

The Understanding of Students with Disabilities through the Lens of Critical Theory

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《요 약》

South Korea's special education has radically developed in its quantitative and qualitative aspects. However, South Korea seems not to pay a lot of attention to theoretical development of special education. This study aimed to understand students with disabilities through the lens of critical theory, one of theoretical approaches. We discussed how to overcome the unequal power relationship between non-disabled people and people with disabilities from the lens of critical theory, and tried to help understand South Korean students with disabilities from the unbalanced power relationship.

주제어 : Critical Theory, Students with Disabilities, Unequal Power Relationship.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Background of the Study

South Korea's special education has drastically developed in its quantitative and qualitative aspects. The number of special schools and special education classrooms and the number of colleges which train preservice special education teachers have increased. As South Korea's special education has developed, it will be necessary for us to discuss theoretical aspects of special education. Moreover, when South Korean scholars approach disability through various theoretical perspectives, the theoretical perspectives of special education will be better developed in South Korean society.

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We reviewed foreign articles which discussed disability through theoretical approaches, and found that the studies on disability in western countries, in particular the United States, have been mostly developed from a positivistic perspective which pursues objective truth. However, we also identified that some scholars in the United States have recently attempted to understand disability through various theoretical approaches such as critical theory and constructivism. In particular, Darder, Baltodano, and Torres's (2003) book, *The critical pedagogy*, introduce critical theory through many scholars' works. As the lens of critical theory can discuss disability in various ways, we introduce critical theory in this study. We explore why disability exists in society and how disability can be developed in society from the lens of critical theory.

Critical theory has been developed by western scholars such as Apple, Derrida, Paulo Freire, Foucault, Gramsci. These scholars differently interpret critical theory based on their own knowledge and beliefs. Therefore, critical theory needs to be understood through various approaches (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1998). This study attempts to discuss two themes that critical theory usually discusses.

Critical theory can be introduced by two themes: 1) the discussion on class, race, and gender (Darder et al., 2003 Kang, Kim, & Fang, 2007; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1998 McLaren, 2003; Weiler, 2003), and 2) the unbalanced power relationship between the oppressors and the oppressed (Darder et al., 2003 Denzin & Lincoln, 1998 Giroux, 2003; Gramsci, 1971; Kang et al., 2007; McLaren, 2003).

First, critical theorists usually discuss social relations of race, class and gender (e.g., Apple, 1996, 2003; Darder et al., 2003 Fine, 1986, 1991; McLaren, 2003; Price, 2000; Weiler, 2003). Although western scholars usually pay attention to race, class and gender, this study only focuses on the issues of class and gender. Some foreign students with disabilities who live in South Korea will experience discriminations because of their race and disability. However, as most people who live in South Korea are Koreans, South Korea's situation on race will be different from that of western countries, in particular the United States. Moreover, since the purpose of this study is to understand disability in South Korea's general settings, we do not discuss the issues of race in this study.

Second, the lens of critical theory discusses the unbalanced power relationship between the oppressors and the oppressed (Darder et al., 2003 Denzin & Lincoln, 1998 Giroux, 2003; Gramsci, 1971; Kang, et al. 2007; McLaren, 2003). From the lens of critical theory, which explores the unbalanced power relationship between the

oppressors and the oppressed, these scholars tend to clarify how and why the minority groups are socially, culturally, politically, economically and educationally marginalized.

In summary, we discuss critical theory by two aspects: 1) the explanation on class and gender through the lens of critical theory, and 2) the unbalanced power relationship between the oppressors and the oppressed (Darder et al., 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Giroux, 2003; Gramsci, 1971; Kang et al., 2007; McLaren, 2003). From the lens of critical theory, we will explore how these two approaches can help people to understand disability.

2. The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to introduce critical theory, and attempts to help South Korean students with disabilities to overcome their oppressed positions through the lens of critical theory. This purpose is explored by the following questions:

- 1) What are critical theorists' main concerns?
- 2) How can we understand South Korean students with disabilities through the lens of critical theory?

3. Method

We reviewed several critical theorists' literature and the literature related to critical theory. We also reviewed the literature related to disability. By reviewing the literature related to critical theory and disability, we attempted to explore the main concepts of critical theory and tried to understand South Korean students with disabilities through the lens of critical theory.

II. THE MAIN CONCERNS OF CRITICAL THEORY

Critical theorists usually discuss social relations of class, race and gender as "certain groups in any society are privileged over others" (Kincheloe & McLaren, p. 263), and explore how people exercise their power through the relations among class,

race and gender, and criticize the unbalanced power relationship between the oppressors and the oppressed (Darder et al., 2003; Kang et al., 2007; McLaren, 2003). In this section, we first explore the characteristics of class and gender, and then discuss power relationship between the oppressors and the oppressed.

1. The Understanding of Class through the Lens of Critical Theory

We explore class based on capitalism, because South Korea has capitalistic characteristics (Eoh, 1999; Kim, 2003c). From the capitalistic perspective, McLaren (2003) defines class as "the economic, social, and political relationships that govern life in a given social order" (p. 74). Class relationships in a capitalistic society "are seen as essentially relations over the distribution of power and the ownership of capital" (Giroux, 1981, p. 14), and reflect "the constraints and limitations individuals and groups experience in the areas of income level, occupation, place of residence, and other indicators of status and social rank" (McLaren, 2003, p. 74). In this social system, the more people acquire economic, social and political resources, the more they exercise their power over others having less power (McLaren, 2003).

1) The relations between class and school

Schools are an example of how middle-class citizens exercise and maintain class power, because schools are "not separate from the wider society" (Apple, 1996, p. 107). Moreover, schools exercise "the mechanisms of domination as they operate at the everyday level of schooling" by hidden curriculum¹⁾ (Giroux, 1981, p. 72). For example, the schools' interior factors such as political, economic, and social ideologies tend to keep people from thinking about class differences. As most people who plan and implement educational policy are middle-class people, they will consider political,

1) "The hidden curriculum refers to the unintended outcomes of the schooling process" (McLaren, 2003, p. 86, italics in original). It "produce(s) and reproduce(s) the dominant categories, values, and social relationships necessary for the maintenance of the larger society" (Giroux, 1981, p. 72). "Critical educators recognize that schools shape students both through standardized learning situations, and through other agendas including rules of conduct, classroom organization, and the informal pedagogical procedures used by teachers with specific groups of students. The hidden curriculum also includes teaching and learning styles that are emphasized in the classroom, the messages that get transmitted to the student by the total physical and instructional environment, governance structures, teacher expectations, and grading procedures" (McLaren, 2003, p. 86).

economic, and social ideologies a lot for middle-class people in the development of competitive and achievement-centered school curriculum. These political, economic, and social ideologies will justify middle-class people's privileges and will make working-class people accept their present status (Apple, 1996; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Fine & Weis, 2003; Giroux, 1981).

2) The relations between class and teacher

As school has a lot of influences on the establishment and maintenance of class differences, teachers can play an important role in class difference. Teachers often exercise their class power over students in "particularly low-income public schools" (Fine, 1991, p. 33). For example, many middle-class teachers will accept the present social system without doubt, and will transmit these beliefs to their students. Teachers' beliefs will be related to students' perceptions on the social system. Students, particularly minority groups such as working-class students, are being silenced "about the reality of class differences" (hooks, 2003, p. 142).

3) The relations between class and family

Like school, family plays an important role in the construction of class differences. Middle-class parents tend to think about the importance of their children's education more than working-class parents do, and hope their children to live more affluently in the future. Moreover, middle-class parents can provide more economic support to their children than working-class parents. On the contrary, students in working-class family usually have less educational motives and receive less educational support in comparison with those in middle-class family (Fine, 1991). That is, "[s]tudents who begin with the greatest economic disadvantages receive the least enriching educations and end up with fewer, less valuable, and historically deflating diplomas" (Fine, 1991, p. 26). For example, the poorest of youths are much "more likely to drop out of high school" than the wealthiest of youths in the United States (Apple, 1996, pp. 73-74). In other words, it can be inferred that students in working-class family will have less educational motives and will experience poor educational opportunities than those in middle-class family.

2. The Understanding of Gender through the Lens of Critical Theory

Critical theorists explore social relations of gender, and, in particular, are

concerned about men's oppression of women (Darder et al., 2003; Davies, 1994; Fine, 1986, 1991; Fischman, 2000; McLaren, 2003; Noddings, 2001; Weiler, 2003). They consider gender as social and historical products rather than as biological distinctions between men and women (Fischman, 2000). However, the conceptualization of gender differences is neither simple nor easy, because "gender is part of a complex system of norms and values that is extremely influential in shaping the relationships between individuals of the same or different sexes, between individuals and society, and between individuals and institutionalized structure of power" (Fischman, 2000, p. 23). A male-centered society, characterized by the unequal power relationship between men and women, constructs many of these differences as natural. Many people also ignore and deny issues of gender and gender inequality. In such a society, citizens are often not conscious of the ways in which the society establishes a male-centered social system (Davies, 1994; Fischman, 2000; Weiler, 2001). Davies (1994) describes how gender discrimination is exercised without resistance in society:

This is because within the binary pair of male and female, male is the unmarked category, female the marked. That which is marked is visible as such. That which is unmarked is invisible as such. Because maleness is the unmarked category, and female the marked (Connell 1987), boys and men may not be able to name the fact that who they are and what they want to be is 'masculine.' (p. 16)

Although the sociocultural, educational, political and economic oppressions of women are pervasive and seem to be natural in a male-centered society, gender differences are not hidden in society. In contrast, "[g]ender differences are ... very visible" (Apple, 2003, p. 453). In particular, school exercises and reproduces gender differences in many ways, such as classroom practices and texts in focusing on patriarchal ideology (Kenway & Modra, 1992; Weiler, 2003).

Critical theory, especially feminism ²⁾, "has emphasized the ways in which schooling reproduces existing gender inequalities" (Weiler, 2003, p. 280, italics in original). It "challenges schooling's complicity in reproducing gender inequality" (Kenway & Modra, 1992, p. 141) and criticizes "the ideological function of texts and

2) According to Guba and Lincoln (1998), the term critical theory is "a blanket term denoting a set of several alternative paradigms, including additionally (but not limited to) neo-Marxism, feminism, materialism, and participatory inquiry" (p. 202). Like Guba and Lincoln's definition of critical theory, I include feminism as a part of critical theory.

classroom practices in reinforcing patriarchal hegemony”(Weiler, 2003, p. 280). Kenway and Modra (1992) report how some critical educators, in particular feminist educators, criticize gender differences in school:

Some researchers have pointed to the inequitable distribution of linguistic and other space in classrooms and school playgrounds. Others have pointed to the inequitable distribution and differential quality of teachers’ time and attention. In allowing boys to dominate classroom resources, in setting different standards for and having different expectations of girls and boys with regard to achievement and classroom rules and speech practices (Gill & Dyer, 1987), many teachers are seen to treat their students in ways which confirm rather than challenge conventional gender identities. (p. 147)

As critical educators point out, many teachers do not treat girls equally in terms of educational resources and expectations. For example, Apple (2003) describes gender differences in mathematics and science, although “many teachers and curriculum workers have devoted considerable time and effort to equalizing both the opportunities and outcomes of female students in mathematics and science (and such efforts are important), the problem still remains a substantive one” (pp 453–454).

In addition, as Kenway and Modra (1992) note, a number of educators problematize the oppression and discrimination of gender in school contexts (see, e.g., Apple, 1996, 2003; Clough & Barton, 1995; Ellsworth, 1992; Kenway & Modra, 1992; Noddings, 2001; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000; Wade, 2000; Weiler, 2001, 2003).

As class and gender are constructed through social relations, confrontation and resistance of class discrimination are similar to those of gender discrimination (Darder et al., 2003; Fine, 1986, 1991; McLaren, 2003; Price, 2000; Weiler, 2003). To confront class and gender discriminations, people need to know how and from where these discriminations come. When people know social relations of class and gender discriminations, they will better critique and transform “the social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender structures” (Guba & Lincoln, 1998, p. 211).

3. The Power Relations between the Oppressors and the Oppressed

In this section, we explore the unbalanced power relationship between the oppressors and the oppressed, the complexity of power between the oppressors and

the oppressed, and multiple approaches of power.

1) The unbalanced power relationship between the oppressors and the oppressed

As mentioned, the lens of critical theory explores the unbalanced power relations between the oppressors and the oppressed (Darder et al., 2003 Kang et al., 2007; McLaren, 2003). In a capitalistic society, some people have more power than others (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; McLaren, 2003), and these people defend their status. For instance, many teachers maintain their middle-class status and exercise their hegemony³⁾ over minority groups such as working-class students and students with disabilities (Collins, 2003; Fine, 1986, 1991). They often demand that all students follow the classroom environments teachers set out for middle-class sociocultural and economic status (Brantlinger, 2003; Collins, 2003; Price, 2000).

2) The complexity of power

Critical theorists explore how power complicatedly interact between the oppressors and the oppressed (Darder et al., 2003 Denzin & Lincoln, 1998 Freire, 1994, reprinted in Darder et al., 2003 Giroux, 2003; Linchelo & McLaren, 1998; McLaren, 2003). Although the oppressed seem to be treated as weak and pathological, they are still members of a society (Freire, 1994, reprinted in Darder et al., 2003). In other words, students who are considered the oppressed are also the insiders of school. However, there are many barriers for students to overcome the oppressions over students and to be insiders in school, because schools are usually authoritarian institutions designed to maintain social orders and customs, which are constructed by the oppressors (Apple, 1996; Fine & Weis, 2003; Giroux, 1981).

3) Multiple approaches to and reflections on knowledge/power

In addition to examining the social construction of knowledge and the unbalanced power relationship between the oppressors and the oppressed, critical

3) Hegemony refers to a process in which dominant groups exercise social control over subordinate groups through intellectual and moral leadership (Gramsci, 1971). It consists of unbalanced power relations, and is exercised as discourse: "a body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period, and for a given social, economic, geographical, or linguistic area, the conditions of operation of the enunciative function" (Foucault, 1972, p. 117).

theorists take multiple approaches and inquiries (Giroux, 2003; McLaren, 2003). For example, critical theorists problematize a binary definition such as teachers as the oppressors and students as the oppressed, and approach questions with a variety of considerations and possibilities (Giroux, 2003; McLaren, 2003).

Fine's (1991) book, *Framing dropouts: Notes on the politics of an urban public high school*, exemplifies why people need to approach a problem in various ways. Fine reports that students in a working-class neighborhood have a higher rate of dropping out of school compared to students in a middle-class neighborhood, but she does not simplify dropping out as two sides. Instead, she explores how and why students drop out, and describes students' various reasons for dropping out. Students attribute their dropping out to socioeconomic status, teachers' attitudes, poor quality of educational services, lack of motivation for education, and so on. Like the drop-out issue, some phenomena, particularly the issues of class, race and gender, are difficult to account for using objective and scientific explanations alone (Darder et al., 2003; Fine, 1986, 1991; McLaren 2003).

III. THE UNDERSTANDING OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES THROUGH THE LENS OF CRITICAL THEORY

It will be difficult to understand students with disabilities through the lens of critical theory, because critical theorists mostly focus on race, class and gender, not disability (see, e.g., Apple; 1996, 2003; Darder et al., 2003; McLaren, 2003; Price, 2000; Weiler, 2003). Although critical theorists seldom discuss the issues on disability, we, South Korean educators, can apply critical theory into the understanding of the concept of students with disabilities.

For example, critical theorists tend to criticize unbalanced power relationship between the oppressors and the oppressed, and often make an effort to empower the oppressed to claim some ways of social justice and equity (Fine, 1986, 1991; Freire, 1994, reprinted in Darder et al., 2003; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1998; McLaren, 2003; Price, 2000). We, South Korean educators, can critique the unbalanced power relationship between non-disabled students and students with disabilities, and can help students with disabilities to have their voices and rights. Similarly, the lens of critical theory also has multiple approaches to and reflections on knowledge/power,

and critically explores the varying aspects of questions (Giroux, 2003; McLaren 2003). We will be able to critically approach the power relationship between non-disabled students and students with disabilities in various ways

In this section, we discuss the relations among class, gender and disability, the unbalanced power relationship between non-disabled students and students with disabilities, and the ways to support students with disabilities through the lens of critical theory.

1. Class, Gender, and Disability

The lens of critical theory can help understand the intersections among disability, class and gender. As Kudlick (2003) describes disability as a "social category on a par with race, class, and gender" (p. 763), disability, class and gender are not simplified as independent factors, but interact together (Connor, 2005; Davis, 1997; Kudlick, 2003; Thomas, 1999). When, we, South Korean educators, think about students with disabilities from class and gender, we will better understand the interactions among race, class, and gender.

We, South Korean educators, can think how both students with disabilities and working-class students are oppressed in society. For instance, the United States often frames the identities and experiences of minority groups, and lead all people to justify the unjust social arrangements of minority groups such as individuals with disabilities and working-class people as natural (Ferry, Connor, Solis, Valle, & Volpitta, 2005; Tatum, 1997). Through these mainstream cultural images, non-disabled middle-class people exercise their economic, social, cultural, educational and political power over minority groups (Brantlinger, 2003; Fine, 1986, 1991; Scully, 2002). In this context, although minority groups such as individuals with disabilities and working-class citizens are socially, economically, and politically oppressed in society, they will assume their present status as natural.

Similarly, South Korean society will make many South Koreans believe people with disabilities have certain identities and experiences. For example, television will usually show people with disabilities usually depend on their family because of the lack of abilities. When South Koreans are repeatedly exposed to these images of disability, South Korean students with disabilities and their related people will usually assume the unjust social arrangement of people with disabilities as natural (Ferry et al., 2005; Brantlinger, 2003).

2. The Unbalanced Power Relationship between Non-disabled Students and Students with Disabilities

As critical theorists discuss the unbalanced power relationship between the oppressors and the oppressed (e.g., Darder et al., 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Giroux, 2003; Gramsci, 1971; Kang et al., 2007; McLaren, 2003), the lens of critical theory can help people to understand how students with disabilities as the oppressed experience social inequality in South Korea's context.

The lens of critical theory focuses on social, educational difficulties that minority groups such as working-class students experience (hooks, 2003). Similarly, the lens of critical theory can help understand students with disabilities who often experience educational exclusion and difficulties in South Korean general schools. Most South Korean students with disabilities do not receive special education services in general education activities. They only receive special education services while attending special education classrooms. Although some students will receive educational support from general education teachers, these assistances will be not enough for these students to improve their academic achievements. The lens of critical theory can help people to understand the unbalanced power relations surrounding disability. For example, from the lens of critical theory, South Koreans can understand the educational inequality in South Korea's education system. When we, South Korean educators, think about the exclusion of students with disabilities from the lens of critical theory, we will identify how much students with disabilities are educationally marginalized as the oppressed. We can think that South Korea's competitive education system is primarily for the oppressors such as non-disabled students. In this education system, South Koreans will be able to understand that students with disabilities experience a lot of educational inequality as the oppressed (Darder et al., 2003; Ferry et al., 2005; Brantlinger, 2003; Kang et al., 2007; McLaren, 2003; Skrtic, 2004).

The lens of critical theory does not only help South Koreans to understand students with disabilities as the oppressed. It also helps students with disabilities to acquire power in society. For example, when students with disabilities and related people perceive the marginalized position of disability, they will better claim their rights. It is important that students with disabilities and their related people should claim the rights of students with disabilities. Shapiro's (1994) book, *no pity: people with disabilities forging a new civil rights*, shows many examples about how people

with disabilities and their related people achieve civil rights by claiming the rights for people with disabilities. When South Korean students with disabilities and their related people perceive the oppression surrounding disability, they will better claim the human rights for students with disabilities. These efforts will eventually bring students with disabilities to receive equal educational support in South Korea's context. Similarly, the lens of critical theory will help non-disabled people to understand and support human rights of students with disabilities as well as students with disabilities and their related people. From the lens of critical theory, non-disabled people will better understand how students with disabilities are oppressed from the unbalanced power relationship between non-disabled students and students with disabilities. When non-disabled people identify that students with disabilities experience unequal conditions in society, they will better claim and support legal and social improvements for students with disabilities. Therefore, the lens of critical theory can reduce the social and educational gaps between non-disabled students and students with disabilities (Darder et al., 2003; Ferry et al., 2005; Brantlinger, 2003; Guba & Lincoln, 1998; Kang et al., 2007; McLaren, 2003; Shapiro, 1994; Skrtic, 2004).

3. Support of Students with Disabilities through the Lens of Critical Theory

As the lens of critical theory explores various approaches and solutions on the unbalanced power relationship between the oppressors and the oppressed (Giroux, 2003; McLaren, 2003), it will help South Koreans to understand perspectives about disability in society and will suggest the ways about how South Koreans reduce their discriminations about people with disabilities. We discuss how people can understand and support minority groups in race, class and gender, and then we apply the discussion among race, class, and gender to the relationship between non-disabled students and students with disabilities.

As class, race, and gender interweave among social relations, people will have similar strategies to cope with the unbalanced power relations among class, race, and gender (Darder et al., 2003; McLaren, 2003). People need to understand the social relations among class, race, and gender to cope with the discriminations among class, race, and gender. When people understand the types and origins of discriminations among class, race, and gender, they will better reduce the gaps of

the unbalanced power relations among class, race, and gender (Guba & Lincoln, 1998). For example, when some teachers understand what kinds of discriminations their students experience, they will explore whether they exercise their class power to working-class students and whether they discriminate students according to gender (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000). When teachers identify how they discriminate students according to class and gender, they will better decrease these discriminations toward students.

We can apply the unbalanced power relations among class, race, and gender to the unbalanced power relationship between non-disabled students and students with disabilities. South Korean educators first need to understand the unbalanced power relationship between non-disabled students and students with disabilities. South Korean educators will often have low expectations about students with disabilities. Moreover, students with disabilities will be often considered as failure in the ability-centered and competitive society.

South Korean educators can think that students with disabilities have less power than non-disabled students from the lens of critical theory, and they can contemplate themselves whether or not they discriminate students with disabilities. For example, South Korean general education teachers can think about their educational discriminations about students with disabilities from the lens of critical theory, and will recognize that they may have low expectations and negative perceptions about students with disabilities. South Korean general education teachers will usually provide fewer educational opportunities to students with disabilities in comparison with non-disabled students, because South Korean general education teachers have to teach many students at the same time. When South Korean general education teachers understand their educational provision to students with disabilities, they will better cope with their negative perceptions and discriminations about students with disabilities. From the lens of critical theory, South Korean general education teachers will understand if students with disabilities do not receive enough educational opportunities in general education classrooms, these students will be discriminated in their education in comparison with non-disabled students (Darder et al., 2003; Kang et al., 2007; McLaren, 2003; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000; Varenne & McDermott, 1998).

Moreover, South Korean educators can think about students with disabilities as different ways. They can think that students with disabilities have less educational opportunities because of the unbalanced power relationship between non-disabled students and students with disabilities and these students can have better educational

improvement by receiving more educational support. South Korean educators can also think that although students with disabilities seem not to have many abilities as much as non-disabled students do, these expectations come from low expectations about students with disabilities in non-disabled people's society. South Korean educators may think that students with disabilities have a lot of abilities and these students' abilities are less respected in the non-disabled people's society. When South Korean educators think that students with disabilities have various abilities and characteristics as non-disabled students do, they will better accept students with disabilities as the members of society (Darder et al., 2003 Kang et al., 2007; McLaren, 2003 Ritchie & Wilson, 2000 Varenne & McDermott, 1998).

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study attempts to understand disability through the lens of critical theory. We identify two major findings in our study. First, while the lens of critical theory usually discusses class, race, and gender (e.g., Darder et al., 2003 Kincheloe & McLaren, 1998; McLaren, 2003 Weiler, 2003), we examine the issues on class and gender. We explore how school leads people to justify the unbalanced power relationship between middle-class people and working-class people, how middle-class teachers influence students with class differences, and how families with class differences influence their children's education. We identify that people have various characteristics within a class (Brantlinger, 2003; Stalvey, 1989). We also find that women are marginalized in the male-centered society (Apple, 2003; Kenway & Modra, 1992; Weiler, 2003). In other words, the lens of critical theory will help understand disability in terms of the class differences between middle-class students and working-class students and the gender differences between male students with disabilities and female students with disabilities. For example, students with disabilities do not have the same class. Some students will be middle-class, and some students will be working-class. As the lens of critical theory shows, students with disabilities may have different experiences from their school, teachers, and family according to their class. Therefore, it is necessary for us to conduct a study on class. Similarly, from the lens of critical theory, we can think that since students with disabilities can have different experiences according to their gender, we need to

explore how students with disabilities experience differences according to their gender.

Second, the lens of critical theory discusses the unbalanced power relationship between the oppressors and the oppressed (Darder et al., 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Giroux, 2003; Gramsci, 1971; Kang et al., 2007; McLaren, 2003). Although the lens of critical theory usually focuses on the unbalanced power relations among class, race, and gender, it can be applied to students with disabilities. For example, as there are unbalanced power relationship between the oppressors and the oppressed, there will be unbalanced power relationship between non-disabled students and students with disabilities. However, the unbalanced power relationship between non-disabled students and students with disabilities is unfixed (Kang et al., 2007; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1998). Although students with disabilities seem to be powerless, they also have power. Moreover, there are several ways that students with disabilities can acquire more power. For example, students with disabilities can acquire power through the changes of environment such as school, teacher, and family. When students with disabilities have more interactions with others and develop their self-esteem, they will improve their power by understanding how they experience less power than non-disabled students do in society. However, since it will be difficult for students with disabilities to acquire power by their own efforts, non-disabled people should help these students to reduce their oppression in society.

Our study has some limitations. First, we have not deeply examined how class and gender influence disability in society. For example, we need to explore how the power relationship between middle-class people and working-class people has the similarities between non-disabled students and students with disabilities. Second, there will be many students with disabilities who come from other countries, and these students will experience a lot of discriminations because of their race and disability. Although we have not discussed race issue in this paper, it is important to explore the oppression of foreign students with disabilities. Third, the power relationship between class and gender can be different from that between non-disabled students and students with disabilities. Therefore, we need to explore what kinds of power relationship exist between non-disabled students and students with disabilities.

In summary, South Korean students with disabilities do not have a lot of power in teacher-centered, competitive education system. Schools, teachers, and parents will easily think that students with disabilities have problems in comparison with

non-disabled students, and will have lower educational expectations about students with disabilities. However, South Korean students with disabilities have various educational characteristics, motives, and goals as non-disabled students have. We, South Korean educators, need to think about students with disabilities as those who are oppressed in society, and have to help these students to overcome their oppressed conditions. When schools, teachers, and families provide social and educational support to students with disabilities by considering these students as those who have various abilities and characteristics, students with disabilities will have more equal relationship with non-disabled students.

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비판이론을 통한 장애학생들 이해

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<요약>

한국 특수교육은 양적, 질적인 면에서 비약적인 발전을 하고 있다. 하지만, 한국에서는 특수교육에 대한 이론적 논의가 부족해 보인다. 본 연구는 다양한 이론들 가운데 하나인 비판이론을 통해서 장애학생들을 이해하고자 하였다. 연구자들은 비판이론의 관점을 통해 장애를 가진 사람들과 장애를 가지지 않은 사람들 간에 불평등한 권력관계를 어떻게 극복할지에 대하여 논의 하였으며, 불평등한 권력관계로부터 한국 장애학생들을 이해하는데 도움을 주고자 하였다.

주제어: 비판이론, 장애 학생, 불평등한 권력관계

논문 접수: 2008. 1. 25 심사 시작: 2008. 2. 15 게재 확정: 2008. 3. 19