

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Educational supports for children with multiple disability in Korea

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Special education in Korea, in educating disabled children including with multiple disability, is aiming for inclusive education in nearby regular schools. The society is responsible for making sure all the members of the society get proper education regardless of the conditions any member of the society could possibly be in. The worse the conditions are, the harder the society has to try to actively educate them and provide with opportunities. Disabled children surely are the ones in less opportunity. Therefore thoughtful considerations and support by the society is necessary. However, the society has been insisting on the logic of majority-centered system based on the average and standard, the government has rather been neglecting the education of disabled children and made it a norm to place them in separate institutions other than in the regular schools with other non-disabled children. Therefore, in order to make it possible for the disabled children to go to a regular school near home and get inclusive education, as it is stated in Act for elementary, middle high school. For the disabled children, the country and a district self-governing body are to provide with the adequate ways to admit and educate them from grade K to 12 or in regular schools or an institute equivalent to those.

In this paper I'll overview general situation of special education in Korea and to explain about educational supports for children with multiple disability.

I . General overview of special education in Korea

According to the results of the 2001' Korea study on the Occurrence of special education children, the disability occurrence ration among school age children between 6-11years of age was 2.71% disabled, among which 61.25% or 150,712 students are able to receive general education. As of April 2004, 51,060 students receive education at 141 special school and 4,300 special education classrooms, 13,632 students are currently delaying their education and reside at homes, hospitals, and welfare.

1. Purpose of special education

Basic directions for special education policies are maximize educational efficiency among all students by sharing a sense of responsibility between general and special education. First, the purpose of special education is guaranteeing equal opportunity for education for those in need of special education by the central and local governments, improving education methods and circumstances to cultivate ability to lead independent lives,

accomplishing the goal of providing special education for all students in need as part of compulsory education free of charge. In order to accomplish the purpose, we should establish a diagnostic system for special education, build new special education schools, increase special education classrooms, cut the number of students per classrooms at special education schools and improve facilities for the disabled

Second, the purpose is creating a school culture that respects the needs in other words it is improving education environment of general schools to build the basis for integrated education. We should improve school education curriculum management, expand the development of curriculum, teach materials and tools, strengthen the sense of responsibility for special education among general education teachers and raise the sense of professionalism among special education teachers.

Third is establishing an education support system that can expand the establishment and support for special education support system centered the around local community. We should expand the establishment and operation of special education support centers, increase the number of personnel for special education administration and support institutions, expand budget and investment for special education and strengthen ties among government ministries related to special education. Through these, we will pursue high quality education that respects

II. How to support for children with multiple disabilities

1. Guarantee Free Compulsory Education for multiple disabled students

Even though students have multiple disabilities, from kindergarten to high school they have to be guaranteed balanced right to special education across the national and education level. For them, we establish and increase the number of special education institutions to provide free education. We provide and expand opportunities for special education adequate to the level and type of disability and guarantee a balanced opportunity for special education among all levels of education. Sometimes their severe and multiple disabilities prevent them to come to school. In that case, we provide education opportunity for disabled students through visitation services. We distribute the guidelines for visitation programs and conduct investigation of the current. In 2003, the number of students receiving visitation education services is 2,599. Visitation education is that special education provided to disabled students by special education teachers by making visits to homes and/or medical facilities. Compulsory education for special education includes primary and middle school curriculum, while kindergarten and high school education is provided free of charge.

To Guarantee Free Compulsory Education for multiple disabled students, we increase the number of special education classes. In Korea, the special education classes are the practical unit that supports inclusion. In special education promotion Act, Article 2, Paragraph 4 characterizes special education class as the full time, part time classes run by schools according to their capability. Therefore the government is making classes for the disabled to be part time rather than full time in the inclusive education. They are planning to increase the special education classes in number.

2. Change of system in Special education schools

Students with multiple disabilities get inclusive education in nearby regular school, the government of Korean is demanding the following three things to be done. First, to make the schools smaller, dispersion of schools and de-categorization of disability categories, making the schools smaller in size and dispersing means that for students who want to choose a school, small size schools should be available in every region. Although in the future when inclusion becomes more common, there will always be students who are in need of special education schools for the disabled only. Therefore special education schools need to be dispersed evenly throughout the region and be increased in number. De-categorization of the categories means that special education schools which are now separated by the categories of disabilities should be changed into one school for all range of disabilities instead of categorizing the disabilities and running separate schools for each. Category of the impairment is the first thing to consider in educating the disabled student because special quality and educational needs differ from one kind to another. However, when majority of disabled students move to regular schools, in special education school, the only ones left will be students with severe and multiple disabilities. Those are students with severe cerebral palsy, severe mental retardation, severe emotional, behavioral disorders and the ones with two or more disabled perceptive functions. However, even students with two or more disabled perceptive functions can perform adequately in regular schools while receiving support services. Therefore in order to reinforce inclusion, Korea is encouraging students with mild disabilities to be moved to regular schools if possible and schools for the disabled to be run without separating students by categories of impairment for the students with severe, multiple disorders.

3. Build a foundation for integrated education for them

Recently regular classroom teachers and parents of non-disabled children agree with the fact that schools and organizations they are concerned about their children having disabled friends or their classes having disabled students. Unless this kind of prejudice against disabled students is lessened, both inclusive and regular educations could not be carried out properly. Therefore the members of schools and societies need to accept the fact that schools and societies with disabled children are normal and are healthy school, classes, and societies. In order to make this kind of social and psychological environment, the government is reinforcing the following politics. Students from grade K to 12 are to have some kind of education to understand disability once or more a semester such as volunteering at an organization for disabled people, having to experience disability, or campaigning to change the prejudice against the disabled people. Teachers need to take 60 hours of special education at least once and those who did, take charge of the inclusive class.

It is important to abolish prejudice of non-disabled students and teachers at general schools against disabled students. We build a foundation for integrated education through improvements on the physical environment of general schools. We strengthen education for awareness towards the disabled for teachers and students at general schools. Kindergarten, primary, middle, and high schools are encouraged to provide education on the disabled at least once a semester. Teachers at general schools (kindergarten, primary, middle, and high

schools) are encouraged to receive training on special education. Standards for assigning teachers at integrated classrooms and management/operation guidelines have been delivered. Priority shall be given to special education majors and those who have completed training. We appoint and operate pilot school for integrated education. At least one school has recommended to be established as an integrated education pilot school for each metropolitan/provincial education office for the widespread implementation of integrated education. The metropolitan/provincial education offices have held a conference on success cases of integrated education at pilot schools.

It is important to establish special education responsibility of regular classroom teachers. Some regular teachers consider special education as the duty of special education teachers, but it is also duty of regular teachers. In order to establish special education responsibility, Korea is reinforcing these policies to make it mandatory to take special education in the curriculum for kindergarten, elementary, middle school teachers, and in the practical training of teaching and thereby take special education curriculum and the teachers in charge of inclusive classroom from grade k to 12, to take the test of the ability to operate inclusive education. Special education is reinforcing policies that extend to provide special programs for the disabled putting into the evaluation category.

4. Facilitating the regular schools with special equipments for the disabled.

In a society that considers disability as a pathological condition, unless we get rid of the physical barriers, it is impossible to educate both the disabled and non-disabled students. There are two physical barriers that keep the disabled students from learning in regular schools. The first one is the facilities and equipments that schools have that are not at all suitable for the disabled students and therefore limiting the right to move around. The other one is the lack of special learning materials and aide who ends up limiting the right to learn. Schools need to have various facilities, equipments and learning materials and aides nor only for the regular students but also for the disabled students. We build a basis for integrated education through improvements on general classroom environment. We improve education environment at special education classrooms and provide support for disabled students to facilitate learning. We establish the 「Comprehensive plans for improving facilities for disable students at general schools」. Plans are underway to complete the installment of facilities for the disable at schools with special education classrooms within three years beginning 2004. Schools without special education classes shall undergo establishment starting with primary schools.

5. Stronger Special Education Support System and Increase in Support

In current special education system in Korea, the local community institutes for supporting the disabled students are special education schools, special education classes and inclusive classes, however, the students in special education classes or in inclusive classes are not getting the proper education or the related services compared to the ones in special education schools. And for the multiple disabled children under school ages or for the ones not selected to receive special education, there are no counseling services or support available. Therefore in order to provide with appropriate special education services and related services for the multiple

disabled students in special education classes and inclusive classes and also for those students who are neglecting their obligation to attend school, Korea has established and run special education support center in the district education hall unit. However now the areas with personnel from special education center are very limited and the financial support has not been well received therefore resulting in difficulties. Therefore Korea is reinforcing policies to establish special education center in all 180 district education hall in the country and place worker in charge, financially support these and therefore make the system more effective and substantial. We establish a decentralized special education support system around local communities and enhance education welfare for special education students through expansion of support for special education. We build a special education support system centered the around local communities. Special education support centers are established and operated at each metropolitan/provincial office of education. In “Special Education Support Center” treatment and counseling services are provided to special education students attending general kindergartens and schools. We enhance professional capabilities of special education teachers. We expand the assignment of special education teachers and enhance their level of professional capacity. Educational efficiency has been improved through the consolidation of occupational education for special education students. We expand education welfare for special education students.

Due to multiple disable students, the importance of therapeutic education has increased along with the professional capability of teaching staff multiple. The excessive numbers of student assigned to therapeutic education teachers and the multiple nature of the disability have made it difficult to provide professional therapeutic services. We provide a basis for assigning therapeutic education teachers by disability type and education environment.

We operate the special education assistant system. In 2004, we hire 2,000 special education assistants. The government has set aside about 55 billion won for this purpose.

To help multiple disable students with visual impairment, we supply “Large-print books” for the visually disabled students. It is first trial among OECD nations. The entire set of primary school textbooks has been produced in large-print in 2002. National textbooks in the middle school and high school curriculum have been produced in large print in 2003. Large-print textbook means 150% enlargement of the textbook for students with vision lower than 0.4. In addition to that we improve teaching materials and tools for special education curriculum for multiple disable students. For physically disabled students we improved transportation. It has been provided for the purchase of school buses for the disabled, electrical wheelchairs at special schools.

III. Conclusion

Recently special education in Korea has made tremendous progress. However it is also true that special education in Korea needs to be developed quantity and quality. In order to reach the quantitative and qualitative progress of special education, the first thing to do is creating the atmosphere that classes, schools and society. Based on this improvement, we have to provide vast range of support for multiple disabled students to study with regular student. Therefore carrying out the policies now being reinforced will be the way to improve not

only the special education but also education itself. To do special education, we have to consider proper education for students with multiple disabilities.