

Working Toward Inclusive Education: The Case of Korean Preschool

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Abstract: The objective of this research is to conduct a case study of a highly effective, inclusive preschool financially supported by local government in Seoul and investigate the educational quality of the program. Researchers had visited Seoul-K preschool and had assisted class for one week from Aug. 4, 2016 in order to thoroughly observe teacher's class and children's attitudes and behaviors and collect relevant materials. About 20 teachers and operating staff including the preschool director are in charge of education. Inclusive education in this preschool has been creating close cooperation between families and a local community. Children are able to learn circumstances of a local community and how to use resources in the circumstances from their early childhood. Due to its locational advantage, disabled children can easily receive treatment from therapists in social welfare and community center and draw attentions from general and special teachers in preschool as well as outside therapists. Furthermore, the monthly parent education and participation program in Seoul-K preschool not only provides close collaboration between teachers or preschools and parents but promotes interaction between all those concerned including disabled children's parents and prevent unnecessary conflicts of opinions. The program can serve as a role for disabled children's parents to have direct relationship with the parents of children who have no disabilities. Compared to a general preschool, an inclusive preschool requires more additional investment in facilities and special manpower. Strong governmental support for inclusive preschools is essential for effective operations, especially in urban areas.

Key words: Inclusive education, preschools, collaboration, parent participation, collaboration, treatment

INTRODUCTION

Special education means the education accomplished in the way of providing a special curriculum that satisfies the educational needs of the persons with special education needs and supporting the services such as counseling support, family support, treatment support, assistance support, aids support, commuting service support and information access support.

But most educational facilities for children with disabilities began to be operated by charity groups or religious groups. They ended up being operated in the separation from society. It brought about giving the disabled a limited opportunity of social inclusion and participation the limited opportunity. As a result, the necessity of inclusive education, rather than separation and isolation has emerged. Generally, inclusive education means that disabled children with special education needs are not discriminated in general school depending on their disability type and degree but receive special education for developing their social adaptation ability in general or that the students in special education institutes are allowed to temporarily participate in a curriculum in general school in order for their education. The purpose of inclusive education is to support their special needs

and provide respect of their human rights and fair educational support.

Inclusive education is a global phenomenon (Garrote *et al.*, 2017). For instance, in many western countries including the US, the principle of full inclusive education is generalized. Full inclusive education means that the students with special education needs are allowed to register in a classroom in consideration of their age and participate in a general education program. On the assumption of the time when children have no disabilities, full inclusive education is provided by a general teacher and a special teacher in a general classroom (Loreman, 2007). In early childhood education institute, inclusive education is on the premise of individualized education in which individual differences are taken into account in the process of class activity and a separate curriculum is not designed for individual abilities. If an individualized curriculum is applied separately depending on abilities, it is hard to expect to improve student's psychological inclusive ability or their cognitive ability in exchange and collaboration with others. Therefore, early childhood teacher's roles and attitudes and learning various intervention methods for children with disabilities are of more significance.

In inclusive school, children with disabilities grow without their perceptions that they are different from

children without disabilities or are intelligently inferior. The goals of inclusive education facility are to accept human diversity regardless of disabilities and develop social and emotional skills for interaction are developed. Therefore, in inclusive education facility, learning and play make it possible for all children to enjoy and have various experiences triggering intrinsic learning motivation regardless of their disabilities. In this process, children with or without disabilities are able to have and keep friendship, control impulsive behaviors and accept diversity. In particular, children with disabilities have no fear of persons including children in the same age group and teachers and desire to have active relationship with children who have no disabilities.

An increase in demands for inclusive education leads to a rise in more contact with children who have no disabilities. The experience of contact positively influences their perceptions and attitudes of children with disabilities. Disabled children who experienced inclusive education had more adaptation and more acceptance to new environments and built more positive emotions and attitudes than those who didn't. That is because inclusive education provide the natural learning environment to give disabled children more opportunities to interact with other children without disabilities, naturally mimic and learn the behaviors fitting their chronological age and experience social interaction and learning in other circumstances than early childhood teachers. Disabled young children are able to naturally obtain perception and communication skills by recognizing and experiencing social interaction with young children who have no disabilities and their roles in the same age group through inclusive education (Lindqvist and Nilholm, 2013).

Particularly, in child-care centers that perform inclusive education, it is possible to find a level of development and an individual interest that children with or without disabilities have, naturally improve their creativity, problem-solving ability and sociality and provide an opportunity to learn the habit of being considerate for others in the way of getting together with children regardless of disabilities. Based on the reliability and respect for developmental potentials of young children in a standard child-care curriculum such as basic living, physical exercise, social relation, nature inquiry activity, communication and arts experience, it is possible to provide an inclusive and lively activity based program for each area on the basis of the theory focusing on individual learning and developmental interaction give children an opportunity to select an activity on their own and improve their ability to become a social member without any feelings of difference and inferiority (Bartolo *et al.*, 2016).

As shown in previous studies on the effects of inclusive education, the education doesn't influence

negatively children without disabilities and is expected to product considerable effects on social exchange ways and learning as there is the relationship between children regardless of disabilities (Peltier, 1997). It is indicated that inclusive education can positively influence not only children with disabilities but ones without disabilities. It was found that inclusive education helped children without disabilities improve their social interaction with other children regardless of disabilities and especially, understand and accept disabled children and improve comprehension (Farrell *et al.*, 2007). Jordan *et al.* (2009) suggested that inclusive education didn't influence negatively the academic achievements of children without disabilities. In other words, it means that the education positively influences their cognitive, social and emotional aspects. Many parents for children without disabilities still reject that their children go to the same institute together with disabled children. Aside from that, managers of preschools are considered to remarkably refuse the establishment of additional facilities for disabled children and the additional employment of early childhood and special teachers. As shown in the statistics, inclusive education in preschool is simply in the initial step. There are relevant works on the phenomenon. Nonis (2006) reported that 25% of them had high support and responsibility for disabled children in an inclusive education system whereas 57% didn't like having such responsibility.

The main obstacles to inclusive education were found to include insufficient knowledge and human resources of inclusive education, difficult collaboration with parents and supporters and no policies of the central and local governments (Horne and Timmons, 2009; Khochen and Radford, 2012). Teachers in child-care institutes also have difficulty with actual inclusive education (Curcic, 2009). In particular, in fierce competition of learning, inclusive education is not smoothly operated. If the goal of the education is not to fall behind competition between child-care institutes and between children, full inclusion or partial inclusion is not a desirable policy from the perspective of educational institutes.

In the educational environment of preschool for inclusive education of children with disabilities, an inclusive education program is being operated without enough preparation for inclusive education. Therefore, teachers have a lot of burden and parents who have high expectancy of the educational and emotional effects of inclusive education more actively demands inclusive education. This study tries to introduce the case of the operation information and operation method at a preschool in Seoul and find the development direction of early childhood education institutes pursuing inclusive education on the basis of interviews

with teachers.

THE CASE OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN SEOUL-K PRESCHOOL

History and management status of seoul-k preschool: In December 2011, Seoul-K preschool established by a local government is an inclusive education institute that has children with or without disabilities under its educational goals of an autonomous person, a creative person, a person accepting diversity, a democratic person and a person living Korean culture. In this study, researchers had visited Seoul-K preschool and had assisted class for one week from Aug. 4, 2016 in order to thoroughly observe teacher’s class and children’s attitudes and behaviors and collect relevant materials.

The facility information on Seoul-K preschool is summarized as follows: About 20 teachers and operating staff including the preschool director are in charge of education. There are a director room, a teacher room, four child-care rooms, a library, two treatment rooms, a textbook and teaching-aids room, three shower and rest rooms, two rest rooms and an outdoor playground. Child-care hours are from 7:30 am to 7:30 pm on weekdays and from 7:30 am to 3:30 pm on Saturdays. Seoul-K preschool is operated by the director, three child-care teachers, eight early childhood special teachers, three therapists, one cook and four assistant teachers. There are four classes: A, B, C and D. Class A has five young children without disabilities and three with disabilities aged <1 which is managed by two teachers. Class B has seven young children without disabilities and six with disabilities aged <2 years which is managed by three eachers. Class C has ten young children without

disabilities and six with disabilities aged <3 years which is managed by three teachers. Class D has three young children without disabilities and nine with disabilities aged four and five which is managed by three teachers. Daily inclusive education activities in each class include attending and greeting, individualized free play, snack in the morning, freely selective play and arrangement, large/small group activity and outdoor activity, lunch preparation, eating and tooth-brushing, freely selective play, nap and rest, arrangement and going to rest room, snack in the afternoon, freely selective play and preparation for going home. Those aged more than 2 select a variety of free play, group play and outdoor activity.

Another, inclusive program to improve a class-by-class program for inclusive education is the program of community association and social improvement activities. The child-care area of social relationship for young children includes such contents as one’s respect for oneself, the creation of positive social relationship with family members, classmates and local communities and improvements in social knowledge and attitude to become a competent social member. In particular by letting parents and local communities know the goals and contents of the child-care curriculum in preschool in various ways and giving parents an opportunity to participate in the operation of the child-care curriculum, the program contributes to close collaboration with families and local communities. It also helps young children learn how to use resources in local communities and contributes to activating interaction between preschools and local communities in order to make local communities recognized as the safe and convenient circumstances for young children. Table 1 shows the program of community association and social improvement activities which is operated by Seoul-K preschool.

Table 1: Program of community association and social improvement activities

Months	Activity	Contents
March	Going around preschool	Expansion of nature-friendly thinking Physical training of young children
April	Visiting a flower ship	Observing spring flowers at a flower shop and purchasing flower seeds and seeding Observing spring flowers
May	Visiting a park	Understanding the roles of bank and post offices
June	Bank, Post office	Understanding a wedding hall
July	Wedding hall	Applying for parent support
August	Washing toys, riding an escalator	Subway use directions Crossing at traffic lights Safety education of bicycle
September	Visiting a subway station	Crossing the street and returning Making a rice cake with friends Observing the process of making a rice
October	Safety education	Observing fall flowers
November	Crossing the street	Understanding the roles of environmental hygienists
December	Making a rice cake	Showing a dance routine before the elderly at a welfare center for the elderly Finding and helping poor neighbors
January	Nearby sports park	Visiting a fire station and safety education
February	Department of environmental hygiene	Visiting an elementary school to find its environment
	Visiting a welfare center for the elderly	
	Visiting a fire station	
	Visiting an elementary school	

PROGRAM FOR TREATING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Seoul-K preschool performs inclusive education and a therapy program for disabled children which is operated by three therapists in a treatment room. Speech therapy for mentally retarded children, children with developmental disorders and children with brain lesions and occupational therapy for children who have cerebral palsy, mental retardation and pervasive developmental disability are performed in the program. For reference, speech therapy is conducted to assess the developmental state and speech of persons who have difficulty with communication because of their speech disorders and to induce speech development and help out smooth communication. In other words, speech therapy is to treat speech disorders. After analyzing a speech expression, language understanding, pronunciation and other speech abilities, the therapy is applied in consideration of an age group. Occupational therapy is applied to children with developmental disorders. Through, a variety of therapeutic intervention, it is aimed at improving the overall development of children in order for them to perform tasks required for each developmental age group in various areas such as children's motion, perception, recognition, sensory information process and play. Occupational therapy helps out children's development through their experiences of normal development and various activities, reduces functional disorders and improves functional independence for living.

The purpose of the therapy program is to provide information on children and knowledge to their parents and guardians through parental counseling and education and to offer support to draw children's potentials as much as possible in order for them to perform their functional activities in everyday life through association with family and society other than a treatment room. If disabled children want to have other additional therapies than speech therapy and occupational therapy in Seoul-K preschool, they can receive class in a proper procedure from play therapists and special physical education teachers at social welfare and community centers like Seoul-K preschool. Therapists working at social welfare and community centers record disabled children's current level, education goal, education contents and their characteristics to provide materials to general teachers, special teachers, speech therapists and occupational therapists working at preschools to help them find the children's conditions. Based on the materials, therapists, general teachers and special teachers can share useful information to educate and treat disabled children.

Aside from that, it is possible to do various activities, including speech, play, special physical education, psychology, arts, works, physics, cognition and sensory therapy with the help of outside experts working at social welfare and community centers located in Seoul, depending on the needs of disabled children. Although there are a variety of intervention strategies for disabled children, it is impossible to perform them because of limited budget. It is also impossible to keep educating teachers in child-care institutes whenever a new therapy and counseling technique is developed. A particular intervention strategy or a therapy request can be temporal in preschool with inclusive education. Therefore, it is more cost-effective to receive support in collaboration with outside experts. What is desirable is to provide a proper intervention and therapy method to preschool and special teachers constantly. Otherwise, the only alternative is the support of outside experts.

PROGRAM FOR OVERCOMING PREJUDICES AND IMPROVING COMMUNITY INTERACTION

Aside from the therapy program for disabled children, there is the program of overcoming prejudices and promoting community association for all children. The concepts of disabilities or mental diseases that children without disabilities understand are often created from a socio-cultural perspective, rather than a medical perspective. In particular with the development of mass media and communication technology, skewed or unreliable information on mental diseases and disorders worsens negative perception on disabilities. The educational program for rightly understanding of disabilities and overcoming prejudices should begin to be provided at early childhood. It is required to accept disabled children as a part of social members and persons to interact directly. Negative attitudes and prejudices for physical and mental disabilities lower disabled children's self-esteem and negatively influence the children and their family life. The program for overcoming prejudices can be evaluated to pursue social inclusion prevent discriminative behaviors for disabilities effectively. The program performed monthly in Seoul-K preschool is summarized in Table 2. The program which all children participate in is performed with a monthly title in collaboration with special and general teachers.

Parent education and participation program: Parents of disabled children, who go to preschools that pursue inclusive education helping disabled children get educated in the same way as children without disabilities

Table 2: Programs for overcoming prejudices

Months	Contents
March	Look at your appearance Observe your friend's appearance Introduce your friends Accept a diversity of appearance
April	Look at yourself Observe your friend
May	What are gender roles There are no difference in the roles Stereotypes for gender roles Everyone can do diverse works Goods used by everyone
June	There is little difference among us I understand my friend We are friends Find your friend's strong points
July	
August	
September	I know what my friend likes I know what my friend doesn't like We help with each other We play together
October	Foods of many different countries Our religion Traditional costumes of neighboring countries Special anniversaries of different countries
November	Various jobs Discrimination for colors Discrimination for countries
December	For yellow race For black race For white race
January	How do you feel about you and your younger brother (sister) Me and my older brother (sister) My father and mother and me My grandfather and grandmother and me Conversation with family members
February	If shared a little If conceded a little Think slowly

are more interested in child-care programs. The more parents are interested in inclusive education, the more child-care teachers have responsibility. That is because their influence on young children with disabilities expands to families beyond child-care institutes. According to a recent American study, adults tend to be dependent on early childhood teachers, rather than psychology experts, in order for psychiatric problems of children with ADHD (Pescosolido *et al.*, 2008). That proves that teacher's roles are of more significance.

Children with disabilities spend a lot of time with their parents. Therefore, cooperation between teachers and parents is essential to draw disabled children's potentials. Preschool teachers caring for disabled children all day long need a wide range of support. Not only counseling and collaboration with various specialists out of school, but collaboration with parents are important. Counseling parents is one of preschool teacher's main activities. However, the teachers have difficulty in communication with parents. A lack of knowledge about instructions for disabled children is an obstacle to instructions and counseling. For these reasons, preschool teachers are highly likely to face difficulty in the way of teaching children with confidence and associating their instructions with therapy.

The program which children with or without disabilities and their parents participate in is considered to promote interaction all those concerned including disabled children's parents, prevent unnecessary conflicts of self-esteem and opinions and reduce duplicated services. Table 3 shows the monthly parent education and participation program at Seoul-K preschool. It requires the parent and children to keep

Table 3: Parent education and participation program

Month	Activities	Contents
March	The adaptation program for new young children Open preschool Bulletin board for parent Parent safety education	Participation during the adaptation period in preschool Participation of all parents for food supply service Information for our children before entrance Tips of report of child abuse, etiquette/respiratory hygiene
April	Parent counseling Open preschool Bulletin board for parent Parent safety education	Individual counseling for all parents Participation of inclusive class parents for food supply service Improving expectancy of books Safe house; tips of food poison during outing season
May	Spring picnic Parent workshop Open preschool Bulletin board for parent Parent safety education	Request of assistance to parents Participation of all parents Participation of all parents for food supply service Desirable tooth care Importance of low salt food in early childhood cherish your body
June	Exhibition and parent participation class Preschool Bulletin board for parent Parent safety education	Participation of all parents Participation of inclusive class parents for food supply service Right birthday celebration Attention on heat wave; do proper actions for food safety in summer!
July	Preschool Bulletin board for parent Parent safety education	Participation of inclusive class parents for food supply service Health care in summer Attention on heat wave; do proper actions for food safety in summer!
August	Preschool Bulletin board for parent	Participation of all parents for food supply service Etiquette in public places

Table 3: Continue

Month	Activities	Contents
September	Day of folklore	Parent assistants
	Project exhibition	Participation of all parents
	Preschool	Participation of inclusive class parents for food supply service
October	Bulletin board for parent	Table manners
	Fall picnic and hiking	Participation of all parents
	Preschool	Participation of inclusive class parents for food supply service
November	Bulletin board for parent	Raising one child
	Parent counseling	Individual counseling for all young children
	Early childhood parents workshop	Participation of inclusive class parents for food supply service
December	Preschool	Participation of inclusive class parents for food supply service
	Christmas event	Voluntary work of all parents
	Bulletin board for parent	Participation of all parents
January	Preschool	Effective answers to children's questions
	Bulletin board for parent	Participation of inclusive class parents for food supply service
February	Graduation ceremony	Use of health media
	Orientation	Participation of all parents
	Preschool	Preschool orientation
	Bulletin board for parent	Participation of inclusive class parents for food supply service
		Traffic safety instructions

exchange and collaboration with each other through various channels. In this program, parents can observe how their children take activities in preschool and can receive a variety of information for rearing their children. In addition, disabled children's parents can have relationship with the parents of children who have no disabilities in order to establish diverse social relations.

INTERVIEW RESULTS FROM SEOUL-K PRESCHOOL TEACHERS

In the course of participating in Seoul-K preschool program, this researcher had an opportunity to discuss inclusive education with teachers. What was discussed is briefly presented as follows. Teacher 'A' (39 years of age) who had an interview with had five-year career as a preschool teacher having been working at Mapo preschool for two years. I asked her the effective aspects of inclusive education and the problems of inclusive education environments. The interview results are presented.

"I think that inclusive education is effective for children without disabilities to recognize disabilities naturally. They are so young that it is hard to recognize what disabilities are and whether disabilities are bad. When I was young, I used to have repulsion of disabled children because I didn't come across them often. Parents of the children with disabilities don't think of inclusive education negatively. They seem to think that inclusive education can give positive effects to children who can have a variety of social experiences. Sometimes, some parents of the children without disabilities ask if their children may be able to follow problematic behaviors of disabled children. But, given that most children get adapted to the environment, inclusive education seems to

bring about more positive effects. There are some children aged 4-5 who help out disabled children at an eating time, or a tooth-brushing time. When I look at the children who didn't learn how to do so, I am very proud of them.

Sometimes, in inclusive education, disabled children who have bad conditions cry out, so that, they make all others startled. It is annoying, indeed. When children cry out and have a problematic behavior, all children are daunted and feel bad. In particular if a disabled child triggers a problematic behavior and don't follow my instructions in outdoor activities and experience activities, it is very hard to control all children. Sometimes, a disabled child has an problematic behavior unexpectedly or hits or pinches other children suddenly. In this case, it is hard to tell parents of other children the situation. Although, the disabled children did, so, without recognition, the parents can feel upset.

As a general teacher, I was startled many times when finding unexpected and problematic behaviors of disabled children. I am always wondering about why they have the behaviors and how to prevent the influence of the behaviors on children without disabilities. I want to learn them in a systematic training program and want a system in which teachers voluntarily participating in a training program get additional points as career. Or I want the head of preschool to give consideration to the training hours."

The second teacher 'B' who I had an interview majored in special education had three-year career of teaching, having been working at Seoul-K preschool for three years. I also asked her the effective aspects of inclusive education and the problems of inclusive education environments.

"As a special teacher, I consider inclusive education positive. On a very hot day, children in my class played

with water pistols as an outdoor activity. Autistic children played so happily. I have never seen him smiling so big in a year before. He seemed to be so happy simply for playing with children who have no disabilities. Since, his parents work, he seems to always play alone at home and doesn't go out often. When children without disabilities gave him a water pistol, saying "let's do together", he was so happy. Looking at children's learning on their own and getting adapted to circumstances, I was very touched. In our Seoul-K preschool, there is a speech therapy room and a sensory therapy room. Therefore, disabled children are able to have person-to-person class at any time. Since, I majored in early childhood special education, I ask a speech therapist or a sensory therapist something that I am not aware of. In this way, I can find out children's advantages and characteristics well. It is very good to ask them what I want to know about class. Also, in the social welfare and community center, children are able to have play therapy, special physical education and other kinds of class. It is beneficial to provide various services for disabled children in one building."

Given the results of the interviews with two teachers, they somewhat seem to agree on the appropriateness and educational value of inclusive education. Teacher as opinion of inclusive education is in the same context with the education and social effects of inclusive education suggested in many previous studies (Lindqvist and Nilholm, 2013; Farrell *et al.*, 2007; Peltier, 1997). Inclusive education is expected to bring about considerable effects in the point that children without disabilities can establish social relationship and a learning course through interaction with disabled children with various learning needs. In particular, inclusive education was found to be very helpful to understand and tolerate disabled children.

In case of general preschool teachers, it is judged that although they have high responsibility, they have difficulty with actual inclusive education because of their lack of knowledge, skills and difficult communication with parents. The special teacher 'B' fully supported the introduction of inclusive education and asked for more active support in the dimension of organizations and the government. Teacher's reactions and attitudes of improper behaviors of children in inclusive class are influenced by their belief on themselves, their responses and intervention skills to the behaviors and administrative support of school (Havey *et al.*, 2005). For this reason, it is unavoidable to request direct or indirect support services such as inclusive education in the dimension of organizations and the government, education or training about intervention methods and offering of relevant information.

CONCLUSION

Despite the limitations of the single case based research, it was possible to draw several suggestions to expand inclusive education and improve its excellence. First, a variety of community association and social improvement activities taken by Seoul-K preschool are aimed at letting parents and a local community knows the goals of its preschool program and contents giving parents an opportunity to participate in the program actively and creating close cooperation between families and a local community. In this way, children are able to learn circumstances of a local community and how to use resources in the circumstances from their early childhood. Secondly, since, Seoul-K preschool is located in the same building as social welfare and community center, disabled children can easily receive treatment from therapists in social welfare and community center. In addition, it is possible to expect collaboration between general and special teachers in preschool and therapists and share information easily. Thirdly, in the Seoul-K preschool program, it is possible to invite outside experts depending on the needs of disabled children and thereby receive treatment in various areas. It is hard to keep educating teachers in child-care institutes whenever a new therapy and counseling technique is developed. Therefore, using outside experts is very cost-effective. Fourthly, the program for overcoming prejudices in Seoul-K preschool is considerably required in order to understand disabilities properly. Through the education program, children without disabilities can be accepted as a social member and as a person to interact with others directly. Fifthly, the monthly parent education and participation program in Seoul-K preschool not only provides close collaboration between teachers or preschools and parents but promote interaction between all those concerned including disabled children's parents and prevent unnecessary conflicts of opinions. In the program, parents can observe how their children take activities. The program can serve as a role for disabled children's parents to have direct relationship with the parents of children who have no disabilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Researchers admitted that inclusive education for disabled children is more educationally effective than separation education. Nevertheless, given that there is a low rate of preschools performing inclusive education, it is possible to find that there are many obstacles to establish and open an inclusive preschool. Compared to a general preschool, an inclusive preschool requires more

additional investment in facilities and special teachers and therapists working regularly. In this sense, it is almost impossible to operate an inclusive preschool without any support of the central or local governments. The philosophy and necessity of inclusive education is quite understandable. However, actually, it is very difficult to operate the preschool. To research obstacles to inclusive education, it is very urgent to study various types of inclusive education preschool cases.

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