

THE CHANGING MODES OF ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM IN SOUTH KOREA

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Abstract

In this paper, we review the past two decades of administrative reform in South Korea and argue that the dominant models and theories in the field, i.e., New Public Management (NPM), post-NPM, and traditional public administration have been in a state of fusion in implementing measures without a coherent reform model. We observe that the reform movements can neither challenge nor undermine the traditional bureaucracy and maintain that they are the result of a complex mix of both environmental events and contextual factors. We specifically examine the concrete change and development of administrative reform during the Kim Dae Jung (1998-2003), Roh Moo Hyun (2003-2008), and Lee Myung Bak (2008-2013) administrations in South Korea. Among the cases being considered are the restructuring of government ministries, the executive agency system, and rationalization of public enterprises, as well as such performance management schemes as the evaluation system for government departments and the Open Position System. We conclude that the developmental state and the hierarchical bureaucracy are still salient in South Korea's inconsistent administrative reform since the 1990s and that it is crucial to design a prudent reform strategy to achieve a more effective public sector.

Keywords: administrative reform, modes of governance, New Public Management (NPM), post-NPM, traditional public administration, South Korea, developmental state.

1. Introduction

The traditional public administration (PA) has been criticized for not responding to the needs of the public, thus the public sector reform movement, known as New Public Management (NPM), continually gained momentum over the last two decades to provide a seemingly salient alternative to the traditional model of PA. It seems clear that a significant change was brought about in the discipline for many years through various discourses. The NPM has challenged the traditional administrative model based on bureaucracy and unseated it as the best interpretation. However, the obvious question is whether NPM reform has become the 'orthodoxy' that replaced the traditional PA. The debate about the NPM reform agenda has been controversial. Some scholars claim that NPM emerged as a standard international model for retooling government (Clark, 2000, pp. 25-44; Gualmini, 2008, pp. 75-94). Others, however, deny the possibility of convergence, which, they argue, is limited, given that divergence and contextual variation prevail, thereby arguing that NPM-inspired reforms might be nothing more than fads (Goldfinch and Wallis, 2010, pp. 1099-1115).

With NPM convergence being questioned, there is even a discussion on post-NPM as a new model for public sector management. The new development can be depicted as 'a pendulum swing' (Chapman and Duncan, 2007). Some critics assert that NPM is dead and has been replaced by a new electronic governance model, maintaining that the NPM reform message ended in policy disasters (Dunleavy *et al.*, 2005). This suggests that in the wake of the break from the bureaucratic model, the efficacy of NPM should be called into question for its weaknesses. Thus, a variety of subsequent post-NPM initiatives should come into being, to critically assess and transform the NPM-type agenda.

With respect to the ongoing debate over these developments, the nature of public management and administration can be categorized into three dominant modes. According to Osborne (2006, pp. 377-387), these include PA from the late nineteenth century through the late 1970s or early 1980s, followed by the second mode of NPM that lasted until the start of the twenty-first century, and an emergent New Public Governance (NPG), which is a kind of post-NPM agenda. The arguments for these theoretical changes can play a key role in strengthening and legitimizing the need for reform by claiming that similar developments take place elsewhere in the name of improving public management. They serve ideological and political functions to provide unifying support for reform ends, viewing them as orthodox and unavoidable methods to create a myth of convergence (Schrempp and Hansen, 2002).

Yet, preoccupied with certain dominant reform prescriptions, a particular set of reform measures which do not provide an advantage over prevailing ones would be marginalized in practice, as well as becoming intellectually stagnant and outdated. In the face of these problems, this paper challenges the convergence in public management and argues for the need for the adaptation of integral features of the NPM and the post-NPM agenda, even returning to certain aspects of classical PA. Whether widely accepted or widely rejected, each model has its strong and weak points. More

significantly, what is appropriate in reforming public management systems is conditioned with reference to a strategic choice to achieve reform objectives. The evolution of different modes is dialectical. A central tenet of hierarchy with emphasis on the rule of law in traditional PA is challenged by the new claims of NPM coupled with the importance of markets for competition. Subsequently, the emergence of post-NPM, such as New Public Governance and Public Value Management (O'Flynn, 2007), is said to address the intrinsic weakness of NPM by highlighting networks, participation, coordination within and between sectors toward trust with more emphasis on central capacity (Stoker, 2006). Again, as NPM has emerged amid a response to the limitations of the classic mode based on bureaucracy, the common pitfalls of NPM led to the formulation of post-NPM. Likewise, post-NPM is dogged by its own set of potential problems as the discourses become more enriched. To put it differently, a single mode cannot dominate a nation's reform initiatives.

In this paper, we investigate the past two decades of administrative reform efforts in South Korea and argue that the models and theories in the field, including NPM, post-NPM initiatives, and even traditional PA themes are in a state of fusion in implementing measures without a coherent reform model. We emphasize that such fusion was possible due to a sedimentation process in which even old ideas are not superseded but merely added to new ones to resolve emergent problems (Christensen and Laegreid, 2011). Thus, the paper's main theme is to illuminate that the reform movements can be seen as neither challenging nor undermining the traditional bureaucracy and maintain that they are the result of a complex mix of both environmental events and contextual factors.

To support the argument, we examine the concrete change and development of administrative reform, particularly during the Kim Dae Jung administration (1998-2003), the Roh Moo Hyun administration (2003-2008), and the Lee Myung Bak administration (2008-2013). Among the cases being considered are the restructuring of government ministries, the executive agency system, and rationalization of public enterprises, as well as such performance management schemes as the evaluation system for departments and the Open Position System (OPS) in the three administrations. Regarding the research methodology, the case study method is employed to look into several typical examples of reform measures. We conduct textual content analyses of government documents, newspaper articles, and academic works, and utilize quantitative data such as the number of agencies operated by the executive agency system and privatized or merged with others, and changes in the number of officials working for government ministries and in the public sector overall. Furthermore, we take a close look at the specific ways in which the reform measures are managed to identify the reform characteristics of each administration while paying attention to the roles of classic bureaucratic elites in the reform process.

We also stress that the legacies of developmentalism during the 1970s and 1980s, with the bureaucratic elites playing a crucial policy-making role, are still pronounced and cast shadows on all reform efforts over the three administrations in South Korea.

This suggests that the effects of reform movements on de-bureaucratization, which is purportedly one of the main objectives, are superficial. Therefore, the unique South Korean experience can be distinguished from the trajectories of administrative reforms in most Western countries (Cheung, 2012, pp. 209-216). Starting with NPM with a pro-market ideology in the Kim era, the government faced criticism for NPM in some areas under the Roh period, when the policy changed to post-NPM. Traditional PA was even reinstituted during the Lee administration. Accordingly, the administrative reforms have been in a state of NPM and pro-NPM hybridity, in addition to a classical PA re-emphasis on bureaucratic central control as well as state capacity. From this perspective, we submit the argument that the state and the bureaucracy, which have embraced developmentalism since the 1970s, remain as salient as the market or private sector, even in times of ostensible retooling of the South Korean government since the late 1990s. This paper concludes by arguing that a contextual narrative of administrative reforms during the past two decades in South Korea calls into question a convergence in the reforms, and at the same time, disapproves the thesis of the 'hollowing out' of the state (Peters, 1997; Rhodes, 1994) as a consequence of reform efforts. We start by comparing key elements of NPM and post-NPM in the shadow of traditional PA, with an emphasis on the roles of state bureaucracy, before explaining the nature of the administrative reforms in South Korea. The explanation of the reform efforts is made possible with reference to a combination of path-dependency and path-adjustment.

2. Traditional PA, NPM, and post-NPM: Beyond single principles

The possible coexistence of key elements drawn from the three PA approaches means that the hallmarks of traditional PA, i.e., pre-NPM, linger on in spite of administrative reforms. Accordingly, the reform process involves supplementation and tension among the approaches to balance the call for a legitimate political process under a specific context (Stoker, 2006, pp. 42-43). Among the key elements of the traditional PA, which draws heavily on Weberian theory, are a pivotal role of the bureaucracy in policy-making and its delivery in line with the rule of law in a hierarchical division of labor. Through their special knowledge and division between politics and administration, public officers can exercise their power in their area of responsibility. The result is that the professional bureaucracy of the modern state can produce organizational effectiveness by administering rules and guidelines (Olsen, 2005, pp. 8-11). The golden days of the bureaucracy was the welfare state in the wake of World War II, when the state was called upon to address all societal and economic needs of the society while expanding the role of the state relative to the market.

Analogous to the welfare state for Western countries, the bureaucracy for an Asian developmental state, such as South Korea, also served as a key agent to the 'successful' accomplishment of economic development during the 1970s and 1980s. According to Evans (1995), two roles of the bureaucracy in the developmental state are especially worthy of notice. One is the 'midwifery role,' steering and protecting the

private sector from a vulnerable business environment in accordance with the state course of action. The other is the 'husbandry role,' supporting the private sector to push for economy development. The successful story of the state bureaucracy directing development is what Wade (1990) described as a 'governed market model.'

The rise of NPM is intended to alleviate the problems of the monopoly and inefficiency associated with the state bureaucracy of classical PA, especially as government intervention has become larger. Thus, NPM involves a reduction in the discretion and influence of a meritocratic civil service, reflecting the ideology of neo-liberalism in favor of markets. The NPM stresses output controls, managerial responsibility, and disaggregation of public service to an autonomous organization, with growing competition and contracts for service delivery within the public sector. The creation of autonomous agencies, Quangos (Quasi-autonomous Nongovernmental Organizations), that are usually given a single-purpose function primarily related to the delivery or provision of public services, not policy-making, signifies that policy implementation is now separate from policy-making and that policy-making is still in the hands of central sponsor departments. Such NPM-driven attempts at disassembling monolithic departments into autonomous agencies reflect an 'unbundled government' (Pollitt and Talbot, 2004). The performance contract- or competition-oriented government practices come from a core belief that market forces and the business sector rather than bureaucracy have an essential role in meeting public goals. As the debate about 'the hollowed-out state' suggests, NPM was introduced to replace the traditional PA, which was plagued by alleged 'ungovernability' fears since the 1980s in Western countries with welfare states (Skelcher, 2000).

In South Korea, NPM followed the economic crisis of 1997, but without the purported 'ungovernability' issues, ostensibly due to the expansion of welfare programs, and was implemented in the context of the ongoing democratization since 1987. The 1997 financial meltdown cast doubts on the efficacy of a civil service career. The allegedly inefficient civil service was blamed for the 1997 economic crisis and was forced to reform. Subsequently, the post-bureaucratic model of NPM was heavily focused on internal reforms in civil service on the basis of economic rationalist discourses in the aftermath of the economic crisis. In general, following NPM premises of marketization and decentralization of authority would make 'states irrelevant' (Farazmand, 2012). This is in striking contrast to the Asian developmental state emphasizing bureaucracy in guiding the economy and preventing market failures. Whether welfare or developmental states, a common reason for the rise of NPM is the search for solutions to address 'government failures' when faced with economic challenges in different settings, for which the trajectories of administrative reforms can vary.

In spite of economic imperatives, NPM has been subject to prolonged and fierce debate, given that it challenged conventional thinking about the legitimacy of government roles. NPM has encompassed public choice beliefs that governments are unresponsive, monopolistic, and unable to efficiently meet the needs of the public. It calls for policy-makers to adopt policies and practices that would introduce incen-

tive structures based on a principal-agent theory, aimed at increasing efficiency and downsizing the state (O'Flynn, 2007, pp. 354-355). This means that NPM stems essentially from the concept of market supremacy. In order to remedy government failures and maximize efficiency, however, the practical application of NPM, like its predecessor equipped with traditional or bureaucratic models, has been plagued with a range of weaknesses that indicate implementation challenges. For instance, practices were in accordance with the free market economic foundations for a competitive schema in the operation of civil service. However, they tend to result in increasing transaction costs because of the high expenses of contract preparation, monitoring, and enforcement, thereby failing to obtain any real efficiency gains (Entwistle and Martin, 2005).

With NPM's use of market ideology, the restructuring and downsizing of civil services have prompted a decline in accountability and led to increased fragmentation in the making and provision of public services. The combination of these effects is most likely to undermine the fundamental values of public organizations. The result is the erosion of 'citizen trust' in the institutional ability to perform and a growing concern about the legitimacy of market-based governments. The phenomenon caused by these negative results support March and Olsen's statement (*apud* O'Flynn, 2007) that reform 'rarely satisfies the prior intention of those who initiate it' (1989, p. 65).

The competitive reform model of NPM has failed to properly understand what roles beyond market the state bureaucracy has to play in serving the public, which provides an intellectual foundation on which the post-NPM agenda is predicated. The emergence of post-NPM suggests that the efficiency calculus can help the government provide 'public services' through a variety of measures, such as laws, regulations, and collaboration between public and private sectors. Thus, post-NPM introduces a 'network,' 'whole-of-government perspective,' 'reintegration of public sector values,' and 'assertion of central control over agencies' (Goldfinch and Wallis, 2010, p. 1105). The concepts of the overarching post-NPM are labeled as 'public value creation' (McCourt, 2008) and 'integrated governance' (Halligan, 2007). They are seen as an attempt to redefine the state, its purpose, and ways of functioning (O'Flynn, 2007, p. 353).

When it comes to 'public value' itself (Moore, 1994; 1995) contrasted with 'private value,' which is hardly a tangible concept, reform along post-competitive grounds is related to embracing a more positive perspective of the state and its civil servants to deal with complex public policy problems. More fundamentally, at the heart of this lies the state bureaucracy's ability to ascertain which governance systems function best for what public services under what circumstances or which relations with society are appropriate in what conditions. Different from the entrepreneurial managers highlighted by NPM, the bureaucracy under post-NPM is also called upon to serve multifaceted functions, including policy-makers, negotiators, and democrats (Peters, 2009, pp. 10-16), depending on the nature of policy and public service.

In general, post-NPM has developed into a distinctive entity of rebuilding of 'state capacity' and generating employees' commitment to facilitate public value. Its prom-

inent attributes include a return to the pre-NPM view of traditional bureaucratic hierarchical centralized systems. It is closely related to the argument that classical bureaucratic values (e.g., due process, policy capacity building, and political accountability) are necessary to carry out reform. For that reason, post-NPM can be regarded as ‘Neo-Weberian’ grounds (Dunn and Miller, 2007; Pollitt and Bouchaert, 2011). The emergence of the Neo-Weberian State (NWS), a post-NPM approach, is aimed at challenging NPM. Arguing against NPM, NWS emphasizes the centrality of the state whose bureaucratic organizations have their own governing capacity to address domestic and international problems. In this regard, the guiding role of the central bureaucratic organization is at the heart of NWS to carry out administrative reform efforts. Critical of NPM, NWS has served as an important means of comprehending what is happening to and within the government after the NPM-driven reforms have penetrated the public sector. Accordingly, the basic reasoning of NWS is to maintain many of the efficiency ideas related to NPM but, at the same time, to revive the focus of accountability and probity that tended to be overlooked in NPM but that had been more prominent to the traditional models of Public Administration (Peters, 2009, p. 9).

In short, post-NPM features have tried to maintain a balance between efficiency based on market ideology and traditional bureaucratic characteristics to resolve the problem of fragmentation in NPM by enhancing probity and accountability with more central coordination. Table 1 summarizes below the main elements of the three ideal types of public management, i.e., traditional PA, NPM, and post-NPM.

Table 1: A synoptic overview of the ideal types of public management

	Pre-NPM	NPM	Post-NPM
Theoretical roots	Political theory with politics-administration dichotomy	Economic theory with public choice, market ideology	Governance theory with network studies
Images of governments	Rowing, designing and implementing policies	Steering, empowering customers	Serving, creating public values, negotiating interests with stakeholders
Primary mechanisms for delivering services	Establishing specialized government agencies	Creating economic incentive schemes through private and non-private agencies	Setting up networks of public, non-profit, and private agencies agreed upon shared values
Value emphasis for governance	Rule of law	Efficiency	Engagement with the public with policy capacity and probity; Reassertion of the state
Dominant tools for accountability	Hierarchy	Output, result	Multifaceted: Return to central coordination, integration, political process

The development from pre-NPM, through NPM, to post-NPM can be cyclical and dialectical in nature, where the traditional pre-NPM model combines with NPM to shape adaptive and hybrid post-NPM forms. This is contrary to the conventional convergence thesis that reform movements are taking place in a linear manner. It is supported by our analysis of administrative reform during three recent administrations in South Korea, which illustrates in detail that the process of reform is very complex and dynamic.

3. Administrative reform in South Korea

3.1. *Kim Dae-jung administration (1998-2003):*

NPM proposals layered with a powerful bureaucracy

The Kim administration launched, as mandated by the IMF in the wake of the economic crisis of 1997, reform measures in line with NPM ideas to create a smaller and more efficient – but more responsive – government. The NPM reform strategy focused on cuts in the public sector, reduction of the bureaucracy through privatization, and introduction of an agency system. These measures came about as civil society activists along with politicians had criticized the bureaucracy for its inefficiency, lack of competition, and ineptitude because of its monopolistic position and service.

Downsizing the bureaucracy and transforming a hierarchy-based bureaucracy into a competition-oriented one emerged as one of the key issues of the reform agenda. As of the end of 2002, a reduction of 20% of the total public sector was made and the civil service, which had continued to grow at a 2.5% annual rate from 1982 to 1997, was reduced by 7.2% during the Kim administration (Namkoong, 2006, p. 248). Additionally, the number of cabinet ministers was reduced from 21 to 17 (Lee, 2004, p. 114). At the same time, eight state-run enterprises were privatized, with the public workforce shrinking by 16% or by 224,000 employees (Ministry of Planning and Budget, 2002, p. 43). The ‘Executive Agency’ system was introduced, starting with ten affiliated agencies in 2000, by benchmarking a British ‘next step reform of agency.’ During the Kim administration, it was extended to 23 agencies to promote autonomous and responsible management (K. Kim, 2008, p. 3).

The Ministry of Planning and Budget (MPB; the successor to the Economic Planning Board, EPB) controlled and directed the reform process, even in the era of retooling the bureaucracy. Hence it was possible for the central ministry to issue detailed instructions and uniformly push ahead with the implementation and instructions that served as bureaucratic regulations and mandates. Therefore, long standing powerful central ministries, such as the MPB, declared an arbitrary ceiling for reform and pressured other ministries to carry out reforms such as restructuring and privatization.

The introduction of executive agencies was intended to separate policymaking and policy execution functions. In spite of the apparent similarities to executive agencies in Western countries, the institutional characteristics of the quasi-autonomous non-governmental organizations (QUANGOs) in Korea remain distinct, reflecting the interests of multiple central ministries that have been in place as the historical remnants of the developmental state. According to the relevant law, the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs (MOGAHA) and the Ministry of Strategy and Finance (MOSF), respectively, were responsible for the evaluation process and performance incentives for agencies. The MOGAHA, which is in charge of the overall management of the agencies, sets up a group of three to four members including professors and civilian experts for each assigned agency in order to assess the performance. Dependent on the result of the assessment, it can decide whether

to come to terms with or replace the agency heads. The MOSF sets the amount of performance incentives for agencies on the basis of performance appraisals. The two central ministries are long term key stakeholders that the agencies must work with. As argued in the bureau-shaping model (Dunleavy, 1991), the senior officials in the two central ministries strengthen the superiority of control tasks, while delegating routine issues to subordinate agencies and increasing discretionary involvement of the operation of the agency.

In short, much of the NPM-inspired reform efforts during the Kim administration were bureaucratically initiated. With regard to performance management, the MOGAHA and MOSP played a critical role in implementing the reform scheme. The government enacted the Basic Law on the Assessment of Government Performance of 2001. Under the law, all government departments are required to evaluate their tasks based on the year's performance action plan on their own. The process was called self-evaluation and the assessment areas were related to the financial and organizational capability of each department. After completing the self-evaluation stage, the departments have to submit the results of the self-evaluation to supervising ministries, such as MOSF and MOGAHA, which were in charge of overseeing the human resources management of the government. If necessary, the two ministries could re-evaluate the results of the self-evaluation for each department. The long-standing powerful central ministries gained overall control over government departments through the enactment of the system. With the institutional power still controlled by senior bureaucrats, the NPM reforms may be viewed as an opportunity for them to perform functions as 'unelected politicians' by creating new self-governed policy-making schemes and units without political intrusion (Suleiman, 2003).

At the same time, the Open Position System (OPS) program was introduced to recruit competent personnel through open competition among applicants not only from the public sector but also from the private sector. The Civil Service Commission (CSC), newly established in May 1999, exercised a strong influence during the OPS position selection phase to boost the inflow of well-qualified personnel from outside. The result was that as of December 2002, ninety five officials were from the same ministry; five were from other ministries which accounted for 4.2% out of the total of the OPS positions available, and eighteen were civilians, representing 15.3% of the positions. The total number of appointments from outside was 19.5% of 129 OPS positions at the end of the Kim administration (Namkoong, 2003, p. 57).

Reform efforts were dominated by the NPM agenda during the Kim administration, taking on ostensibly isomorphic features, with a structural similarity to Western countries, to gain legitimacy for reform. Added to that, however, are bureaucracy-led characteristics, traceable all the way back to the times of 'the developmental state' between the 1970s and 1980s when the powerful ministries spearheaded state-led economic development through organizational autonomy with technical-instrumental rationality.

3.2. *Roh Moo-hyun administration (2003-2008):*

Reflective of NPM measures toward the emergence of post-NPM

When President Roh took office in February 2003, he launched the Presidential Committee of Government Innovation and Decentralization (PCGID) as a principal engine for public sector reform. The presidential committee consisted of 28 members, including 8 cabinet members and 20 civic experts as well as scholars. The PCGID prepared a roadmap for reform under the theme of 'competent government with people.' The reform objectives lay in the construction of efficient and capable government while bringing people together. The committee was designed to involve civic groups and scholars in cooperation with bureaucrats. The ground rules for reform involved laying out a basic reform agenda in a top-down manner on the basis of the roadmap, with a simultaneous bottom-up approach of reform initiatives at the 'street-level' by bureaucrats as well as civic groups. The PCGID viewed administrative reform as an ongoing process through active interactions between the relevant bureaucrats and scholars as well as civic groups outside the government. The connections between public and private actors led to the creation of network forms for administrative reform where a continuous learning process could be emphasized. As part of the policy network, the Policy Customer Relationship Management (PCRM) was highlighted as a mechanism for conducting policy survey and proposing policy initiatives from civil society (PCGID, 2008, p. 277). The formation of a policy network between bureaucrats and civic groups meant challenging the ideology of NPM, which considers citizens as customers based on a passive commercial transaction, to give a new definition to the relationship between the public and government as an interactive political engagement (Ryan, 2001). It is evident that this development by the Roh administration introduced one of the post-NPM themes to public sector governance.

Regarding the restructuring of government agencies, Roh's reform was based on specific functions and divisions of individual organizations. This is a clear departure from the preceding Kim administration, in which the focus was geared to a comprehensive revamp intended to make the government small and efficient. Rather than the retrenchment of government, the Roh administration placed emphasis on the missions and values that each agency had perceived as their core responsibilities and highlighted the performance of tasks, instead of outputs. In line with those policy directions, unlike the drastic cutback in organization and personnel undertaken by the previous administration, the Roh administration tried to address the needs of the public. The total number of public employees increased from 889,993 people in 2002 at the end of the Kim administration to 975,012 people in 2007 when the term of the Roh administration was near its end. This was an increase of about 9.5%, showing that most agencies enlarged their size (Hwang, 2013, p. 344). Notably, there was a remarkable growth of 2,753 in the Ministry of Labor and Employment in the same period (Hwang, 2013, p. 344). The phenomenon can be viewed as an active government response to the public demand to stabilize industrial relations to countervail the uncertainty of industrial relations governance during the period of concern. More generally, the expansion was

not continuous retrenchment in terms of government size, rather it meant the rebuilding of state capacity, embodying what the government should do according to the will of the public. The expansion was in favor of the notion that public management not only delivers public services, but also cherishes common values.

As the government size became larger, the government moved to privatize public enterprises and receded on the reform agenda. For example, a bid to privatize Korea Railroad, which had been one of the state-run agencies, was under discussion but was rescinded, thereby to remain in the hands of the state as a public enterprise. Unlike the Kim administration, most of the state-run enterprises enlarged their role and size for the sake of their public value rather than market-driven competition. This was in marked contrast with the former administration where privatization was successful in that it made a contribution to making government smaller and more efficient under NPM principles. Accordingly, the restructuring reform of the Roh administration embraced post-NPM inspiration with an emphasis on the creation of public value, as Christensen and Laegried (2007) argued.

Performance management was strengthened by the creation of a new law called the Government Performance Evaluation Act of 2006, amid comprehensive analysis of NPM reforms by the previous administration. Under the new law, with the control of the MOSF and MOGAHA over all the government departments unchanged, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) was added to exercise the authority to appraise central ministries, as necessary, for the purpose of managing public affairs in a balanced and integrated manner. To this end, 'specific evaluation,' composed of regulation reform and specified task analysis, was introduced. The Roh administration made efforts to overcome the fragmentation caused by the competition-led performance management of NPM reforms and to espouse post-NPM ideas that focused more on central capacity, control, and coordination (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011).

The Executive Agency System and OPS, which the preceding Kim administration had set in motion, continued to flourish. For the former, the number of agencies increased from 23 in 2003 to 45 in 2008 (K. Kim, 2010, pp. 15-16). For example, Statistics Korea, which had been a government organization, was transformed into a QUANGO in 2006. With the revision of the applicable law in 2008, executive agencies were no longer required to consult MOGAHA to appoint their heads. In addition, the term of office for the heads was increased from three to five years with a two-year term guarantee. These developments helped strengthen decentralization and autonomy in the operation of executive agencies.

According to the roadmap promulgated by the PCGID, CSC pushed forward with the OPS, another clear example of the influence of NPM. The number of open positions increased continually throughout the Roh administration from 142 in 2003 to 220 in 2007, including 20% of the bureau director positions (S. Kim, 2010, p. 248). The underlying purpose of the OPS is to reinforce the core competencies of civil servants, who might become complacent in the prevailing rank-based system, by exposing them to competition with applicants from the private sector and by reinvigorating

them to improve their personal capacities. The ratio of appointees from the private sector increased from 29.8% in 2003 to 56.1% in 2007 (Korea Statistics, 2014a).

To sum up, unlike the previous Kim administration, which was compelled by the IMF to implement NPM reform measures, the Roh administration featured the emergence of post-NPM, albeit with some aspects of NPM remaining salient. With the PCGD serving as an overarching entity, restructuring efforts turned out to be against NPM by opposing cutback management, but also to be post-NPM by continuing to form state-run public enterprises to uphold the creation of public values. In performance management, the introduction of a specific evaluation system for government agencies since 2006 reinforced the PMO's coordination and control authority. The executive agency system and the OPS, on the other hand, continued to conform to the ideas of NPM accentuating the competence and efficiency of civil service.

3.3. Lee Myung-Bak administration (2008-2013):

Return to traditional PA with an eclectic mix of NPM and post-NPM

The plans for administrative reform by the Lee government were perfunctorily created by the presidential transition committee, with no participation by the civil society. For the Lee administration, in fact, the general direction of the reform was left in the hands of the MOGAHA, MOSF, and PMO, which had played a key role in carrying out reform plans since the 1990s, in a traditional bureaucratic manner. This is different from the Roh administration where the PCGID, whose hallmark was the formation of networks between bureaucrats and civilian experts, led the reform in a participatory governance fashion. The new Lee government suffered from an economic slump caused by the financial crisis in the USA and Europe in 2008. The unfavorable international conditions made the situation unstable, slowing the rate of economic growth from 2.8% in 2008 to 0.7% in 2009, bouncing back to 6.5% in 2010, and falling again to 3.7% in 2011, and 2.3% in 2012 (Korea Statistics, 2014b).

The depressed economic circumstances provided a good reason for restructuring reform in line with the NPM theme for the Lee government, which claimed to be 'pragmatic,' to make it more efficient and competitive. The MOSF designed and oversaw the cutback management plan on the basis of NPM. As a result, the annual growth rate of total civil service in 2008, the first year of Lee's term, stood at -0.7% and increased slightly to 0.2% in 2009, remaining at less than 1% until the end of the Lee administration in 2012 (technically, early 2013). This shows a marked contrast with the preceding Roh administration whose annual average rate was about 2% between 2003 and 2007 (Lee and Kim, 2012, pp. 37-38).

In the context of the prolonged economic recession, the number of ministries also decreased from 18 in 2007 to 15 in 2008, and the privatization of state-run enterprises remained an essential feature of Lee's reform agenda to allegedly make his government smaller and more efficient. Three public enterprises were completely privatized; thirty four were restructured and consolidated into fifteen, with a reduction of twenty two thousand employees, as of 2011 (Cho, 2011, p. 43).

Performance management was rather inconsistent for the Lee administration. Seemingly, the Lee government followed in the footsteps of the past two governments: the PMO and supervising organizations, including the MOGAHA and the MOSE, oversaw, monitored, and, if necessary, re-evaluated the results of self-evaluation for all departments of the government. Taking advantage of the specific evaluation scheme introduced and implemented since 2006, the PMO added 'green growth' in 2009 and 'job creation' in 2010 to the existing list of specific evaluation subjects that already included 'regulatory reform' and 'customer satisfaction,' left over from the previous Roh administration. This addition demonstrates increased efforts to strengthen the executive center, which is associated with post-NPM characterized by coordination through more centralized capacity (Lodge and Gill, 2011).

With regard to the OPS, however, the Lee administration continued to follow the NPM reform formula, similar to its predecessors, the Kim and Roh administrations. The number of open positions increased from 188 in 2008, to 210 in 2010, and to 311 in 2012 (Korea Statistics, 2014a). This increase, however, is misleading. Despite the apparent surge in the 'open' positions, the proportion of persons recruited from outside the government persistently decreased from 56.1% in 2007 under Roh, which was a record high, to 45% in 2009 under Lee. The rate fell from 44.3% in 2011, to 37.4% in 2012, and continued to drop to 36.1% in 2013 (Korea Statistics, 2014a). It is likely that the open positions were in fact filled with traditional bureaucrats, instead of persons from the private sector. In that respect, it would be reasonable to argue that the Lee administration veered away from NPM to return to the mode of traditional PA in operating the OPS. Another clear sign of the return to the traditional PA mode was the abolishment of the CSC, which was established in 1999 during the Kim administration and in operation through the Roh administration, as the President's independent entity to design, mandate, and advance the performance-oriented OPS. The Lee government decided to repeal the personnel agency and transferred its functions to the MOGAHA.

The reinforcement of the MOGAHA, integrating policy-making and implementation processes to enhance the effectiveness of the delivery of public services, was meant to turn away from NPM's emphasis on organizational disaggregation. Alford and Hughes (2008, p. 137) see this shift as one of the elements of post-NPM. At the same time, it was bound to entail an emphasis on the hierarchical nature of government organizations, to function as internal control mechanisms over subordinates. The organizational revamp of the MOGAHA and CSC in South Korea thus points to the reemergence of a traditional or Weberian administrative process, which is associated with post-NPM (Goldfinch and Walls, 2010, pp. 1109-1115).

Meanwhile, the number of executive agencies was reduced from the peak of 45 in 2007 under Roh to 38 in 2012 under Lee. The decline implies that the Lee government questioned the efficacy of the performance-contracts scheme drawn from the principal-agent theory to improve the managerial autonomy of the agency heads (Van Thiel and Pollitt, 2007). A good example of the growing skepticism includes the fact that three of the road maintenance 'autonomous' agencies turned into hierarchical

‘departmental’ agencies under the direct control of their parent ministry, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport. Additionally, two agriculture-related agencies were withdrawn from the executive system in 2008.

On the whole, the administrative reform efforts during the Lee administration were a return to the mode of traditional PA with an inconsistent mix of NPM and post-NPM. NPM-driven measures such as restructuring and privatization were led by the MOSF serving as a ‘control tower,’ reminiscent of the developmental state during the 1970s and 1980s. Meanwhile, performance management for government departments was linked to post-NPM with an emphasis on policy coordination and coherence. The number of civil servants recruited from the private sector through the OPS declined, while the number of agencies that reverted back to the hierarchical bureaucratic structure increased. See Table 2.

4. Conclusion and implications

As shown in Table 2 below, administrative reforms in South Korea have been inconsistent, with the exception of the Kim administration, which vigorously pursued NPM reforms in the aftermath of the 1997 economic crisis. During the Roh administration, both NPM and post-NPM governance mechanisms coexisted and interacted with each other. While adhering to the OPS and executive agency system in line with NPM, the government also pursued a post-NPM reform agenda to build the capacity of the public sector, to strengthen the core public service, and to enhance policy coordination, which all points to integrated governance (Halligan, 2007). The Lee administration preserved certain aspects of integrated governance, with a mix of NPM and post-NPM – but also with a return to traditional PA. The traditional personnel central ministry such as the MOGAHA, in cooperation with the MOSF, was empowered to enforce hierarchical control and top-down ‘coordination,’ thus confirming the resurrection of classical PA. On top of that, empowerment of the executive center is beyond NPM (Kolltveit, 2015). With the institutional capacity to administer performance evaluation of line ministries, which were in the process of devolution and horizontal separation due to NPM reforms, PMO strengthened its ability to identify necessary actions in an overreaching fashion to improve coherence and coordination of cabinet policies. The re-centering efforts were to address the possible negative sectorization effects of NPM reforms.

The South Korean case demonstrates that a trajectory of administrative reform is very complex and is often full of inconsistencies, contradictions, advances and setbacks, initiatives and reversals, and so on. The three South Korean governments selectively adopted and carried out elements of NPM, post-NPM, and traditional PA, without convergence on a single administrative reform model. Rather, the three available models of administrative reform have coexisted and co-evolved. These findings dispute the arguments for public management convergence in which a particular reform theme in public sector governance prevails in carrying out legitimizing administrative reform. Rather, they prove that convergence is just a ‘myth’.

Table 2: A comparison of reform measures and modes of governance of three administrations in South Korea, 1998-2013

	Reform Measures			
	Restructuring		Performance Management	
Kim (1998-2003)	Cutback Management	Privatization	Evaluation System	Executive Agency System
	Reduction of 20% of total public sector; Decline in number of cabinet ministers from 21 to 17	Eight state-run enterprises privatized	Government departments required to evaluate their tasks outside government	Started with 19.5% of 129 OPS positions recruited from outside government Started with 10 executive agencies
Key Institutions & Values	The MOSF & Efficiency		The PMO in cooperation with MOSF and MOGAHA & Competition	The MOGAHA & Efficiency
Mode of Governance	NPM	NPM	NPM	NPM
Roh (2003-2008)	Cutback Management	Privatization	Evaluation System	Executive Agency System
	Increase of 9.5% of public employees; Establishment of new government agencies	Most of state-run agencies enlarging their role	Specific evaluation newly introduced, retaining department evaluation	Rose to 56.1% of 220 OPS positions recruited from outside government Increased to 45 executive agencies
Key Institutions & Values	The MOSF on the basis of plans of the PCGID & Public ethos on network with civil society and Re-building state capacity		The PMO based on roadmap made by the PCGID & Competition but also coordination	The MOGAHA & Efficiency
Mode of Governance	Post-NPM	Post-NPM	Post-NPM amid NPM	Deepened NPM
Lee (2008-2013)	Cutback Management	Privatization	Evaluation System	Executive Agency System
	Annual growth rate of less than 1% of total civil service; Decrease in number of ministries from 18 to 15	Three state-run enterprises privatized; Reduction of number of state-run enterprises from 34 to 15	Expansion of specific evaluation, with no change in department evaluation	Dropped to 37.4% of 331 OPS positions recruited from outside government Decreased to 38 executive agencies
Key Institutions & Values	The MOSF & Efficiency		The PMO in cooperation with the MOSF and MOGAHA & Competition but also coordination	The MOGAHA & Central coordination
Mode of Governance	Back to NPM	Back to NPM	Deepened post-NPM amid NPM	Return to traditional PA

However, it is imperative to point out that the key components of the developmental state of the 1970s and 1980s have lingered throughout the vicissitudes of administrative reform in South Korea. The central ministries, such as MOSF, MOGAHA, and PMO, have played important roles as supervisory ministries, designing, monitoring, and evaluating reforms. In other words, the structural legacies of the developmental state continued to inform and guide the actual unfolding of post-developmental, post-democratic administrative reform in the country. In this regard, to understand and explain a country's administrative reform, it is crucial to go beyond the rhetoric of reform and to analyze in detail its developmental history and the current nature of its methods of governance. To put it differently, the three governments' reform efforts in concern can be explained through a combination of path-dependency and path-adjustment. The nature of path-dependency is evident in that the key central ministries played a pivotal role in driving and steering reform, and most had orchestrated and implemented the government economic development plans during the 1970s and the 1980s. Thanks to their imbedded governing capacity, the bureaucracies were instilled with the value of reforms since the mid-1990s in overseeing reform measures. The characteristic of path-adjustment became visible in the way the governing capacity is administrated in response to the changing administrative environment. A good example is that the PCGID, some of whose members were from the civil society, was allowed to take part in the process of adopting and implementing reform measures. As the concept of path-adjustment suggests, this new practice of civic participation demonstrated that internal bureaucratic rules extended to responding to the needs of citizens but still retained and exercised the central control of the government. The recapture of central control, as reflected in the NWS prescriptions, indicates that the traditional forms of governance are never dead but are supplemented by new reform measures for control. The combination of path-dependency and path-adjustment significantly epitomizes the balance between performance-oriented management introduced by NPM or post-NPM reform efforts and traditional control mechanism introduced by the central ministries.

Hierarchical bureaucracies and control mechanisms do not disappear overnight due to NPM measures such as contract and competition or post-NPM values such as coordination and integration. In a setting where developmentalist legacies still linger, powerful political and administrative actors find the traditional PA model useful. The South Korean example showcases the importance of designing an appropriate amalgam of reform measures to rein in vested interests and to achieve a more capable and effective public sector. This implies that the understanding of the specific context is crucial to explain the developments of administrative reforms.

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