

# **Book: Exceptional Children: An Introduction to Special Education**

[Lecture 1]

## **Chapter 1: The Purpose and Promise of Special Education**

**Dr. Dae Young Jung(Department of Special Education, Changwon national University)**

### **Summary**

#### ***Who are exceptional Children?***

Exceptional children are those who experience difficulties in learning as well as those whose performance is so advanced that modifications in curriculum and instruction are necessary to help them fulfill their potential. Therefore, 'exceptional children' is an inclusive term that refers to children with learning and/or behavior problems, children with physical disabilities or sensory impairments, and children with superior intellectual abilities and/or special talents. The term 'students with disabilities' is more restrictive than 'exceptional children' because it does not include gifted and talented children.

### **Definitions of the following terms**

**Impairment:** It refers to the loss or reduced function of a particular body part or organ.

**Disability:** When impairment limits a person's ability to perform certain tasks.

**Handicap:** It refers to a problem or a disadvantage that a person with a disability or impairment encounters when interacting with the environment.

**At risk:** This term refers to children who are not currently identified as having a disability but are considered to have a great chance of developing one.

The characteristics shared by exceptional children are as follows:

### **[USA]**

- Intellectual disabilities
- Learning disabilities
- Emotional or behavioral disorders
- Autism

- Speech or language impairments
- Hearing impairments
- Visual impairments
- Physical or health impairments
- Traumatic brain injury
- Multiple disabilities
- Giftedness and special talents

#### [South Korea]

- Intellectual disabilities
- Learning disabilities
- Emotional or behavioral disorders
- Autism Disorders
- Communication(Speech or language impairments)
- Hearing impairments
- Visual impairments
- Physical or health impairments
- Developmental Delay
- Others
- Giftedness and special talents(not included in Special Education)

#### [Nepal] Department of Education 2013

- Physical Disabilities
- Intellectual Impaired
- Hearing Impairment
- Visually Impairment
- Low Vision
- Hearing and Visually Impairment
- Vocal and Speech Related Disabilities

**Labeling and Eligibility for Special Education:** According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), to receive special education and related services, a child must be identified as having a disability and in most cases, further classified into one of that state's categories, such as learning disabilities or orthopedic impairments. Therefore, to receive the benefits and services, labeling is important.

### **Benefits and Disadvantages of Labeling and Classification**

Benefits	Disadvantages
Labeling recognizes meaningful differences in learning or behavior and is a first and necessary step in responding to those differences.	Since labels focus on disability, impairment or performance deficits, they may lead some people to think only in terms of what the individual cannot do instead of what they can do/ are capable of doing.
A disability label can provide access to accommodations and services not available to people without the label.	Teachers may hold low expectations for a labeled student.
Labeling may lead to a protective response in which peers are more accepting of the atypical behavior.	Labels may stigmatize the child and lead peers to ridicule the labeled child.
Classification helps practitioners and researchers communicate with one another and evaluate research findings.	Labels may negatively affect the child's self esteem.
Funding and resources for research and other programs are often based on specific categories of exceptionality.	Disability labels are often misused as explanatory constructs (e.g. "she cannot do it because of her disability")
Labels enable disability-specific advocacy groups to promote specific programs and spur legislative action.	There is tendency to assume that all children in a category share the same traits which decreases the detection and appreciation of each child's uniqueness.
Labeling helps make exceptional children's special needs more visible to policy makers and the public.	A disproportionate number of children from some minority or diverse cultural groups are included in special education programs and thus have been assigned disability labels.

### ***Importance of Laws Governing the Education of Exceptional Children***

**An Exclusionary Past:** Children who are different because of race, culture, language, gender, socioeconomic status or exceptionality have often been denied full and fair access to educational opportunities. Not very long ago, many children with disabilities were entirely excluded from any publicly supported program of education. Additionally, before the 1970's, laws in many US states permitted public schools to deny enrollment to children with disabilities. As the societies' concept of equality, freedom and justice have expanded, children with disabilities and their families have moved from exclusion and isolation to inclusion and participation. In recent times, US Federal legislation and court rulings have made it clear that all children with disabilities have the right to a free appropriate program of public education in the least restrictive environment.

**Separate is not equal:** Special education was strongly influenced by social developments and court decisions in the 1950's and 1960's. Parents and other advocates dissatisfied with an educational system that denied equal access to children with disabilities initiated numerous court cases in the 1960's and early 1970's. The US Supreme Court declared that education must be made available to all children on equal terms.

**Equal protection:** In the past, children with disabilities were denied access to certain educational programs or received special education only in segregated settings. Even though the children had intellectual disabilities, it was neither rational nor necessary to assume they were unworthy of education. Eventually, the court decided that the children were entitled to receive a free public education.

### ***The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act***

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) exerts a great influence on what takes place in every school building in the USA and has changed the roles of general and special educators, school administrators, parents, and students with disabilities in the educational process. The law reflects the society's concern about treating people with disabilities as full citizens with the same rights and privileges all other citizens enjoy. Some of the major principles of IDEA are:

**Zero Reject:** No child with disability should be excluded from a free public education, regardless of the nature of the severity of the disability. Each state's education agency is responsible for locating, identifying and evaluating all children from birth to age 21, residing in the state with disabilities or who are suspected of having disabilities.

**Nondiscriminatory evaluation:** Schools must use nonbiased, multifaceted methods of evaluation to determine whether a child has a disability and if so, whether the child needs specially designed instruction to benefit from education.

**Free Appropriate Public Education:** All children with disabilities, regardless of the type of severity of their disability, shall receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE). This education must be provided at public expense (without cost to the child's parents). An individualized education program (IEP) must be developed and implemented to meet the unique needs of each student with a disability.

**Least Restrictive Environment:** IDEA requires schools to educate students with disabilities with children without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate. Students with disabilities should be removed to separate classes or schools only when the nature or severity of their disabilities is such that they cannot receive an appropriate education in a general education classroom with supplementary aids and services. To ensure that each student with disabilities is educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE) appropriate for her needs, school districts must provide a continuum of alternative placements and service alternatives (e.g. special room, special school etc.)

**Procedural safeguards:** Schools must follow an extensive set of procedures to safeguard and protect the rights and interests of children with disabilities and their parents. Parental consent must be obtained for initial and all subsequent evaluations and placement decisions regarding special education. Schools must maintain the confidentiality of all records pertaining to a child with disabilities and make those records available to the parents.

**Parent participation and shared decision making:** Schools must collaborate with parents and students with disabilities in the planning and implementation of special education and related services. The parent's and student's wishes and input must be considered in determining IEP goals, related service needs and placement decisions.

**Other provisions of IDEA are as follows:**

**Special Education Services for Preschoolers:** Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments in 1986 (PL 99-457) required each US state to fully serve all preschool children with disabilities aged 3 to 5 by providing them the same services and protections available to school-age children.

**Early intervention for infants and toddlers:** PL 99-457 included an incentive grant program to encourage states to provide early intervention services to infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. The children served are those from birth to age 2 who need early intervention services because they are experiencing developmental delays or are likely to develop one due to biological conditions. They are provided services such as medical and educational assessment, physical therapy, speech and language intervention and parent counseling and training. These early intervention services are implemented according to an individualized family services plan (IFSP) written by a multidisciplinary team that includes the child's parents.

**Assistive technology:** IDEA requires IEP teams to consider whether assistive technology is necessary in order for a child to receive a FAPE. The law defines assistive technology as "any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified or customized, that is used to increase, maintain or improve functional capabilities of a child with a disability".

**Scientifically based instruction:** An important addition to IDEA 2004 was the stipulation that the special education and related services prescribed in a child's IEP be based on peer-reviewed research to the extent practicable.

**Universal design for learning (UDL):** IDEA 2004 defines universal design as a "concept or philosophy for designing and delivering products and services that are usable by people with the widest possible range of functional capabilities, which include products and services that are directly accessible (without requiring assistive technologies) and products and services that are interoperable with assistive technologies." The basic idea of UDL is that new curricular materials and learning technologies should be designed from the beginning to be flexible enough to

accommodate the learning styles of a wide range of individuals, including children with disabilities.

### ***Legal Challenges to IDEA***

**Extended School year:** In the US, most public schools operate for approximately 180 days per year. Parents and advocates have argued that for some children with disabilities, a 180 day school year is not sufficient to meet their needs. Some parents of children with severe disabilities claimed that their children tended to regress during the usual breaks in the school year and called on the schools to provide a period of instruction longer than 180 days. The court agreed and ordered the schools to extend the school year for these students.

**FAPE and related services:** The related services provision of IDEA has been highly controversial creating much disagreement about what kinds of related services are necessary and reasonable for the schools to provide a FAPE and what should be the responsibility of the child's parents.

**Disciplining students with disabilities:** Some cases have resulted from parents protesting the suspension or expulsion of children with disabilities.

**Right to education:** All children have the right to education regardless of how little they might benefit or the nature or severity of their disabilities.

### ***Related Legislation***

Some of the related legislation in the US which supports exceptional children (whether disabled or gifted/talented) are as follows:

- Javits Gifted and Talented Student Education Act
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Americans with Disabilities Act
- Elementary and Secondary Education Act (a.k.a. No Child Left Behind Act)

### ***What is Special Education?***

Special education is purposeful intervention designed to prevent, eliminate and/or overcome the obstacles that might keep a child with disabilities from learning and from full and active participation in school and society. Special education is individually planned, specialized, intensive, goal-directed instruction. It provides three basic types of intervention: **preventive** (to help prevent a disability from occurring), **remedial** (to eliminate specific effects of a disability) and **compensatory** (teaching a substitute skill that enables a person to perform tasks despite disability).

### *Challenges in Special Education*

- Improve the quality of pre and in-service training to ensure that all special educators meet professional standards.
- Increase the availability and quality of special education programs for gifted and talented students.
- Help secondary students with disabilities transition to adult life. Special education must improve the transition of youth with disabilities from school to life in their communities.
- Apply advances in technologies that reduce or eliminate the disabling effects of physical and sensory impairments.
- Increase access to assistive technology that enhances the educational performance and personal independence of individuals with disabilities.
- Increase funding for special education.
- Improve behavior and attitudes of people without disabilities towards those with disabilities.
- Open more opportunities for individuals with disabilities to participate in the full range of residential, employment and recreational options available to people without disabilities.