

Strategies for Transition Support in Social Relationships for Effective Integrated Education in Students with Disabilities

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to bibliographically search for strategies for transition support in social relationships for effectively integrated education in students with disabilities. For this purpose, this study focused on sociability skill instruction, self-decision and self-defense skill instruction, disability understanding instruction, and helpers' volunteer services for students with a disability to develop the target strategies.

Keywords: Integrated Education, Strategies for Transition Support in Social Relationships, Students with Disability

1. Necessity of and Purpose for the Study

The Special Education Law on those with Disabilities which was put into effect as Law No. 8483 on May 25, 2007 specifies the definition of integrated education. In accordance with Section 6, Article 2 of the same law, "Integrated Education" means: those who are subjects of special education shall have the opportunity to receive proper education depending on their individual educational needs with peers without any differentiation according to the type and degree of disability.

Students with disabilities experience anxiety and tension when they are exposed to rapid changes in their environment as they enter middle school. Therefore, they can adjust to the environment of integrated education as they have plenty of positive interactions when they are understood and considered as being without disability by fellow students Odom, McConnell & Chandler¹⁶. Staub et al¹⁸. reported that some students without disabilities felt more responsible while helping students with disabilities in studies on the effects of integrated education targeting four students with severe or moderate disabilities and 31 students without disabilities in a middle school in the

U.S.A. Thus, integrated education has a positive effect on the development of both students with and without disabilities and maximizes educational advantages (Parsons & Beauchamp¹⁷, Miller¹⁵).

However, it is very difficult for students with disabilities to exert their ability in an integrated educational environment because integrated education in middle schools requires independent performance. Therefore, teachers should help students in this transition period to control their behavior themselves by developing diverse self-control strategies.

The transition education focused on transition to employment in the adult period (Na, Soo-Hyon and Park, Seung-Hee⁶, Jo, In-Soo⁸). but recently it has been understood as a comprehensive concept. 'Transition as a comprehensive meaning' Transition education includes all the transition from pre-school educational institutes to elementary school, from elementary school to middle school, from middle school to high school, and from high school to the adult period (Na, Soo-Hyon and Park, Seung-Hee⁶).

These previous studies emphasized that support for social relationships within transition education services in integrated education for students with disabilities is

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required. Although support for social relationships is very important for students with disabilities, as there were few theses and articles on strategies for transition support in social relationships, this study is much needed. The aim of this study is to develop strategies for transition support in social relationships in order to have effectively integrated education in students with disabilities.

2. Methods

This study was conducted bibliographically through examination of theses and articles on transition support in social relations for effective integrated education in students with disabilities. Theses and articles with 'students with disabilities', 'integrated education', 'social relationships', and 'transition support' as key words were retrieved from Riss and DBPIA. To effectively achieve the purpose of this study, this study referred to previous studies which reported successful transitions in the integrated education school environment (Na, Soo-Hyon⁴, Na, Soo-Hyon and Park, Seung-Hee⁵, Na, Soo-Hyon and Park, Seung-Hee⁶, Akos¹⁰, Akos & Martin¹¹).

In particular, Na Soo-Hyon⁴. drew six themes as support factors for students successful transition from elementary to middle school: 1) academic support, 2) school life support, 3) social relationship support, 4) psychological support, 5) environmental adjustment and 6) family support. Therefore, this study used the term 'social relationship transition support' based on the social relationship support drawn by Na Soo-Hyon⁴. Na Soo-Hyon⁴. reported that social relationship support is needed as students with disabilities have difficulty in formation and maintenance of proper social relationships in the transition period. Then, the author suggested that social skills should be taught to students with disabilities for active social relationship support and abilities for interaction with peers, having appropriate behavior depending on the situation and age, and knowing polite behavior as a social skill.

As transition support in social relationships were closely involved in sociability skill instruction, self-decision and self-defense skill instruction, education on disability understanding, and helpers' volunteer service for students with disability, this study examined previous studies on these by Na, Soo-Hyon and Park, Seung-Hee⁶ Feyerer et al¹², Malian & Nevin¹⁴. to develop strategies for transition support.

3. Strategies for Transition Support in Social Relationships for Effective Integrated Education in Students with Disabilities

This study examined previous studies on social skills instruction, self-decision and self-defense skills instruction, education for disability understanding, and helpers' volunteer services for students with disability to develop strategies on transition support in social relationships for effective integrated education in students with disabilities.

First, for transition support in social relationships of students with disabilities who are studying in an integrated education environment, social skills education is needed. Students with disabilities may feel psychologically weak and afraid because they have many people who they have to have relationships with in a new school environment. Therefore, they should be educated in social skills and learn how to make good relationships with teachers, staff and fellow students without disability and understand how to adjust to their new environment. For education of social skills, it is very important for us to help students with disabilities to understand popular culture and current trends and sing popular songs with peers without disability and share feelings. Then, students can acquire how to form good relationships with partners and members of small groups based on the social skills they acquire and enjoy the integrated education activities presented.

Teachers should develop good social skills education programs consisting of using appropriate language for communication with peers, expressing what they think according to the kinds and characteristics of the subjects, and expressing what they feel appropriately according to the scene. Also, students with disabilities should join in integrated education activities through social skills education programs so that they can apply what they learn in their real school environment.

Second, as a way to support transition in social relationships for successful integrated education in students with disability, self-decision skills should be taught. A number of researchers depicted or developed a teaching mode for self-decision behavior (Agran⁹, Field, Martin, Miller, Ward, & Wehmeyer¹³). and special education teachers should teach self-decision skills

needed by students through the process that they help them select teaching models which are suitable for their present performance ability through interviews with parents.

Third, self-defense skills education can help students protect themselves and acquire how to deal with what they are exposed to and have less mental trauma when they are exposed to sexual, physical and mental violence in an integrated education environment. When they are trained in these skills, they can express what they feel and think in a school violence situation appropriately and defend and control themselves. Also, they can learn how to control their anger and their behaviors in school violence, which will help them not have as many difficult situations.

Fourth, education for understanding disability is a way to support the transition in social relationships which is useful to decrease prejudice against the disability. Students without the disability play an important role in helping students with the disability adjust to an integrated education environment (Kim, Hee-Gyu³, Ysseldyke et al.²⁰). Special education teachers can invite special education experts for lectures on the Day of the disability to facilitate the disability understanding by students without the disability and the teaching staff.

Also, books, photos, poetry with pictures, craft works by students with disability and what they learn at school can be displayed in an integrated school environment. It is suggested that this is a good way to support the transition for students without disability to write essays after watching movies or dramas designed for proper perceptions on disability and confer awards through writing contests. Disability experience activities can be a good opportunity for students without disability to realize the difficulty of students with disability and help them understand the difficulty of students with the disability in school life and accept the disability.

Fifth, for higher quality integrated education in students with the disability, an intervention program which leads students without the disability to have a positive attitude towards students with the disability and desirable interaction should be developed. Helpers' volunteer service is one intervention strategy. Special education teachers can give opportunities to students without disability to help disabled students on a basis of volunteering or recommendation.

Many researchers pointed out that most students with the disability exist only physically and meaninglessly in

their integrated education classrooms (Na, Soo-Hyon and Park, Seung-Hee⁶). In that case, students with the disability have a lower motivation to study, cause problematic behavior, and have problems with teachers and classmates (Kim, Bun-Young, Park, Seung-Hee¹, Park, Seung-Hee, Hong, Jeong-A⁷, Wenz-Gross & Siperstein¹⁹, Na, Soo-Hyun, Park, Seung-Hee⁶). Such a phenomenon makes students with disability have difficulty in adjusting to school life, have psychological stress, and more burden in studying and diverse assignments, finally leading to problems in adjustment to integrated education. Therefore, teachers should encourage helper students to support disabled students in their school life in diverse ways.

If normal students keep daily records of their volunteer service for students with the disability as helpers, special education teachers can obtain useful information on homework, performance tests, group activities and student progress at a glance, and can support them effectively for integration of the curriculum for disabled students.

4. Conclusion and Suggestions

4.1 Conclusion

This study searched for strategies on transition support in social relationships for effective integrated education in students with disability and the results are presented as follows:

First, for social skill education, we can help students with disabilities to sing popular songs with peers without disability by understanding popular culture and understand current trends and share what they feel. Then, students can acquire how to form good relationships with partners and members of small groups based on the social skills they acquire and enjoy the integrated education activities presented.

Second, special education teachers should teach self-decision skills needed by students through the process that they help them select teaching models which are suitable for their present performance ability through interviews with parents.

Third, self-defense skill education can help students protect themselves and have less mental trauma when they are exposed to sexual, physical and mental violence in an integrated education environment.

Fourth, special education teachers can arrange lectures from invited special education experts, exhibitions of works on overcoming disability, literary writing contests and disability experience activities as ways to understand disability.

Fifth, some researchers pointed out that most students with disability exist only physically and meaninglessly in their integrated education classrooms (Na, Soo-Hyon and Park, Seung-Hee⁶). Therefore, if students with normal conditions keep records of their volunteer service for students with disability as helpers everyday, special education teachers can grasp homework, performance tests and group activities at a glance, and can support them.

Students with disability can do well with normal students in such activities as academic programs, break time, athletic activities, and having fun at lunch time by acquiring social skills. Also, self-decision skills and self-defense skills are important for effective integrated education in students with disability.

When students with disabilities are well-trained in their social skills, they can form and maintain good relationships with peers they meet in middle school, and can have active interactions according to peer culture. Social skills help students with disabilities communicate with peers using appropriate language and express what they feel and think properly in their environment. They can participate in diverse activities in school with their peers and explore what they are interested in, form friendships and develop living skills. (Na Soo-Hyon and Park Seung-Hee⁶). Students without disability can communicate with students with disabilities and have relationships with them through voluntary services such as participation in school year opening and entrance ceremonies, having relationships with class-mates, integration at school sports days, participation in student clubs, and integration of free play at lunch time, which supports the transition of students with disabilities.

Special education teachers can support transitions in social relationships where students with disability communicate with normal students and have good relationships in an integrated education environment through disability understanding education and volunteer service activities (Feyerer et al¹²).

School is a space where healthy personalities and knowledge are developed and it is the same for students with disability. So it is difficult for adolescents to achieve true self-development when they are exposed to violence at school and feel threatened in their school life. (Kim,

Yang-Hwa and Kim, Nam-Soon²). In consideration that school violence can cause deep trauma even to students with disability, it is very important to create a good environment for integrated education where human rights are protected and respected.

4.2 Suggestions

This study presents the following suggestions for further study:

First, it is necessary to conduct research on strategies for cooperation between teachers and special education teachers for transition support in social relationships in students with disability.

Second, further studies are needed to verify the effectiveness of a transition support program.

5. References

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