Invited Paper
Current Topic

Exploring the Nature of Secondary Special Education in Korea

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Given the unique demands of educating adolescents with disabilities, the long-term focus on elementary and early-childhood special education, and the recent emphasis on the enhancement of the quality of education and accountability issues and on inclusive education at the secondary level, there is a need to examine the current status and unique functions of secondary special education in Korea. The present paper reviews the current status of secondary special education and explores 7 themes defining the features of secondary special education in Korea. Some functions of secondary special education and indicators of the quality of the practice of secondary special education and transition services are also examined. Establishing the unique territory and nature of secondary special education and providing a quality education and services for adolescents with disabilities is a critical agenda for the advancement of Korean special education.

Key Words: secondary special education, Korean special education, functions of secondary special education

Introduction

Up to the present time, the term “secondary special education” has not been used frequently in South Korea in the field of special education. Rather, the term that has been used more commonly could be translated as “transition education”. In the public education sector, special education practices have mainly evolved at the elementary education levels and, later, in the early childhood education. However, now, the area of secondary special education is receiving attention from academics and practitioners in the field of special education. This pattern can be observed not only in Korea, but also in other countries that have more advanced educational systems for students with disabilities.

Based on the full revision of Special Education Promotion Law in 1994, special education practice across Korea within the realm of public education system has

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S. Park

improved continuously for the first time in Korean history. Since the 1990s, inclusive education opportunities have increased and the quality of inclusive education has gradually improved for many students with disabilities. In that time period, there has been significant development in special education in Korea. Some of the achievements include the following: an increase in the number of special education classes in regular schools and the number of certified special education teachers, the establishment of the Korean Institute of Special Education (KISE), an increase in the provision of special education and services, the initiation of special education teacher assistants into school settings, the improvement in physical accessibility for students with physical disabilities in regular schools, increased shared responsibilities among school administrators and general education teachers in the provision of inclusive education, and the establishment of a department of special education policy in the Ministry of Education of the Korean government.

These recent developments can be attributed to the endeavor in various areas, such as legislation and policy relating to special education, administrative arrangements for inclusive schools, the increasing quality of educational practice, supporting systems for special education, and research activities.

Despite these notable achievements in many aspects of special education, some areas have still received little attention. One of the neglected areas of special education in Korea is secondary education and transition services for adolescents with disabilities. As a consequence, secondary special education has not provided adolescents with disabilities with appropriate educational opportunities in their transition to adulthood (Park, 1995).

Some of the reasons for this lack of the provision of quality secondary and transitional education for adolescents with disabilities include the following. Among the courses included in the in-service training for special education teacher, although some courses have been developed specifically for early childhood education, there are few for secondary education. Teacher education courses for the elementary and secondary levels have been mingled and are not specific enough to address each level's uniqueness. Rather, the pre-service curriculum for special education teacher is centered on teaching the subjects of the Korean National Curriculum of k-12, as well as specific instructional methods for students with various disabilities.

Although recently some universities have added courses related to career education, secondary special education, transition education and services, or vocational education to their existing teacher education curriculum, those courses are usually electives or students are only required to take one of them. Even where these courses are offered, they are not geared to give future educators training that is adequate for them to be able to know how to prepare their students with moderate to severe disabilities for post-secondary education, employment, or community-based residence. In addition, research on issues related to adolescents with disabilities and differential curricula and instructional methods in secondary special education has been limited.

Additionally, it appears that when students with disabilities go to secondary

Exploring the Nature of Secondary Special Education in Korea

schools, their parents tend to become worn out and lose their enthusiasm for their children's education and future. Professional guidance from the directors of school district offices on best practices and implementation strategies of secondary special education and transition has also been restricted, due to their lack of professional knowledge and experiences in this area. Collaboration of the school system with vocational rehabilitation institutes and labor markets, and inter-department collaboration within government, are essential for providing the best practices of secondary special education and transition services for students with disabilities. Lack of inter-department collaboration on developing and implementing secondary education and transition services for secondary students with disabilities may be one of the factors that has interfered with the development of Korea's disability-related policy and strategic plans. All these aspects have contributed to the limited progress in the development of the current secondary special education for students with disabilities in Korea (Park, 1999a).

Since the early 1990s, with an increasing emphasis on inclusive education, many special classes have started to implement part-time inclusive education, moving from the previous self-contained system. In 1997, special classes in regular high schools were set to start (in addition to the classes established earlier to serve students with partial sight at the Yeoido High School in Seoul) and the number of special classes in regular middle schools nationwide has gradually increased (Park, 2003). Establishing special classes in regular high schools was drastic change at that time, when the prevalent setting for adolescents with disabilities was segregated special schools. Many parents with young children with disabilities also started to advocate for inclusive education in regular kindergartens and day-care centers. The increased presence of students with disabilities in inclusive settings at all levels of education has demanded further interest in and examination of special education programs, not only by special educators but by general educators and parents.

Starting around 2000, many adolescents with disabilities who had spent their early childhood and elementary years in inclusive settings started to enter regular secondary schools. In addition, graduates of special elementary schools began to demand quality secondary education that would prepare them for adult life in the community. Responding to this request from students with disabilities for quality secondary education is the current agenda of the utmost importance for special education in Korea. Now it is imperative to reestablish the secondary education system to meet the unique needs of adolescents with disabilities, needs which are, in many aspects, different from those of elementary students.

The present paper attempts to review briefly the current status of Korean secondary special education and explore the features and functions of secondary special education, in order for secondary special education to secure its own place in the field of special education and to forward its development.

S. Park

Features of Secondary Special Education in Korea

There is no clear definition of “secondary special education” in any published literature. The uniqueness of the problems that adolescents with special needs face can distinguish it from early childhood or elementary programs. The identity of secondary special education will become clear from an identification of its characteristic features.

The features of secondary special education are: (1) the population of the recipients, (2) the setting, (3) the content of the curriculum, (4) the implementation of the curriculum, (5) overlapping issues during adolescence in relation to students with disabilities, (6) the need to prepare students for adult life, and (7) the requirement to prepare students for college education or employment.

Population of Secondary Special Education Recipients

The population receiving secondary special education includes middle school and high school students who are identified as in need of special education. They are studying either (1) at segregated special middle or high schools, (2) in a special class in a regular middle or high school, or (3) in fully included regular classes. According to the Special Education Promotion Law (recently renamed as the Special Education Law for People with Disabilities and Others, fully revised and enacted on May 25, 2007, and implemented on May 26, 2008), current relevant legislation for secondary special education stipulates that education of individuals with special needs at both primary and middle school level is compulsory, and both the kindergarten and high school levels are free. The legislation also specifies that middle school education is free and mandatory, just as primary education is, whereas high school education is free, but not mandatory.

The categories of students with disabilities who are entitled to receive special education services in Korea are specified in Special Education Promotion Law. They are students with: (1) visual impairments, (2) hearing impairments, (3) mental retardation, (4) physical disabilities, (5) emotional and behavioral disorders, (6) other health impairments, and (7) learning disabilities.

According to statistics from the Ministry of Education (2007, August; cf. Table 1 and Fig. 1), the number of secondary special education recipients is 15,267(23%) in middle school and 14,796 (22%) in high school (including further education unit after high school), which amounts to more than 45% of the total number (65,940) of recipients of all levels of special education (including 32,752 [50%] in elementary school and 3,125 [5%] in kindergarten). Although the number of secondary students with special needs reaches almost half of the whole population of special education recipients in Korea, the general administrative system of special education has devoted little attention to secondary education, focusing almost entirely on the elementary level.

Exploring the Nature of Secondary Special Education in Korea

TABLE 1 Current Number of Students Receiving Special Education in Korea

Classification			Special schools	Regular schools		Total
				Special classes	Regular classes	
Recipients of special education			22,963	35,340	7,637	65,940
Number of students	Category of disability	Visual impairment	1,819	269	204	2,292
		Hearing impairment	1,334	853	677	2,864
		Intellectual disability	14,365	19,246	2,430	36,041
		Physical disability	3,094	3,002	1,643	7,739
		Emotional and behavioral disability	2,139	4,629	927	7,695
		Communication disability	161	522	502	1,185
		Learning disability	11	6,310	661	6,982
		Other health-related disabilities	40	509	593	1,142
		Total	22,963	35,340	7,637	65,940
	School level	Kindergarten	1,032	599	1,494	3,125
		Elementary school	7,657	22,498	2,597	32,752
		Middle school	6,286	7,500	1,481	15,267
		High school	6,541	4,743	2,065	13,349
		Further education	1,447	0	0	1,447
		Total	22,963	35,340	7,637	65,940
Number of schools			144	4,530	3,621	8,295
Number of classes			3,278	5,753	6,263	15,294
Number of teachers (special schools and special classes in regular schools)			6,141	6,108	—	12,249
Number of teachers' assistants			1,753	3,914	574	6,241

Source: Ministry of Education (2007, August), p. 3.

Settings of Secondary Special Education

Secondary special education in Korea is provided in inclusive settings and special schools. Inclusive settings include 1,125 special classes in regular middle schools (20% of 5,753 classes), 562 in high schools (10%), and regular classes (Ministry of Education, 2007, August, p. 5). There are five categories of special schools: 12 schools for students with visual impairments, 8% of the total of 144 special schools; 18 for students with hearing impairments, 12%; 89 for students with intellectual disabilities, 62%; 18 for students with physical disabilities, 12%; and 7 for students with emotional and behavioral disorders, 4.9%. These 144 schools are responsible for the education of students with disabilities through their secondary and further education (vocational training) levels.

The number of special education recipients according to setting (refer to Fig. 2) is 22,963 in special schools (35%) and 42,977 in regular schools (65%). The fact that the students with special needs in regular schools outnumber the ones in special school by more than 30% emphasizes the need for more in-depth discussion and

S. Park

analysis of the inclusive educational environment.

As of August, 2007, the average percentage of regular schools having special classes at all school levels was 20%, including 3% with kindergartens, 68% with elementary school classes, 20% with middle school classes, and 10% with high school classes (Ministry of Education, 2007, August). In other words, nationwide, approximately one out of five regular middle schools and one out of ten high schools contain special classes.

Special schools are responsible for the education of students with special needs,

※ Total : 65,940

FIG. 1 Number of Special Education Recipients According to the School Level
Source: Ministry of Education (2007, August), p. 4.

※ Total : 65,940

FIG. 2 Number of Special Education Recipients by Setting
Source: Ministry of Education (2007, August), p. 4.

Exploring the Nature of Secondary Special Education in Korea

with 1,032 (4%) in kindergartens, 7,657 (33%) in elementary schools, 6,286 (27%) in middle schools, and 6,541 (28%) in high schools. The number of students with special needs at the secondary level was 12,827 (56%), that is, more than half of those students.

When examining secondary special education services, it is critical to understand some peculiarities of regular middle and high schools. During secondary education, the discrepancy in performance between students with and without disabilities widens. In addition, the atmosphere of secondary education in Korea is extremely competitive, because it is heavily driven to preparing students for post-secondary education. Due to the huge pressure for good grades for college entrance, the participation of students with special needs in regular classes is easily neglected, making it more difficult for them to accomplish meaningful access to general education than at the elementary level.

On the other hand, some concerns should be noted with regards to the practice of secondary special schools as the institutions responsible for students' growth in various developmental areas and for the maturity of adolescents with disabilities. First, most special schools in Korea serve students at all levels of education, including kindergarten, elementary and secondary education in the same building or in adjacent ones. The students at those special schools often do not recognize the changes that occur when transitioning into a higher level (e.g., from elementary to secondary), because they remain in the same building. Such an environment may limit these students' opportunities for enrichment, opportunities that other students experience. For students with special needs to grow well, they should have the opportunity to establish an appropriate self-identity, adjust to changes, learn how to cope with stress at different times of life, and recognize the changing expectations of other people for socially responsible, age-appropriate behaviors.

In-depth understanding of both regular and special school environments and potentially different influences that they might create is critical for defining accurately the real issues of adolescents with special needs. For example, most students in secondary special schools do not wear school uniforms, although uniforms are prevalent for students in regular secondary schools. This difference in clothing tends to make students with special needs in special secondary schools stand out. Considering that one's appearance, including a school outfit, has its own role in establishing the self-identity, social expectations, and social images of teenagers, students who are in special classes at regular schools fortunately can have the opportunity to share the same experiences that other teenagers enjoy.

Regular school and special school environments yield different opportunities for students to experience age-appropriate adolescence. The cultural differences between regular schools and special schools are revealed not only by their school uniforms, but also by their students' leisure/game activities and favorite items, accessories, and celebrities. Such differences in school experiences may impact differently on the development of students with special needs, depending on which type of school they go to.

S. Park

Curriculum Contents of Secondary Special Education

The curriculum of secondary special education during the six middle and high school years consists of the National General Education Curriculum (including the basic required curriculum and also an optional curriculum at the high school level) and the National Special School Curriculum (developed separately for special schools). Additionally, career or transition education is provided either separately or embedded in the existing curriculum. Other programs covered in secondary special education include locally developed (mostly by special schools) vocational curricula, community-based curricula (living skills or functional curriculum), adolescent-specific social skills, sex education, various kinds of inclusive programs as extracurricular programs or club activities (e.g., leisure programs, hobbies, or special talent-specific classes). The scope of secondary special education ranges from academically focused content that prepares students to enter a college or university to functional curricula that develop skills necessary for adult life, such as basic daily living skills (e.g., eating, using the bathroom, moving about the community, and communicating basic needs). Therefore, secondary students are at a crossroads of their individual decision in curriculum, with both potential opportunities and possible difficulties according to post-secondary path they take.

Unlike elementary education, secondary education for students with special needs should emphasize vocational curricula, including general work attitudes, work habits, and skills necessary for certain jobs, and transition education that will prepare students for various adult-life roles. Specifically, a priority for secondary special education programs lies in establishing individualized transition plan (ITP) based on students' post-secondary needs and in implementing necessary transition education as early as possible.

Difficulties in Implementing the Curriculum at the Secondary Special Education Level

Curriculum content and the method of implementing that content is different in secondary education compared to elementary education, because the content in secondary education becomes more complicated and is delivered by a number of different subject teachers. For adolescents with intellectual disabilities in particular, their access to the general education curriculum becomes more challenging at the secondary level and requires that the regular teachers produce more substantial instructional adaptations (Park, 1999b, 2002). Because the curriculum at the secondary level is delivered by several different teachers, collaboration and information sharing among the teachers are essential in order to provide every student with a quality education. Students with special needs also need to adapt to the diversified pedagogic approaches of various teachers.

Unfortunately, such collaboration among the teachers still has a long way to go, which makes inclusive education in secondary level even more challenging than that either in early childhood education or in the elementary level. Considering the context of social relationships among puberty-driven students, social inclusion of students

Exploring the Nature of Secondary Special Education in Korea

with special needs in secondary education is not an easy goal. Peer support from regular students, which is relatively more common at previous stages, becomes difficult to expect at the secondary education level from stress-stricken adolescents preparing for college entrance examinations.

As mentioned above, inclusive education in secondary schools requires an in-depth understanding of the characteristics of school environments and students, as well as of the unique system in which curriculum is delivered by various teachers. Despite these challenges, many secondary schools strive to increase the participation of students with special needs in regular classes.

However, curricular inclusion at the secondary level is quite challenging for a teacher who is responsible for teaching a certain subject to all the students who are at the same grade level (Park, 2002, 2003). Even though many adolescents with disabilities participate partially in regular classes, there is still much need for improvement in terms of providing secondary students with special needs with quality lessons that are inclusive.

Overlapping Issues During Adolescence in Relation to Students With Disabilities

When adolescents have disabilities, the overlapping of issues relating to their disabilities with issues relating to adolescence in general adds a uniqueness and intensity to those issues. These special issues can prevent related personnel from understanding each student correctly. The presence of disability seems to decrease the significance of the common issues of adolescence in secondary students with disabilities.

The adolescent years are challenging for all students, whether or not they have a disability. During this time, broadly defined as the transition period from dependent childhood to self-fulfilling adulthood, adolescents pass through the stages of conflict, redefinition, and independence. Teachers and social workers who work with adolescents with special needs should consider the general characteristics and difficulties that adolescents face during this period and the possible influence of transition periods on the students' behavior and personality.

During the adolescent years, genetic and physiological characteristics that are signs of puberty begin to appear. This is a period of physical development for reproductive maturity. Changes in the body occur fastest during puberty. Adolescents need to deal with those changes as well as changes in their expected roles, within a limited period. New relations with others of the same and the opposite sex are established by both necessity and wish. In addition, adolescents explore not only their own new body and identity, but also their masculinity and femininity. Likewise, adolescents strive to develop their sexual identity, as can be seen from their tendency to maintain a similar or a different appearance from their peers, to develop new relations with peers and/or adults, to try experiments in their romantic relationships, and to demonstrate the various behaviors that adults often consider to be immature, antisocial, and defiant (Sitlington, Clark, & Kolstoe, 2000).

Physiological changes are not the sole cause of the turmoil of adolescent years.

S. Park

Adolescents are programmed to live up to the expectations of their own culture. They may be considered to be adults, and be able to enter into adult life through certain rituals or ceremonies. In addition, they are expected to pattern themselves after role models, so that they adapt to adult standards. Youngsters want to be self-fulfilling, but they may not have the means for that. Parents may put restriction on them, while still financially supporting them.

Theories of adolescence have been developed in reference to normal development, and various studies have identified developmental tasks that are to be achieved during this period. Sitlington et al. (2000) listed some developmental tasks during the adolescent years in the context of contemporary American culture, although most of them are applicable to Korean students as well. The Sitlington et al. (2000, p. 71–72) list is as follows:

- 1) Achieving new and more mature relations with age-mates of both sexes
- 2) Achieving a sexual identity
- 3) Accepting one's physique and using the body effectively
- 4) Achieving emotional independence from parents and other adults
- 5) Achieving economic independence
- 6) Selecting and preparing for an occupation
- 7) Preparing for marriage, family life, and intimate relationships
- 8) Developing intellectual skills and concepts necessary for civic competence
- 9) Desiring and achieving socially responsible behavior
- 10) Acquiring a set of values and an ethical system as a guide to behavior

Given these challenging tasks, the adolescent years definitely mean more than simply a period of physical maturity and hormonal change, but rather include emotional and social changes as well (e.g., McDowell, 1981). Although these challenges are common to most adolescents, the problems adolescent with disabilities face are often aggravated by the fact that their disabilities influence their development and social expectations. When teenagers with disabilities have problems that are common to adolescents, they are often misunderstood as problems due to their disabilities. The complicated problems that adolescents with disabilities face may include: (1) problems unique to adolescence, (2) problems specific to disabilities, and (3) compounded issues from having a disability during one's adolescent years. Any overlapping among these three may confuse teachers and parents and prevent them from clearly understanding the problems. Thus, a general approach to these mixed problems may not adequately address the essence of the problems from definition to actual solutions. Hence, first, such overlapped problems should be disentangled into the above three components, and each component problem correctly defined and dealt with either as discrete or as interwoven issues.

Pressure of Preparation for Adult Life

Adolescents with disabilities face the pressure to prepare for adult life, including job placements and alternative residence other than their original home (e.g., a group home) earlier than those without disabilities. Many adolescents without disabilities go

Exploring the Nature of Secondary Special Education in Korea

to a university or college for post-secondary education, so that the pressure of becoming an independent worker starts to evolve during their college days. In contrast, most youth with special needs are under earlier and more practical pressure with respect to the transition from school to the job arena and from school to adult life. Recently, an increasing, yet still very limited number of students with physical disabilities, including those with hearing or visual impairments, have been able to enter colleges and universities in Korea (Park, 2004).

Teachers in special education settings, social workers, and the parents of adolescents with special needs consider the adolescents' transition and post-secondary life earlier and with more serious concerns than do the adults around students without special needs. Preparation for various roles in adult life (e.g., independent or interdependent citizens, workers, being an adult member of a family, adult students in post-secondary education, opposite sex partners) becomes a main source of pressure in secondary special education. Where will the students live, with whom, doing what kind of work? Who will the students spend time with? What will the students do for leisure? Can they manage their own home in the community? All these questions challenge secondary special education for students with special needs. With the secondary education system in Korea unequipped to address these challenges, preparation of adolescents with special needs for adult life is surely a very challenging task to tackle.

Preparation for College Education or Employment

Since 1995, a special college entrance quota for students with disabilities has been implemented in Korea. This has contributed to the increased number of students with disabilities who enter colleges or universities. However, this has created numerous problems to solve as well. One of the problems is the disagreement between teachers and parents on the wisdom of pursuing college education through the quota. The quota system was established to enable students with special needs who have a certain level of scholastic aptitude to enter and study at university with proper accommodations for their disabilities. Some parents, however, insist that their children pursue post-secondary education regardless of their limited academic or adaptive abilities without thoughtful consideration of whether studying at college is the optimal post-secondary option (Park, 2004). This is seen not only in parents of children with special needs; but rather is universal among parents in Korea, where parents believe a post-secondary education leads to success for their children. Parents of children with special needs urgently have to be informed and guided with respect to the optimal post-secondary option for their children.

Supporting capable students to prepare them for post-secondary education is still a very important part of secondary special education, and yet it is an area that requires much improvement (Park & Na, 2003). Special education teachers should advise students and their parents on their options for post-secondary education, based on the results of assessments of the students' capabilities and aptitudes. In addition, the system of preparation for college entrance in special classes in regular

S. Park

high schools and in high school programs at special schools needs to be scrutinized extensively, and the administrative and curricular supports for this system need to be increased (Park & Na, 2003).

One of the unique problems in secondary special education relates to preparing students for employment. Although published studies have suggested that career and vocational education should start at the elementary level, it is only in middle school that vocational education becomes an official part of curriculum. The need for quality vocational education increases in high school (Park, 1995).

Preparation for college entrance and for vocational training for employment are equally important curricular options in secondary special education. Choosing one or the other depends on individual students' post-secondary life goals; that should be decided by the students and their family together, based on a comprehensive assessment of the adolescent's interests, capabilities, preferences, and needs. For adolescents with disabilities, setting a clear goal for post-secondary life may be much more important than it is for those without disabilities, because for most adolescents with disabilities, secondary education is the last educational service that they receive before beginning their adult life.

Functions of Secondary Special Education

In order to establish the identity and status of secondary special education in Korea, secondary special education should fulfill essential functions that are required to improve quality management of related programs. Five fundamental functions of secondary special education and transition programs, as suggested by related studies, are summarized below. The functions of secondary special education are described, together with some quality indicators of secondary special and transition education suggested by the related literature (e.g., Conderman & Katsiyannis, 2002; Masters, Mori, & Mori, 1999; Park, 1995, 2000; Sitlington & Clark, 2006; Wehman, 2001).

Five Functions of Secondary Special Education

Function of setting post-secondary life goals and establishing Individualized Transition Plans (ITP). As early as middle school, students should start to establish a vision and specific goals for their post-secondary life, and Individualized Transition Plans should be developed based on a series of transition assessments. According to different post-secondary life goals, the contents of curriculum and programs in both middle and high school should be differentiated.

Function of providing community-referenced quality education based on individual post-secondary needs. Secondary education should be provided ensuring its optimal quality according to individual students' future plans. Currently, the choices that adolescents with disabilities can make for their future path after graduation of high school are; (1) studying at a university or community college, (2) employment, (3) transition to specialized job training institutes with a promise of guaranteed employment later, (4) residence in a group home or some other type of home or small facility in the

Exploring the Nature of Secondary Special Education in Korea

community, and (5) transition to post-secondary life-long education institutes other than a university. The instruction during the secondary years should be focused on the one chosen from among these goals, and programs should be available according to the diverse needs of individual students. Curricular options for high school students with disabilities should include life skill curricula addressing self-care skills, communication skills, mobility, and safety skills, more academically focused curricula, community-based functional curricula, and skill-refining courses for highly skilled jobs.

Function of providing vocational education for employment. So far, vocational education in secondary settings has been criticized on the grounds that it functions as such in name only. Although there is no general agreement about the main purpose of vocational education in middle and high schools, secondary vocational education for students with disabilities who will be seeking employment soon after graduation should support them in achieving specific employment outcomes. Hence, collaboration between secondary education and post-secondary vocational institutions in the community is critical in devising and providing vocational education for students with special needs. Examples of coordinated programs between secondary schools and professional vocational training agencies include specific career and vocational education programs in schools, training programs at actual community job sites, and programs that bridge those two. In short, these various types of vocational education programs in secondary schools should aim at linking to employment opportunities for adolescents with special needs before their graduation from high school.

Function of preparing the knowledge and skills needed for various adult life roles. The meaning of adulthood may vary, depending on different nations and cultures. Nevertheless, some universally common standards can be found that define adulthood. Possible roles of adult life include that of family member, student in post-secondary education settings, worker, neighbor, partner in leisure activities, and partner in intimate relationships. Entering adult life is a difficult challenge for students who are in the transition period, as it involves performing various roles according to different standards of “adulthood”. Adulthood is characterized by economic self-reliance, emotional self-fulfillment, self-determination, independent or interdependent home living, coping in various situations, mature personal relations, being a member of community organizations, responsibilities in the community, participation in voting, perception about one’s own achievement and status, and access to information (Kennedy & Horn, 2004). The curriculum for transition or career education and functional curricula should be designed to help students develop knowledge and skills required to meet such adult life standards (e.g., Greene & Kochhar-Bryant, 2003; Trainor, Patton, & Clark, 2005).

Function of establishing a support and service network before graduation. Establishing social and support network for individual students with special needs is critical for their adjustment to adult life and their maintenance of such a life. It is a very important factor that will enable the students to be successful in their adult life and allow them to have a high quality of life (Park, 2000). Developing and maintaining

S. Park

social relationships is as significant an aspect of adult life as others, such as home living, vocation, leisure, and utilizing community resources. Through friendships and social relations, individuals with disabilities may obtain the resources and supports necessary to maintain their adult life and enrich the joys of their life. Natural supports at work sites help workers succeed in their employment (Kim & Park, 2004). Moreover, support and service networks in the community that assist students with special needs to adjust to and maintain their adult life should be established before high school graduation.

Quality Indicators of Secondary Special Education

Halpern (1988, 1990) established and validated a set of quality indicators for secondary school programs. Those indicators were identified from published literature and a systematic statewide evaluation of secondary special education and transition programs in the state of Oregon. In related literature over several years, four basic areas have been identified: academic, vocational, independent living, and social/interrelational knowledge and skills. Halpern and Benz (1987) and others validated the indicators for quality program characteristics which are related to student outcomes. Halpern and other researchers refined a set of indicators that deal with six major categories: (1) curriculum and instruction, (2) coordination and inclusion, (3) transition, (4) documentation of programs, (5) administrative supports, and (6) services for adult life. Table 2 lists some indicators that are considered to be appropriate for secondary special education.

Many recommended practices for transition have been identified from reviews of the published literature (e.g., Banks & Renzaglia, 1993; Kohler, 1993; Kohler, DeStefano, Wermuth, Grayson, & McGinty, 1994; Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell, 1997). Examples of practices include the following: (1) vocational training, (2) parent involvement, (3) interagency collaboration, (4) social skills training, (5) paid work experience, (6) follow-up employment services, (7) integrated settings, (8) community-based instruction, (9) vocational assessment, (10) community-referenced curricula, (11) career education curricula and experience, and (12) academic skills training.

Hughes, Hwang, Kim, Killian, Harmer, and Alcantara (1997) studied teachers' perceptions of effective transition support strategies. Their study, done in the state of Tennessee, expanded the foundation of recommended transition practices. Eight transition support strategies at the secondary level which they indicated were socially validated are: (1) identify and provide social support, (2) identify environmental supports and provide environmental changes, (3) promote acceptance, (4) observe the students' opportunities for choice, (5) provide choice-making opportunities, (6) identify the students' strengths and areas needing support, (7) teach self-management, and (8) provide opportunities to learn and practice social skills.

In that study, participating teachers were asked to list under the eight practices specific strategies that they used. From this, 592 items were identified (Hughes, Hwang, Kim, Killian, Harmer, & Alcantara, 1997). Those recommended and validated practices could possibly help special education professionals establish or improve

Exploring the Nature of Secondary Special Education in Korea

TABLE 2 Quality Indicators of Secondary Special Education Programs

Curriculum and Instruction

- Students with disabilities receive appropriate remedial academic instruction, which prepares them for functioning in their community, including the possibility of post-secondary education.
- Students with disabilities receive appropriate instruction in vocational skills, which prepares them for jobs in their community.
- Students with disabilities receive appropriate instruction in independent living, which prepares them for functioning independently in their community.
- Students with disabilities receive appropriate instruction in social/interpersonal skills, which prepares them for interacting effectively with people in their community.
- Students with disabilities receive appropriate instruction in leisure and recreation skills, which prepares them for leisure opportunities within their community.
- Community-based instruction is available as one option within the special education program's offerings.
- Instructional procedures for students with disabilities are designed to ensure that students can perform in new settings the skills that they have learned (generalization) and that they are able to continue to use their skills over time (maintenance).
- Appropriate curricular materials are available for providing instruction to students with disabilities.
- Procedures exist for placing students with disabilities into an instructional program that is tailored to their individual needs.

Coordination and Mainstreaming

- Specific programs exist for facilitating the social integration of all students with disabilities.
- Students with disabilities have opportunities to learn prerequisite skills that are needed for participating in general education academic programs.
- Students with disabilities have opportunities to learn prerequisite skills that are needed for participating in vocational-technical education programs.
- Teachers of general education academic courses are provided with assistance in adapting their instruction so that it meets the needs of students with disabilities.
- Teachers in vocational-technical education courses are provided with assistance in adapting their instruction so that it meets the needs of students with disabilities.
- A process exists for enhancing program planning and administrative collaboration between special and general education academic programs.
- A process exists for enhancing program planning and administrative collaboration between special education and vocational-technical education programs.

Transition

- Information on community services is available for students with disabilities as they exit the school system.
 - Transition goals are addressed as part of the planning process for students with disabilities.
 - A process exists for enhancing collaboration between special education and relevant adult agencies in order to facilitate successful transitions of students.
 - Procedures exist for securing parents' involvement in the transition process.
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Source: Sitlington, Clark, & Kolstoe (2000), p. 67

S. Park

secondary programs. Many other researchers have identified quality indicators of transition practices (e.g., Sale, Metzler, Everson, & Moon, 1991). Those studies also contributed to the development of principles for programs for students in need in various secondary settings. Table 2 lists quality indicators that professionals can utilize for improving local secondary special education programs and transition practices.

Conclusions

Secondary special education teachers have much to accomplish with their students in just a few years. In many cases, these teachers provide students with their last opportunity to learn basic skills and learning strategies, acquire essential social or functional skills and develop a variety of skills for adult life. However, thus far, administrative and practical endeavors in Korean special education tend to focus almost entirely on early childhood and elementary education, leaving secondary special education with less sophisticated development in terms of research and teaching practices. The above-described seven themes defining the feature of secondary special education and five functions identifying secondary special education were outlined and discussed in order to secure and promote the place of secondary special education programs in Korean special education.

The present study suggests the need for additional research, increased policy-related supports, more financial support and appropriate curricula and various model programs at the secondary level for adolescents with special needs.

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Exploring the Nature of Secondary Special Education in Korea

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S. Park

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