I. Introduction

With the shift of paradigm in the 21st century, the area of special education has changed from segregation to inclusion. Many of the students with disabilities desire to be included in the general classes of the general school setting, and the number of the students with disabilities integrated in the general classes has been gradually increasing.

Korea has made efforts to promote the rights of education and environmental setting for the students with disabilities since the “Special Education Promotion Act” enacted in 1977. With several amendments, the contents of the inclusion of students with disabilities have been stipulated in the law. Consequently, the students with disabilities in Korea are allowed to be educated in the general educational setting, and the number of those students in the regular schools has actually increased (Korea Institute for Special Education, 2004).

The integrated education is a passive way of placement of students with disabilities in regular classroom while inclusive education refers to full inclusion that helps students with disabilities to participate actively at all educational activities in the cooperative relationship with the peers. The inclusive education is broader than integrated education (Lombardi, 1994). Kim (1996) emphasizes expansion of inclusive educational
environments for students with disabilities from schools to the whole society in order for those students to be fully included physically, functionally and emotionally. By this expansion they can live as a fully included member of their local society, living with their family, receiving education in the local schools, and working at the local workplaces.

Following this trend, Korea has sought the methods to tackle down the obstacles of full inclusion in various areas such as administration, finance, law, education, and tried to put those methods into practice. Educational inclusion of special education should be established on the basis of a full review of the ideas and the system. But many problems occur in the field in establishing the educational inclusion, such as problems about perception and attitude of teachers and non-disabled peers, problems about care for children with disabilities, problems about condition and method of inclusion, etc.

Among those problems, proper perception of non-disabled peers toward students with disabilities in regular classroom setting is a crucial element to prevent failure of inclusion. However, we are actually facing the environments where only physical interaction has been achieved without having any social/emotional interaction, which is critical in full inclusion. Students with and without disabilities stay together in the classroom without understanding each other or experiencing interaction among themselves.

We in Korea have made efforts to switch perceptions of non-disabled students toward inclusion and also to establish its basis. Korean government decided inclusion as a priority item to be promoted. According to the policy, every student can equally receive quality education regardless of type and severity of disabilities. Those efforts are made mainly in the elementary and middle school system. The Ministry of
Education & Human Resources Development (2001) urges that regular classroom setting be considered as the starting point for school placement and the decision of school placement be made in the order of regular class, resource room, and special school. To achieve the goal, the government has carried out some projects such as 5-year Plan for Special Education Development (Ministry of Education & Human Resources Development, 2002) and Special Education Development Strategy Research (Jeong et al., 2000).

As mentioned above, the shift of non-disabled students’ perception is a critical element to accomplish full inclusion successfully. Thus many researchers in Korea attempt to conduct various types of work to change the perception of non-disabled students toward students with disabilities. The majority of the studies have tried to investigate the change of non-disabled students’ perception and attitude toward students with disabilities by means of questionnaires or disability experiences. Those studies obtained positive results, providing us with clues for successful inclusion.

This paper examines crucial elements and practical tasks necessary for full inclusion. Especially we focus on the current research trend in Korea in terms of perceptual change of non-disabled students toward students with disabilities. Each country needs to develop an appropriate perceptual change program to meet its own needs and circumstances. Hopefully this study will become a basis to promote further research.

. Success of Full Inclusion

It is generally agreed that the paradigm of special education has already shifted
from segregation to inclusion. Recently the range of inclusion has extended to the concept of “full inclusion”. The term full inclusion implicates not only physical inclusion but also educational and social inclusion. This change of the paradigm in special education is an attempt to guarantee human rights, assuring that everyone is equal and lives together without discrimination.

Along this movement in special education, many countries have tried to include students with disabilities in regular classroom setting. But inclusion of those students without careful preparation has brought about many problems. A variety of practical methods have been proposed and applied to solve the problems. For instance, Kim (1997) suggests reform of school system and curriculum for successful inclusion. Application of various educational methods has also been suggested, such as cooperative learning, consultation, peer tutoring, curriculum-based measurement, etc. (Kim, 1995, 1997).

In Korea, people have conducted various researches to identify necessary elements for successful inclusion and put them in practice, extending them from the educational sites to society. This paper describes the necessary elements for success of full inclusion suggested in Korea, and then presents new tasks to be solved.

1. The elements for Success of Full Inclusion

Researchers in Korea have accommodated themselves to the new trend of full inclusion in special education and attempted consistently to seek for devices to cope with limitations. First of all, researchers checked whether full inclusion is possible in our actual circumstances. Then, we have started to study about reform of educational system, degree of inclusion, procedure of inclusion, and reform of social system.
1) Transition of Special Education in Korea

The notion of special education was first introduced in Korea by protestant missionaries at the end of the 19th century. In 1894, R. S. Hall first taught blind girls and founded Pyongyang Girl’s School for the Blind. In 1949, a basis of a systematic framework was established when special education was included in Education Law. The Education Law mandated the establishment of special education in each province and special classes in regular schools. However, the result was not satisfactory, and the development of special education was pursued not by the government but by the private schools or institutes.

In 1970s, national attention was given to children with disabilities as compulsory education started for elementary school. Special Education Promotion Act was enacted in 1977. At that time, special education in advanced countries was on a turning point. In America, the provision of ‘Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)’ was mandated by the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, commonly known as PL 94-142. In England, the report called ‘Special Education Needs (SEN) ’ was made in May 1978, and the report provided a momentum for providing special education to children with disabilities who are neglected in the regular classroom. Italian government decided to abolish special classroom and special schools in 1977. In Sweden, regular schools started to provide educational support for children with special needs in educational curriculum in 1980.

When Korea just started to acknowledge educational rights of children with disabilities, advanced countries had begun to shift from segregation to inclusion. However, the educational rights for children with disabilities were viewed as a crucial
part of the human rights for people with disabilities in Korea. Consequently, great efforts both in quantity and quality were made in special education of Korea. Korea started special education 10 years behind advanced western countries. But we started to discuss inclusion in early 1990s and stipulated inclusion in the amendment of Special Education Promotion Act, 1994.

2) Trials for Success of Full Inclusion in Korea

Success of full inclusion requires detailed plans and their alternatives about the degree and methods of full inclusion. The degree of inclusion indicates how severely disabled students are included at the regular classroom. The method of inclusion indicates how to merge the existing systems.

Regarding the degree of inclusion, IDEA still uses the term “Least Restrictive Environments (LRE)”. The idea of LRE assumes that there are alternatives in the placement of children along with a continuum of restrictiveness. Radical advocates of full inclusion do not agree with the idea of the continuum of placement. Regardless of the degree and types of disabilities, all students attend all classes in regular classroom. Stainback & Stainback (1984, 1989) argues that all students, even students with severe disabilities, should be included in the regular education setting although there are some special cases where we perceive the needs for the placement at special education.

However, many researchers do not agree with it. They argue that no empirical evidence is available to support full inclusion. They admit that there are problems with the current system and even more inclusion (including full inclusion) of students with disabilities is needed. However, the researchers note that the systems and teachers are not ready to provide qualified education for students with disabilities.
 Regarding the method of full inclusion, the merge of teaching in the system of education is needed, but the main roles should be carried out by the regular classroom teachers (Lilly, 1986: Gartner & Lipsky, 1987). However, special education teachers are primarily responsible for their overall educational programming to satisfy those students’ needs although regular classroom teachers are more responsible for the education of students with disabilities.

In Korea, we do accept the concept of “full inclusion” but operate a partial or a full inclusion system, depending on the needs of students with disabilities, having a resource room in a regular school. Students with severe disabilities rarely attend regular schools. Some special schools try “reverse inclusion” by having non-disabled students attend at special school for a period of time.

The merge of two separate educational systems—regular education and special education—is not accomplished yet in Korea. Few policies for inclusion are established and applied by the central and local governments. Many researchers have conducted studies to develop polices and methods for successful inclusion for a decade.

3) Major Elements for Success of Full Inclusion

Success of full inclusion can be attained when appropriate supports are given to students with disabilities. Especially, it can be achieved when both students with and without disabilities have a progress and the interpersonal differences between the two are reduced. The change of the educational systems and the development of teaching strategies are essential for successful inclusion.

A school system needs to be changed to reduce the interpersonal differences. The size of classes and the teacher-student ratio need to be reduced properly. Also the grade
recording and reporting system and the promotion system must be appropriate (Kim, 1997).

A variety of teaching strategies are needed to make both students with and without disabilities progress in their achievements. Examples are following (Kim, 1997; Korea Inclusive Education Association, 2005):

- Develop various teaching materials and alternative teaching procedures to meet the individual needs (i.e., characteristics, speed, ability etc.).
- Cooperative learning is an effective strategy. Each member in a team plays one’s role, working together as a team to achieve common objects.
- Peer tutoring can be used to include students with disabilities. The role of a learner or a teacher may be assigned to either students with disabilities or non-disabled students.
- Collaboration is effective to solve any teaching and evaluation problems in the inclusive setting.

The supporting system in a school should be arranged to solve any problems that occur when the teaching strategies are applied in a classroom setting.

2. Practical Tasks for Full Inclusion

One of the most important practical tasks for full inclusion is the perceptual change toward students with disabilities. Although students with disabilities are educated in the regular classroom settings in terms of the effective teaching strategies in an improved educational system, they can feel segregated if students without disabilities do not
change their negative perception toward them.

Successful inclusion means not only physical inclusion but also social and emotional inclusion. When students with disabilities are socially and emotionally included in a school, then they can live as a member of community, experiencing together with other people feelings like joy, happiness, sadness, and anger.

Kim (1997) asserts that success of full inclusion requires the following tasks to be considered:

- There is lack of understanding about inclusion by parents of non-disabled children, non-disabled peers, educators, and local residents. It is important for them to understand that students with disabilities have rights to live and be educated together with people in the society.
- Inflexible social and educational systems become serious obstacles. Flexibility of the systems is needed for the application of alternatives to meet the needs of students with disabilities.
- The physical environments are obstacles for inclusion. Few efforts are made to equip the materials and facilities that students with disabilities can have an easy access. The guarantee of accessibility is necessary.
- It is an obstacle that regular or special education teachers are not educated enough to practice full inclusion in their school. The education programs for both regular and special education teachers at the universities should require students to take enough courses in both programs.
- Financial assistance should be provided for special education, career education and welfare of students with disabilities. Financial supports for students with
disabilities should be considered as a part of welfare or human rights.

Identification of this kind of tasks provided Korea a chance to establish various supportive systems that are necessary for success of full inclusion. Korea set up supportive systems in a short period of time, such as legal support, administrative support, community support, parent support, paraprofessional support, etc. But offering benefits by the supportive systems to people with disabilities has a risk to yield unequal relationship between people with and without disabilities. Although full inclusion refers to creating the interactive relationships between people with and without disabilities, unilateral supports for students with disabilities may lead to their demand on other different types of special support systems. In other words, we in Korea still need to develop well-defined specific and practical methods to create intimate relationship and change the perception of non-disabled people about people with disabilities.

Recently researchers have been making efforts to explore ways of developing practical methods for the success of full inclusion. Especially, development of programs that can change the perception of the non-disabled has been pursued since 2000.

III. Change of Perception of Non-disabled Students toward Students with Disabilities

The most important thing to succeed in full inclusion is the non-disabled students’ understanding and attitude toward students with disabilities who stay together with them in the school settings. With help of the systematic supports, non-disabled students appear to adapt themselves to the new situations. But in fact, their attitudes are usually
very passive and negative toward students with disabilities. Students with disabilities are segregated in their classrooms and treated as a stranger by their peers.

The perception of non-disabled students about students with disabilities is hardly changed by teachers’ efforts or school systems. As mentioned above, various supports provided by teachers and school systems can also make students with disabilities consider themselves as special subjects who get special treatments. Thus, it is necessary to develop effective educational programs not only to help students with disabilities have appropriate relationships with their non-disabled peers but also to change the perception of non-disabled students toward students with disabilities.

In this section, we examine the necessity of perceptual change and present the recent trends and status of studies on the perceptual change in Korea.

1. Why Perceptual Change?

When we interact with someone, we usually judge the other and decide our actions depending on the degree of understanding the person. This means that perception of an individual affects one’s own attitudes.

In Korea, the perception toward people with disabilities is very negative. They are viewed as lack of product value, biased subject, etc (Lee, 1990). Due to the influence of agricultural culture, people have more superstitionistely negative view on people with disabilities than those in western culture do (Moon, 1996; Korea Institute for Special Education, 2004).

Lee (1981) also points out that the Korean society tends to aim at producing general and perfect individuals. Under the social environments, people with disabilities in Korea have been considered as objects of relief, sympathy and inability. To change the
atmosphere, many researchers and teachers have stressed the needs of planning and applying programs to develop appropriate perception of the non-disabled toward people with disabilities. Especially, Jang (1987) emphasizes that people with and without disabilities all need to be perceived equally.

The attitude and behavior play an important part as the components of the perception of human beings. The attitude and behavior start to develop from early childhood. Thus, the growing environments and the educational atmospheres in early childhood are very important in determining one’s attitude and behavior. The individuals who are most influential on one’s attitude and behavior are parents in early childhood, but are extended to parents, teachers and peers in childhood. Offering valuable information to children by those individuals would influence children in establishing appropriate values, attitude and behavior in their lives. Thus, development and application of the programs that help non-disabled children establish right understanding and attitude toward people with disabilities can be a starting point of the change of the perception. The change of perception of non-disabled students, along with administrative and educational support systems, will be the essential element for the success of full inclusion.

2. The Trend and Status of Research on Perceptual Change

1) Trend of Research on Perceptual Change

People have made efforts to practice full inclusion in Korea. To accomplish full inclusion in schools and local communities, the non-disabled should have positive perception and attitude toward individuals with disabilities. We are in need of efforts to change the perception and attitude of the non-disabled that are still negative (Korea
Institute for Special Education, 2004).

As an effort to change the perception and attitude of the non-disabled, two approaches are generally applied in the current research in Korea: activity-based program and understanding-based program. The programs of perceptual change based on activities consist of direct contact with children with disabilities, indirect and simulated experiences of disabilities, reverse-inclusion of non-disabled students in the special classes or special schools. The programs of perceptual change based on understanding consist of offering information about various characteristics of people with disabilities such as their ability, difficulty, lives, etc., or talking about the facts of disabilities and sharing feelings toward people with disabilities in a group discussion, or guiding about various facilities and materials for people with disabilities used in inclusive environments, or providing specific knowledge about disabilities by invited instructors, or presenting real or hypothetical situations about people with disabilities.

2) Status of Research on Perceptual Change

Recently, the field of special education in Korea has stressed inclusion, but many problems appeared in schools and communities. Thus, specific practical plans and methods are needed to solve the problems.

The Korea Institute for Special Education (2004) analyzed status about the use of disability-understanding programs and presented some factors to be improved on the basis of the results. The study presents that 84.1% of the target institutions provide disability-understanding programs. The objects that received the programs are 41.1% of students, 33.3% of teachers, 14% of parents, 10.9% of administrators. The reasons for providing the programs are to promote the non-disabled people’s understanding about
students with disabilities (41.6%), to enhance full inclusion (39.4%), to operate curriculum effectively (10.4%).

The instructional materials used in the programs are disability-education packets (33%), movie video (28.9%), books related to disabilities (11.7%), documentary materials (7.4%). Regarding the quantity of materials useful for disability-understanding program, more than 70% of the answers are negative: a little limited (32%) and very limited (39.4%). Regarding the quality of the materials, 51.4% of the responses are ‘average’ and 40% ‘unsatisfied’. Concerning the necessity of material development, 64.4% of the answers are ‘very necessary’ and 33.7% ‘necessary’.

Based on the results, the Korea Institute for Special Education pointed out the followings:

- Awareness of the school personnel is not sufficient about application of disability-understanding programs and full inclusion.
- It is hard to arrange a time schedule for the application of disability-understanding programs.
- Most programs are applied only to students.
- Materials used for disability-understanding programs are not satisfied and qualified.
- The programs are operated only in a special day like ‘Day of People with Disabilities’.
- The methods used in disability-understanding programs are not diverse.
- The programs do not cover various types of disabilities.
The institute emphasized to develop and supply the disability-understanding programs that resolve the above problems. Besides, many studies have showed positive results concerning the effects of the various disability-understanding programs that help non-disabled students change their perception toward students with disabilities in inclusive educational settings.

At the beginning, studies on this topic focused mainly on descriptive researches that use questionnaire to measure the degree of non-disabled students’ understanding about students with disabilities. Current researches on the topic, however, are conducted in the way of implementing various disability-understanding programs, and then comparing the effects of the programs on the perceptual change, and then developing qualified and specific programs on the basis of the results (Choi & Park, 2004; Na & Kim, 2004; Park, 2004). This is a big change in our research trend.

IV. Conclusion

Korea has tried to accomplish full inclusion under the systematic plans and programs in considerations of society-specific conditions. A lot of problems have been reported in various areas, and thus various improvement plans are in need. To be successful in full inclusion, establishment of appropriate systems and facilities is needed, but the perceptual change of the members in the society appears to be more important in Korea.

Programs for perceptual change can get more positive effects when they are provided to all members in all circumstances than when they are applied selectively to a certain limited group of individuals or to a certain limited situation. The reason is that
understanding each other among the community members is required to build up ‘a living-together society’ regardless of who the individual is and where he/she is.

As mentioned above, determination of the contents and methods for the disability-understanding programs is important, but is not easy. Follow-up studies on the topic should be conducted continuously.

This paper ends with the introduction of the program the presenters operated last year. We provided the disability-understanding program for 34 elementary students in the 6th grade. The program was given for about 50 minutes, every other week for 6 months. At first, students’ responses were very negative. On the questionnaire ‘What do you think of people with disabilities?’, most of the students responded with ‘creepy’, ‘scary’, and ‘don’t want to be close with’. On the questionnaire ‘Are you going to help people with disabilities when they need your help?’, most students answered ‘no’, ‘shy to help’, and ‘feel awkward to help’.

The program we provided consisted of various contents and methods. At first, we conducted theoretical instruction, including the change of treatment of human beings in history, treatment of people with disabilities, the characteristics of disabilities, etc. Next, the program offered them introduction of the famous people who had overcome their disabilities, and also presented educational facilities for people with disabilities in terms of the internet search, and also showed them videos about every day life of the common people with disabilities. Finally, the program offered some simulated experiences of disabilities and practice about how to help people with disabilities.

Students were asked the same questionnaires after completing the program. After the application of the program, the perception of the students changed. They responded in various ways in considerations of characteristics of disabilities. They agreed that it is
natural for them to be in the same classroom with students with disabilities. Students were willing to help people with disabilities when they ask for help.

The program stressed teaching the characteristics of disabilities and it was effective. Although some parts of teaching require special knowledge about disabilities, the program helped students understand that people with disabilities have strengths and weaknesses just as the non-disabled do. Use of various methods was an advantage of the program.

References


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