

Status of higher education and employment of the Disabled in Korea

- Centering on vocational competency development services of Korea

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I. Status of People with disabilities in Korea

According to the 2008 national survey on the disabled, the number of registered people with disabilities in Korea amounted to 2.137 million persons. It is estimated to be 4.59% of its population. The number of the registered disabled is increasing annually and the figure increased more than 10 times from 250,000 in 1990 to 2.25 million in 2008. It is related to the expansion of disability categories and the types of disability have been expanded from 5 to 15 types including internal organs disorder in 2000 and 2003 respectively.

According to the status survey of the disabled in 2005, 44.3% of them were participating in the economic activities whereas the rate of participating in economic activities for the non-disabled persons in the same period was 62.3%. With respect to employment status of the disabled in Korea, the unemployment rate is 23.5% showing 6.7times the total unemployment rate. This means that one out of four people with disabilities is unemployed.

II. Employment Policy and System for the Disabled

1. Basic ideology for employment of people with disabilities

Securing the fundamental human rights of people with disabilities, such as the right to live and work, should be the basic ideology for employment of the disabled. Once this ideology is realized and practiced, the pursuit of equal employment opportunities for the disabled would enable them to lead an equal life.

In this regard, the employment policy for the disabled is at the heart to ensure full participation and equal opportunities for people with disabilities. Securing a job is more than a source of income and it is closely related to social integration. Moreover, the population of Korea is on a decreasing trend and the workforce is expected to dwindle as well. It has been emphasized to expand the employment opportunities for women and the disabled to create new workforce.

2. Status of Korea's employment policy for the disabled

People with disabilities are generally more susceptible to fall into the risk of unemployment in the labor market and more likely to have a low paying job with poor working conditions. Hence, many countries have undertaken diverse policies to intervene into the general labor market directly and indirectly to promote equal job opportunities for people with disabilities.

In the event of Korea, the employment quota system has been operated as the key system for the promotion of employment for the disabled. And, countries such as Japan, Germany and France have been implementing the employment quota system as well. This quota system forces employers with a certain number of employees to hire a certain ratio of people with disabilities. And, it is based on the law enacted in 1990, which is 'the Employment promotion and vocational rehabilitation act for the disabled.'

In addition to imposing obligations on employers, the Act places duties on service providers and requires "reasonable adjustments" to be made when providing access to goods, facilities, services and premises.

In the beginning, employers with over 300 employees are obliged to fulfill the employment quota of the disabled. But, it has expanded to those with 50 employees in 2004.

If employers fail to fulfill the obligatory quota, they are supposed to pay burden charges. And, the collected burden charges are used to support those businesses actively hiring people with disabilities. For the public institutions, the law stipulated the obligation of the state and the head of local governments to hire 2% or more of the quota of civil servants.

Since 1990, policy initiatives and laws for people with disabilities have been progressed. In 2007, the Disability Discrimination prohibition Act was enacted to lay down the legal foundation to prevent discrimination against the disabled in all aspects. This law has begun to appear as the notion of civil rights and it has become more influential globally following other forms of anti-discrimination and equal opportunity legislation. It makes it unlawful to discriminate against people in respect of their disabilities in relation to employment, the provision of goods and services, education and transport.

3. Institution overview of Korea employment promotion agency for the disabled (KEPAD)

In 1990, Korea Employment Promotion Agency for the Disabled (KEPAD) was founded with the enactment of the 'Employment Promotion Law for the disabled' to promote people with disability's full participation into society through jobs by improving their employability and creating fair opportunities for decent work.

It is a unique government agency under the ministry of labor providing services for the disabled in

the aspects of vocational guidance, job placement, vocational training, research and development. KEPAD has 15 local branch offices, 5 vocational training centers, R&D institute across the country.

III. Status of Post-secondary education of the disabled in Korea

1. Status of higher education of the disabled in Korea

1) Legal basis and administrative support for student with disabilities

To amend and supplement the lack of educational supports for students with disabilities in the special education promotion act in 1997, the special education act for individuals with disabilities and others was enacted in 2007. This law provides the legal basis for significant changes to the college education for the disabled by providing support services. According to the law, colleges cannot deny the entrance or discriminate individuals with disabilities in the process of college application. Further, it states that the head of universities must establish and operate ‘the special support committee’ to support students with disabilities in their universities. The university with a certain number of students with disabilities must establish and operate ‘the Student with Disabilities support center’ to guarantee access to education by providing material supports such as academic assistance and assistive technology.

However, if a university does not have any students with disabilities attending or does not have a certain number of students with disabilities set by the Presidential Decree, the university can organize a team or assign a person in charge to support the students. Currently, there are 31 support centers for students with disabilities in universities and they are expected to increase up to 103 in 2011.

2) The University entrance system for the disabled.

Considering the lack of appropriate educational support for students with disabilities in the secondary education settings, the university implemented the special admissions for students with disabilities in 1995. Hence, a person registered as an individual with a disability under the law can be accepted into the universities through the guidelines set by the head of the university.

It allows universities to accept additional number of students with disabilities to expand educational opportunities for them.

3) Current university entrance status of students with disabilities and Issues

Currently, there are 10,020 colleges and universities across the country and 3 universities have the most number of students with disabilities. They are Daegu University, Korea Nazarene University, and Korea National College of rehabilitation & welfare.

The yearly status of university entrance shows that 795(39.8%) students with disabilities in 2005, 938(43.3%) students in 2006, and 1,039(50.4%) students in 2007 advanced to post-secondary education from special schools. The number of students with disabilities entering university through the special entrance process was increased from 1995 to 2001. And, there was a drop from 2003 to 2005, and it has begun to increase since 2006.

[Number of students with disabilities entering university through the special entrance process]

	Technical college	University	Total
Year	Number of students with disabilities Entered	Number of students with disabilities Entered	Number of students with disabilities Entered
1995	6	107	113
1996	16	201	217
1997	42	234	276
1998	57	298	355
1999	47	349	396
2000	55	313	368
2001	61	360	421
2002	194	420	614
2003	117	310	427
2004	115	309	424
2005	45	344	389
2006	3	388	419
2007	79	439	518
2008	100	460	560

*Source: Korea National Institute for Special Education (www.knis.kr)

Although educational opportunities for the disabled for colleges and universities have been increasing because of the special admissions for them, the dropout and temporary leave of absence rate of the students with disabilities are increasing. It means students with disabilities tend to take a leave of absence or drop out more compared to their non-disabled peers. Hence, when students who lack of academic skills enter into universities through the special admissions, they often find it difficult to compete with their non-disabled peers in terms of academic achievement.

Moreover, it turns out that students with disabilities tend to apply for universities where the support services available, it limits their choice for colleges and majors.

2. Vocational competency development services for the disabled in Korea

All the vocational training programs for the disabled in Korea are supported by KEPAD both directly and indirectly. 5 vocational training centers of KEPAD provide vocational training service directly by running 14 technical courses for the disabled and support other private and public training institutes for the disabled.

1) Vocational training services for the disabled in KEPAD

In 1981, the government started examining the establishment of a vocational training institute for the disabled and the first public vocational training institute for the disabled was established in 1991. And, currently 5 vocational training institutes for the disabled under KEPAD are being operated and the average employment rate is about 81.4%.

[5 vocational training centers of KEPAD]

	Career courses
Ilsan center	Mechanics/ Electronics/ Printed media/ Design/ IT / Jewelry Craft
Daejeon center	Electronics/ Jewelry Craft/ Cookery / IT
Daegu center	Mechanics/ Electronics/ Design/ IT/ Fashion Design
Busan center	Mechanics/ Electronics/ Design/ Architecture modeling/ Cookery
Jeonnam center	Mechanics/ Design/ IT/ Computer Animation

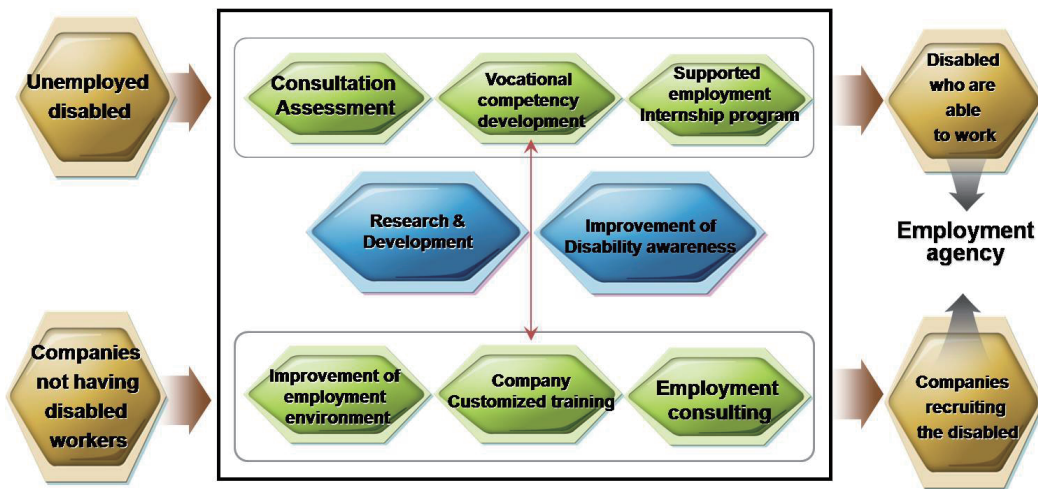
Those institutes provide people with disabilities with career courses at technical college level and have a close relationship with various enterprises engaged in the employment of the disabled. It supports people with disabilities to be equipped with skills in a competitive labor market.

Further, to meet rapidly changing needs of the employer, vocational training centers of KEPAD have gone through several changes and reformed its programs. As a result of the reform, customized training and specialized training course for people with specific types of disabilities have been implemented.

(1) Customized Training

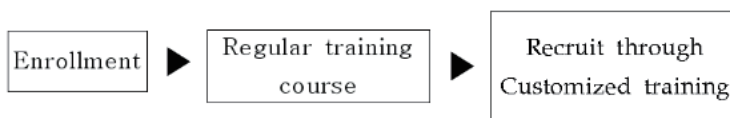
Customized Training is vocational training based on a contract concluded between a training institute and a business entity with regard to the overall training aspect that includes particular technical skills, training period, and recruitment after the completion of training. Customized training has started to meet the growing demands of employers in a fast-changing, competitive labour market. In addition to meeting the demands of employer, customized training emphasizes corporate social responsibility(CSR) by promoting the recruitment of people with disabilities in open employment(mainstream employment).

○ System of Customized training



○ Procedure of Customized Training

- Liaised with regular training courses



- Recruitment for specific jobs



① Liaised with regular training courses

: This can be started at the end of regular training for recruitment after the trainees have gained basic skills in school. This gives the employers the advantage of flexibility with regard to the recruitment period and employment position.

② Recruitment for specific jobs

: When employers wish to hire people for specific jobs, they can employ those who have received customized training. In this case, the employers are more involved in designing curriculums and determining the training period for the specific jobs. This requires the open recruitment of trainees as it often needs a considerable number of employees.

(Ex. Samsung electronics, LG philips LCD Co., Cannon Korea. ...etc.)

□ Employers committee for Customized Training

This committee for improving customized training comprises 10 employers. The committee hosts regular meetings to discuss all the matters regarding customized training to maximize its benefits.

(2) The Merits of Customized Training

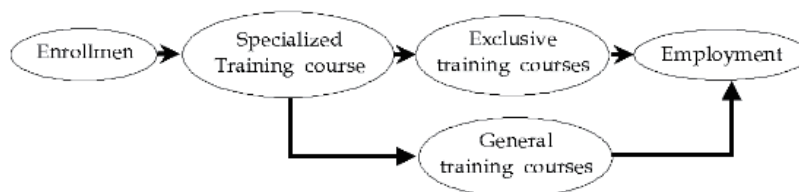
It turns out that the Customized training benefits all three parties involved: employers, training institutes and trainees. Firstly, employers can save time and costs on the recruitment and training of new employees as they can immediately place skilled employees into jobs. And, it can raise the satisfaction level of employers as they have skilled employees who meet the high demands of the employers. At the same time, Employers can fulfill their corporate social responsibility by hiring people with disabilities.

Secondly, training institutes can improve the quality of training by accumulating knowledge and experiences with businesses. Training institutes can update their curriculum and training courses by reflecting on the business trends and technical advancements. And, lastly, trainees can easily adapt themselves to the business environment as they have experienced the workplace and the atmosphere during their training. It can motivate the trainees and raise their job satisfaction level as they have already experienced the job environment before they are employed.

(3) Specialized Training for people with specific disabilities

It particularly focuses on people with severe disabilities, who need additional considerations in both training and employment. This type of training makes appropriate accommodations for people with specific disabilities to guarantee their access to training and maximize learning. And, curriculum and instructional technology are designed specifically for people with certain types of disabilities to meet their different learning needs. Other considerations such as environment accommodations and technical assistance are taken care of as well. The procedure of the Specialized Training can be carried out in two ways. It can set up a exclusive training course for certain type of disability or the course can be combined with general training courses as shown below.

○ The operation of Specialized training



- Specialized training for specific type of Disability in 5 vocational training centers of KEPAD

Institutions	Type of Disability
Ilsan vocational competency development center	the Blind / the Deaf
Busan vocational competency development center	Mental illness /Brain disorder
Daejeon vocational competency development center	Mental illness/ Deaf
Jeonnam vocational competency development center	Brain disorder / Physical-amputation
Daegu vocational competency development center	the Blind / Physical-spinal cord

1) Specialized training for people with severe visual impairment

This training has started to broaden the job categories that people with severe visual impairment can be employed in instead of them being restricted to certain professions such as massagers.

The training course is targeted toward the blind and people with severe visual impairment. It has developed several career courses for jobs such as telemarketing and Stenographing to broaden job opportunities in open employment.

- Course Overview

	Curriculum Details
Customer Service	Telemarketing, Computer skills, Customer service
Information Community	Information access, Web application, Statistics analysis

- Developing Learning aids for the Visually impaired

Year	Textbook	Note
2005	Microsoft office 2004, Excel etc. (14 Software)	Braille
2006	Certificate course for Data-processing I~IV	Braille
2007	Computer Stenographing I, II	Electronic

- Providing assistive technology for the visually impaired.

: Braille note taker, Electronic magnifier for low vision, Screen reader, Text reader etc.

- Finding a new job field ,‘Exhibition guide’

: There is an exhibition named “Dialogue in the Dark” and it aims to experience multi-sensorial reality in total darkness. This exhibition uses the guides who are blind to lead visitors through different settings in total darkness where they could learn how to interact without eyesight by using other senses. The original idea came from Germany and it has spread all over the world : Austria, Japan, U.K, France, Italy, U.S.A, Israel. Over 6 million visitors have experienced the exhibition ,

giving over 5,000 blind people jobs since 1988 in Germany.

2) Specialized training for the Deaf and Hard of hearing

Deaf people in Korea generally have limited access to professional education opportunities due to lack of support service. This affected their employment outcomes in turn. The national survey revealed that workers who are deaf or hard of hearing are engaged in mostly unskilled and manual jobs, getting low wages. And, 30% of them change their jobs within a year and their high job turnover rate affects their career development and income security.

This is due to a combination of various factors including a low level of education and vocational skills, limited communication, and a hearing person-oriented environment.

It means that their different learning needs and communication needs are not being met in the educational settings. Hence, deaf and hard-of-hearing students in mainstream colleges face many difficulties in learning and lag behind their peers.

In this regard, the project has started to increase better occupational opportunities of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. KEPAD initiated the project to improve access for the Deaf at the post-secondary level and the quality of education by partnering PEN-International¹. And, KEPAD has been benefiting accumulated knowledge from the NTID² in benchmarking their system.

- Building a Deaf-friendly learning environment
 - Installment of flashing lights for gaining attention in classroom
 - Installment of angle flexible lights for Sign language interpreters

□ Developing Learning aids for the Deaf and Hard of hearing

Year	Educational materials	Note
2006	- WBT(Web-based Training program) Program - A Sign language dictionary for technical terms	Sign language video Clips, Captions
2007	- A Guidebook for teachers who are engaged in Deaf Education - Development of MBTI video test for the Deaf	Translated version of NTID's Class Act book Sign language video Clips
2008	- Counseling guidebook of Deaf and hard of hearing students	

- Providing assistive technology for the Deaf and Hard of hearing
 - : FM Loop Amplifier, Headset Vibrator, Vibrating alarm clocks, Flashing lights etc.

¹ Post-secondary Education Network International (www.pen.ntid.rit.edu)

² National Technical Institute for the Deaf, Rochester Institute of Technology

IV. Future policy directions of KEPAD

KEPAD has been taking the lead in promoting employment of the disabled in Korea and the employment rate has improved both in the public and private sectors. The obligatory employment rate of the disabled steadily increased with the rate in the government and private sectors nearing the 2% target.

And, through the customized training with enterprises, about 2,000 people with disabilities have landed jobs in 149 large companies including Samsung, LG, SK, Lotte, CJ Telenix, Kyobo, Korea Airline, Shinsegye and Poswith. In addition, KEPAD has been implementing government-subsidized workplaces working with business entities to create more job opportunities for people with disabilities. 8 workplaces have been settled in 2008 and it is expected to increase up to 30 places in the future.

When it comes to vocational competency development, we have 3 major strategies to achieve 2% employment quota of the disabled by year 2012. First strategy is improving employability by providing professional technical courses and strengthening customized training courses with enterprises.

Second is activating specialized training courses for people with specific disabilities who need additional accommodations for their training and employment.

Lastly, we aim to activate cyber on-line education and rehabilitation programs for the disabled.

Those strategies will benefit people with severe disabilities by improving their access to learning.

KEPAD will make every effort to create fair opportunities for decent work for people with disabilities and support them to achieve full participation into society through jobs.