the child (91%) and for educators (86%). Their approach towards inclusion and the IEP in general seems to be positive and, as has been noted by many researchers, affects the IEP implementation (Martinez 2004, AlGazo & Gaad 2004 and McLaughlin 1987). Additionally, as has been pointed by Ainscow (2011), Martinez (2004) and AlGazo & Gaad (2004) the gender and years of professional experience influence the perception of inclusion and related to it services. Within the researched school the vast majority of respondents are females with experience: 49% with 7 + years and 25.5% with 4 – 6 years. Additionally, they are mainly UK graduated (71,5%) with a potential understanding and training of inclusive principles and its importance within education system. This may have an on their mainly positive perception of the IEP usefulness.

Considering that 23% remained neutral and 3% (almost ¼) considered this process as time-consuming or as a legal requirement. It appears that this is the most problematic aspect of an IEP as a process. From this perspective, survey results are consistent with interviews data, where that lack of time has been clearly stated by both Teachers and LSA's. Both teachers and LSA's declared not to have sufficient time to implement all IEP goals, forced by curriculum expectations and set accordingly time frame for its achievement. This problem has been identified earlier by Schulte, Osborne and Erchul (1998) and Huefner (2000) as a one of the greater obstacles on the way to full inclusion.

A very important factor in stimulating successful IEP implementation within the process is evaluation of the IEP's goals attainment (Rotter 2014 and Lee-Tarver 2006). 86% of respondents declared to have evaluated the IEP goals on regular bases. Interviews confirmed this tendency and stressed the importance of continuous monitoring by the schools internal systems of reporting, reviewing and setting new targets. The IEP process from this perspective seems to be ongoing and dynamic.

4.5.2. IEP Impact on Daily Planning

The IEP main function within modern inclusive school is to provide a guideline for teachers and parents in order to increase child's involvement and participation in learning process and social life. For this, the document has to be used by educators to provide meaningful education based on individualized learning objectives, personalized assessments and necessary adjustments. The IEP content has been designed to increase the teachers' liability to enable the learning process within a curriculum, based on individualized instructional goals (Wamba and Dunn 2009, Gallagher and Desimone 1995).

Researchers have pointed at the IEP accessibility as an important factor, stimulating the use of this document for instructions (Rotter 2014, Dudley-Marling 1985). Within the researched school the accessibility has been considered by 77% of respondents as a good. The IEP's are stored on the

schools public computer system, and are sent electronically to all involved parties and, in addition, printed copies are distributed to the parents and LSA's. Data on when the IEP's are available has not been obtained in this research.

One of the main indicators of the Teachers perception of the IEP usefulness for instructional planning is the frequency in which educators refer and review this document. Wickenden (2015) shown that teachers tend to review the IEP no more than stated in the school policy and that describes the document utility as poor.

The survey shows that overall the educator's review the IEP's on a regular bases: 60% termly, 48% monthly and 32% weekly. 71% of teachers tend to review the IEP termly and 57% monthly; only 19% of teachers and 30% of SEN teachers declared weekly revisions. This may be related to the type of planning they keep, which usually considers periods longer than one week. 60% of LSA's review the IEP on weekly bases. It was also noted that 20% of educators do not review that IEP at least once a semester, which may suggest that this document does not have a significant impact on their instructional practices. However, this includes LSA's and TA's who may not have review the document due to teachers providing instructions.

During lesson observations and interviews it has been noticed, that educators are familiar with the IEP goals and objectives. The observed fact that IEP goals have been partly implemented is related rather to occasional incompatibility between lesson and IEP objectives, than their reluctance or lack of skills. It was also noticed that all teachers used strategies recommended by researchers within inclusive environment such as: multisensory teaching, peer tutoring, differentiation in instructions and worksheets, sufficient use of resources, various assessments and explicate instruction (Womba &Dunn 2009). Interviewed Teachers admitted that they could not implement all IEP goals within lessons, however they tried as many as possible. As a result some of the SEN students, although present within classroom were working individually supported by LSA's towards lesson objectives rather than IEP objectives. This

problem has been recognized by Gallagher and Desimone (1995) and Goodman and Bond (1993), who noted that highly specific objectives make it very difficult for teachers to incorporate these fully within lessons. Additionally, Lynch and Beare (1990) pointed at non-academic IEP goals for children with intellectual disabilities, which in practice do not allow them to be academically fully engaged, as these objectives are very difficult to implement within general lessons. However, within this research, no disconnect between the IEP and classroom practices have been observed as mentioned by Dudley-Marling (1985), Morgan-Rhode (1983) or Margolis & Truesdell (1987).

Over 70% of educators admitted that the IEP provides them with guidelines for better assessment, individualized lesson objectives and support for appropriate instructional planning.

Research has shown a dependency on successful IEP implementation and teachers' professional preparation regarding instructional strategies within an inclusive environment and available resources (Gallagher & Desimone 1995, Lee-Tarver 2006, Morgolis & Truesdell 1987, Rotter 2014, AlGazo & Gaad 2004, Huefner 2000). Additionally, KHDA report from 2013 identified the biggest problem within schools with good and outstanding rating was a lack of additional training and sufficient use of human resources. During the interviews teachers admitted that they have been not provided with appropriate training regarding IEP implementation, instructions differentiation, managing behaviour or using Assistive Technologies, apart of their basic university preparation. LSA's, mainly without teaching qualifications, declared not to have received any training. Additionally, with the LSA's restricted time for working toward IEP objectives, primary focus on lesson objectives and activities, the IEP implementation was not fully implemented.

4.5.3. IEP as a Document

The vast majority of respondents considered the IEP as document, which provides clear provisions, procedures of goals attainment and support for better

lesson planning. The document structure and its simplicity have been highlighted by over 90% of respondents. 77% of surveyed educators did not consider this document as a time-consuming. Research has shown that the form of IEP as a document, its clarity and goals specificity may determine the IEP implementation (Gallager & Bond 1993, Rotter 2014, Gallager & Desimone 1985, Ardekani 2012). Additionally, Wikenden (2015) and Margolis and Truesdell (1987) emphasized the teachers' participation in the IEP preparation as important for further implementation. The interviewed Teachers and LSA's stated to have an active role in the IEP preparation. Teachers take part in SEN identification and make recommendations for additional support. The school has internal assessment for SEN prior to external tests in regards of dyslexia and dyscalculia. The IEP goals were recognized as individualized enough to provide better education. Interviewed LSA's described the IEP objectives as challenging but achievable, leading SEN children to steady progress. Interviewed teachers admitted, that all SEN students make progress not necessary within general curriculum, however within they own abilities. Accordingly to Kaye & Aserlind (1979) the IEP as product if is good, serves the students' academic and social functioning.

It has been found, that teachers perception of the IEP usefulness for instructional planning is positive. The vast majority of educators use the document for their day-to-day work to support their teaching within inclusive environment and to deliver meaningful education for SEN students

5. Conclusion & Recommendations

5.1. Conclusions

The aim of this small-scale study was to establish teacher perception of IEP usefulness for instructional planning, as a supportive document for inclusive education, and, to which extend the IEP, as a document is functional and the main challenges during its implementation.

The researched school is an inclusive environment and children with disabilities are enrolled within general classrooms. The school has an enrolment of 7,5% of students with various disabilities and learning difficulties.

This school is well funded with good resources, which include human resources. All children identified as SEN receive the necessary services to make academic progress, unfortunately most of them with additional fees.

All collected data has led to the conclusion that within the researched school the IEP is perceived as a useful document, is supportive not only for SEN children, but also for educators.

To support inclusion a clear system has been established for reporting of children exhibiting learning disabilities, identification for SEN, to IEP preparation, implementation, monitoring and reviewing. This is not only restricted to Inclusion Department, but is understood and appreciated by all educators. Inclusive policies are not only created but also implemented and the school recognizes the IEP as a process and tries to involve within it all relevant participants. There is good cooperation and communication between Teachers, SEN Teachers and management in supporting IEP implementation.

The school is one of the very few in Dubai that employs LSA's as an integral part of the school team. Teachers, SEN Teachers and LSA's all work with the IEP on a regular bases. The majority of respondents were found to be using this document for instructional planning and appreciate its utility to deliver inclusive education.

However, it has been noticed that when incorporate within lessons, all IEP goals are not always possible. The number of children with IEP's within classroom ranged from 1-5, which makes the goals implementation very challenging and educators at times seemed to focus more on lesson objectives at the expense of implementing IEP objectives. In many cases, the children are less active within class and more focused on individual work. However, none of the observed children lagged behind non-SEN students.

Overall, teachers believed that the document had a positive influence on the learning process for SEN students and supported teachers for better planning and assessing. The survey respondents, describing their experience with the IEP stated:

"I believe that the IEP is very crucial document that specifically addresses the students learning needs and a tool to guide the day-to-day activities for that individual's support. It provides the Teacher information that is important when planning lessons and works as a guide to the Learning Support Assistants; without it, there would not be a format for support. It also helps an LSA to generate resources to support the child."

"I am supporting many children with and without an IEP. At times I am not aware of the IEP content. However, when an IEP is available, I use in my daily work."

It was noticed that all delivered lessons had an inclusive character and educators tried to make use of all resources and strategies to deliver meaningful education for all learners.

Whilst, the IEP as a structured document with appropriate goals, ways of attainment and provisions has been appreciated by most of the respondents, there are some shortcomings and challenges with implementation. As one respondent described it;

“...Whilst there are areas where an IEP is not the perfect document, there are currently no better alternatives...”

5.2. Recommendations

Overall uses of IEP may be considered as a good. There are some areas, which seem to be consistent with earlier findings into this research topic. In view of this, the study recommends:

1. Further research within for-profit schools following western curricula, to establish to which extend the good practice and use of the IEP is a norm
2. Research within this researched school among parents, to establish their perception of the IEP usefulness
3. Additional trainings for teachers and LSA's to maximise their ability to incorporate IEP goals within their daily work
4. Decrease in the number of IEP goals in order to support their implementation within lessons and outside of the classroom
5. Provide additional slots for meetings and cooperation between parties involved in IEP process

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Appendix 1: Demographic Data of Survey Respondents

No.	Professional Position	Teaching Experience (Years)	Gender	Country of Graduation	No. of Children with IEP in Classroom
1	T / ST	7 +	Female	UK	1
2	T / ST	7 +	Female	UK	2
3	T / ST	4 – 6	Female	UK (N. Ireland)	1
4	T / ST	0 – 3	Female	New Zealand	0
5	T / ST	7 +	Female	UK	1
6	T / ST	7 +	Male	UK	1
7	T / ST	4 – 6	Female	UK (N. Ireland)	1
8	T / ST	0 – 3	Female	UK	3
9	T / ST	4 – 6	Female	UK	1
10	T / ST	7 +	Female	UK	1
11	T / ST	7 +	Male	UK	4
12	T / ST	7 +	Female	UK	4
13	T / ST	7 +	Male	UK	3
14	T / ST	7 +	Female	UK	0
15	T / ST	4 – 6	Female	UK	5
16	T / ST	7 +	Male	UK	1
17	T / ST	4 – 6	Male	UK	2
18	T / ST	7 +	Female	UK	2
19	T / ST	4 – 6	Female	UK	2
20	T / ST	4 – 6	Female	Austria	11

21	LSA	7 +	Female	UK	18
22	LSA	0 – 3	Female	India	1
23	LSA	0 – 3	Female	South Africa	1
24	LSA	7 +	Female	U.A.E.	2
25	LSA	0 – 3	Female	India	1
26	LSA	0 – 3	Female	UK	2
27	LSA	0 – 3	Female	India	1
28	LSA	0 – 3	Female	India	1
29	LSA	7 +	Female	U.A.E.	1
30	LSA	4 – 6	Female	Sri Lanka	1
31	LSA	0 – 3	Female	UK	2
32	SEN	7 +	Female	UK	16
33	SEN	7 +	Female	UK (Scotland)	18
34	SEN	7 +	Female	UK	20
35	TA	4 – 6	Female	UK	4

Where:

Teacher / Specialist Teacher: T / ST

Learning Support Assistant: LSA

Special Needs Teacher: SNT

Teaching Assistant: TA

Appendix 2: Survey Questionnaire

Demographic characteristics					
Educational teaching level (early childhood; primary; secondary)					
Position at school (teacher; teaching assistant; learning support assistant, special needs teacher, specialist teacher)					
Gender					
Years of professional experience 0-3; 4-6; 7-more)					
Curriculum followed					
Number of children with IEP in classroom					
Country of graduation					
<u>IEP as a process</u>	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I take part in the IEP process					
I believe that the IEP process is helpful for the child					
I believe that the IEP process is helpful for teachers (better planning and assessing)					
I believe that the IEP process is legal requirement and time-consuming, without any significant impact on child's learning process					
I review the IEP and assess goals attainment on regular bases (monthly, semester or annually)					
<u>IEP impact on teachers' daily planning</u>	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Does the IEP support you to develop meaningful and appropriate planning for children in your classroom					
The IEP helps me to prepare individualized lesson objectives accordingly to a child's needs					
The IEP helps me to individualize and adjust assessments accordingly to a child's needs					
I review the IEP at least once a week					
I review the IEP at least once a month.					
I review the IEP once a semester or less.					
In my school IEP is easy accessible.					
<u>IEP as a document</u>	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Goals and objective stated in the IEP are individualized and provide support for better lesson planning and assessment					
The IEP as a document has a clear structure and form					
The IEP provides me with a clear procedures of goals attainment					
The IEP provides me with clear provisions for SEN students					
The IEP is a complicated and time-consuming document					
<u>Open Question</u>	Describe in one paragraph your personal perception of the IEP as a lesson enhancing document				

Appendix 3: Lesson Observations

Lesson Observation: Teacher 1

Date: 23.11.15

Grade: 4

Support: 5 x LSA

Number of Learners: 21

Number of Students with IEP's: 5

Class level: Bottom group

IEP objectives:

<u>Child 1</u>	<u>Child 2</u>	<u>Child 3</u>	<u>Child 4</u>	<u>Child 5</u>
Mental addition and subtraction to 20	Odd and even numbers to 100	Odd and even numbers to 100	Counting in jumps	Number facts to 10 for subtraction
9 addition to single digit number	Number bonds to 10	Sequences	Multiplication to 10	Counting in steps
Counting in steps of 2, 5, 10	3 single digit addition	Number bonds to 10	Doubling and halving	Number bonds to 10
To understand equivalence	Facts to 10 for subtraction	Subtraction facts to 20	Addition two 2-digit numbers	Multiplication of 3, 5, 10
-	To understand equivalence	Partitioning	9, 11, 21, 19 subtraction from any 2-digit number	3 or more single-digit addition

1. Classroom settings:

Carpet area for cooperative learning, discussion, warm up games; visible and accessible resources / learning aids; tables in groups; no visible distractions and obstacles;

2. Focus of lesson:

Algebra, fractions, simple problems solving in relation to fractions; real world problems

3. Lesson delivery:

Content present properly	Yes
Real world context	Yes
Problem solving	Yes
Inquiry based	No
Explicit	Partly, on the level of approaching problem
Peer tutoring	Yes, parts of the lesson
Cooperative learning	Yes, carpet area; parts of the lesson

4. Grouping:

Internal grouping within class in relation to abilities within “low abilities”; children with IEP’s working with their LSA’s, however within groups not in isolation but do not taking a part in cooperative learning all the time;

5. Instructional strategies

Differentiated instructions for IEP students	Stress on multisensory teaching and use of visual aids and manipulative; differentiated levels of given problems; scaffolding build up at beginning of the lesson;
Connection to prior knowledge	Yes. During introduction and within lesson explicit parts referred to prior knowledge
Teacher modelling	Yes. Teacher clearly presented step by step procedures
Varied assessments	Yes. Formative assessment by Teacher and LSA. Positive encouraging feedback with children being given the opportunity to present their work
Use of multimedia	Interactive board and manipulative
Varied questioning	Yes. Towards scaffolding
Students' involvement	Yes. IEP children more focused on individual tasks than on general classwork

6. Time and classroom management

Good use of time control with time boundaries given and monitored for task completion. Extended time for instruction and answering for SEN children.

7. General comments

- IEP goals related partly with the lesson content were in practice
- LSA focused more towards lesson objectives than IEP goals
- IEP did not give consideration to special classroom adjustments for SEN children. However, they were working within the classroom with other students
- SEN children were seated away from distractive objects or items
- Inclusive classroom settings
- All necessary resources were available during the lesson
- LSA attempted to maximize children involvement and differentiated instructions as required

Lesson Observation: Teacher 2

Date: 17.11.15

Grade: 6

Support: 2 x LSA, 1 x TA

Number of Learners: 22

Number of Students with IEP's: 3

Class level: Bottom group

IEP objectives:

<u>Child 1</u>	<u>Child 2</u>	<u>Child 3</u>
9 addition to single digit number	Interpretive simple bar charts using scales	No math related objectives
Subtract mentally a single digit from 10's and unit to 20	Equivalent fractions, addition and subtraction	To respond when asked questions directly by the teacher
Predict the subsequent number in a number sequence	Converting of fractions to percentages $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{3}{4}$ & $\frac{1}{10}$	-
Multiplication tables up to 10	Working through two step word problems using all four operations	-
Equivalence between fractions	-	-

1. Classroom settings:

Carpet area for cooperative learning, discussion, warm up games; visible and accessible resources / learning aids; tables in groups; no visible distractions and obstacles. All students working within the classroom.

2. Focus of lesson:

Algebra and fractions

3. Lesson delivery:

Content present properly	Yes. Clearly and explicitly
Real world context	No
Problem solving	Yes. Differentiated problems
Inquiry based	No
Explicit	Yes
Peer tutoring	Yes
Cooperative learning	Yes. Carpet area

4. Grouping:

Internal grouping within class in relation to abilities within “low abilities”; children with IEP’s working with their LSA’s, however within groups not in isolation but do not taking a part in cooperative learning all the time

5. Instructional strategies

Differentiated instructions for IEP students	Differentiated worksheets with visual and manual aids (fraction charts and its equivalent). Multisensory teaching. Child three has been asked simple question to follow IEP targets. Children 1 & 2 with targets related to lesson objectives working within a group
Connection to prior knowledge	Yes. Introduction part, focus on building up scaffolding. IEP involvement with active questions in relation to prior knowledge
Teacher modelling	Yes. Explaining problems by example and possible solutions on the board. Walking students step by step through instructions and problem solving
Varied assessments	Yes. Formative, positive encouraging feedback. Individualized prizes for correct answers and children being given the opportunity to present their work
Use of multimedia	No
Varied questioning	Yes. Clarifying problems, follow-ups and scaffolding building
Students' involvement	Yes. IEP children more focused on individual tasks than on general classwork together with LSA's

6. Time and classroom management

Extended time for instruction and answering for SEN children

7. General comments

- IEP did not give consideration to special classroom adjustments for SEN children. However, they were working within the classroom with other students
- SEN children were seated away from distractive objects or items
- Inclusive classroom settings
- All necessary resources were available during the lesson
- LSA attempted to maximize children involvement and differentiated instructions as required
- Teacher did not lower the expectations for SEN children. However, extended time for responses was given

Lesson Observation: Teacher 3

Date: 18.11.15

Grade: 6

Support: 3 x LSA

Number of Learners: 23

Number of Students with IEP's: 3

Class level: Bottom group

IEP objectives:

<u>Child 1</u>	<u>Child 2</u>	<u>Child 3</u>
Conversion of fractions to decimals and percentages, including multistep word problems	Prediction of subsequent numbers in a number sequence	Understand 2, 3, 5, 10 times tables out of order mentally
Conversion of mm to meters, cm to meters & grams to kg's independently	Addition of 100's, 10's and units vertically	To understand 100's with a view to relating these to money problems
Understand multiple step problems in mental math	Subtract 9, 19, 29, 11, 21 mentally from any two digit number	-
Visualization of 3-D shapes and lines of symmetry	All times tables up to 10	-
-	Order number to one thousand	-

1. Classroom settings:

Carpet area for cooperative learning, discussion, warm up games; visible and accessible resources / learning aids; tables in groups; no visible distractions and obstacles. All students working within the classroom.

2. Focus of lesson:

Algebra and fractions

3. Lesson delivery:

Content present properly	Yes. 100 square and HTU grid
Real world context	Yes
Problem solving	Yes
Inquiry based	No
Explicit	Yes. Patterns provided for calculation
Peer tutoring	Yes
Cooperative learning	Yes. Groups of two or three children at solving the same problem, including SEN children

4. Grouping:

Internal grouping within class in relation to abilities within “low abilities”; children with IEP’s working with their LSA’s, however within groups not in isolation but do not taking a part in cooperative learning all the time

5. Instructional strategies

Differentiated instructions for IEP students	Multisensory teaching. Differentiated works sheets for child 1. Children 2 & 3 focused on individual targets
Connection to prior knowledge	Yes. Lesson fully based on prior knowledge
Teacher modelling	Yes. Patterns and follow up questions
Varied assessments	Yes. Formative, positive encouraging feedback (performance based)
Use of multimedia	Yes. Interactive board
Varied questioning	Yes. Lower cognitive stimulated. Narrowing of student responses. Multiple student answering due to use of white board
Students' involvement	Yes. Interaction within small groups. Peer tutoring present. Children 2 & 3 working with LSA on individual tasks

6. Time and classroom management

Extended time for instruction and answering for SEN children. All tasks set within a time frame

7. General comments

- IEP did not give consideration to special classroom adjustments for SEN children. However, they were working within the classroom with other students
- SEN children were seated away from distractive objects or items
- Inclusive classroom settings
- All necessary resources were available during the lesson
- LSA attempted to maximize children involvement and differentiated instructions as required. LSA working with children 2 & 3, worked only on individual IEP tasks
- Child 1 actively involved within general lessons

Appendix 4: Teacher Interviews

Teacher Interview questions

1. Do you have the opportunity to provide information to the IEP team regarding students that exhibit the potential for learning difficulties or requiring additional support enrolled in your classroom?

Teacher 1:

Usually I have in my class children with IEP's from previous years but I believe that if I would have a new child and his or her performance indicates special needs I can always talk to the head of inclusion. We have within the school a concern form to complete if we believe that a child needs additional support or and IEP.

Teacher 2:

I receive an IEP based on the concern form that has been submitted by many teachers to the inclusion department and followed by appropriate assessment. My input is in relation to the IEP review (mainly) at the IEP review meetings. My opinion is always considered. I always report children that potentially qualify for an IEP on the concern form or through direct conversation with the head of inclusion.

Teacher 3:

Yes. Children who are on IEP's (or that teachers feel should be on IEP's) have evidence provided (concern form). Children exhibiting potential of requiring additional help in reading are identified and document on a separate form.

2. Do you participate in the IEP team with respect to IEP goals, provisions or modifications to be implemented?

Teacher 1:

Yes, during IEP meetings my opinion is taken into consideration. I can determine particular goals or provisions if I feel that this will benefit a child's progress.

Teacher 2:

Yes, part of my work I directly linked with the IEP teams work. Since I have three children with an IEP in my class, I always take part in the IEP process.

Teacher 3:

Yes, I am present at the IEP meetings. Head of inclusion, the LSA and I review the provisions and goals from previous IEP's, discuss the concern form and then start planning the next targets together.

3. Do you provide any feedback of a student's progress or IEP goals attainment?

Teacher 1:

I take part in IEP meetings, then is the time to provide feedback about a child's achievements and obstacles during IEP implementation and possible better provisions.

Teacher 2:

During the IEP review meetings, together with the LSA and other teachers, we discuss methods of delivering the IEP goals and what we were actually able to achieve.

Teacher 3:

Yes, at IEP meetings all participants provide feedback. In my case the IEP goals are discussed and the way and level to which they have been done.

4. Do you participate in determining the kind of support or technical assistance needed for students with IEP?

Teacher 1:

I have all the resources I need. If something is missing, I try to prepare this myself. So far I have not yet had children in my class children requiring assistive technologies.

Teacher 2:

All resources and assistive technologies are always available, so I have not yet had to request any.

Teacher 3:

Yes, to a point. Obviously it matters what support or resources we have in the school or how much of the budget is allocated for these. I can only expect as much as the school system allows me. Currently there is no support I have requested that has not been provided.

5. Do special education teachers work directly with you to help with an IEP implementation?

Teacher 1:

Yes, the head of inclusion and special needs teachers are always willing to discuss my issues regarding IEP implementation. I believe that the IEP is a process that should include all parties, that has been my experience to date.

Teacher 2:

Yes, if I need any support. The head of inclusion is always available and I am in steady contact with special needs teachers to make our work with the IEP children consistent.

Teacher 3:

The head of inclusion, LSA and class teacher works out the IEP implementation. I all IEP's to date I have been part of the group.

6. Do you have sufficient time to collaborate with special educators to meet SEN student's needs?

Teacher 1:

Not really, I struggle to find time to discuss issues related the IEP. Usually I wait until the IEP review meetings, then I have time to discuss all aspects of IEP implementation, provisions and differentiations etc.

Teacher 2:

Only during IEP meetings; I am very busy so I have to organize my time to talk wit special needs teachers or the head of inclusion. However, this is usually very challenging.

Teacher 3:

Yes, but at the review meetings there is enough time to organize the IEP correctly. I addition to there is constant interaction / communication between teachers, specialist, LSA's, SEN teachers and parents.

7. Do you receive training regarding how to modify the curriculum and assessment, differentiate instructions, manage behavior or use Assistive Technologies?

Teacher 1:

No, maybe in some schools such training is provided. However, all the schools I have worked in have not offered such training.

Teacher 2:

Not in this school.

Teacher 3:

Not at the current school. The only training I have received was during my university course.

8. Are you familiar with the content of students' IEP (modifications, accommodations, goals, additional services)?

Teacher 1:

I have five children with IEP's in my class; I am generally familiar with the IEP's but not in detail. Preparing my lesson plans I always have the IEP's with me to take these into account if possible. Unfortunately the IEP are not always compatible with the curriculum, so have to decide how to implement the IEP accordingly.

Teacher 2:

Yes, I use it for my planning, especially for math and english. I need to know how to work, what to expect and how to prepare work sheets and assessments.

Teacher 3:

Yes, I have worked in a variety of schools and IEP have always been a part of these. When I prepare my math lessons. I have three IEP's in the class, and I always try to accommodate the goals in the current lesson.

9. Do you provide all requested provisions and differentiated instructions based on student's IEP?

Teacher 1:

It depends on the content of the lesson. Sometime it is extremely difficult when the IEP objectives are very narrow and not much within the curriculum. However, I always try and implement as much as possible.

Teacher 2:

Not always, it depends on the current lesson and the child's level. I try to implement it often but sometimes request the LSA to focus on the IEP goals, especially when the lesson content is not compatible with the IEP goals.

Teacher 3:

Not all. Some children go further than the IEP and this needs to be taken in account when differentiating. I try at least at warm-up sessions to link the IEP goals with activities.

10. Do you attend on regular bases IEP review meetings and have the opportunity to provide input?

Teacher 1:

My presence is always expected, as are other members of the IEP team. We usually meet three times in a year.

Teacher 2:

Yes, during these meetings I always discuss the IEP's goals achievement and plans for new IEP'S.

Teacher 3:

Yes, the meetings are often and beneficial to the IEP. To take part in the meetings is my professional obligation.

11. Is the student with IEP making measured progress within the general curriculum?

Teacher 1:

They make progress, however not always age or curriculum band related. I believe that in the case of children with an IEP it is much more important to measure their progress on a personal level of achievement more than in relation to standardized tests or curriculum bands.

Teacher 2:

There is always some progress, however not always related to the curriculum band. It always depends on how we measure the progress and if we remember the child's abilities.

Teacher 3:

Yes, but according to their levels. This does not mean they are making progress against their age related curriculum band. However, they always make progress according to their levels.

12. How did you implement the student's IEP during an observed lesson? Have you modified the curriculum, differentiate instructions or adjust to classroom settings?

Teacher 1:

The observed lesson objectives were not related to IEP targets of all the children. I differentiated worksheets, broke down content, slightly lowered expectations and extended time for responses. I used strategies and resources for better understanding of problems, I made sure that LSA's supported the IEP children correctly. With five children that have IEP's it is difficult to implement the IEP's objectives, especially if they are not compatible with the lesson objectives. In such situations, LSA support is important because they work toward IEP and lesson objects individually with children.

Teacher 2:

I prepared differentiated worksheets and lower expectations. Two of the children have targets matching lesson objectives, so I gave them different tasks and time to complete these. I tried to use varied resources and have consulted they way of their work with the LSA's.

Teacher 3:

Just as every lesson, children needs are taken into account. I have differentiated worksheets, war-up games and activities e.g. times table practice (two children's IEP's adjectives). I used varied resources, such as numicon. I used differentiated feed-back and always try to make the IEP children visible in the class and show appreciation of their efforts.

13. Did you find the student's IEP useful to meet the curriculum according to a student's needs?

Teacher 1:

Not really this time. But that does not mean the IEP is not useful. The lesson did not match the IEP objectives on this occasion.

Teacher 2:

Yes, I always try to take as much out of the IEP as possible. One child's IEP objectives were directly linked to the lesson objectives. The IEP helped me to determine the expectations of the child. The IEP helped me to plan activities, worksheets and plan LSA assistance according to the IEP's goals and lesson content.

Teacher 3:

To a certain extent, as long as the targets are relevant and achievable. Of course in this case (lesson observed), it helps me to prepare proper worksheets and resources. The IEP directs my expectation towards children's abilities more than with lesson objectives

Appendix 5: LSA Interviews

Learning Support Assistants (LSA's) Interview questions

1. Do you participate in the IEP team with respect to IEP goals, provisions or modifications to be implemented?

LSA 1:

Yes. I am making them aware where my child is right now in curriculum. The IEP meeting is the opportunity to show the evidence of the child's performance.

LSA 2:

Yes. Not at the stage of setting the initial IEP, but review of the existing one and suggestions for further objectives. I take part in the IEP meetings and share my opinion.

LSA 3:

Yes. I give my viewpoint, we sit together with the class teacher and discuss before review meetings.

2. Do you provide any feedback of a student's progress or IEP goals attainment?

LSA 1:

Yes. By the daily "observation diary" (communication with parents about daily activities and achievement). Inclusion department monthly reports and twice yearly "case studies"

LSA 2:

Yes. Daily with parents by the “observation diary” and by monthly reports. Termly case study, where I have the opportunity to provide the child’s progress.

LSA 3:

Yes. By case study, monthly reports, daily communication with parents about the child’s progress and achievement within class that day “observation diary” and by direct communication with parents and the inclusion department.

3. Do special education teachers work directly with you to help with an IEP implementation?

LSA 1:

The head of inclusion always works directly with me. I attend all specialist classes so I know how to work with the child towards the goals. Sometimes I have the external support, they observe me and give feedback.

LSA 2:

Usually the inclusion head has time to discuss with me all my problems and challenges. Additionally the class and special needs teacher’s supports me.

LSA 3:

I get help from the teachers; I take part in the child’s classes with speech therapist and special needs occupational therapist. I can always discuss any issues that I have at work with the specialists.

4. Do you have sufficient time to collaborate with special educators to meet SEN student's needs?

LSA 1:

No. My time is fully dedicated with the work with the child

LSA 2:

The time is very limited and I am usually fully occupied with working with the child. I have time only when classes are cancelled or during assembly, and other events, I have the time to get advice or discuss my concerns.

LSA 3:

I have two or three days that are very busy, I have sometime to contact them if I do not have to support my child outside of the classroom. School events, trips or an assembly is a good time to contact other teachers.

5. Do you receive training regarding how to modify the curriculum and assessment, differentiate instructions, manage behavior or use Assistive Technologies?

LSA 1:

Not in the specific area I work in. I can always get advice from the head of inclusion. I have done courses, conferences and related workshops for my own interest in related areas. Within this school I have not received addition training.

LSA 2:

Not particularly how to work with my child. I look for information on my own and take external courses in my free time. Within this school I have not received training.

LSA 3:

Not yet, but in the last year I have had training in behavioral management and child safety. I have not received any training on IEP implementation modification or assessment but I am always able to discuss with the head of inclusion or with teachers.

6. Are you familiar with the content of students' IEP (modifications, accommodations, goals, additional services)?

LSA 1:

Yes I know all recommendations, goals and provisions.

LSA 2:

Yes I have access to this document all the time and I work with it daily.

LSA 3:

Yes I am working with the child's IEP daily.

7. Do you provide all requested provisions and differentiated instructions based on student's IEP?

LSA 1:

I try to simplify the lesson content to suit the child according to the child's needs so he is part of the class and working to goal achievement. I try to implement the IEP as long as the objects are related to the curriculum. When the gap between curriculum and IEP goals is big, then I work only toward IEP goals separately from the class in order to achieve the IEP goals.

LSA 2:

Sometimes I am focused on lesson topics more than IEP goals. However, I still try to accommodate some of the IEP goals.

LSA 3:

I try to provide when it is appropriate but it is not always possible to provide all requested provisions.

8. Do you attend on regular bases IEP review meetings and have the opportunity to provide input?

LSA 1:

Yes, every term (three times a year). I provide the goals achievement. Comment for new targets or discuss the transfer of IEP goals to other time frames.

LSA 2:

Yes, I take part termly. This is the opportunity for me to present concerns and observation I have made working with the child.

LSA 3:

Yes, always. I take part in the discussion on the child's achievement, what we need to work on and about targets.

9. Do you find the IEP (for child you work with) useful in your daily work?

LSA 1:

Yes, as it is planned to suit the individual needs of the child. If the child is behind in the class, the IEP helps me to focus for on the child's needs.

LSA 2:

Not really, as it depends on the time available to me when working with the child. Sometimes there is not enough time to follow the IEP.

LSA 3:

Definitely, we all know how we should work to improve the child and areas needing development. The IEP provides good information on how to work to achieve the child's goals.

10. How do you use the IEP objectives and suggested provisions in your daily work?

LSA 1:

By linking the classwork and IEP as much as possible. Work in the class is simplified to suit the child's level and ability so the child can contribute.

LSA 2:

As so much is ongoing with all the subjects and other activities, I only have two or three times weekly to work to the IEP goals.

LSA 3:

It helps me to achieve the targets set for the child.

11. Would you be able to organize your daily work and support the child without the IEP?

LSA 1:

It is possible but having the IEP is beneficial as a guideline to segregate the time within the class.

LSA 2:

It depends on the day planning and class teacher's expectations. I am often working with the IEP.

LSA 3:

No, this is a guideline. How will I know what the child needs and how to achieve this?

12. How do you find the IEP as a document? Do you think that its form is supportive, objectives individualized enough and access to the IEP easy and not restricted?

LSA 1:

The form is OK. I always have access to this document. However, the targets could be expanded from educational goals to into other areas, such as; social, physical and mental.

LSA 2:

50 – 70% is affective and workable. The IEP targets should be smaller, maximum one to three. Currently there is too much to follow.

LSA 3:

It is easy to access the IEP (computer file and printout). It is also very handy, simple and easy to understand. The objectives are individualized enough, achievable but challenging.