

PEPUBLIC OF KOREA

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Special Education Informationalization in Korea

Korea is hot for the Special Education Informationalization.

Assistive technology is defined as hardwares and softwares that are designed for supporting the disabled people. Development of the assistive technology is being evaluated as the most remarkable achievement in the area of recent special education services. Assistive technology even tends to be considered as new alternatives of the special education. In Korea, the development and the usage of multimedia teaching materials and related infrastructures to increase the knowledge-proximity of students with disabilities through the internet, computers, and the assistive technology is very prosperous in recent days, and this kind of social change is called the “Special Education Informationalization”.

Background of the Special Education Informationalization

In 1999, Former president Kim Dae-jung set up the plan, “Cyber Korea 21” for the construction of creative knowledge-based country. “Education Informationalization” was a content included in this plan. Education Informationalization was derived at high speed, getting the following tasks as main achievements : the propagation of PC for students and teachers, the construction of school intranet, schools' connection to the internet, the production of schools' websites, and the development and deployment of educational softwares. It's true that the preceding change of general education field gave rise to the change of special education field, but the merit of ICT to meet the needs of individual students have been more embossed in the field of special education. In consequence, much of study by government and non-government is making remarkable progress.

Main bodies of the Special Education Informationalization

1. Korea Institute for Special Education (KISE)

In 1998, Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development established the Education and Welfare Information Center for People with Disabilities in KISE, and have offered the budget every year from time so that the center can carry out teacher in-service trainings, parents educations, and parents consultations, as well as the developing and the propagating of multimedia web contents.

2. Korea Education and Research Information Service (KERIS)

KERIS, an organization being subscribed from the government, have developed multimedia teaching-learning materials for students with disabilities with annual variation. Edunet (www.

edunet4u.net), a website operated by KERIS, is offering educational web contents for students with special needs as well as general students.

3. Korean Association for Special Education (KASE)

Korean Association for Special Education, a meeting of principals of the special education schools, have held software exhibitions for the special education teachers every year from 2000.

4. Offices for educational affairs in the cities.

Each offices for educational affairs in the cities are developing educational web contents for the special education, and are diffusing them to the special education schools and resource rooms in general schools. Some offices are operating websites especially for the deployment of educational web contents. This system is specially being used for teaching students with disabilities in home, hospitals, and institutes.

5. Teachers' circles for the research

Many teachers' circles for the special education research are developing educational web contents and are sharing them in on-line system.

Special Education Informationalization in the special education schools

1. PC possession in the special education schools

In July of 2003, total number of PC which are distributed to the special education schools in whole country is 11, 455. The number of PC per one school averages 83.6, and the number of students per one PC averages 2.1. But this statistical data is including the number of general PC that doesn't have any special application for students with disabilities. So the spearheads of computers that have special application for individual students are being more needed.

2. Use of the internet in the special education schools

Every special education schools use the internet service, and are offered much of teaching materials by contacting many organizations including KISE and KERIS. And many special education schools are operating their own websites, so that teachers, students, and parents can share their opinions and information together.

3. Use of the assistive technology apparatus in the special education schools

At present, schools are using the assistive technology apparatus like discover boards, touch pads, discover switches, trackballs, wireless keyboards, head sticks, TDD, screen enlargers, and so on. But such apparatus are not sufficient to meet all individual students with special needs.

Special Education Informationalization activities of KISE

1. Construction and operation of a distance education system

KISE, as a host station, has 8 branch stations in 8 special education schools throughout the nation, and is broadcasting the special education-related lectures to those branches in the form of moving images for teachers and parents in all over the country.

2. Operating a website

KISE operates its own website, and offers many-sided information to students with disabilities,

their parents, and their teachers. People can get a downloading service of studying reports and training materials which are developed by KISE. In the website, there are cyber spaces for teacher-communities, too.

3. Development of multimedia teaching materials for the special education.

KISE develops multimedia learning materials for students with disabilities, and is offering them to the special education schools of all over the nation in the form of CD. On the other hand, through loading the softwares on their websites, KISE makes teachers and students use them .

4. Holding the Special Education Informationalization Festival

In July 2003, KISE holded the Special Education Informationalization Festival in campus of a certain college placed in Kyung-gi-do. This festival included an information searching contest for students with disabilities, informationalization-related workshop for the special education teachers, and a pop-concerts of popular stars. KISE plans to hold this event once every year.

Future Direction

Korea is going to increase budgets for development and deployment of educational softwares that have more excellent quality especially for teaching students with disabilities in home, hospitals, and institute, and for solving the problem of the proximity of students with visual and hearing impairments.