

Civil Service Reform in Participatory Government: Civil Service System in Transition*

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Abstract: This paper analyzes the recent reform initiatives of the civil service system in Korea. The modern civil service system was founded during the Park Jung-Hee Administration. The major characteristics of the system can be summarized as a merit-based, rank-oriented, closed career, and centralized management system. The Korean civil service system was instrumental during the period of government-led growth. However, the 1997 financial crisis and the ensuing economic recession instigated the Korean government reform program, including civil service reform. As the package of civil service reform policies has been formulated and implemented during the Kim Dae-Jung and the Roh Moo-Hyun administrations, the Korean civil service system is experiencing a paradigm shift from a rank-oriented, closed-career, seniority-based, and centralized management system to a job-oriented, open-career, performance-based, and decentralized system. This article outlines three factors explaining the transformation. For Korean civil service reform to be successful, implementation is required for a certain period of time. The article discusses several tasks that are necessary for fully achieving the reform goals of the participatory government.

Keywords: Civil Service Reform, Civil Service System, Government Innovation, Korea

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the recent reform initiatives of the civil service system in Korea. In general, the term *civil service*¹ means the remunerated personnel, other than those serving in the armed forces, whose functions are to administer policies formulated by or approved by national governments (Bogdanor, cited in Bekke, Perry, and Toonen, 1996, 1). This paper deals mainly with career civil servants working for the national government. A civil service system is typically the primary means for staffing the administrative organizations of the state (Bekke, Perry, and Toonen 1996, 5). Key issues surrounding civil service system design are as follows: recruitment (open or closed), selection basis (selection for a career or a program), job evaluation (rank and pay vested in positions or persons), performance appraisal (performance-based or seniority-based pay formula), and personnel management authority (centralized or decentralized). This paper discusses some of these issues in relation to Korean civil service system reform initiatives.

Section II describes the formation process of the modern civil service system of Korea and the major characteristics of the system. Section III deals with the recent reform efforts initiated by the Kim Dae-Jung Administration and the participatory government of President Roh Moo-Hyun. In general, the reform efforts produced a civil service system considerably different from the former system. After describing the background to the reform initiatives, the reform efforts will be analyzed. They are grouped into five categories: (a) from closed to open recruitment, (b) enhancing the representativeness of the civil service, (c) developing competency for specialists, (d) from a seniority-based to a performance-based system, and (e) from a centralized to a decentralized personnel management system. Section III presents a summary and conclusions.

MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CIVIL SERVICE SYSTEM IN KOREA

Formation of the Civil Service System in Korea

The modern civil service system began in 1949 with the passing of the National

1. Civil service is differentiated from public service, which also includes civilian personnel working with the armed forces, armed forces personnel serving government in a civilian capacity, the judiciary, employees of local governments and public corporations, school and university teachers, and employees of other agencies (Bekke, Perry, and Toonen 1996, 1).

Civil Service Act during the Rhee administration (1948-1960). The act specified, in legal form, the basic tenets of civil service, which were based on the principles of the merit system (Kim 2006, 8). The act was relatively short, with the full text covering only 57 articles. Among others, it included the following provisions: (a) it classified regular government positions into five ranks; (b) two levels of examination were set up: the higher civil service examination and the ordinary civil service examination; (c) it established the Ministry of Government Administration as the central personnel agency; and (d) it emphasized that civil servants should maintain political neutrality.

In spite of the provisions based on the merit system, an illegal and informal form of a political spoils became popular, because President Rhee and the ruling Liberal Party wanted to assure the civil servants' loyalty (Kim 2006, 9; Oh 1993, 32; Park 1980, 42-44). The form of the spoils system was different from that of early 19th Century United States. In the United States, the spoils system meant the political selection of federal job holders and massive turnover according to electoral results. In contrast, during the Rhee administration, political considerations affected personnel management with regard to filling empty positions and effecting transfers and promotions (Park 2006, 43). Disobedient civil servants were sometimes illegitimately removed from office. The practice of the spoils system intensified as the ruling Liberal Party abruptly lost popularity and the people's confidence.

On April 19, 1960, the Liberal Party government was overthrown in a student revolution. As a result, the Chang administration (1960-1961) was established on August 23, 1960. Although the Chang administration attempted to introduce several changes in the civil service system (Yoo 1973), the administration was not effective in ensuring political stability or governmental efficiency, because of the prevailing societal constraints of political turmoil and unrest following the April student revolution (Kim 1982, 60). In addition, an informal and illegal form of the spoils system still prevailed in personnel administration. Whereas the spoils system in the United States contributed to the democratization of politics, the Korean system continued to be affected by the prolonged rule of President Syngman Rhee.

As a result of the military coup on May 16, 1961, the military junta took over the combined legislative, executive, and judicial functions of the government. After amending the Constitution, the Park Jung-Hee administration began its first term in 1963. The core members of the Park administration had acquired considerable knowledge and skills at personnel administration because they had been trained in large-scale military administration for the previous 10 years. Their knowledge, skill, and enthusiasm for efficient administration led to reforms of the civil service system. In addition, advisors from the United States Operation Mission (USOM)² recommended civil service reforms, including installation of a position classification system (Yoo

1973). In this context, the Park administration enacted the new National Civil Service Act on April 17, 1963. The innovative characteristics of this new system were as follows: (a) reinforcement of the central personnel agency, (b) centralization of recruitment and testing, (c) change of the test system from qualification exam to recruitment exam, (d) adoption of a position classification system, (e) establishment of a work performance and career system, (f) reinforcement of the education and training system, (g) improvement of the pension system, and (h) establishment of the Appeals Commission (Kim 2006, 11). The Civil Service Training Act was enacted on November 1, 1961.³ On November 1, 1963, the Position Classification System Act was also enacted in an attempt to introduce a position classification system similar to that used in the United States. The act stipulated that all general positions should be classified according to the position classification system. However, it was not actually implemented because it did not fit the realities of the Korean civil service system, which was rooted in the rank system. As a consequence, the Position Classification Act was abolished on February 5, 1973. Although the Civil Service Pension Act was legislated in January 1, 1960, during the Chang administration, it was actually enforced during the Park Administration.

Thus the civil service system was renovated through a series of innovations during the Park Administration. It can be said that the Park administration laid the foundation of the civil service system in Korea. However, the reform initiatives were taken within a short time period, with insufficient knowledge and skills. In addition, the politicians and civil servants who were operating these systems did not fully understand the innovation measures (Park 1980, 45). As a result, sometimes the renovated system did not work properly, and there was a considerable gap between operation in the field and the design of the system.

Major Characteristics of the Korean Civil Service System

The Korean civil service system founded during the Park Administration (1963-1979) underwent continuous development in succeeding administrations. For exam-

2. USOM is an operational agency of U.S Agency for International Development. Mr. Charles W. Terry, a USOM personnel advisor, stayed in Korea for two weeks as a consultant and spent considerable time reviewing the central personnel systems of the Korean Government, particularly in the office of the Personnel Bureau, the Ministry of Finance, the National Official Training Institute, and the Graduate School of Public Administration of Seoul National University.

3. The Act was abolished later as the new Civil Service Education and Training Act was enacted on February 5, 1972.

ple, in 1981, the National Civil Service Act was revised, focusing on increasing the job security of civil servants, thus increasing efficiency through the establishment of a career civil service system. As the corruption of civil servants became a hot issue during the early 1980s, the Civil Service Ethics Act was established on January 1, 1983, and a property registration system for higher civil servants was enforced.

However, the major characteristics of the Korean civil service system did not change much until the 1990s. The basic characteristics of the Korean civil service system can be summarized as the merit system, the rank-oriented classification system, the closed-career system, and the centralized management system.

Merit System

In its broadest sense, a *merit system* is a personnel system in which comparative merit or achievement governs each individual's selection and progress in the service (Stahl 1976, 41-42).⁴ In Korea, although the merit principle was officially declared in the 1949 National Civil Service Act, it did not actually operate during the Rhee and the Chang administrations. The merit principle was actually settled during the Park administration (Oh 1993, 32-33). Article 26 of the National Civil Service Act of 1963 prescribed that "civil servants are employed in accordance with exam result, work performance, and actual ability," and thus formally incorporated the merit principle.

Since the new National Civil Service Act was enacted on April 17, 1963, the open competitive entrance examination has become the most common method of recruitment. Open competitive entrance examinations were classified into three types according to ranks (or grades). They are the Senior Civil Service Examination for grade 5, the Open Competitive Entrance Examination for grade 7, and the Open Competitive Entrance Examination for grade 9. The examinations are divided into three categories according to occupational groups: administrative service, foreign service, and technical service. The examinations are administered by the Central Personnel Agency. There are often upper and lower age limits for candidates. All three types of civil service examination are highly competitive, with the number of applicants far exceeding the number of personnel recruited.

4. The concept of a merit system itself is not clear. Initially it applied solely to the manner of entrance into the civil service. Nowadays, the term merit system is commonly used not only to convey the form of selection for entrance to the civil service but also to embrace other aspects of the personnel system, that is, advancement on merit, pay related to the nature of the job and to quality of performance, and desirable working conditions.

Rank Oriented Classification System

According to Article 3 of the National Service Act of 1949, all public employees were grouped into two major service categories: the special category (byuljong jik)⁵ and the general category (ilban jik). The general category included all positions other than the special category positions. There were two legal provisions for the general category. Article 10 of the National Civil Service Act stated that the civil service was classified into five ranks according to the amount of compensation that the employee received. Article 22 of the Act provided that the compensation of public employees would be determined according to the differences of the duties and responsibilities of the work. Thus it may be said that Korean position classification was based on a rank system.

Table 1. Classification of General Service According to Duties and Responsibilities, 1961

Rank	Number of Job Classifications within ranks	Description of Ranks
1	16	Assistant Vice-Minister, Planning Coordinator, Provincial Governor
2	24	Central Bureau Director, Directors of Field Offices
3A	32	Central Section Chiefs, Heads of Large Field Offices
3B	31	Central Subsection Chiefs, Heads of Small Field Offices
4	25	Senior Clerk
5	20	Junior Clerk
technical service	111	
Total	259	

Source: Yoo, Jong-Hae 1973. "Reforms in the Civil Service Administration in Korea." p. 111.

Although the Korean government announced that it would adopt the position classification plan as a part of the civil service reform in 1961, nothing satisfactory was accomplished during the Park administration. Although there were 132 job classifications in the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th ranks (as shown in Table 1), there were only 36 different kinds of duties (Yoo 1973). Thus there was no genuine position classification based on duties and responsibilities. The position classification simply categorized

5. The special category includes (a) officials who are elected or whose appointment requires the consent of the National Assembly; (b) Members of the Council of State (Ministers), heads of offices, and Vice-Ministers, (c) Ambassadors and Ministers in the foreign service; (d) judges, teachers, secretaries, members of the Armed Forces, and other personnel who are designated by law as being in special categories; (e) personnel who are engaged in manual work. The National Civil Service Law does not apply to the Special category service.

jobs into five levels of rank to identify different levels of compensation, prestige, and status (Yoo, 1973). Many positions that were not similar with respect to duty, responsibility, authority, and training were classified in the same rank. Under this classification system, those who had the same rank could be transferred to other ministries to perform entirely different jobs; skill specialization was not required.

In 1961, the revised National Civil Service Act introduced the new rank system, which was a modified form of the rank system, with nine ranks instead of five. The additional ranks resulted from establishing A and B subgrades in ranks two through five: Grade 2A (Central Bureau Directors), 2B (Directors of Field Offices), 3A (Central Section Chiefs), 3B (Central Subsection Chiefs, Heads of Small Field Offices), 4A (Senior Clerk I), 4B (Senior Clerk II), 5A (Junior Clerk I), and 5B (Junior Clerk II). To a certain extent, these additional classifications enabled personnel officers to better assign a person to the proper job within the proper grade level, thus providing better means to realize the equal pay for equal work concept. However, this new system was simply a modification of the rank system with more grade subdivisions. In other words, the government did not establish position classification in the real sense. Because of the rank-oriented system, employees with positions of widely varying difficulty and responsibility not only received the same pay, but also received no salary adjustment in spite of significant changes in the complexity and scope of their work (Yoo, 1973).

In 1981, the nine rank system was changed into a nine grade system, with grade 1 being the highest (assistant minister level) and grade 9 the lowest. This grade system applies fully to the engineering and administrative occupational groups. Other occupational groups, although not so well suited for this grade system, widely use a *grade-equivalency* to define their status relative to those in the administrative occupational group. For instance, public school principals, police chiefs, and researchers who are heads of divisions in research agencies are all regarded as being equivalent to a grade 4 official in the administrative group (a division chief in a central government agency). The qualification of every government position is specified strictly in terms of title. A bureau chief, for instance, would hold the title of administrative associate executive manager (grade 3) or administrative executive manager (grade 2). In this manner, position assignments became strictly grade based (Kwon 2006).

Closed Career System

The career civil service system can be classified into two types, closed and open. The closed career system is the typical style found in countries that use a rank-oriented classification system. In this system, positions in the middle rank are not open to outside applicants, but only to those who started in low-level positions and were promot-

ed internally. In contrast, in the open career system, individuals can move from positions in the private sector to civil service jobs (lateral entry) and back again to private employment, thus providing flexibility and maximizing opportunity and expertise. In the United States, the Civil Service Reform Act of 1883 (Pendleton Act) initiated a unique open career system.

Korea used the closed type career system. Newly employed civil servants started at the very bottom of a certain rank group, and outside appointment was not allowed except for a few special positions. There is no room for the principle of open competition between the public sector and private sector in the closed hierarchical system typified by seniority-based personnel management with guaranteed lifetime employment. New outside recruitment for career service is made at the 9th, 7th, and 5th grade levels. Manpower vacancies at the 9th grade are met by new recruitments, while vacancies at the 7th and 5th grades are filled in large part by promotions or transfers from other civil service positions and, to a lesser extent, through new recruitment. Grade promotions are made either by competitive examination or by reviews of candidates. To be a candidate for promotion, one should first meet the minimum grade-specific length-of-service requirements. To be chosen from a field of candidates, although the results of performance evaluations and training matter to some extent, seniority is the key. It is in this sense that promotions are mainly seniority based (Kwon 2006).

Centralized Personnel Management System

The Central Personnel Agency (CPA) of Korea has been changed several times since the establishment of self-governance in 1948. In 1948, personnel administration was managed by the Personnel Bureau within the Ministry of Government Administration (MOGA), under the Office of the Prime Minister. Competitive and noncompetitive recruitment was separately managed by the Recruitment Examination Commission (REC) under the Office of the President. From February 1955, when the prime minister system was abolished and the State Council Secretariat was set up, personnel management functions were performed by the Administrative Bureau of the State Council Secretariat. From May 1963, the Ministry of Government Administration (MOGA) took charge of personnel administration functions. With the government restructuring of Feb 28, 1998, MOGA was merged with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to form the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs (MOGAHA). Consequently, personnel functions were performed by MOGAHA.

The personnel management functions were centralized from the beginning and were not altered in spite of the changes to the CPA. During the authoritarian regimes (1961-1992), the centralized personnel management system was reinforced even more. The CPA managed virtually all civil service entrance examinations and inter-

vened in the process of promotions within the government as a whole. The CPA managed not only personnel administrative functions of the central government but also those of local governments to a certain extent. Although centralized management has some advantages such as improving standardization, efficiency, and specialized counseling, it also has disadvantages such as administrative delays and inflexibility.

CIVIL SERVICE REFORMS IN PARTICIPATORY GOVERNMENT

Background to the Civil Service Reform of the Participatory Government

Reform Efforts of the Kim Dae-Jung Administration

Over the past three decades, public sector reforms have been ubiquitous in many countries. As with many other countries, crisis was the impetus for the recent public sector reform in Korea. The 1997 financial crisis and the ensuing economic recession instigated the Korean reform program. Before the 1997 crisis, the Korean economy had made phenomenal progress by pursuing a government-led growth strategy. Starting from the ranks of the underdeveloped nations in the 1960s with a per capita GNP of only \$80, Korea had risen to become one of the 10 largest economic powers by the end of the 1990s. However, underlying the exceptional results of the government-led growth strategy were wide-spread inefficiencies in the public sector (MPB, 2002). Policy makers began to recognize that the old system and old methods had become antiquated and rendered the public sector impotent to carry out the internal changes necessary to recover from the crisis. Meanwhile, new public management (NPM) became a standard for public sector reform programs in Anglo-American countries. The NPM approach is characterized by elements such as restructuring to streamline organizations and the workforce, operation system innovations to promote competition and efficiency, and decentralization and greater autonomy through delegation to private organizations and local governments.

Embracing these elements, the Kim Dae-Jung administration sought to create “a small and efficient but better serving government,” the ultimate goal of which was to increase Korea’s national competitiveness (MPB, 2002). The Kim administration followed the Anglo-American Model of NPM reform strategy, which concentrated on reducing the size of the public sector and streamlining the bureaucracy through privatization and downsizing. To make government smaller, the number of civil servants was drastically reduced during the Kim Dae-Jung administration. In the relatively short space of just four years (1998-2002) a reduction of 20% of total public sector

employment was achieved. In the central government, the 162,000 employees (excluding nonadministrative personnel such as teachers, police, and security staff) had been reduced by 22,000, while local governments had dismissed 57,000 employees out of 291,000. For public enterprises and government-affiliated organizations, 62,000 out of 247,000 (25%) had been reduced (MPB 2002, 52-53). The size of the civil service, which had steadily grown at an annual rate of 2.5% from 1982 to 1997, was reduced by 7.2% during the Kim Dae-Jung Administration, bringing it below the 1992 level. Consequently, as of 2000, Korea had only 18 civil servants per 1000 people, which is substantially lower than the ratio in Japan (35), the United States (75), or the United Kingdom (65).

Although downsizing can involve straightforward subtraction, it requires various ideas and strategies to make the government perform better with a smaller workforce without sacrificing the quality of public service (Kim and Lee 2001). It is the public servants who design, implement, and deliver the services that the public needs. Without public servants who are capable and dedicated, most of the reform package cannot materialize. As Kettl et al. (1996, 3) argued, "government's performance can only be as good as the people who do its work. When it fails to recruit, retain, and reward the best possible people, or when it subjects good people to bad systems, government's performance inevitably suffers and taxpayers lose."

Thus, civil service reform is the core of public service reform. The civil service reforms of the Kim Dae-Jung administration dealt with almost every aspect of personnel management, including the establishment of a new commission for personnel management, an open position system, and performance-based personnel management (MPB 2002, 102-114; Kim and Lee 2001). It is worth mentioning the Civil Service Commission (CSC), which was established on May 24, 1999. The scope of the Commission's responsibilities includes formulating general policies for personnel management, reviewing the promotion of senior civil servants and other personnel actions, and implementing the open position system. Before the establishment of the CSC, government-wide personnel management was performed by MOGAHA. However, human resource management is still one of the many functions the MOGAHA performs.

Although the principle of small government was not adopted by the participatory government of President Roh Moo-Hyun, other civil service reforms initiated by the previous administration, including the open-position system and performance-based management, were strongly pursued and elaborated. These aspects of the civil service reform efforts of the Kim administration will be discussed later.

Overview of the Civil Service Reform of the Participatory Government

The government innovations of the Roh Moo-Hyun administration inherited ele-

ments of the previous Kim Dae-Jung administration's pursuit of an efficient and better serving government. Even so, it differs from past governments in several ways (Namkoong 2006). The direction of the innovation distinguishes itself. In the past, small government with minimized government intervention was the main idea. On the other hand, the Roh administration is emphasizing the active role of the government. In essence, the Roh administration adopted a participatory model of governing rather than the previous market model or the new public management model (see Peters 1996). In such a context, the Roh administration has called itself a participatory government. The Roh administration views the civil service as the main partner in this innovation. In other words, it has chosen the strategy of encouraging participation from middle- and low-level public workers. The Roh administration has vigorously sought expert and citizen participation in the process of government innovation.

A prominent feature of the Roh administration's innovation is the fact that a presidential committee was set up for the sole purpose of taking charge of government innovation and decentralization (Namkoong 2006). The previous Kim Dae-Jung administration had instead relied on an official government organization in the Ministry of Planning and Budget. Although an official organization has the advantage of legally binding powers to enforce proposed plans, it inherently lacks creativity, which is an essential element of the innovation process. On the other hand, ad hoc advisory commissions of the past, comprising only outside specialists, lacked legally binding powers. The Presidential Committee on Government Innovation and Decentralization (PCGID), established in April 2003, shortly after the inauguration of Roh Moo-Hyun, comprised both outside specialists and government officials. The composition of PCGID members combines the advantages of the creativity of the private sector and the binding powers of a government organization. Many civilian professionals and representatives of civic organizations have participated in agenda setting and policy formation. By August 2003 the innovation road map was developed, based on the opinions of academic scholars and civilian professionals participating in the Presidential Committee.

According to the road map, the vision of government innovation of the Roh administration was defined as a "transparent and competent government" To achieve this vision, five goals were drawn up: "an efficient government, better-serving government, transparent government, decentralized government, and people-centered government." The road map included 23 national agendas consisting of 150 specific tasks in the fields of administrative reform, personnel management reform, electronic government reform, finance and tax system reform, and decentralization reform.

The road map of civil service reform was formulated by the Human Resource Management Reform Sub-committee of the PCGID⁶ in collaboration with the Civil

Service Commission, and was announced in July 2003 with a timetable for implementation. The vision of civil service reform was “building a participatory HR management system based on fairness and expertise.” To accomplish this vision, 20 specific tasks were chosen. They can be grouped into five categories: (a) moving recruitment of core talents from closed to open, (b) enhancing the representativeness of the personnel system, (c) developing competencies from generalist to specialist, (d) changing the reward system from seniority based to performance based, and (e) moving personnel authority from a centralized to a decentralized system. We will discuss each of these issues in detail.

In order to implement civil service reform tasks effectively, government-wide personnel management functions separately performed by the CSC and the MOGAHA were consolidated on June 12, 2004. The revised National Civil Service Act of March 2004 provided the CSC with increased capacity in implementing civil service reform. With this change, personnel management functions previously under the MOGAHA were transferred to the CSC, establishing a consolidated central personnel authority. The CSC experienced major organizational changes with added responsibilities in recruitment, training & education, and appeals (CSC 2005).

Closed to Open Recruitment System

As discussed earlier, since its founding in 1948, the personnel management of the higher civil service positions of grade 4 and above had been characterized as a closed system. After passing an open competitive entrance examination for the positions of grade 5, 7, and 9 at a young age, civil servants were given legally guaranteed lifelong job security, regardless of job performance, until retirement.

The participatory government pursued the previous Kim administration’s policy of opening the door of civil service to attract more talented people from inside and outside government. Seen from the point of view of human resource management, open government activates a two-way interaction between the government sector and the private sector. This means that the government can invite talented professionals from the human resource pool of the private sector, while government employees work in the private sector for a set period of time and then return to the public sector. The for-

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6. The human service reform sub-committee is composed of 19 members including the chairperson, who is concurrently a member of the PCGID. The members are 12 professors majoring in human resource management in public and private sectors, 6 persons working at consulting firms related to human resource management, 1 senior researcher from the Korean Institute of Public Administration, and 1 senior civil servant.

mer program is called the *open position system*, and the latter is called the *leave of absence for private work program*. These two programs were adopted by the Kim administration. The participatory government instituted the Senior Civil Service Program, which was based on these programs, in July 2006.

Open Position System

The open position system (OPS) was brought into effect by the revised National Government Organization Act and the National Civil Service Act on May 22, 1999. The basic goal of the system is to recruit competent personnel through open competition among applicants from the public and private sectors. This new system was designed as a way to recruit outstanding talent and experts from both the private and public sectors through diversifying recruiting methods for the civil service (Namkoong 2003). To those who had been accustomed to the closed system, the open position system meant a great challenge to personal status and vested privilege. Naturally there arose an apprehension that organized resistance from bureaucrats might result in the system becoming merely formal.

Under the OPS program, a ministry should designate 20% of its positions in grades 1 through 3 as open competitive positions. Later the system was revised so that a ministry could designate grade 4 positions instead of those in grades 1 to 3. The CSC selected 129 positions as OPS positions on November 15, 1999. The selection of the right person from a group of applicants is made through fair and open competition. The review of personal documentation, such as school transcripts, employment history, and certificates of various special skills, as well as an intensive interview, are used to make a selection. Both career civil servants and civilians can apply for a position. When a career civil servant is selected, he or she can be appointed to the position as a career civil servant. However, when a civilian is selected, he or she is appointed on a contract of less than three years. In order to encourage civilian applications, the annual salary for open positions can be adjusted to up to 130% that of comparable career civil servants, and a special stipend can be added.

Since the Senior Civil Service was introduced on July 2006, the positions of the OPS have been classified into SCS positions and section chief (grade 4) positions.

As of May 2007, 219 positions were designated as open positions, and 186 out of 219, or 84.9% of the OPS positions were appointed. One of the purposes of the OPS program is to promote the inflow of well-qualified personnel from outside. As shown in Table 2, as of May 2007, 76 civilians (40.9%) and 15 officials from other Ministries (8.0%) had been appointed. The total percentage of outside appointments was 48.9%. The percentage of outside appointments of section chief (grade 4) positions (67.4%) is higher than that of SCS (former grades 1-3) positions (43.4%).

Table 2. Prior Positions of OPS Appointees as of May 2007

	Total OPS Positions	Positions not appointed	Positions appointed	Within the Ministry	Outside of the Ministry		
					Subtotal	Civilian	Other Ministry
Total	219	33	186 (100%)	95 (51.1%)	91 (48.9%)	76 (40.9%)	15 (8.0%)
SCS Positions (former grades 1-3)	175	32	143 (100%)	81 (56.6%)	62 (43.4%)	49 (34.3%)	13 (9.1%)
Division Chief Positions (grade 4)	44	1	43 (100%)	14 (32.6%)	29 (67.4%)	27 (62.8%)	2 (4.6%)

Table 3 shows the percentages of outside appointments to OPS positions during the Kim Administration and the Roh Administration. During the Kim Administration (July 2000 to February 2003), among a total of 180 appointees, only 29 (16.1%) came from outside of the Ministry. In contrast, of 348 appointments during the Roh Administration, 132 civilians (34.3%) and 26 officials from other ministries (9.1%) were appointed. The total percentage of appointments from outside was 43.4%. Thus outside appointments rose markedly, from 16.1% during the Kim administration to 43.4% during the Roh Administration.

Table 3. Comparison between Outside Appointments of OPS Positions by the Kim Dae-Jung Administration and the Roh Moo-Hyun Administration

	Total positions appointed	Within the Ministry	Outside of the Ministry		
			Subtotal	Civilian	Other Ministry
Kim administration 2000.7-2003.21	180 (100%)	151 (83.9%)	29 (16.1%)	22 (12.2%)	7 (3.9%)
Rho administration 2003.2-2007.5.31	348 (100%)	190 (56.6%)	158 (43.4%)	132 (34.3%)	26 (9.1%)

During the open competition between civil servants and civilians, those already in service always have natural advantages such as intimate knowledge of the program, performance already known to selecting officials, and ready access to the selection process, so that it would be erroneous to claim that outsiders have equal access to all job openings or that insiders lack adequate assurance of advancement opportunity (Stahl 1976, 62-63). Therefore, having 34.3% of appointments go to civilians during the Roh administration indicates that the OPS program's initial intention of inviting qualified civilians to government organizations has been successfully achieved in the participatory government.

Personnel Exchange Programs

Since the early 1990s, the Korean government has attempted to expand personnel exchange in several directions, including exchange within the central government and between the government and the private sector. Personnel exchange between different agencies in different levels is expected to reduce sectionalism and encourage cooperation through mutual understanding (Kim and Lee 2001). Globalization and the growth of civil organizations, along with the rapid development of information technology, has blurred the boundary between the public and private sectors. Close cooperation between the sectors has become a critical element of public management. The CSC focuses on expanding the personnel exchange that has received the least attention so far, that between the private sector and government, through the official leave of absence for private work program. Middle managers are targeted to be exchanged. The term of exchange is about two years. After two years of working in the private sector, a public servant can return to public service. Table 4 shows the numbers of participants of the leave of absence for private work program. In 2002, only 12 civil servants utilized the program. However, the number increased to 24 in 2004. As of May 2007, a total of 96 civil servants had participated in the program. Fifty-six of them had returned to their ministries or agencies, and 40 were working in the private sector.

Table 4. Number of Participants in the Leave of Absence for Private Work Program as of May 2007

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	total
No. of original participants	12	13	24	24	23	96
No. of returned	12	13	20	11	—	56
As of May 2007	—	—	4	13	23	40

In 2004, the director-general level (grade 2 or 3) interministry personnel exchange program was introduced. With the introduction of the Senior Civil Service in July 2006, the exchange program was incorporated into the SCS scheme. As of January 2007, a total of 32 SCS positions were exchanged. Twenty-two of the positions in 14 ministries were selected as exchange positions, and 10 positions in nine ministries were chosen as government-wide job posting positions. In 2005, the division chief level (grade 3 or 4) interministry personnel exchange program began. As of January 2007, 34 positions in 23 ministries were selected as exchange positions.

Interdepartmental mobility is typically uncommon in national civil service systems (Wise 1996, 106). However, mobility between ministries or departments can be seen as a way to improve the overall quality of a civil service workforce. Although the number is not yet large, various personnel exchange programs actively utilized in the

participatory government contribute to skill sharing and the broadening of individual employees' understanding of organizational operations.

Ministry-Wide Job Posting Program

Job posting is a competitive recruitment program within the civil service. Civilians are not permitted to apply, and the right person for the post is selected from a competition among civil servants. Under the Ministry-Wide Job Posting program, a ministry voluntarily designates job posting positions. Only career civil servants within the ministry can apply for the position.

Table 5. Numbers of Posts and Agencies Participating in Ministry-wide Job Posting Program

	Before 2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2007.5
Agencies	4	6	8	29	36	—
Posts	48	5	13	244	460	530

As shown in Table 5, the number of participating agencies and posts increased dramatically after the inauguration of the Roh Moo-Hyun in 2003. Up to 2000, only 48 posts in four agencies were designated as job posting positions. However, in 2007 the number of job posting positions was 530. The statistics shown in Table 5 may underestimate the real number, because some ministries and agencies did not report their data.

Senior Civil Service Program

The Senior Civil Service, which was formed on the basis of the experiences of the open position program, government-wide job posting program, and personnel exchange program, was introduced in July 2006. The objective of the Senior Civil Service is to improve the core management of the government by holding senior managers accountable for individual and organizational performance, selecting and developing senior managers from an expanded government-wide pool of talent, and making senior levels more open to talent from the lower ranks and from the outside. The SCS had already been introduced⁷ in the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Australia, and Canada (Namkoong et. al. 2005). The Senior Civil Service is the government-wide system for selecting, preparing, paying, and managing a differentiated group of senior managers. It is composed of approximately 1,500 positions, at the director-general level and higher, in the central government. The Senior Civil Service

7. See Halligan (1996) for the diffusion of the U.S. Senior Executive Service system to Australia.

is managed by combining the open competition system (Open Position System; 20%), the government-wide job posting system (30%), and agency flexible management (50%). Each SCS official is given an individual performance plan. This means that the system is dependent upon a performance agreement, which will be discussed later. The SCS also has a differential pay scheme based on the difficulty or importance of the job and position. Former grades for the SCS positions (grades 1-3) were abolished.

Promoting Representativeness of the Civil Service

The participatory government has promoted the representativeness of the civil service by actively recruiting those groups previously underrepresented within the civil service. Those social minorities include women, disabled persons, scientists and engineers, and those from outside the Seoul metropolitan area. Article 26 of the revised National Civil Service Act of March 24, 2005, prescribed that “affirmative action can be put in place to recruit, promote, and transfer in favor of disabled persons and science and engineering majors, and to bring about substantial gender equality.”

Affirmative Action for Women

To bring more women into the public sector, several policy initiatives have been undertaken since the late 1990s. Since 1996, the target quota program for the appointment of female civil servants has been implemented for the civil service entrance examinations. Since 2005, the target quota ratio has been 30% for the entrance examinations of grades 5, 7, and 9. It is noteworthy that the target quota ratio is applied to both male and female applicants on the grounds of gender equality.

As shown in Table 6, the number of female civil servants has gradually increased from 27.3% of the total civil servants in 1995 to 38.1% in 2005.

Table 6. Numbers of Female Civil Servants, 1995-2005

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Total	903,828	913,104	923,714	888,217	865,650	849,152	869,030	869,030	891,949	915,689	915,221
Female	246,468	253,917	265,162	263,853	258,347	267,647	282,028	286,074	302,830	324,576	348,710
% female	27.3	27.8	28.7	29.7	29.8	31.5	32.8	32.9	34.0	35.4	38.1
% increase	-	+0.5	+0.9	+1.0	+0.1	+1.7	+1.3	+0.1	+1.1	+1.4	+2.7

However, it has been argued that most of the female civil servants are in the lower grades, and that they cannot participate in the policy-making process. In 1996, the number of female civil servants of grade 5 and over was only 378, or 3.0%. Although the number increased to 1,203, or 7.4%, in 2004, it is still not considered enough. To

improve this situation, affirmative action was put in place to raise the percentage of women at the management level (grade 5 and over) with the target ratio of 10 % in 2010. Additionally, more attractive benefits for women, including child care leave, have been offered. Furthermore, training programs for women were designed with career management plans as well as learning and development opportunities.

Affirmative Action for the Disabled

In order to employ more disabled persons in the public sector, the participatory government seeks to provide better working environments for civil servants with physical disabilities. Since 1990, the law has required that at least 2% of total recruits in government agencies and local governments be disabled persons. In spite of the legal obligation, the actual rate in 2002 was only 1.66% (see Table 7). In 2005, the rate was 2.25%, which exceeded the requirement.

Table 7. Percentage of Disabled Civil Servants, 1996-2005.

Year	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
% disabled	0.99	1.08	1.23	1.33	1.48	1.61	1.66	1.81	2.04	2.25

However, another problem was that occupational categories subject to mandatory employment of the disabled were too narrow—that only 32% of civil servants were subject to mandatory employment categories. In other words, 68% of civil servants, including teachers, were excluded from affirmative action requirements. To solve this problem, an annual plan was made to cover 64.3% of total civil servants by 2010, excluding public safety personnel, prosecutors, police, firefighters, and military personnel. In addition, incentives will be provided for those agencies employing severely disabled persons. A human resource database of people with disabilities will be managed, and recruitment channels for the disabled will be improved.

Affirmative Action for Scientists and Engineers

In Korea, scientists and engineers are another category of the population that is considered to be underrepresented in the civil service. As of May 2003, out of 90,542 general service civil servants working in the central government, only 22,506 (24.9%) belonged to science and engineering occupational groups. The other 75.1%, or 68,036, belonged to administrative and public safety occupational groups. To promote the hiring of science and engineering majors in the higher-level civil service, the participatory government set target ratios for the new employment of scientists and engineers in grade 5 and above as follows: 26.8% in 2004, 30.1% in 2005, 33.4% in 2006, 36.7%

in 2007, and 40% in 2008. In addition, the government plans to appoint more scientists and engineers to policy-making positions (grade 4 and above). As of October 2003, the actual ratio of scientists and engineers among grade 4 and above was 26.6%. According to the government plan, this ratio will increase to 34.2% in 2008. To reach these targets, several actions have been taken. First, special recruitment examinations are conducted on a regular basis. Second, the civil service classification system has been reorganized to improve opportunities for the promotion of civil servants from science and engineering occupational groups. Expanded learning and development programs will be provided to strengthen their policy skills.

Affirmative Action for Talent from Outside the Seoul Metropolitan Area

Lastly, the participatory government seeks to place more talent from outside the Seoul metropolitan area into the public sector. As there has been increasing concentration on the Seoul metropolitan area in every field including politics, the economy, and education during past decades, the number of people from outside of Seoul entering the civil service has dramatically decreased. To solve this problem, several reform initiatives have been taken. For example, beginning in 2007, 20% of the highest (grade 5) civil service entrance examination applicants will be graduates of universities located outside the Seoul metro region. Several affirmative action programs for regional talent have also expanded to lower job grades and other job categories.

In addition to women and the disabled, affirmative action for scientists, engineers, and residents from outside of Seoul can be regarded as a unique effort to build a Korean-style representative bureaucracy.

Developing Competencies: From Generalists to Specialists

As discussed earlier, the Korean civil service system was based on rank classification and a closed career system. Therefore it was difficult to recruit specialized professionals into mid-position civil service positions. Furthermore, the career development program (CDP) was not yet established, and the training programs for career civil servants were not successful at fostering the expertise of civil servants. Recognizing this problem, the participatory government decided to implement a comprehensive plan that includes recruiting more specialists into the civil service, instituting a CDP, and improving training programs.

Recruiting More Specialists into the Civil Service

As discussed earlier, the open competitive entrance examinations for grades 5, 7, and 9 are the most common method of recruitment. This method is oriented toward

testing the general knowledge of applicants, so it cannot test the qualifications for a specific job. Under this method, generalists rather than specialists became the mainstream of the civil service, so that the civil service system cannot effectively respond to complex, diverse, and specific public needs. Several reform initiatives were undertaken to ease this problem. First, each ministry's and agency's discretionary recruitment power has been enlarged. Some authority of the CSC (central personnel agency) has been delegated to ministries and agencies to allow them the flexibility to recruit their own necessary specialists, reflecting the demands and characteristics of their situation. Second, the methods of recruiting outside specialists have been diversified. The number of personnel recruited from competitive entrance examinations, which do not have academic prerequisites, will be gradually reduced. Instead, those from noncompetitive examinations, which require certain qualifications such as degrees in certain fields and professional certificates, have been increased. Third, an action plan for recruiting science and engineering majors was formulated. The plan was described earlier in this article as an affirmative action for scientists and engineers.

Improving Career Management

In order for civil servants to become experts, they need not only specialized knowledge and skills for performing jobs, but also accumulated knowledge acquired from job experience. However, the average length in service at a position is remarkably short for Korean civil servants. During the four-year period from 1997 to 2001, the average length in service of senior civil servants (director-general and above) was only 385 days, and of division chiefs, about 416 days. In April 2004, the average length in service of the senior civil servants had increased by one month (a total of 416 days), and that of division chiefs by one and a half months (a total of 476 days). However, these times are considered to be too short to acquire experiential knowledge. Moreover, whenever a vacancy appears, successive lateral transfers occur within the ministry or agency, so career management within a ministry or agency reveals the so called Z-type circular transfers. This means that position transfers are based on seniority rather than professional qualifications. To solve these problems, the minimum length in service at a position has been extended from one year to one and a half years for division chiefs (grade 4) and two years for grade 5 and below.

The Career Development Program (CDP) was also introduced in 2006. Under the CDP, each ministry is obliged to classify its work into several professional categories and to appoint staff according to specialized categories. A J-type career path is applied for administrative occupational groups, and a T-type career path is applied for science and engineering occupational groups and those who are recruited by noncompetitive recruitment procedures. Civil service classification will also be reformed to

allow better career path management. These reform initiatives are expected to increase considerably the level of expertise of the civil service in Korea.

Developing Professional Competency through Education and Training

The quality of Korean civil servants has been consistently high in most areas because of high competition at the recruiting stage. Education and training, however, exhibits serious defects and is unable to help civil servants continuously improve their professional competence (Kim and Lee 2001).

Reform initiatives were undertaken to help ease the problems of the education and training system. First, education and training functions were decentralized to ministries and agencies. Each ministry is responsible for designing basic and specialized training programs for its own staff. Second, training institutes are to be specialized. The central government has 26 education and training institutes, and local governments have 20 institutes. Each training institute should run professional training for the staff of its affiliated organizations. Third, education and training for civil servants in managerial positions has been intensified. Many reform initiatives have been implemented to provide diverse, self-motivated training programs with high standards and to introduce customized training programs designed through individual assessment. Among them, the Action Learning method is worth mentioning. Instead of lecturing and listening in the classroom, Action Learning aims to solve real-world problems that trainees are facing. Thus trainees bring their own problems to solve, and a professional facilitator helps them to solve them during the training session.

Performance-based Management and Appraisal System

Traditionally, appraisal and rewards for civil servants in Korea were based on the seniority principle. Job security was valued more than performance among civil servants, because it was thought that job security gave each civil servant a long-term perspective and dedication to the organization. However, job security minimizes the incentive to compete for better performance and, eventually, better compensation. This resulted in the weakness of civil service competitiveness internationally as well as domestically (Kim and Lee 2001). Performance-based management has been introduced in hopes that, by linking performance to rewards, civil servants will become better motivated to contribute hard work in their service.

Performance-Based Pay

The pay scheme of civil servants in Korea was previously based on seniority. In this scheme, the salary scale was based on the period of employment, with the estab-

ishment of allowances for long service. In 1999, to strengthen the competitiveness of civil servants, the Korean government introduced an annual salary scheme for the central government. Under this new salary scheme, the level of compensation is differentiated within each pay grade band depending on performance. Several issues regarding performance-based pay have already emerged (Kim and Lee 2001). First, objective performance evaluation is the key to the success of any performance-based pay scheme. When public servants do not trust the results of a performance assessment, it is hard for them to accept the variances in pay. The evaluation criteria and process, along with an appeal process, should be carefully designed. Second, differences in pay should be substantial. If they are not, they do not work as incentives.

The participatory government strengthened the performance-based pay scheme initiated by the previous administration. First, the government introduced a program that measures performance by means of a performance agreement appraisal. Increasing or retaining salary is dependent upon the degree of goals actually achieved. The government has a plan to increase the proportion of performance-related pay to 10% of salary for senior civil servants in 2007 and 6% for general civil servants in 2010, an increase of 3.5 percentage points compared with 2.5 in 2006. Performance-based pay is in a mature stage of implementation.

The Performance Management System

The Kim Dae-Jung administration adopted two kinds of performance management programs: Management by Objectives (MBO) for managers of grade 4 and above, and Work Performance Rating for grade 5 and below. The participatory government introduced the Performance Agreement, an appraisal system for managers of grade 4 and above. The Performance Agreement gradually replaces MBO in ministries and agencies. It is an individual agreement between the agency chief and a senior manager regarding the manager's performance objectives and measurement indicators. Thus the agreement links evaluation and rewards.

The Performance Agreement has three objectives (Kwon 2006). First, it promotes the new management principle of Managing for Results by clarifying differences between "what we do" and "what we achieve." Second, it enhances the objectivity and fairness of performance appraisal through the necessary processes (e.g., monitoring, recording, and interviewing). Third, it contributes to overall organizational performance by focusing on individual performance rather than seniority.

It is too soon to evaluate the impact of the Performance Agreement. However, the success of the Performance Agreement cannot be achieved without full support from the organization through training, a detailed manual, and objective evaluation (see Swiss 2005).

From Centralized to Decentralized Personnel Management

The Roh administration has actively pursued autonomy and decentralization. Authority is being delegated down the hierarchy from higher to lower institutions, and from central to local governments. The Roh administration is convinced that autonomy and decentralization drive everyone to do their utmost while simultaneously increasing the government's capability. Along this line, the deregulation and decentralization of personnel management authority from the CSC to each ministry and agency has been actively pursued. Reform initiatives have removed many unnecessary rules and regulations for recruitment, promotion, dispatch, and training in the ministries and agencies. Among many reform initiatives, the lump-sum compensation budget program is noteworthy. Under this program, each ministry and agency can exert considerable discretionary powers in deciding organizational structures and composition of its workforce within the limit of the lump-sum compensation budget. From 2006, a pilot program was implemented in the CSC, MOGAHA, and MPB. Government-wide implementation is scheduled for 2007. As a result, more flexible, efficient, and decentralized personnel management is expected in the future.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The modern civil service system of Korea was founded during the Park Administration. Major characteristics of the system can be summarized as a merit-based, rank-oriented, closed-career, and centralized management system. These characteristics did not change much until the early 1990s. The Korean civil service system had been instrumental during the period of government-led growth. The civil service system had performed well with highly qualified, motivated personnel who had been recognized for their devotion to the task of national development (Kim and Lee 2001). Partly because of the civil service system, the Korean economy made a phenomenal progress.

However, the Korean civil service system has been subject to radical changes since the late 1990s. The Kim Dae-Jung administration (1998-2002) sought to create "a small and efficient but better serving government," the ultimate goal of which was to increase Korea's national competitiveness. The civil service reforms of the Kim Dae-Jung administration dealt with almost every aspect of personnel management. Although the participatory government did not adopt the principle of small government, other civil service reforms were strongly pursued and elaborated. The road map of civil service reform was announced in July 2003 with a timetable for implementa-

tion. The reform initiatives of the participatory government can be grouped into five categories: (a) moving from closed to open recruitment, (b) enhancing the representativeness of the civil service, (c) developing competency as specialists, (d) going from a seniority-based to a performance-based reward system, and (e) moving from centralized to decentralized personnel management. During the four and a half years since the inauguration of President Roh, the participatory government has been actively striving to legislate and implement each of the civil service reform road-map agendas. As the package of civil service reform policies has been formulated and implemented, the civil service system of Korea is experiencing a paradigm shift from a rank-oriented, closed-career, seniority-based, and centralized management system to a position-oriented, open-career, performance-based, and decentralized system.

The question arises as to what major factors explain the transformation of the Korean civil service system. I will present tentative answers to the question. First, changes in the socio-economic environment served as triggering events. In particular, the 1997 financial crisis and the ensuing economic recession instigated Korean government reform programs. It became apparent that the civil service system itself became a problem to be solved. Second, there had been a rough consensus among HRM experts on what needed to be done to advance civil service reform in Korea. Many of the reform ideas had been introduced by academics and experts who were working as members of the Human Resource Management Reform Subcommittee of the PCGID in collaboration with reform-oriented civil servants within the Civil Service Commission. There had been a series of regular meetings and reports reflecting their collective thinking (PCGID 2006; CSC 2006). Although there were some disagreements on minor issues such as recruiting talent from outside the Seoul Metropolitan area, the academics and experts agreed on the core principles of reform toward a position-oriented, open-career, performance-based, and decentralized civil service system. Third, continuous support from political leadership is a critical factor. As Peters and Savoie (1998, 5-7) argue, the political will of the highest authority is important to make government reform successful. Both Presidents Kim and Roh were very supportive of the reform. President Roh himself presided over the PCGID meetings several times whenever critical decisions were called for. This support was crucial in overcoming bureaucratic resistance in formulation and implementation stages of the reform process.

However, the experience of advanced countries has shown that civil service system reform is a long-term process that requires continuous attention over a number of years in order to achieve actual changes in civil servants' behavior and culture. The civil service comprises a great number of civil servants working for different ministries and agencies. Because the reforms influence their interests and change their sta-

tus, the likelihood of ultimate success depends on changes in their attitudes and behaviors. Therefore, at least a full decade is needed before the results of the civil service reforms can be seen sufficiently. Thus, for the civil service reform of Korea to be successful, a certain period of implementation is required. Many policy implementation studies have shown that the implementation process can be easily delayed and distorted by vested interest groups. The following points should be considered to fully achieve the goals of reform policies initiated by the government.

First, the government needs the support of civil servants and the general public. Although most specialists agree that the civil service reforms are going in the right direction, according to recent surveys (Park 2006; Ha et al. 2004), some civil servants have shown reluctance and resistance to the reforms. Second, implementation timing and sequence should be carefully considered. As new institutionalist scholars argue, timing and sequencing reform programs may affect the final results. At present, too many reform initiatives are simultaneously on the table. Not only the civil service reform initiatives discussed in this paper but also many other reform initiatives in the fields of administrative reform, electronic government, finance and tax system, and decentralization were formulated and implemented at the same time. Some of them may conflict with each other. For example, the Career Development Program (CDP), the Senior Civil Service, and the Lump-Sum Compensation Budget program of civil service reform on one hand, and the Team System and the Balanced Score Card (BSC) program of administrative reform on the other hand, may conflict if not carefully coordinated (Namkoong and Suh 2005). Finally, it should be remembered that reform is not an end in itself. Reform activities must enable the Korean civil service system to meet the new challenges of the changing environment and to enhance national competitiveness.

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