IEP DOCUMENTATION FOR EFFECTIVE SYSTEMATIC FACILITATION

Peng-Sim Eng
Kianh Foundation

This paper discusses how the process for IEP documentation was used in a training program for a group of young inexperienced teachers and teaching aides to effectively address the educational needs of children with diverse disabilities. Teachers at Kianh Centre in Vietnam received explicit instructions for writing effective functional individual education plans (IEPs). The authentic evidence-based IEP pro forma presently discussed, and was made culturally appropriate after many reviews and about a year of training. IEPs written on this pro forma were used as operational reference and working documents by both classroom and physical therapy staff for six and four months, respectively. Staff feedback on use of these documents was facilitated through a questionnaire. This paper presents the outcome of how IEP was used as a functional reference to empower staff to work with students with disabilities. Despite the diversity of disabilities of the students at Kianh Centre, all staff who participated agreed that IEPs written on the pro forma empowered them with effective skills to facilitate student learning.

EP Documentation for Effective Systematic Facilitation
Vietnam, as a country, has just begun to acknowledge the needs of individuals with disabilities. Effective systematic facilitation for individuals with special educational needs is in its infancy. For the general population away from major cities, effective support services, resources and assessments for children with significant intellectual and other disabilities are wanting. As a member of Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID), I was assigned the position of special education trainer at Kianh Centre. Located in rural central Vietnam, it is operated by a charity funded non-government organisation for children with different disabilities. My task was to train and empower a group of inexperienced teaching staff with skills to meet the educational needs of all students within the centre. Two major outcomes were identified to achieve these goals. Staff must acquire skills that will be operationally functional for facilitating all students at the centre. Skills developed have to be maintained to ensure continuation of effective facilitation over time. This paper discusses how individual education plan (IEP) documentation was developed to establish and maintain the operating educational system at Kianh Centre. Staff feedback on the skills they acquired as a result of using this authentic IEP pro forma is presently discussed.

Literature Review
Since mid-1970s (Drasgow, Yell, & Robinson, 2001) individual education plan (IEP) has been the foundation document for special needs. It helps integrate students with special needs into identified educational curriculum (Pretti-Frontczak & Bricker, 2000; Gartin & Murdick, 2005; Kurth & Mastergeorge, 2010). As a roadmap (Diliberto & Brewer, 2012) for student development, IEP identifies goals as realistic functional outcomes (Pretti-Frontczak & Bricker 2000; Grisham-Brown, Pretti-Frontczak, Hemmeter, & Ridgley, 2002; Twachtman-Cullen & Twachtman-Bassett, 2011). Based on individual's ability to acquire specified skills (Grisham-Brown & Hemmeter, 1998; Twachtman-Cullen &Twachtman-Bassett, 2011), short and long term goals are incremental progression points (Micchnowicz, McConnell, Peterson, & Odom, 1995) along developmental continuum (Notari & Bricker ,1990; Armstrong, Armstrong, & Spandaguo, 2011; Twachtman-Cullen, &Twachtman-Bassett, 2011) within the individual's zone of proximal development.

Complexities of Operationally Effective IEP
The process linking procedure and substantive requirements to accurately identifying individual needs as goals in IEP for effective delivery of appropriate services however, is complex. A review of 26 studies on intended inclusion (Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2011) reflected *increased exclusionary practices* (Lloyd, 2008, p. 221). IEP as the document that links student learning to student development has fallen short of its original intent (Blackhurst & Berdine, 1993; Giangreco, Dennis, Edelman, & Cloninger, 1994; J. Grisham-Brown & Hemmeter, 1998; Huefner, 2000; Pretti-Frontczak & Bricker, 2000; Drasgow, Yell, & Robinson, 2001; Gartin & Murdick, 2005; Lloyd, 2008; Hollingsworth, Boone, & Crais, 2009; Armstrong, Armstrong, & Spandaguo, 2011; Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2011; Lo, 2012;). Limitations in teacher capacity was identified as a possible cause of this (Grisham-Brown, Pretti-Frontczak, Hemmeter, & Ridgley, 2002; McSheehan, Sonnenmeier, Jorgensen, & Turner, 2006; Rehfeldt, Clark, & Lee, 2010; Doren, Flannery, Lombardi, & Kato, 2012; Shriner, Carty, Rose, Shogren, et al., 2012; Blackwell & Rossetti, 2014). This view was supported when teachers wrote more effective IEPs after receiving training (Pretti-Frontczak & Bricker, 2000; Rehfeldt, Clark, & Lee, 2010; Shriner, et al., 2012; Doren, et al., 2012).

Five criteria (Pretti-Frontczak & Bricker, 2000) have been identified for goals identified in IEP to be operational effectiveness. Goals must be observable and measurable (Micchnowicz, et al., 1995) for appropriate facilitation that targets the final observable outcome. Goals must set the ground for planning that creates opportunities for the student to learn through practice and active participation during the day (Notari & Bricker, 1990; Grisham-Brown & Hemmeter, 1998; McWilliam, et al., 1998; Grisham-Brown, et al., 2002). Goals should target functional skills (Grisham-Brown & Hemmeter, 1998; Pretti-Frontczak & Bricker, 2000; Grisham-Brown, et al., 2002; Diliberto & Brewer, 2012) that can be generalized and used across different environments (Lynch & Beare, 1990; Notari & Bricker, 1990). Goals must reflect sequential relationship for progressive development (Micchnowicz, et al., 1995; Pretti-Frontczak & Bricker, 2000; Dinnebeil, Spino, & McInerney, 2011) and functional progression so as to provide appropriate context for planning and instruction (Mager, 1997; Grisham-Brown & Hemmeter, 1998; Pretti-Frontczak & Bricker, 2000; Grisham-Brown, et al., 2002; Twachtman-Cullen & Twachtman-Bassett, 2011). Furthermore, goals set should result in functional outcomes that lead to greater independence (Lynch & Beare, 1990; McWilliam, et al., 1998).

The increased level of independence may also result from the convergence of different functional skills by functioning as the focus for pathways and direction for sequential skill developmental (Twachtman-Cullen & Twachtman-Bassett, 2011). It helps to minimize development of functionally ineffectively splinter skills.

IEP and Student Learning
Goals in IEP are identified in relation to entry skill and the level of assistance or least restrictive environment (Twachtman-Cullen & Twachtman-Bassett, 2011) required to achieve this defined outcome. Entry skill or present learning position (Bricker, Pretti-Frontczak, & McComas, 1998; Twachtman-Cullen & Twachtman-Bassett, 2011) provides the baseline for assessment (Pretti-Frontczak & Bricker, 2000; Cooney & Buchanan, 2001) . It also forms the abilities reference for lesson plans (Bricker, Pretti-Frontczak, & McComas, 1998; Grisham-Brown & Hemmeter, 1998; Twachtman-Cullen & Twachtman-Bassett, 2011). Goals as observable outcomes are measured and assessed for levels of achievement (Micchnowicz, et al., 1995; Pretti-Frontczak & Bricker, 2000; Grisham-Brown, et al., 2002; Twachtman-Cullen & Twachtman-Bassett, 2011). The assessment can be based on standardized expectations (Huefner, 2000; Gartin & Murdick, 2005; Armstrong, et al., 2011; Twachtman-Cullen & Twachtman-Bassett, 2011) or simply based on individualized abilities (Cooney & Buchanan, 2001; Hollingsworth, Boone, & Crais, 2009; Dinnebeil, Spino, & McInerney, 2011). Assessment results charted over time provides a checklist (Dinnebeil, Spino, & McInerney, 2011) that documents individual development.

IEP and Teaching
IEP with instructional contents are operationally beneficial (Mager, 1997; Grisham-Brown & Hemmeter, 1998; Pretti-Frontczak & Bricker, 2000; Grisham-Brown, et al., 2002; Twachtman-Cullen & Twachtman-Bassett, 2011) as reference for planning lessons (Grisham-Brown & Hemmeter, 1998; Grisham-Brown, et al., 2002; Hollingsworth, Boone, & Crais, 2009). The resultant organized structured approach (Bennett, Reichow, & Wolery, 2011; Murdock & Hobbs, 2011) provides for consistency from both teachers and teaching assistants (French, 2001; Hollingsworth, Boone, & Crais, 2009) . It minimizes confusion and inconsistencies that may result when oral instructions dominate (French, 2001; Hollingsworth, Boone, & Crais, 2009).

Based on above discussion, student development is determined by the quality of goal identified in the IEP. Thus the operational value of IEP is positively correlated to student learning. Hence ability to write and/or use IEP are basic skills required for effective facilitation of special educational needs. IEP documentation is the logical starting point when providing training for facilitating special educational needs.

Method
Kianh Centre enrolls students from ages three to eighteen. It provides educational programs for students with a diversity of disabilities including autism, cerebral palsy, developmental delay, Down syndrome, microcephalus, sensory impairments, and behavior issues   as well as other undiagnosed disabilities. The academic year begins about August each year and ends with a one-month summer break about July.

This project started in April 2012 with 21 students, mostly from families within the immediate commune. The diversity of impairments and wide age gap posed major challenges to the committed but mostly inexperienced staff. The demand for special education was great and student number increased over time. In June 2012 there were two certified and one uncertified teacher with five teaching assistants in three classes with just over twenty students. By the end of 2013 there were three certified and one uncertified teacher with thirteen teaching assistants in four classes for just over sixty students. The project ended in March 2014 with more than seventy full time students enrolled at Kianh Centre. Except for the certified teachers all other staff did not receive formal training for special educational needs (SEN) and most had limited educational experience in the field of disability. For duration of this period three physical therapists attended to students with physical therapy needs. Training program, discussion, instructions, information and documentation were conducted in English and translated to Vietnamese and vice versa by a proficient interpreter.

The project started with identification of the level of teaching skills through observations and discussions with teachers. This was followed by analysis of the profile of student abilities and needs in relation to classroom physical and learning environments. Preliminary findings showed that effective engagement for learning was limited and skills required to address diverse needs through individualized active participation was wanting. It was noted that the entry skill of certified teachers was insufficient to enable effective facilitation for student learning.

The training program started with teachers being introduced to theoretical aspects of IEP, its functions and how IEPs were written. The first task was for teachers to recognize that students were individuals within a classroom. Teachers observed how their students with different disabilities benefited when taught as individuals with different abilities and needs. Teachers were encouraged and guided to identify individual abilities. Instead of focusing on the disabilities, they learnt to maintain and develop awareness for inherent limitations that respective disabilities have on the individual's development. These were documented in sessions when they learnt to write IEPs on given pro forma. Based on teachers' responses, modifications were made to IEP pro forma for greater efficiency and effectiveness as well as to accommodate for cultural needs.

Teachers were guided to identify the entry skill (Appendix, item 3) and the subject (Appendix) specific functional outcome (Appendix, item 2) based on student's abilities and needs. Ideally goals identified should reflect progression points over time along identified curriculum. This however was possible only for students working on the mainstream curriculum. A curriculum that effectively addresses special needs and functional outcomes has not yet been developed in Vietnam. In the absence of a reference curriculum, teachers were facilitated to view long term goals (Appendix, item 5) as progression points along sequential points towards subject specific functional outcome (Appendix, item 2). Similarly, short term goals (Appendix, item 4) were smaller steps along the same pathway towards the long term goal.

With reference to the entry skill and short term goal identified, teachers were encouraged and guided to reflect on the student's learning process. Teachers received demonstrations on how to plan their teaching strategies by defining the task analysis (Appendix, item 6) as small sequential skills to be acquired by that student to achieve the short term goal. They were facilitated to reflect on the student's abilities and needs in order to identify and document (Appendix, item 6) the type and level of assistance the student would require to complete each task documented within the task analysis.

Eventually teachers were guided to make a realistic projection for a functional outcome (Appendix, item 1) that reflected greater independence in the next two to five years, depending on student's ability. In order that student develop skills towards greater independence, teachers were assisted to view this projected functional outcome (Appendix, item 1) of improved independence as the convergent point for different subject specific functional skills (Appendix, item 2).

Over a period of about twelve months, discussions and reviews were carried out with each teacher for every IEP written. Subsequent changes made to pro forma ensured greater ease of use and uniformity in approach for writing IEPs. Familiarity in appropriate use of pro forma and practice over time saw a change in mindset towards appropriate and more effective facilitation for individualized special educational needs. Over a period of about nine months, pro forma were reviewed to facilitate a logical flow for trend of thoughts. In the finalized pro forma presently discussed (Appendix), guiding questions were posted for teachers to respond in a sequential order indicated by the numerals. This process of documentation developed an operating system that helped to minimize reversion to the original that may result from culturally ingrained habits.

Teachers wrote IEPs and trained teaching assistants to use these as references and operating documents. IEPs written for every student had goals for literacy, numeracy and communication. Based on individualized needs, other goals for physical therapy, behavior, and social and life skills were optional. Physical therapy staff received training from an Australian occupational therapist (also an AVID volunteer) after the finalized pro forma (Appendix) was prepared.

About six months after these IEPs were used in classrooms and four months by therapy staff, staff evaluated their skill levels in relation to student outcomes.

Results
About eighteen months into the training program, staff who had worked at the centre for at least six months participated in this evaluation. Staff evaluated the outcomes achieved as a result of using IEPs written on prescribed pro forma (Appendix). The results shown in Tables 1 to 5 do not reflect results for *Disagree* and *Strongly disagree* as there was no disagreement. A total of twelve staff participated. This included three teachers (T), six teaching assistants (TA) and three physical therapists (PT). Value given in ( ) reflect per cent of sub-total and total as indicated within each table.

Table 1. Profile of Students in Classrooms over a Period of Six Months

The Classroom								
Statement		Yes			No			Comment
		T	TA	PT	T	TA	PT	
1	There are 10-15 students in my class.	3	4	*	0	2	*	
2	Students in my class usually work in small groups of 1 to 4 students per group.	2	4	*	1	1	*	1 TA did not respond.
3	There are usually 3-5 groups of students doing work in my class.	3	6	*	0	0	*	*Not relevant for PT

Note. A Total of Twelve Staff Participated - 3 Teachers (T), 6 Teaching Assistants (TA) And 3 Physical Therapists (PT).

The Classroom
The results in Table 1 show the complex dynamics within classrooms in terms of total number of students, the number of students within each group and the number of groups during classroom sessions.

Student numbers in classes vary. Two teaching staff had less than ten students (nine, not shown in table), seven had more than ten students with one classroom having sixteen students (not shown in table) at one stage. The diversity in student profile is reflected in the number of groups within each class and number of students within each group. Classroom sessions may operate with three or more small groups within each class. The class with sixteen students had as many as five and at times six separate groups. Physical therapists did not respond as therapist worked with one student at a time.

At the start of the training program, teachings staff was overwhelmed by complex educational needs and the difficulty in organizing the total of twenty odd students at the centre. Teaching and learning was very much determined by staff's personal experiences as students in mainstream schools in Vietnam. It

reflected marginal awareness for special needs and individualization. Teachers instructed from the front of the classroom while students as a group were expected to be quiet, seated and listening. The level of active participation and effective learning for most students were low. Compliance was very much equivalent to 'learning'. The general comments were that students did not 'remember' what they had 'learnt' and disruptive behavior was an issue. Subsequent to receiving professional development training and using student goals in the IEPs they wrote as a measure, staff reflected on their abilities to facilitate special educational needs (Tables 2 to 5). There was agreement for all statements except for some neutral responses. One teaching staff gave a neutral response to (Table 3, statement 6) while the other four neutral responses were given by therapy staff for Table 2, statement 5, Table 3, statement 5 and Table 4, statements 1 and 4. For purpose of present discussion, analysis and discussion of the data will focus mainly on responses that showed fifty percent or more for *strongly agree* and eighty percent or more for *agree*. Data for *disagree* and *strongly disagree* is not shown as there was no disagreement.

Table 2. Staff Evaluation on Student Development as A Result of Using IEP Written on Pro Forma

Statement	Strongly agree				Agree				Neutral		
	T	TA	PT	A	T	TA	PT	A	T	TA	PT
Individual Student Developmental Outcome Resulting From Use of IEP Pro Forma											
1 Identified long term expected functional outcome (next 2-5 years) has enabled student to focus on tasks for developing specific skills along the mapped pathway.	1 (33)	2 (3)	0	3 (25)	2 (67)	5 (83)	3 (100)	10 (83)	0	0	0
2 It has enabled student to achieve short term goal as an outcome along a sequence of steps to be acquired for the mapped pathway.	1 (33)	3 (50)	1 (33)	5 (42)	2 (67)	4 (67)	2 (67)	8 (57)	0	0	0
3 It has helped students achieve greater success in acquiring new skills.	2 (67)	2 (3)	2 (67)	6 (50)	1 (33)	5 (83)	1 (33)	7 (58)	0	0	0
4 It has resulted in student development towards acquiring functional skills.	1 (33)	1 (17)	1 (33)	3 (25)	2 (67)	6 (100)	2 (67)	10 (83)	0	0	0
5 Writing task analysis has made me reflect on the small steps within the specified short term goal.	1 (33)	2 (33)	1 (33)	4 (33)	2 (67)	5 (83)	1 (33)	8 (67)	0	0	1 (33)

Note: A Total (A) Of Twelve Staff Participated - 3 Teachers (T), 6 Teaching Assistants (TA) And 3 Physical Therapists (PT). Figure In ( ) Reflect %.

Individual Student Development Outcome
Responses given in Table 2 demonstrates how staff felt about the way they facilitated student development (statements 3 and 4) by linking short term goals along specified pathway (statement 2) to a projected functional outcome towards greater independence (statement 1). Staff reflected on how they viewed the process of student learning as a sequence of small steps within a given task (statement 5).

In the training program for writing IEP, projection and identification of an expected functional outcome (Appendix, item 1) took place at the end after staff was able to address other aspects of IEP. Subsequently termed the projected functional outcome (PFO), this however was made the first point of contact (Appendix, item 1) when writing IEP. As the focal point for convergence of skills from different areas of development (Appendix, item 2) it required the teacher to reflect on student's inherent impairment and the implications this had on the individual's development before making a realistic projection (two to five years) for a possible outcome within his/her functional limits. All staff, except one neutral response, indicated that the PFO identified within the IEP was useful in helping students to acquire skills.

Eighty-three per cent of all staff, including all therapists and eighty-three percent of teaching assistants agreed that PFO enabled student development to be mapped along a developmental pathway over time. Fifty percent of teaching assistants strongly agreed that PFO helped them enable student to focus on tasks for developing specific skills along mapped pathways. Fifty percent of all staff, including sixty-seven percent of teachers and therapists, strongly agreed that students were better able to achieve short term goal as an outcome along a sequence of steps toward functional skill outcome identified in PFO. Eighty-three percent of teaching assistants agreed that their knowing the PFO helped enabled student

develop skills. An overwhelming eighty-three percent of classroom staff, including all teaching assistants, agreed that the having PFO identified for them helped in student development.

Table 3. Staff Evaluation on the Functions And Operational Outcomes Derived as a Result of Having the Task Analysis for the Short Term Goal Identified within IEPs

Statement	Strongly agree				Agree				Neutral			
	T	TA	PT	A	T	TA	PT	A	T	TA	PT	A
Task Analysis For Short Term Goal												
1 Writing task analysis has made me reflect on the small steps within the specified short term goal.	0	4 (67)	1 (33)	5 (42)	3 (100)	2 (33)	2 (67)	7 (58)	0	0	0	
2 Writing task analysis has made me more aware of the process of learning that the student undergo to achieve the specified goal.	1 (33)	3 (50)	1 (33)	5 (42)	2 (67)	3 (50)	2 (67)	7 (58)	0	0	0	
3 Writing task analysis has made me a better facilitator for student learning.	0	3 (50)	0	3 (25)	3 (100)	3 (50)	3	9 (75)	0	0	0	
4 The level of assistance and expected outcomes identified in the task analysis table is operationally important in the classroom.	1 (33)	4 (67)	1 (33)	6 (50)	2 (67)	2 (33)	2 (67)	6 (50)	0	0	0	
5 The task analysis table provides useful information to other teaching staff on the level of assistance the student requires to achieve the expected outcome.	1 (33)	3 (50)	0	4 (33)	2 (67)	3 (50)	2 (67)	7 (58)	0	0	1 (33)	1 0
6 Regular entry of dates for recording of the student's performance in the task analysis table is not difficult.	0	0	1 (33)	1 (8)	3 (100)	5 (83)	2 (67)	10 (83)	0	1 (17)	0	1 0
7 Classroom staff who work with the student is able to make accurate entries for charting the student's development.	1 (33)	1 (17)	1 (33)	3 (25)	2 (67)	5 (83)	2 (67)	9 (75)	0	0	0	
8 Regular entry of dates in the task analysis table has helped me to monitor progress or the lack of it towards achieving the specified short term goal.	2 (67)	3 (50)	2 (67)	7 (58)	1 (33)	3 (50)	*1* (33)	5 (42)	0	0	0	
9 Regular entry of dates in the task analysis table provides me with information for future goal writing.	1 (33)	2 (33)	1 (33)	4 (33)	2 (67)	4 (67)	2 (67)	8 (67)	0	0	0	

Note. Total number of participants (A); Teachers (T), Teaching assistants (TA); Physical therapists (PT). Figure in ( ) reflect %.

Task Analysis for Short Term Goal
Enabling learning by all students in the complex classroom environment as discussed above was further complicated by the prevalence of verbal instructions. Having identified the appropriate entry skill (Appendix, item 3) and short term goal (Appendix, item 4) the pro forma presented an avenue for reference through documentation of the task analysis (Appendix, item 6). Table 3 focuses on the result that task analysis had on staffs' ability to facilitate student learning.

When teachers and therapists write IEPs, in consultation with parents and teaching assistants, they reflect on possible and anticipated responses from students. They developed greater awareness for student as individual with abilities and needs to acquire specified skills as observable outcomes. Inclusion of the task analysis within the IEP enabled facilitators to view student acquisition of short term goal as a sequence of small steps (statement1). Based on individual student abilities and needs (Appendix, items 4b/4c), the task analysis (Appendix, item 6) identifies and documents the individual's learning process (statement 2) as a sequence of small manageable tasks/steps between entry skill (Appendix , item 3) and the final outcome as identified in the short term goal (Appendix, item 4a). The types and levels of assistance required (statement 4) to achieve outcomes identified within each task served as working reference (statement 5) and made it easier to effectively facilitate student learning (statement 3). It also presented reference points for monitoring (statement 8) when individualized assessments should be carried out. Simple regular date entries (statement 6) within the task analysis also presented useful information for planning realistic goals (statement 9). The task analysis established a document for reference and provided a working document for checking and recording individualized development over time (statement 7).

All teachers agreed and sixty seven percent of teaching assistants strongly agreed that the documented task analysis helped them reflect on small steps when assisting students to achieve specified goals. Fifty percent of teaching assistants strongly agreed that the task analysis improved their awareness on how student learnt. All teachers and physiotherapists agreed that the task analysis made them better facilitators for student learning. Fifty percent of all participants including, sixty-seven percent of teaching assistants strongly agreed that the level of assistance and expected outcomes identified in the task analysis was operationally important in the classroom. All teachers, eighty-three percent of teaching assistants and sixty-seven percent of therapists agreed that making regular entry of dates for recording student performance in the tabulated task analysis was not difficult. Fifty-eight percent of participants including, sixty-seven percent of teachers, fifty percent of teaching assistants and sixty-seven percent of therapist strongly agreed that regular entry of dates in the tabulated task analysis helped them to monitor progress towards achieving short term goals.

Table 4. Staff Evaluation on the Effect that Information Given in IEPS had on Organizing Students and Developing Lesson Plans

Statement	Strongly agree				Agree				Neutral			
	T	TA	PT	A	T	TA	PT	A	T	TA	PT	A
Lesson Plan												
1 Student diversity in my classroom makes planning lessons to address all their needs a challenge.	1 (33)	2 (33)	0	3 (25)	2 (67)	4 (67)	2 (67)	8 (67)	0	0	1 (33)	1 0
2 The abilities and needs information given in the IEP has helped in the grouping of students within the classroom.	1 (33)	4 (67)	1 (33)	6 (50)	2 (67)	2 (33)	2 (67)	6 (50)	0	0	0	
3 The information given in the IEP made it easier to develop lesson plans for the different groups of students in my classroom.	1 (33)	4 (67)	0	5 (42)	2 (67)	2 (33)	3 (100)	7 (58)	0	0	0	
4 Organising information in the manner required by the IEP pro forma has improved my organisational skill for teaching.	0	3 (50)	0	3 (25)	3 (100)	3 (50)	2 (67)	8 (67)	0	0	1 (33)	1 0

Note. Total number of participants (A); Teachers (T), Teaching assistants (TA); Physical therapists (PT). Figure in ( ) reflect %.

Lesson Plans

Table 4 records opinions on the effect that IEP had on classroom organization and teaching. Staff reflected on the challenge (statement 1) that broad student diversity (Table 1) had on classroom management. Grouping students based on abilities and needs helped minimize the effects of differences within the classroom setting. Staff commented on how information in IEPs affected student grouping for classroom organization (statement 2) and planning lessons (statement 3). They reflected on the effect IEPs had on their organizational and management skills for effective student learning (statement 4). In any given area of development (Appendix, item 2) relevant knowledge of entry skills (Appendix, item 3), short/long term goals (Appendix, items 4/5) and learning process as given in the task analysis (Appendix, item 6) provided critical information required to organize and plan for student learning. Once grouped, lesson plans can be prepared according to needs (Appendix, items 4b/4c) of students within each group.

Sixty-seven percent of teaching assistants strongly agreed that information given in the IEP made student grouping and planning lessons easier. All therapists also agreed that the way the information was organized within IEPs assisted them to facilitate the therapy needs of their students. All teachers agreed and fifty percent of teaching assistants strongly agreed that information presented in IEP resulted in improvement in their organization skills for teaching. All teachers agreed that the need to reflect and organize the information required to fill in the IEP pro forma has improved their organizational skill for teaching. Improved ability to plan and organize may be demonstrated by the fact that only thirty-three percent of all classroom staff strongly agreed that student diversity within the classroom was a challenge for teaching.

Table 5. Staff Evaluation on Personal Skills Acquired as a Result of Writing and/or Using IEPS on Given Pro Forma

	Statement	Strongly agree				Agree				Neutral			
		T	TA	PT	A	T	TA	PT	A	T	TA	PT	A
	Views On The Pro Forma For IEP Writing												
1	It has made me reflect on the way I function as a teacher in a classroom for students with special needs.	1 (33)	3 (50)	0	4 (33)	2 (67)	3 (50)	3 (100)	8 (67)	0	0	0	
2	It has enabled me to recognise each student as an individual with impairment/s and still has his/her own abilities.	1 (33)	2 (33)	1 (33)	4 (33)	2 (67)	4 (67)	2 (67)	8 (67)	0	0	0	
3	It has empowered me to assist my students to develop based on their individual abilities and needs.	1 (33)	4 (67)	0	5 (42)	2 (67)	2 (33)	3 (100)	7 (58)	0	0	0	
4	It has helped me set realistic (achievable) short term goals as progressive functional skills to be acquired over time.	1 (33)	2 (33)	0	3 (25)	2 (67)	4 (67)	3 (100)	9 (75)	0	0	0	
5	It has made me a more effective teacher for students with special needs.	1 (33)	3 (50)	0	4 (33)	2 (67)	3 (50)	3 (100)	8 (67)	0	0	0	

Note. Total number of participants (A); Teachers (T), Teaching assistants (TA); Physical therapists (PT). Figure in ( ) reflect %.

Views for the Use of IEP Forma
Table 5 presents opinions on the pro forma and how information was presented in the IEPs. Staff reflected on the way they work as facilitators (statement 1) with students as individuals (statement 2). They assessed the skills they acquired for facilitating learning (statements 3 and 5) and their ability for identifying realistic goals for students (statement 4).

All staff agreed that the way information was presented in IEPs gave them better skills to facilitate student learning. Fifty percent of teaching assistants strongly agreed it had made them more reflective of the way they functioned in classroom and that it made them better facilitators. Sixty-seven percent of teaching assistants strongly agreed that the IEP had enabled them to work with students as individuals with special needs and abilities.

Discussion
All staff found the PFO useful (Table 2). Identifying and subsequently knowing the PFO helped minimize operational complexities (Drasgow, Yell, & Robinson, 2001; Blackwell, 2014) by facilitating planning for appropriate developmental pathways (Pretti-Frontczak, 2000; Dinnebeil, Spino, & McInerney, 2011; Twachtman-Cullen & Twachtman-Bassett, 2011) towards greater independence (Pretti-Frontczak, 2000). PFO positioned students as individuals with potential and provided foreknowledge for purposeful directed (Notari & Bricker ,1990; Armstrong, Armstrong, & Spandaguo, 2011; Twachtman-Cullen, &Twachtman-Bassett, 2011) facilitation. The operational benefits (Pretti-Frontczak, 2000; Grisham-Brown, et al., 2002; Twachtman-Cullen & Twachtman-Bassett, 2011) provided by PFO empowered staff to be better facilitators (Table 2).

PFO facilitates planning for developmental pathways from entry skill to functional outcome for greater independence. It addresses issues that arise with frequent changes in goals that often accompany changes in service providers and environments, norms in educational settings, over time. PFO maintains developmental continuity. It provides direction for identification of student goals as acquisition of sequential skills (Micchnowicz, et al., 1995; Pretti-Frontczak & Bricker, 2000; Dinnebeil, Spino, & McInerney, 2011) towards the identified functional outcomes (Lynch & Beare, 1990; McWilliam, et al., 1998). Maintaining this developmental continuum is especially important for students with severe and/or multiple disabilities who often require long time to acquires skills to a functional level. PFO minimizes changes to goals that may result in acquisition of a variety of splinter skill that cannot be effectively generalized for functional use towards greater independence It facilitates effective identification of subject specific goals (Appendix, item 2) six-month short term (Appendix, item 4) and one-year long

term (Appendix, item 5) goals as progression points from relevant entry skill (Appendix, item 3) towards outcome for PFO. PFO facilitated the convergent mapping for developmental pathways towards greater independence.

Results given in Tables 3 and 4 demonstrate the effects IEP had on levels of classroom organization and student learning. As goals are sequential steps from the entry skills along pathways for progressive development (Pretti-Frontczak, 2000; Twachtman-Cullen & Twachtman-Bassett, 2011; Diliberto & Brewer, 2012), task analysis are small sequential steps within the student's learning process for achieving the specified short term goal (Grisham-Brown & Hemmeter, 1998; Grisham-Brown, et al., 2002; Hollingsworth, Boone, &Crais, 2009; Dinnebeil, Spino, &McInerney, 2011). Documented within the IEP, task analysis provides the reference for planning and uniformity for instructions (Mager, 1997; Grisham-Brown & Hemmeter, 1998; Pretti-Frontczak & Bricker, 2000; Grisham-Brown, et al., 2002; Twachtman-Cullen & Twachtman-Bassett, 2011).

Task analysis charts the student learning process. It assists in the setting up of an environment that facilitates learning and skill acquisition (Twachtman-Cullen & Twachtman-Bassett, 2011). IEPs with task analysis facilitated planning and addressed the important factor of uniformity across team members in terms of expected outcome as well as type and level of assistance (Table 3, statement 5) to be provided for student to complete task. As an operational reference it was useful when teachers were not available to help and when students were being assisted by less familiar staff. Date check entries made in task analysis transformed IEPs into working documents that provided records of individual student development over the years. While there was general agreement that this information could be used for subsequent identification and setting of realistic future goals for students (Table 3, statement 9), only one teacher and one therapist strongly agreed. This may be indicative of the novelty of writing IEPs and using them as working and recording document. It may also reflect the absence of appropriate curricula required for reference to set goals along identified developmental pathways.

Lesson plans are operational references that document strategic needs for facilitating student learning in structured sessions. While lesson plans may be distinct from IEP, Table 4 indicates information documented in IEPs served as important references when setting up and supporting student-centered (Grisham-Brown & Hemmeter, 1998; Grisham-Brown, et al., 2002; Hollingsworth, Boone, & Crais, 2009; Dinnebeil, Spino, &McInerney, 2011) learning environments. Lesson plans together with the task analysis minimized confusion among staff members and provided consistent structures in sessions. Thus IEPs as reference resulted in improved levels of organization and planning which in turn resulted in improved levels of engagement and learning as discussed for Table 2.

The strong support given by teaching assistants for use of IEPs as reference and working documents, as shown in Table 4, is encouraging. Their ability to adapt by acquiring new skills through professional development (Doren, et al., 2012) and moving from less effective aural instructions (Hollingsworth, Boone, & Crais, 2009) are important contributors in student learning. Using IEPs written by the teachers, they became more aware of the who, how and what of each student   and made significant progress in their ability to facilitate individualized special needs.

Table 5 showed all staff agreed that the professional development they underwent for writing and/or using IEP has empowered them with skills to facilitate SEN. This is supported by student development observed as discussed earlier for Table 2. By the end of this two-year project teachers writing term reports estimated goal achievement rates between seventy and one hundred per cent. Academic goals set for literacy and numeracy experienced greatest success. Behavior issues had lowest success. This is because concepts for behavior manifestation and appropriate behavior management are relatively new grounds for the staff.

While IEPs written on the authentic pro forma presently discussed has initiated a change mindset towards understanding that individuals with impairments have abilities and can acquire skills, it will be useful to assess the functional value of goals identified within these IEPs. While records of student development in the task analysis provided opportunities for assessments (Micchnowicz, et al., 1995; Huefner, 2000Pretti-Frontczak & Bricker, 2000; Cooney & Buchanan, 2001, Grisham-Brown, et al., 2002; Gartin & Murdick, 2005; Hollingsworth, Boone, & Crais, 2009; Armstrong, Armstrong, & Spandaguo, 2011; Dinnebeil, et al., 2011Twachtman-Cullen & Twachtman-Bassett, 2011), this was not was addressed in the study.

Developing *standards-based* IEPs as identified in Shriner, et al., (2012) remains a challenge. In the absence if legal procedural requirements, this project only addressed the *substantive* educational benefits of student within Kianh Centre, a small non-government organization. More research is required to assess the feasibility of this approach for other settings with special educational needs. Furthermore over time, functional educational system can only be sustained with the support of an equally effective reference curriculum. Until such times when an effective reference curriculum for special education is made available, this effective IEP effected operating system for SEN as discussed in this paper, may only be transient.

Conclusion
The results discussed have demonstrated that in the absence of legal procedural requirement, special educational needs have been effective addressed in Vietnam. Professional development has developed understanding for the function and use of IEP as the primary reference and working document required in special education. Logical and systematic organization of student information within an authentic IEP pro forma has empowered inexperienced staff with skills to effectively facilitate the educational, communication and physical needs of students within an environment with diverse special needs.

References
Armstrong, D., Armstrong, A. C., & Spandaguo, I. (2011). Inclusion: by choice or chance? *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 15*(1), 29-39.
Bennett, K., Reichow, B., & Wolery, M. (2011). Effects of structured teaching on the behavior of young children with disabilities. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 26*, 143-152.
Blackhurst, A. E., & Berdine, W. H. (1993). Issues in special education. . In A.E.Blackhurst & W. H. Berdine (Eds.), *An Introduction to special education* (3 ed., pp. 37-75). New York: HarperCollins.
Blackwell, W. H., & Rossetti, Z. S. (2014). The development of individualized education programs: Where have we been and where should we go now? *SAGE Open*(April-June), 1-15.
Boer, A. d., Pijl, S. J., & Minnaert, A. (2011). Regular primary school teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education: a review of the literature. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 15*(3), 331-353.
Bricker, D. D., Pretti-Frontczak, K. L., & McComas, N. R. (1998). *An activity-based approach to early intervention (2nd Ed.)*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.
Cooney, M. H., & Buchanan, M. (2001). Documentation: Making assessment visible. *Young Exceptional Children, 4*(3), 10-16.
Diliberto, J. A., & Brewer, D. (2012). Six tips for successful IEP meetings. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 44*(4), 30-37.
Dinnebeil, L., Spino, M., & McInerney, W. (2011). Using implementation checklists to reinforce the use of child-focused intervention strategies. *Young Exceptional Children, 14*(2), 22-31.
Doren, B., Flannery, K. B., Lombardi, A. R., & Kato, M. M. (2012). The impact of professional development and student and teacher characteristics on the quality of postsecondary goals. *Remedial and Special Education, 34*(4), 215-224.
Drasgow, E., Yell, M. L., & Robinson, T. R. (2001). Developing legally correct and educationally appropriate IEPs. *Remedial and Special Education, 22*(6), 359-373.
French, N. K. (2001). Supervising paraprofessionals: A survey of teacher practices. *Journal of Special Education, 35*(1), 41-53.
Gartin, B. C., & Murdick, N. L. (2005). IDEA 2004: The IEP. *Remedial and Special Education, 26*(6), 327-331.
Giangreco, M. F., Dennis, R. E., Edelman, S. W., & Cloninger, C. J. (1994). Dressing your IEPs for the general education climate :Analysis of IEP goals and objectives for students with multiple disabilities. *Remedial and Special Education, 15*(5), 288-296.
Grisham-Brown, J., & Hemmeter, M. L. (1998). Writing IEP goals and objectives: Reflecting an activity-based approach to instruction for young children with disabilities. . *Young Exceptional Children, 1*(3), 2-10.
Grisham-Brown, J., Pretti-Frontczak, K., Hemmeter, M. L., & Ridgley, R. (2002). Teaching IEP goals and objectives: In the context of classroom routines and activities. *Young Exceptional Children   6*(1), 18-27.
Hollingsworth, H. L., Boone, H. A., & Crais, E. R. (2009). Individualized inclusion plans at work in early childhood classrooms. *Young Exceptional Children 13*(1), 19-35.
Huefner, D. S. (2000). The risks and opportunities of the IEP requirements under IDEA '97. *Journal of Special Education, 33*, 195-204.

Kurth, J., & Mastergeorge, A. M. (2010). Individual education plan goals and services for adolescents with autism: Impact of age and educational setting. *J Spec Educ : , 44*(3), 146-160

Lloyd, C. (2008). Removing barriers to achievement: A strategy for inclusion or exclusion? *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 12*(2), 221-236.

Lo, L. (2012). Demystifying the IEP process for diverse parents of children with disabilities. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 44*(3), 14-20.

Lynch, E. C., & Beare, P. L. (1990). The quality of IEP objectives and their relevance to instruction for students with mental retardation and behaviour disorders. *Remedial and Special Education, 11*(2), 48-55.

Mager, R. F. (1997). *Preparing instructional objectives: A critical tool in the development of effective instruction* (3 ed.). Atlanta: Center for Effective Performance.

McSheehan, M., Sonnenmeier, R. M., Jorgensen, C. M., & Turner, K. (2006). Beyond communication access: Promoting learning of the general education curriculum by students with significant disabilities. *Topics in Language Disorders, 26*(3), 266-290.

McWilliam, R. A., Ferguson, A., Harbin, G. L., Porter, P., Munn, D., & Vandiviere, P. (1998). The family-centeredness of individualized family service plans. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 18*(2), 69-82.

Micchnowicz, L. L., McConnell, S. R., Peterson, C. A., & Odom, S. L. (1995). Social goals and objectives of preschool IEPs : A content analysis. *Journal of Early Intervention, 19*(4), 273-282.

Murdock, L. C., & Hobbs, J. Q. (2011). Tell me what you did today: A visual cueing strategy for children with ASD. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 26*(3), 162-172.

Notari, A. R., & Bricker, D. D. (1990). The utility of a curriculum-based assessment instrument in the development of individualized education plans for infants and young children. *Journal of Early Intervention, 14*(2), 5-11.

Pretti-Frontczak, K., & Bricker, D. (2000). Enhancing the quality of individualized educational plan (IEP) goals and objectives. *Journal of Early Intervention, 23*(2), 92-105.

Rehfeldt, J. D., Clark, G. M., & Lee, S. W. (2010). The effects of using the Transition Planning Inventory and a structured IEP process as a transition planning intervention in IEP meeting outcomes. *Remedial and Special Education, 33*(1), 48-58.

Shriner, J. G., Carty, S. J., Rose, C. A., Shogren, K. A., Kim, M., & Trach, J. S. (2012). Effects of using a web-based individualized education program decision-making tutorial. *The Journal of Special Education, 47*(3), 175-185.

Twachtman-Cullen, D., & Twachtman-Bassett, J. (2011). *The IEP from A to Z : How to create meaningful and measurable goals and objectives*. San Francisco, CA Josey-Bass.

Appendix

Individual Education Plan – pro forma

Student Name :-	Date :-
Teacher :-	

1. *Expected functional outcome in….years (2-5 years)*	*Subject*	*2.Functional skill*
Think of THIS student (abilities and needs) what CAN the student do in the future.		*For this subject - take one relevant skill required to achieve the projected outcome identified in 1 .*

3. Entry skill	3a. *What can the student do or do independently or best in relation to the selected skill/s in 2 above ?*
	3b. *What can the student do with help - what is the level of help needed ?*
	3c. *What other skills (name a few) does the student need to learn to gain more independence for this functional skill?*
4.Short term goal (eg. 6 months)	4a. *What will the student learn to do?- identify from 3c above. State level of expected outcome to achieve goal eg. % success.*
	4b. *How will I support the student to ensure that he achieves the goal/s?*
	4c. *How will I teach so that the student can learn? – refer to this for lesson plan.*
5. Long term goal (eg.12months)	*To be related to the Functional Skill identified in 2 above.*

6. Task analysis /Assessment(refer to 4a above)	*(Refer to 4b/4c above)*			*(Refer to 4b/4c above)*			Use in unstructured activity			Comment
	Fully assisted	Some assistance	Independent	Fully assisted	Some assistance	Independent	Fully assisted	Some assistance	Independent	

(Table contents – change according to goals, abilities and needs of student)