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## Study on the Vocational Rehabilitation Education for the Disabled in South Korea

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# Study on the Vocational Rehabilitation Education for the Disabled in South Korea

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## I. Introduction

The ultimate purpose of welfare for the disabled is to help them live independent lives, which can be achieved by vocational education. If the disabled had jobs after graduation, they could be socially recognized by economically support their families as well as themselves and feel the sense of achievement. As the basic factor to live in society, jobs provide people with their social positions and become the core of self-respect and self-esteem and the major means to achieve self-realization.

Currently, however, in South Korea most of the disabled who graduate from the special-education school don't have jobs, go back to family or institutions and live dependent or isolated lives again. Especially as for the students with developmental disabilities who have limited intellectual and adaptive abilities, this situation is getting worse. For example, according to *the Annual Report on Special Education (2009)*<sup>1)</sup> by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, only 534 (49.4%) of 2,181 graduates from the high school courses in 149 special-education schools in 2009 found jobs, which was much lower rate than the employment rate of graduates with intellectual disabilities. Furthermore, most of the employed graduates are working as unskilled laborers with minimum wage or working in sheltered workshop<sup>2)</sup>.

Diverse problems have been revealed from

vocational education in most special-education schools, even though some schools are attempting exemplary vocational educations escaping from the existing wrong methods and framework. It is not easy for the students with developmental disabilities, which most of students who are attending the special-education school have, to improve the vocational competencies within 1~2 years by intensive training. To promote the employment rate of the students with developmental disabilities, during the school age they need to receive enough transition education or preparatory education before beginning to work and, after graduation from special-education school, they should be referred to vocational education service for adults. In fact, the current vocational education programs in special-education school are not playing the appropriate roles in these aspects in South Korea.

Transition education is the vocational education that is conducted during the transitional period, which starts from the secondary school days and proceeds for several years after beginning to work in the broad concept. In other words, it is the career program in the broad concept to combine the prevocational education in school with the vocational adjustment training that is implemented in the workplace, which is different from the existing school-centered vocational education<sup>3)</sup>. The transition education greatly affects the students with disabilities in the aspects of the quality of life and their identity as well

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as the adjustment to society and jobs. Students with disabilities face the uncertain future just after they graduate from special-education school, even though they have received the high-quality vocational education. This situation has been well proven by low employment rate, very fewer opportunities to work and much lower wage of the disabled and the discrimination between the disabled and the non-disabled. The students with disabilities usually seem to graduate from school and to be sent to society without enough skill and preparation for both workplace and society. Because they don't have any skill to explore the career, they need to rely on parents or friends<sup>1)</sup>.

Rehabilitation centers and special-education schools as well as Korea Employment Promotion Agency for the Disabled have concentrated on the transitional education focusing on the employment, but not been systemized enough. Moreover, special education teacher in the special-education school have not conducted the proper career program to meet the diverse needs of students. In addition, the establishment and implementation of transition education plan have not drawn the attentions from professionals, parents and other related staff. In this context, this study was conducted to search the problems and improvement methods of vocational rehabilitation education and to reveal the application and practice methods of it by researching the law and systems in relation to the vocational rehabilitation education for the disabled and by analyzing the current situation of it.

## II. The Current Situation of the Vocational Rehabilitation Education for the Disabled

### 1. The Law and System in relation to the Vocational Rehabilitation Education

The purpose of the 'Act on Employment Promotion and Vocational Rehabilitation for Disabled Persons' is "to contribute to the employment promotion and vocational rehabilitation of disabled person so that they may live decent lives through the works suited to their abilities." The term "employment promotion and vocational rehabilitation" means to enable the disabled persons to become self-supporting through their vocational life, by taking the measures provided in this Act with respect to the vocational guidance, vocational adjustment training, vocational skills development training, mediation of employments, employments, adjustment guidance after employment, etc. for the disabled persons.<sup>1)</sup> Act on Employment Promotion and Vocational Rehabilitation for Disabled Persons had been first legislated as the title of the 'Act on the Employment Promotion for Disabled Persons' in January, 1990, since then, partly amended four times, and wholly amended and finally become to have the current title in January, 2000.

According to the Act on Special Education for Disabled Persons, etc, the State and local self-government shall implement the establishment of career and vocational education comprehensive plan for the disabled in order to provide appropriate education to the persons subject to special education (Article 5). The head of each school whose are in middle school or higher shall implement self-support training such as job rehabilitation

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1 Act on Employment Promotion and Vocational Rehabilitation for Disabled Person, Article 1 (Purpose) and Article 2 (Definition). 3

training, daily life adaptation training and society adaptation training in order to support the vocational course and job training that meets the characteristics and requirement of the persons subject to special education, and shall have experts in charge of vocational courses and job training who are qualified as determined by the Presidential Decree (Article 23). Moreover, the Special Education Support Center shall constitute an association with the related institutions according to decisions as determined by the Presidential Decree in order to support efficient vocational courses and job training for persons subject to special education (Article 23). In the special education institute, major subjects of more than one year of class terms can be established and managed for providing vocational courses and job training to the persons subject to special education who graduated from the high school (Article 24)<sup>5)</sup>.

For the first time, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism has implemented the study and policy development for the youth center, development of joint programs for the vocational training and support for youth with disabilities, the support for the small size and unregistered facilities for youth with disabilities and the support for youth with disabilities to properly understand the disabled while establishing the support policy for youth with disabilities in the second 'Five-year Plan for youth fostering' in 1998. Based on this policy, youth with disabilities was included in the subject of the policy and became recognized more extensively. The current 'Framework Act on Youth', however, does not contain the articles in relation to youth with disabilities, which is still considered as a problem<sup>6)</sup>.

## 2. Vocational Rehabilitation Education for the Students with Disabilities

Vocational Rehabilitation Education guarantees the right for all the people to live decent lives through the works suited to their abilities and its activation will stimulate their participations in vocational education, let them acquire social positions and play the integrated role to help them establish the identity as the member of our society<sup>7)</sup>. Even though the contents of vocational rehabilitation education differ from school types for support, the common curricula of special-education school are as follows:

### 1) On-Campus Vocational Education

On-campus vocational education is conducted to train students with the products that are being manufactured in community. This vocational education gives different class atmosphere from regular classes in the aspect to strictly impose on the rules, order and responsibilities for the amount of production. When the educational environment and contents are not properly equipped for the on-campus vocational education, the joint programs with sheltered workshop, welfare centers and local vocational training centers would be conducted.

### 2) On-and Off-campus Blend Education

Both on-campus practice and field training are conducted together. Students study or get trained at school in the morning and work or practice at company, academy or training agency in the afternoon. While teachers accompany and assist students during the practices, they record their performances and give support or corrections during on campus class.

### 3) Practice-centered Education

As the students are adjusted to on-and

off-campus blend education, they are sent to the company and practice just like as they really work. When the students are assigned to workplace, whether they are individually, mixedly or homogeneously assigned should be considered. The education is usually led by teacher in charge, but the supports from the staff of Korea Employment Promotion Agency for the Disabled and vocational rehabilitation consultants within the company would be included.

#### 4) Company-centered Adjustment Education

Through the company-centered adjustment education, students can learn the skills and attitude that they should be equipped as the full time employees. Even though some companies give systemized educations to the students with disabilities, there are not many companies to have well-organized education system for the trainees. While the students are trained, teachers should frequently contact with company staff, parents and the staff of Korea Employment Promotion Agency for the Disabled to regularly check whether they are well-adjusted to the company. The company mostly leads the vocational practice with evaluating whether the students are equipped with the proper skills and attitude as the employees and getting assistance from school and parents who knows them well. The disabled who finish the vocational adjustment training are assigned to the jobs suited to them and whether they are placed with one partner who is the non-disabled or into the group. The effective training methods were found as follows; setting a goal, individual instruction, step-by-step instruction, on-the-job coaching, the training considering the environment, comparison, giving simple task, repetition of explanation, demonstration and practice and compensation.

### 3. Vocational Rehabilitation Education Facilities for the Disabled

Because the vocational rehabilitation education for the students with disabilities is directly connected with the socially and economically independent life after graduation, the cooperative relationship among school, community and vocational rehabilitation centers is indispensable. Jung Hyun-Kyung (2006)<sup>8)</sup> suggested that vocational rehabilitation equalizes the right and obligation to work by raising the physical, psychological, social, vocational and economical abilities of the disabled with the non-disabled and the most important essential task of rehabilitation education for the disabled is to help them live independent lives to realize their successful social integration.

Hagner, Cheney & Malloy (1999)<sup>9)</sup> presented the three important meanings of vocational rehabilitation in the study of rehabilitation project for people with emotional disorder: first, it provides clients with the resources based on the assessment of their needs through the vocational rehabilitation counseling without using the traditional assessment tool emphasizing the person-centered career plan; second, it need to establish the transition plan among the cooperative agencies by connecting the resources of special-education agency; and third, the service implementation with flexibility would let clients experience the various career and jobs and produce more successful results. The vocational facilities for the vocational rehabilitation education are as follows:

#### 1) Sheltered Workshop

Sheltered workshop is the first service for people to become disabled in adulthood in the vocational rehabilitation process and it is classified into two types depending on whether

its focus put on training or employment in advanced countries, but there is no clear difference between two types in South Korea where has difficulty to pursue the rehabilitation of the disabled and its feasibility<sup>9)</sup>. Sheltered workshop has been designed to provide severely disabled people with vocational training for the goal to be employed and the opportunities to make money while they are trained, to help them establish the basis for rehabilitation so that they can pursue the holistic development and stable work life and eventually to give them broaden employment opportunities. In other words, it is the vocational facilities to furnish the disabled who are not able to be competitively employed due to the serious disabilities with the work or work experience with income together with the individualized work goals and controlled working environment.

To accomplish these goals, it provide with working opportunities and wage within the controlled environment, vocational adjustment training, career counseling, assessment of working to improve the productivity and skills of disabled employees. Through the sheltered employment, by training specific techniques or offering the on-the-spot training in the company, the supportive employment for the vocational training and integrated employment within community can be implemented.

Sheltered workshops seem to be a vocational training program as well as a prevocational facility, for they are more likely to train the disabled to improve the fine motor skill through ceramic art, carpentry and weaving than to attain the manufacturing techniques such as baking, pastry and information processing.

The common characteristics of sheltered workshops are as follows, even though they are slightly different from each other: first, sheltered workshops should pay for the work

that the disabled have involved to them as well as give them various psycho-social services and recreation; second, they should place top priority on the interest of the disabled and create diverse feasible opportunities for them; third, they should be harmoniously run, although they should simultaneously take care of both sides of the productivity and rehabilitation, which seem to conflict each other. Sheltered workshops are trying to support the competitive employment and sheltered employment for the vocational rehabilitation of people who became to have disabilities in adulthood through the various methods such as training, education and employment.

## 2) Welfare Center for the Disabled

Based on the Act on Welfare of Disabled Persons, welfare Centers for the Disabled provides the disabled who lives with their family in community with comprehensive rehabilitation service including assessment and evaluation of disabilities, vocational rehabilitation program, special education program, medical rehabilitation program, psychosocial rehabilitation program to help the disabled in community live independent lives and to meet their welfare needs<sup>10)</sup>.

Among those programs, vocational rehabilitation program includes career counseling, vocational evaluation and establishment of the prevocational, vocational and social adjustment training plans based on the counseling and evaluation to help the disabled live independent lives in economical stability. Moreover, it finds jobs suited to the degree of disability and competence of the disabled and conducts the follow-up for their satisfying work lives.

#### 4. The Current Situation of Vocational Rehabilitation Education for the Disabled

According to *the Annual Report on Special Education (2009)*<sup>1)</sup> by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, the entrance rate has been increased every year and the employment rate also has been gradually increased every year except 2005, but it is still short in the comparison of the number of entrants (See Table 1). The seventy-three (73) special-education schools have specialized vocational classes and therein 214 classes are run for 2,062

students, which include 139 in school for the blind, 60 in school for the deaf, 1,722 in school for students with intellectual disabilities, 49 in school for students with physical disabilities and 92 in school for students with emotional disabilities (See Table 2). In February, 2009, the employment rate was 54.3% (447 out of 828 graduates from the specialized vocational class succeeded to find jobs) and 30% of the successfully employed are mainly working for vocational rehabilitation program of welfare centers and sheltered workshops as paid employees and also engage in packaging,

Table 1. The Current Situation of Entrants to higher school and the Employed among the High School Graduates

Numbers	Total	Special-Education School	Special-education Class	General Class
Graduates	4,489	2,181	1,641	667
Entrants to higher school (Entrance rate)	2,013 (44.8%)	1,099 (50.4%)	524 (31.9%)	390 (58.5%)
The Employed (Employment rate)	1,193 (48.2%)	534 (49.4%)	588 (52.6%)	71 (25.6%)
Out of school /Unemployed	1,283	548	529	206

Source: *the Annual Report on Special Education (2009)* by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology<sup>1)</sup>

\*Entrance rate=entrants to higher school from the graduates in the year / graduates in the year ×100

\*Employment rate= the employed/ (graduates- entrants to higher school) ×100

Table 2. The Current Installation of the Specialized Vocational Class at Special-Education Schools

Types	The Blind	The Deaf	The Intellectual Disabilities	The Physical Disabilities	The Emotional Disabilities	Total
The Number of Schools	7	1	56	4	5	73
The Number of Classes	18	6	174	6	10	214
The Number of Students	139	60	1,722	49	92	2,062

Source: *the Annual Report on Special Education (2009)* by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology<sup>1)</sup>

Table 3. The Experience of Vocational Education during the School Days of the Disabled who were born in and after 1958. (Unit: number, %)

Vocational Education	Estimation	Rate
Total	679,684	100.0
Received vocational educations	58,164	8.6
Received on-the-job training/had internships	48,933	7.2
Engaged in part-time job	60,342	8.9

Source: The 1<sup>st</sup> Panel Survey of Employment for the Disabled by Korea Employment Promotion Agency for the Disabled in 2009 <sup>11)</sup>

Table 4. The Period and the Type of Industries of Vocational Education (Unit: number, %)

Types		Estimation	Rate
The Period of Vocational Education	Under 1 month	15,150	13.0
	1 month~under 3 months	28,806	24.8
	3 months~under 6 months	37,728	32.5
	6 months~under 12 months	23,698	20.4
	12 month and above	7,957	6.8
	Don't remember/Nonresponse	2,863	2.5
	Subtotal	116,202	100.0
The Industries of Vocational Education	Agriculture, forestry and fishing / Mining and quarrying	3,431	3.0
	Textile	1,859	1.6
	Chemicals and Ceramics	183	0.2
	Metal	605	0.5
	Machinery / Equipment	23,617	20.3
	Construction	3,730	3.2
	Electronics / Electricss	7,831	6.7
	Computer/Information/Communication	24,702	21.3
	Service	19,897	17.1
	Administration	3,441	3.0
	Wearing apparel	5,754	5.0
	Transportation	5,834	5.0
	Industrial application	2,420	2.1
	Polytechnic Engineer	1,966	1.7
	Financial and insurance / Environment	674	0.6
	Preparation for civil service examination and higher civil service examination	2,740	2.4
	Art and sports	1,937	1.7
	Language	2,109	1.8
	Others	3,470	3.0
Subtotal	116,200	100.0	

Note: This table was made of the survey result from the disabled who had vocational education experiences.

Source: The 1<sup>st</sup> Panel Survey of Employment for the Disabled by Korea Employment Promotion Agency for the Disabled in 2009 <sup>11)</sup>

assembling, transporting, service and manual labor.

The result to study the vocational education experience of the disabled who were born in and after 1958 shows that 24.7% had vocational education, and therein 8.6% had vocational trainings, 7.2% had on-the-job training and internships and 8.9% had part-time jobs (See Table 3), which demonstrates the fact that 75% of the disabled had never received any vocational education during their school days.

As for the period of vocational education, the period of 3 months ~ under 6 months was the highest one, 32.5%; 1 month ~ under 3 months 24.8%, 6 months ~ under 12months 20.4% and Under 1 month 13.0% (See Table 4). Because most of employers want the disabled to have more than one year vocational education and it also takes at least one year to acquire the specialized technique, even though there are differences among types of jobs, the proper period of vocational education is needed to be considered based on the types of jobs. As for the type of industries, Computer / Information / Communication was the highest one, 21.3%; Machinery/Equipment 20.3%, Service 17.1% and Electronics/Electrics 6.7%.

### III. Problems and Solutions of Vocational Rehabilitation Education for the Disabled

The problems of vocational rehabilitation education are that the vocation educations focusing on on-the-job training in the most schools and special classes have not been satisfactorily conducted and that professional personnel, facilities, equipment and financial resources are poor. In addition, guidebook for vocational guidance and education materials have not been developed enough and school-industry cooperation has not been

established<sup>12)</sup>. To solve these problems, first, to widen and stimulate the recognition for the employment of the disabled, the development of programs and educational materials in relation to vocational rehabilitation and seminars and workshops should be held; Second, the techniques and guidebooks for rehabilitation should be developed; third, the assessment tools to measure the vocational competence and to build plans for vocational education; fourth, the research for employment promotion and vocational rehabilitation for the disabled should be conducted; fifth, the counseling, guidance and management for vocational rehabilitation and research institution are needed, and sixth, experts for vocational rehabilitation should be fostered. Based on these solutions, the direction of vocational rehabilitation education for the disabled would be suggested as follows:

#### 1. Vocational Education Teacher for the Disabled

The retention of vocational education teachers and improvement of their quality are the most important task to implement more specialized-vocational education. Vocation education teachers play various roles such as coordinator, mediator, instructor, guide and therapist. Specifically in the beginning stage, they assess and evaluate the degree of disabilities of the students with disabilities in the beginning and research job market. In the development stage, they record and develop the job decision and implement the job placement, continuous support and regular assessment, analysis and record of all process. However, the system to culture the qualified teachers who can take responsibilities for the vocational education for students with disabilities has not been established yet. Therefore, the curriculum of the special

education teacher training programs should include more courses in relation to vocational and transition education, the number of colleges to foster vocational education teachers should be increased, the qualification requirement and placement criteria of vocational education teachers need to be readjusted and their professionalism should be kept up with by the workshops and follow-up courses.

The vocational education for the disabled should not be limited to the responsibility of special-education teachers, but the administrative action should be implemented to include the other teachers so that they can share the responsibilities for the vocational education and accept the vocational education as their job with the related knowledge. The programs of the workshop for the principals and the faculty should include on-the-job training course of students with disabilities so that they can fully and practically understand the work contents.

## **2. The Contents of Vocational Rehabilitation Education for the Disabled**

The definitions of vocational education, career education, transition education and other related concepts should be completed and thereby the supporting system should be also established. For the successful transition of students with disabilities to society, the continuous education, commitment of community, independent life as well as the vocational education should be assisted.

Moreover, for the diversification and specialization of the vocational education contents for secondary school, the training for the special education teachers should be reinforced so that the occupational skill of the students in special classes could be improved and simultaneously for the joint education of school and company, the dispatched class to

the workplace should be considered.

Vocational rehabilitation education for students with disabilities should help them live within community by educating them with using work sample in the school and by analyzing the types of occupations that are available in the community.

In addition, the study to develop the jobs suited to the disabled should be continued to and the system to guarantee students with disabilities some types of jobs that are found to be suited to them should be established. To solve the problems of vocational education, even private agencies could be supported by state and local government administratively and financially.

## **3. Methods of Vocational Rehabilitation Education for the Disabled**

The vocational rehabilitation education for the disabled should be individualized based on their vocational needs so that they can get support of education and rehabilitation training with various methods, for the types and degree of disabilities are different from each person.

To activate the vocational training and to get the disabled be equipped with qualification and skills needed for employment, opportunities of vocational training and types of occupations should be extended, the training levels of vocational training institutions should be diversified and vocational rehabilitation for the disabled should be practically conducted in the dimension of life-long education. For this, all the process of adjustment training, technical training, placement on workplace and follow-up should be packaged so that the disabled could be cared for their entire work life by degrees and systemically.

According to the survey of Employment for the Disabled in 2009 targeting the employers

who are interested in hiring the disabled and job seekers with disabilities, the jobs in relation to office work, information process and graphic design were selected as the most wanted jobs that the disabled want to get vocational training. Moreover, as the IT workforce need more followed by the change of industrial structure, more than two-year training course should be installed. Through these kinds of courses, students with disabilities would have more opportunities to acquire the professional skills and techniques, more easily get a job and eventually have more advantage for higher wage and promotion.

Even though the vocational education is supposed to begin at 2<sup>nd</sup> grade of middle school based on the principle that the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology presented, the vocational education should begin at the kindergarten and be consistently conducted based on the stages of career development such as career consciousness, career exploration, career preparation and employment.

#### IV. Conclusion

The ultimate purpose of vocational rehabilitation education for the disabled is to help them live socially and economically independent lives by providing them with the proper service suited for the types and degree of disability and let them integrated to community.

In South Korea, however, the vocational education has not been fully established and there are many problems to be solved. First, the most urgent task to activate the vocational education is the retention of professionalism of vocational education teachers. It is indispensable for the vocational education teachers to be equipped with knowledge and skills to conduct the specialized vocational education.

Second, the contents of vocational education for the disabled should be fitted to the jobs

that are needed in the community and the education should be dynamic focusing on on-the-job training in liaison with the human and material resources of community.

Third, sheltered workshops, one of the vocational education facilities, have been recognized as the transition facility to the community through the prevocational and occupational trainings. The synthesized program should be developed to improve the working conditions by raising the wage and by cultivating the market for their products. Fourth, the Act on Employment Promotion and Vocational Rehabilitation for Disabled Persons may be the most important legal system for the disabled. The job exploration program for youth with disabilities should be implemented based on this act so that the disabled could live with the work life suited to their ability.

As seen from above, for the stabilization of vocational education for the disabled, the customized education for each student is needed and the education program should be urgently diversified. In addition, the disabled should be provided with broad opportunity to choose their occupations through the systemized vocational education. To accomplish these goals, legal and systemic improvement, the recognition change and strict vocational rehabilitation education at the related agencies, institutions and home are needed. Most of all, the disabled should have the confidence to have jobs and make efforts to have them just like the non-disabled.

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韓国では、2000年「障害者雇用促進及び職業リハビリテーション法」が改正され、障害者雇用促進に関する大きな法律的、制度的整備が行われた。この影響を受け、教育分野から職業的自立への移行が社会的要求となり、移行支援計画に基づく学校から職業への移行の重要性が話題になっている。しかし、各個人に適切な移行支援計画の作成やその方法に関する専門家の確保と関連機関との連携などに改善点が多い状況である。今後、障害のある生徒の職業教育に関する専門家（職業リハ教育専門教師）の養成、地域で活用できる職業教育内容の開発と多様な教育方法やプログラムの増加、また、教育、福祉、雇用それぞれの分野のさまざまな雇用支援が、就職前から就職後にわたり、各障害者を中心として整合性のあるシステムが必要である。

キーワード：障害者職業教育 移行支援  
障害者等に関する特殊教育法  
障害者雇用促進及び職業リハビリテーション法