Special Education in South Korea: Policies and Issues

AUTHORS
Jeongae Kang
Mikyung Shin

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ABSTRACT

Although South Korea has a relatively short history of special education, the country has made remarkable improvements following the Special Education Act (1974) and Act on Special Education for Persons with Disabilities (2008) mandates. The meaningful social inclusion of individuals with disabilities is a fundamental goal documented through the law and five-year development plans for special education in South Korea. However, multiple areas require more intensive attention, such as preparing general and special education teachers, promoting the public's disability awareness, and designing quality special education curricula. The present article provides an overview of the overall special education system in South Korea and discusses contemporary issues.

KEYWORDS

Inclusion, South Korea, special education, teacher preparation

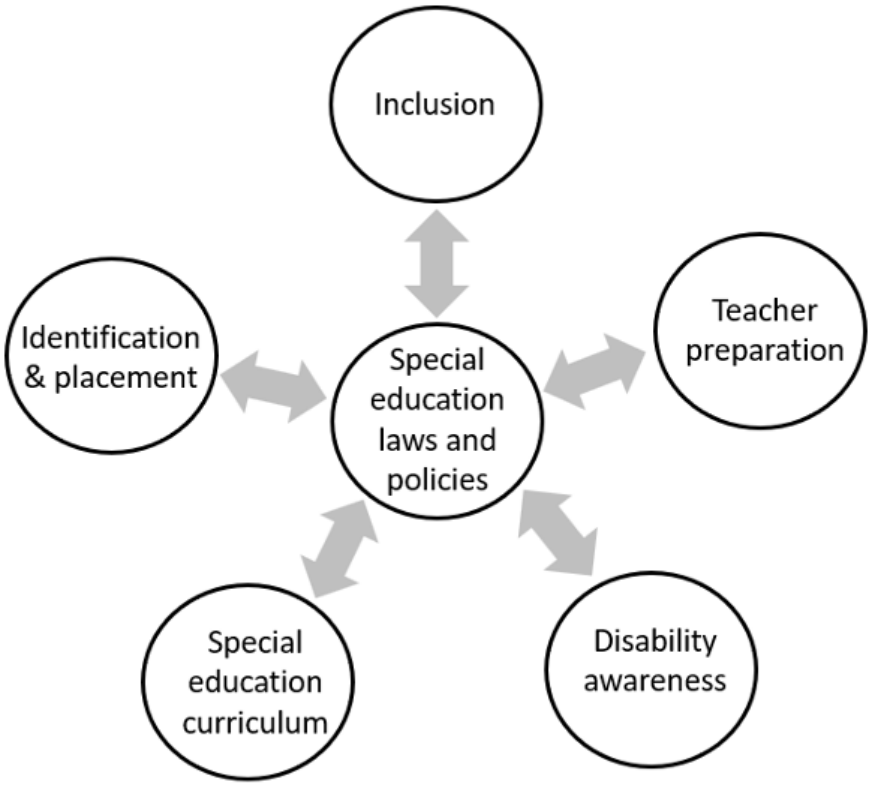
The Republic of Korea (referred to here as South Korea) is in East Asia, and its reported population is approximately 51.6 million (Korea Statistical Office, 2021). Its total area is 100,363 km^2, which is about one-sixth of the size of Texas in the United States. South Korea has received a strong cultural philosophical influence by Confucianism, which placed substantial value on education. Education in South Korea has become a tool to advance one's social and economic status and since its recovery from the Korean War in the 1950s, South Korea's education fever has become a driving force for remarkable changes in its economic and educational development over a short period (Hyun et al., 2003).

Educational Performance and Literacy Rate

Regarding education, in particular, average scores in reading, mathematics, and science from the 2018 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) show that 15-year-old students in South Korea performed better than their counterparts in other Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries (OECD, 2018). In 2018, South Korea had high rates of high school and college graduation, and literacy. In the 25–34-year-old age range, 98% of the population was found to have graduated from high school, while 70% had received postsecondary education—the highest rate among OECD countries. While only 22% of people in South Korea older than 15 could read and write in 1945, South Korea's current literacy rate of 99.7% demonstrates excellent educational strides.

While South Korea is currently ranked as one of the highest-performing countries in terms of academic performance (OECD, 2018), excellence in education and equity has been a highly debated topic (Lee et al., 2018). Although Lee and colleagues argued that educational excellence must include efforts to provide additional resources for diverse students, in practice, excellence is often interpreted as earning higher grades through competitions. As a result, in the highly competitive educational atmosphere of South Korea, teachers and

FIGURE 1: A Concept Map for Current Policies and Issues in South Korea



parents tend to prioritize high-performing students, which results in them not giving equal public attention to diverse students' learning, hindering the effective implementation of inclusion.

Unique Cultural and Social Contexts

Although the United States has influenced the nation's special education foundation (e.g., laws and regulations), South Korea's special education situation has unique issues due to social and cultural contexts described above. At the same time, while special education in South Korea has undergone multiple changes, its development has not paralleled that of general education. The 2018 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), one of the largest international surveys, found that South Korean general educators rated themselves considerably lower on their own preparedness for working with students with disabilities than the ones in other OECD countries (OECD, 2018). All these issues require more intensive attention to implement inclusive education so that every student can succeed.

This article provides an overview of the history of special education in South Korea, describing current practices, including the country's special education laws and regulations. The article also describes the challenges that special education in South Korea experiences. Figure 1 depicts a concept map showing the current policies and issues in South Korea.

Special Education Laws and Policies

Early special education practice between the 1940s and 1960s was mainly offered in segregated, private residential special schools (e.g., Bo-Gun School for students with physical disabilities, Bo-Myoung School for students with intellectual disabilities, and Young-Hwa School for the deaf and hard of hearing (Kim & Yeo, 1976). Although special education was mentioned in general education laws, the absence of laws and regulations specific to special education did not help the integration of students with disabilities into public schools (Kim et al., 2019). The Korean War paused the continuous development of special education, occurring before special education laws and regulations could be established.

Modern general education in South Korea began immediately after the Korean War in 1950. However, the Special Education Promotion Act (SEPA), the first special education law, was not mandated until 1977, approximately 25 years after the 1949 Korean Education Law was enacted. The law helped establish legal regulations to enforce the educational rights of elementary and secondary students with disabilities to receive special education and related services at public schools for free. The law also mandated that students at-risk for disabilities referred by teachers be assessed through the appropriate special education evaluation process and have individualized education programs (IEPs) designed around them. The second reauthorized SEPA (1994) started using the term integration, and the third reauthorized SEPA (1997) emphasized placing students in the least restrictive environment. As a result of these reauthorizations, more students with mild and moderate disabilities started attending public schools. Although the SEPA contributed to establishing the South Korean special education system, the law was criticized for providing limited legal evidence supporting the entire school-age groups of students and practicing educational accountability. For example, the SEPA mainly focused on elementary and secondary schools

rather than early childhood or postsecondary support. In addition, it included no specific roles of the federal and local governments in providing an integrated educational environment.

A new special education law, the Act on Special Education for Persons with Disabilities (ASEPD, 2008), was mandated, with multiple major changes to the SEPA. First, free public special education was expanded to early childhood and college students with disabilities. Accordingly, students with disabilities aged between 3 and 20 received free public special education—free services that few countries provide to this age range (Kang et al., 2015). This change led to a 58% increase in students receiving special services, from 62,500 in 2006 to 98,154 in 2021 (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2021). Second, the law mandated installing and operating Special Education Support Centers (SESCs, Article 11). The centers are responsible for administering screening, diagnosis, and evaluation processes, providing support for special education-related and itinerant education services and training special education teachers (Article 16). ASEPD (2008) also enforced inclusive educational settings for students with disabilities to support their transition to postsecondary life and promote their quality of life and inclusion in society (Article 1). In 2013, with the social movements for protecting the rights of students with disabilities, the law mandated that general education and special education teachers complete professional development on the human rights of individuals with disabilities.

Trends in Special Education Laws and Policies

Providing special education for students with disabilities is a critical duty for federal and local governments. Special education law in South Korea lists establishing comprehensive special education plans for students with disabilities as a specific duty of governments at both levels. Specifically, since 1997, the MOE has published comprehensive plans every five years supported by legal evidence. These five-year special education development plans have been a driving force in shaping the direction of special education and special education teacher preparation. As a strategic roadmap, each five-year plan includes specific goals and tasks to help the MOE achieve short- and long-term special education goals. Therefore, an overview of the plans demonstrate how special education in South Korea has changed over time.

> “… five-year special education development plans have been a driving force in shaping the direction of special education and special education teacher preparation.”

The first and second five-year plans were made under the SEPA. The first plan (1997–2001) focused on establishing comprehensive special education and social welfare to expand the range of recipients of special education services (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development [MEHRD], 1997). The second plan (2003–2007) targeted improving special education accountability and maximizing outcomes for all students with and without disabilities (MEHRD, 2003). To achieve this goal, the government ensured (a) providing special education opportunities across grades and geographic regions, (b) improving the quality of the inclusive education learning environment of regular schools, and (c) establishing and expanding the community-based special education support system.

Along with the special education law, in particular, the ASEPD (2008), the third five-year plan (2008–2012) focused on providing individualized education and related services suitable for various types and characteristics of disabilities to support the inclusion of students with disabilities in society (Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology [MEST], 2008). This plan emphasized the accountability of the federal and local governments to provide educational opportunities and access to those learning opportunities for individuals with disabilities. It also emphasized providing overall support for the social inclusion of these individuals by, for example, improving the disability awareness of the public and providing more inclusive education opportunities for students with disabilities at public schools.

The fourth five-year plan (2013–2017) focused on ensuring the participation of students with disabilities in student-led activities (MOE, 2013). Specific tasks of the plan involved improving the quality of special education and special education-related services, advocating for the human rights of the students, and helping them participate in student-led and social activities. As a result, there was an increase in special education classrooms for young children, special education curricula and learning materials, and teacher preparation. Adapted curricula for students with moderate and severe disabilities, as well as for deaf and hard-of-hearing students, were implemented. The number of special education classrooms and SESCs (from 3 classrooms in 2012 to 38 classrooms in 2017) increased to provide more special education services. Despite the increase, the United Nations (UN) expressed

concern that students with disabilities in South Korea were not receiving inclusive education of sufficient quality, and more general education and special education teachers needed to engage in professional development. As a result, in 2017, approximately 41,000 special education teachers took special education courses and underwent professional development training, and about 228,272 general and special education teachers took inclusion professional development courses (MOE, 2018). The ASEPD (2008, Clause 25) further specified educators and government personnel must complete disability awareness courses. In 2015, the South Korean Human Rights Committee also recommended creating policies on including students with disabilities. In response, more attention was given to advocating for the human rights of students with disabilities, providing further education, and hiring a support advisory board.

The fifth five-year plan (2018–2022) has now been implemented (MOE, 2018). The specific goal of this plan is to ensure equitable educational opportunities, strengthen a disability empathy culture, and improve the quality of special education, inclusive education, support for postsecondary, and lifelong education support. In response to these specific goals, those in the field of special education have made efforts to increase the number of special education teachers and improve their professionalism, enhance the quality of inclusion support (taking into consideration degrees of disability and reinforcing career, higher education, and lifelong education support), increase public awareness of disability, and create a culture of empathy for people with disabilities.

According to the 2022 Special Education Operation Plans (MOE, 2022), the latest policy and plans consistently emphasize equal and fair educational opportunities, enhanced support for inclusive education and special education, career and lifelong education support, and a shared culture for people with disabilities. In this way, it is vitally important that schools deepen the operationalization of inclusive education in both special and general classes. Educators have also advocated for their rights to learn art, music and sports in light of the growing interest in students with various needs (MOE, 2022). All these changes in law and policies of South Korea have contributed to multiple changes, including changes in multiple special education practices and teacher preparation (Figure 1).

Procedures for Identifying and Placing Eligible Students for Special Education

The procedure for identifying eligible students for special education begins when caregivers or school principals request diagnosis or evaluation tests from the school district heads or superintendents of the school districts for young children (infants, toddlers, and preschoolers) or students who have or are suspected of having a disability. With the caregiver's consent, the superintendent immediately refers the concerned infants or students to a SESC (ASEPD, 2008, Article 14). SESCs must administer the requested diagnosis or evaluation test within 30 days after the student is referred and provide reports on the test results and recommendations. The head of the school district or superintendent determines whether the student is eligible for special education services based on the SESC report and provides written notice to the caregivers (ASEPD, 2008, Article 14). Currently, ASEPD list 11 disability categories, including visual impairment, hearing impairment, intellectual disability, physical disability, emotional disturbance or behavioral disorder, autism, communication disorder, learning disability, health impairment, developmental delay, and other disabilities prescribed by Presidential decree, such as the presence of two or more disabilities. An individualized education support team is then established, and this team prepares an individualized education plan for the student every semester. The school district head or superintendent places students eligible for special education services into general or special classes at general schools or special schools, based on the recommendation of the special management committee and consideration of the least restrictive environments for the students (ASEPD, 2008, Article 17).

For the last 10 years, the number of students eligible for special education services in South Korea has increased from 85,012 in 2012 to 98,154 in 2021. In 2021, about two-thirds of 98,154 South Korean students with special needs were placed in general schools (70,866 students, 72.2%), including general education classrooms (16,600 students, 16.9%) or special classrooms (54,266, 55.3%). About 27.5% of the students were in special schools, and about 0.3% were served in SESCs. In South Korea, 12,042 special education classrooms or 187 special schools exist. As of 2021, the four largest disability groups in South Korea were intellectual disability (n = 51,788, 52.8%), autism (n = 15,215, 15.5%), physical disability (n = 9,695; 9.9%), and developmental delays (n = 9,367; 9.5%). By contrast, learning disabilities, health impairment, emotional disturbance, and behavioral disorders were identified as relatively smaller groups, comprising only about 1.1%, 1.8%, and 1.9%, respectively (MOE, 2021).

Teacher Preparation for Special Education in South Korea

In 1956, the first official teacher preparation program in South Korea

started at Daegu University (Kim et al., 2009). In South Korea, special education teacher preparation consists of two steps: (a) the license process and (b) selection and the hiring process. In this section, we describe both processes in detail.

License Processes

To become a licensed special education teacher in South Korea, the first step is to undergo special education teacher preparation, with the most typical route being to complete an undergraduate special education program, separately from the general education licensure program. Another route is to complete a graduate-level special education teacher preparation program if the person has already obtained teaching licenses in other content areas (e.g., elementary education, social studies, math). As of 2021, 1,507 teacher candidates were enrolled in the undergraduate special education teacher preparation programs at 37 universities (seven national and 30 private; MOE, 2021). In addition, 18 universities (six national and 16 private) prepare special education preservice teachers through 26 preparation programs.

Program Requirements

During teacher preparation, preservice special education teachers must complete courses in the following three areas: special education, license or endorsement, and the teaching profession. First, special education-related courses help preservice teachers better understand special education and disabilities. Undergraduate-level preservice teachers are required to take 42 credit hours in this area, while graduate-level preservice teachers are required to take 30 credit hours. Second, preservice teachers take 29 credit hours in license- or endorsement-related courses, with 21 of the credit hours in courses for the school level they plan to teach (e.g., early childhood, elementary, secondary) and eight credit hours in method courses focusing on content areas for endorsements. Third, the teaching profession courses are intended to enhance preservice teachers' overall understanding of the teaching profession. Examples of professional teaching courses include teaching profession theory, teaching profession knowledge, and teaching practice. Undergraduate-level preservice teachers must take a minimum of 22 credit hours of these courses, while those at graduate level are exempted from this requirement. The MOE (2013) announced that courses on teaching profession knowledge should include an introduction to special education along with training on gifted education, teaching profession practice, and school violence prevention and countermeasures. In addition to course requirements, preservice teachers need to complete student teaching and teaching services. Preservice teachers must complete a four-week student teaching period and gain field experience, such as by volunteering at special education- or multicultural family-related institutions, for more than 30 hours.

Teaching License

After completing all teacher preparation program requirements, including courses and field experience, and passing the aptitude test, preservice SETs obtain their initial special education teaching license (MEST, 2008) without additional content tests. As the special education teaching license enables teachers to work for students with disabilities in either special schools or special classrooms in general schools, it is one of the most critical milestones for preservice teachers in stepping into special education. The special education teaching license is categorized into three school levels: early childhood, elementary, and secondary. Specifically, the number of school-level and endorsement-related courses determines the license types. Early childhood and elementary-level licenses do not show endorsement areas. However, secondary-level licenses typically mark endorsement areas next to the school level, such as secondary special physical education or secondary vocational education.

Selection/Hiring Process

Obtaining the initial special school teaching license means that teachers are now qualified to take the annual National Teacher Employment Examination (NTEE), which is administered by the Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation. The MOE hires teachers selected through the NTEE, and once hired, they become tenured for lifetime service in public schools. In addition, the MOE assigns special education teachers uniformly, offering children with equal access to quality teachers to provide equal quality of learning opportunities (Luschei et al., 2013). To work at private agencies for persons with disabilities (e.g., special schools, inclusive preschools, clinics, and welfare centers), candidates need to go through agency-wide hiring procedures, such as an interview with agency administrators (Kim et al., 2015). After three years of service as a special education teacher, teachers can participate in a five-week or 180-hour professional development program to obtain an advanced certificate (Kang & Hong, 2008).

Current Issues and Solutions for Special Education in South Korea

Despite the improvements in special education laws and policies and teacher preparation in South Korea, its inclusion practices have experienced challenges for several reasons. In this section, we describe current issues of South Korea special education and share solutions that South Korea has tried to improve those issues.

Inclusion

While integration creates new spaces for students with disabilities (e.g., special education classrooms, pull-out services), inclusion enables all participants to interact by removing barriers (Rodriguez & Garro-Gil, 2015). In South Korea, however, "integration" and "inclusion" are used interchangeably. The ASEPD (2008) states that "integrated education means education provided for persons eligible for special education in a regular school with other persons of the same age which is suitable for the educational needs of each individual without any discrimination according to the type and level of disability" (Article 2, Clause 6). In other words, inclusion in South Korea refers to including children in either special classrooms or inclusive classrooms in general schools. Given this definition, the number of students included into such settings has slightly increased over the years. In 2012, about 70.7% of students eligible for special education services (60,080 students) attended general schools. In 2021, about 72.1% of students with disabilities (70,866 students) eligible for special education in South Korea (98,154 students) attended general schools. In general schools, the percentage of students in special education classrooms was 52.3% in 2012 and increased to 55.3% in 2021. By contrast, the percentage of students in inclusion classrooms decreased from 18.4% in 2012 to 16.8% in 2021 (MOE, 2021). Given that meaningful social inclusion of individuals with disabilities is the goal of the MOE, documented through the law and five-year plans, more discussions are needed on how to facilitate authentic interaction among students with and without disabilities.

Although there are movements to pursue more inclusion rather than integration, the lack of teacher knowledge for including students with disabilities is known as one of the main barriers to implementing inclusion. General education teachers, responsible for facilitating learning opportunities for students in the class, play a critical role in making the classroom inclusive. Therefore, their knowledge and pedagogical practice about inclusion and views toward students with disabilities are essential for successful inclusion (Kim & Kim, 2015). However, in the highly competitive educational atmosphere of South Korea, teachers tend to prioritize high-performing students, which interrupts the effective implementation of inclusion. The referral process for at-risk students is often delayed (Kwon, 2015), and teachers frequently have negative attitudes toward and low expectations of students with disabilities. Therefore, it is challenging to build inclusive educational environments without first improving educators' views toward students with disabilities (Seo, 2021).

> "Disability awareness involves educating to create a precise understanding of disability and improve attitudes toward individuals with disabilities."

As a result, for future solutions, policymakers and educators should extend their efforts to improve teachers' knowledge about inclusion in general education preparation. To support in-service general education teachers, the recent special education policies enforced more training for general education teachers to help their understanding of inclusion (e.g., MOE, 2022). The MOE started using the Jungdaun School model to facilitate co-teaching between special and general education teachers to facilitate inclusive education for all. In 2018, five schools adopted the school model, and in 2021, 85 schools implemented it (MOE, 2022). Teachers working at the schools indicated that their experience helped them better understand that inclusion is for all students and understand the need for collaboration between general and special education teachers by using their expertise to include all students (Kang et al., 2021). However, preservice general education teachers expressed that their confidence regarding skills needed for handling students with disabilities was not the required level (Lee et al., 2018). Seo (2020) pointed out the scarcity of specific guidelines on training preservice general education teachers to interact with students with disabilities. While MSET (2008) now requires general education teachers to take one special education course (e.g., introduction to special education) as a minimum and to complete a practicum in inclusive education classrooms, this may not be enough to master the knowledge and skills to create inclusive classrooms (Symeonidou, 2017). Given that preparing teachers to implement inclusive education should be prioritized for success for all, continuous discussions on how to provide opportunities to learn and practice inclusive skills for preservice general education teachers is necessary.

Promoting Disability Awareness to the Public

Positive social acceptance is a critical indicator of an inclusive society. However, as in other countries, misunderstandings of, or stigmas associated with, individuals with disabilities have been of concern in South Korea. In some cases, although parents have known that their children with disabilities were experi-

encing unfair educational opportunities, they have accepted the situation rather than advocated for their children because they thought nothing could be done (Kim & Kim, 2015; Kwon, 2015). Shin and Choi (2022) pointed out the limited public disability awareness and a lack of understanding of disabilities.

Considering these ongoing issues regarding public awareness on disability, policymakers and practitioners have suggested solutions. Following the global effort to improve public awareness regarding disability and the social acceptance of individuals with disabilities (UN, 2006), policymakers and educators in South Korea have broadened legal actions emphasizing human rights, including for people with disabilities. National initiatives, such as the 2022 Special Education Operation Plan (MOE, 2022) and the Fifth Five-Year Development Plan for Persons with Disabilities (MOE, 2018), have underscored these movements to promote public awareness of disabilities. Disability awareness involves educating to create a precise understanding of disability and improve attitudes toward individuals with disabilities. Its goal is to promote a view of individuals with disabilities as equal citizens to guarantee their rights as human beings (Disabled World, 2016; Leicester, 2008). An increasing number of school-based intervention projects have sought to improve disability awareness for students without disabilities in South Korea. Researchers have implemented various programs, including the use of informational materials (Lee, 2013), role-playing, direct interaction among peers with disabilities within social groups (Kang et al., 2007), and human rights lessons (Jeong & Chu, 2016). Between 2001 and 2017, 20 peer-reviewed journal articles were published on disability awareness for students without disabilities in kindergarten through high school years (Chae et al., 2018).

Furthermore, to promote disability awareness in public on a larger scale, the MOE expanded initiatives on awareness education. For example, K–12 students without disabilities must now take disability awareness classes twice a year, and federal or local government employees need to participate in the activity once a year (Enforcement Decree of the Welfare Act for the Disabled [EDWAD], 2015, Article 25). In addition, the MOE created publicity campaigns using e-books, websites, video clips, nonprofit commercials, and viral clips. It drew on social network services (SNS), transit advertising, and broadcast streaming to enhance understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of each individual, including those with disabilities. As changing people's perceptions and beliefs can take a long time, the upcoming new five-year plan will need to consider intense partnership and collaboration among agencies to maintain these movements.

Special Education Teacher Preparation

Although laws and teacher preparation have contributed to strengthening the professionalism of in-service special education teachers, there has still been relatively limited guidance on how to improve the professionalism of preservice SETs. For example, the targeting tasks listed in the fifth five-year special education development plan (MOE, 2018) are mainly related to in-service teachers. However, following the mandates of the SEPA (1974) and ASEPD (2008), special education teachers should be able to implement increasingly pedagogically effective instruction with professionalism, which has changed special teacher education preparation.

Based on these issues on special education teacher preparation, both university and related laws should collaboratively provide quality education programs. Kim and Park (2016) highlighted the efficacy of preservice special education teachers regarding their teaching preparation and their professionalism. Universities and educators should extend practical collaboration and partnerships to discuss how to increase preservice teachers' experiences in relevant education fields. Engaged with MOE-funded projects promoting individual universities' strengths and specializations (e.g., University for Creative Korea), special education teacher preparation programs can extend practicum opportunities through community-based service-learning activities and project-based learning projects to enhance preservice teacher training. Preservice teachers can experience developing lesson plans and implementing targeted skills in local disability centers and improve their professionalism through practical career opportunities in university programs.

Special Education Curriculum

Special education in South Korea has its own curriculum, separate from the general education curriculum, with the purpose of supporting students' unique needs (MOE, 2015). Developing a high-quality special education curriculum has been an ongoing issue in South Korea, and many teachers and parents of students with disabilities have requested to engage in the inclusive school curriculum (Jeong, 2015). To address this ongoing issue and needs of special education curriculum for students in both elementary and secondary grades, MOE has revised the national-level Special Education Curriculum for students with disabilities in 2015 and provided standards for curriculum goals in all school grades. The Common Curriculum and Basic Curriculum are applied at the elementary and secondary school levels for students in general education classes. The Elective-Centered Curriculum and Basic Curriculum are applied at the high school level. In particular, teachers can

implement the Basic Curriculum for students with disabilities who need a modified curriculum and have difficulty following the Common Curriculum or the Elective-Centered Curriculum (MOE, 2015). Furthermore, to enhance the accountability of government organizations and local schools in guaranteeing students' access to inclusive instruction at their schools, the ASEPD (2008) has also emphasized the provision of textbooks, devices, and teaching equipment.

The lack of teaching and learning materials for students with disabilities has been another consistent issue (Kim & Park, 2016). Thus, aligning with the currently available 2015 national-level Common Curriculum, the National Institute of Special Education (2018a, 2018b, 2019a, 2019b) under the MOE has developed resources for teachers, including adapted textbooks. Lee and Shin (2020) showed that teachers could use teaching materials and adapted texts by incorporating accommodated and modified curricular goals (Lee & Shin, 2020, p. 259). Teachers and students can download the adapted textbooks as PDF files from the publisher's server. Especially since 2020, with the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic, MOE started using online digital teaching and learning materials and textbooks for students with and without disabilities as one of the solutions for the lack of accessible learning materials for students with disabilities. For example, in April and May 2020, all students could access academic content sites, such as digital textbooks, e-learning sites, and the Educational Broadcasting System (EBS), with MOE's educational policy of free mobile data and online content support (MOE, 2020). Another web portal, Edu-able (www.nise.go.kr), operated by the National Institute of Special Education, was also available free of charge to support learning in subject areas for students with disabilities. Udurang (rang.edunet.net) was used as a web community to share learning materials with students, hold student discussions, and engage students in project activities.

Conclusion

Special education laws and policies have played a critical role in the overall development of special education in South Korea. More students with disabilities have been able to receive free public special education and access to education curriculum. However, inclusion, the public's disability awareness, special education teacher preparation, and special education curricula are still unsolved issues in South Korea. Some topics related to instructional and service delivery in inclusive education have been a concern since the 1990s. Researchers and teacher educators need to pay particular attention to these issues to make special education more inclusive and to prepare quality teachers to enhance the learning of students with disabilities. To support the social inclusion of individuals with disabilities, which is the fundamental goal of special education in South Korea, more effort is needed to promote disability awareness and human rights to the public (MOE, 2018). Furthermore, to ensure the rights of people with disabilities and provide meaningful engagement in the classroom, in either face-to-face or virtual learning, both preservice and in-service teachers need opportunities to co-teach and collaborate across special and general education curricula. Since we know that special education laws and policies have impacted the overall development of special education in South Korea (see Figure 1), establishing systematic policies and related initiatives are critical in overcoming these issues. We still believe that more policymakers, stakeholders, and practitioners need to discuss how to create and implement policies that facilitate authentic interaction among families and students with and without disabilities.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Jeongae Kang

Dr. Jeongae Kang is an assistant professor in the Department of Special Education at Illinois State University. Her research interests include preparing special education teachers by providing an authentic learning environment. Her recent publication includes using preclinical field experiences in preparing preservice special education teachers. In addition, she wrote about using case learning in preparing preservice special education teachers and investigating factors for special education teachers' stress and burnout during the pandemic.

Mikyung Shin

Dr. Mikyung Shin is an assistant professor in the Department of Education at West Texas A&M University. Her research interests include mathematics instruction for students with learning disabilities, instructional technology, single-case experimental designs, meta-analysis, and text mining.

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