

A Prologue to a Survey of the Study of Public Administration in Korea

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I. INTRODUCTION

Until a few years ago, it seemed that most of the Korean scholars and practitioners of public administration were busily consuming numerous brands of ready-made foreign ideas of public administration. These days, some scholars are engaged in building their own factory of ideas. In order to build a foundation for the factory of "indigenous" ideas and theories of public administration, several authors have contributed to an evaluation of the development of Korean public administration⁽¹⁾.

Yet, these reviews and evaluations tend to lean heavily toward describing a history of social backgrounds and conditions of the development or dissemination of the ideas of public administration in Korea.

Without unduly minimizing the relevance and importance of carefully reflecting upon the past, of describing the present, and of perspecting the future roles and status of the discipline in Korea, we suggest that the development of the discipline should also be reviewed from an analytical perspective.

A survey of an academic discipline in its theoretical aspects is necessarily a philosophical analysis, because various frameworks themselves used in a discipline are subject to analysis.

This is an essay aimed at drawing an outline for a philosophical analysis of the study of public administration in Korea. It is assumed that a theory or an approach used in a discipline cannot be a good tool for analyzing the discipline itself. In other words, a survey of the study of public administration in Korea must be attempted from a perspective that is different from those used in the study itself. Author intends to apply the perspective of history of scientific development⁽²⁾. It should be stressed that this is only one of many possible perspectives.

The purpose of this short essay is to propose an analytical scheme through which we might

(1) Moon-Ok Park, "Development of Korean Public Administration: Trends, Problems, and Prospects," *Korean Public Administration Review* (KPAR), Vol.3, (1969), pp.9-30; Woon-Tai Kim, "Reflections and Perspects on the Science of Public Administration," *ibid*, pp.31-66; See also *Korean Journal of Public Administration* (KJPA), 10th anniversary special issue of the Graduate School of Public Administration, Seoul National University, Vol. VII, No.1, (1969).

(2) Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962) describes the role of paradigm and the nature of crisis and anomaly of the existing theories in the development of a science. Although his analysis is addressed to the natural sciences, his ideas can be adopted for the purpose of this essay.

be able to trace and review the development of the study of public administration in Korea⁽³⁾. Emphasis is on theory or “modes of analysis.” It is not intended to present some “proper” concepts, scope, or methods of Korean public administration. This is not a proposal for a “theory” of Korean Public Administration.

II. LANGUAGE, SCIENCE, AND STUDY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Scholarly activities are necessarily conducted by languages, either formal or verbal. There are two sets of languages used in scholarly communities: language of justification and language of explanation and understanding. The minimum requirement for scholarly communication is to settle on the issues of language at two different levels.

Language of justification deals with metaphysics, ethics, and epistemology, that is, it deals with the nature of reality, order, and knowing what and how. It provides a world-view - a paradigm. Under a paradigm, a specific language of explanation and understanding is provided, and there can be innumerable ways of structuring the language through which data are collected and analyzed.

Currently popular yet unsettled arguments on the nature of the study of public administration—arguments on whether it is an art or science—are conducted by justifying language involving a world-view. Once it is settled by justification that the study of public administration should or can be a science, then the study must be carried out by the language of science. On the other hand, if it is maintained that public administration should be an art, its method of communication will be insights and inspirations. The heritage of the administrative arts will be appreciated by insightful sympathy, and the courses of action will be charted by inspiration.

In view of prevailing outlook that the study of public administration can be a science, it might be worthwhile to enumerate a few characteristics of the scientific language: (1) It should be external to the individual scholars, which is understandable to the community of scholars in a field of study. If it is internal to the user, it may be understandable to the user alone. The requirement of external nature of the scientific language is that of inter-subjectivity. (2) Moreover, the scientific language should have empirical import, capable of empiri-

(3) Strictly speaking, “public administration” is a phenomenon while the “study of public administration” is sets of prescriptions for, and descriptions of, the phenomenon called public administration.

cally being experienced. (3) It is nomothetic. It deals with general and universal terms. And, finally, (4) the scientific language is more or less structured so that it can express general statements of relationships of terms or variables.

This final characteristic of the scientific language is highly suggestive for our present analysis. There can be numerous ways of structuring the language, and a particular way of language-structuring can be called a "mode of analysis." Depending upon a particular mode of analysis, data and analytical requirements and consequences are determined.

III. DISCIPLINE, PARADIGM, AND THEORY

A science—a normal science—begins when a paradigm is formed. Paradigm is a set of laws, theories, and instruments shared by the whole or a segment of community of scholars in particular field of inquiry. Consensus by the community of scholars is the minimum requirement of a paradigm. An academic discipline as a field of inquiry may contain more than one paradigm.

Once a paradigm is given or identified, scientific activities are carried out within the paradigm. Within a paradigm of science, there may be various "systems of related concepts" which may be called theory or mode of analysis.

To understand an academic discipline, therefore, we must understand or at least discern three levels of discourse: first, at the level of general area of interest, second, at the level of paradigm, and third, at the level of theory or mode of analysis. Of course, it is possible that a single author or article may deal with all of these three levels, but, for an analytical purpose, the content and intention can be differentiated.

IV. A FRAMEWORK FOR SURVEY AND ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN KOREA

Based on the foregoing brief discussion, we can now build a framework for survey and analysis of the study of public administration in Korea. The framework will be elaborated further in the following sections of this essay.

This section is a summary. Even if there is a consciousness of an academic discipline, it may not progress very far if there is no accepted paradigm. Especially, a scientific study of a discipline must have some kind of paradigm. Therefore, if a discipline is interested in conducting scientific research for description, and ultimately for prescription, it must adopt or build

a paradigm.

It is logical that a discipline in its formative years will endeavor to search for a suitable paradigm.

Once even a rudimentary form of at least one paradigm is identified or built, there are essentially three phases in the conduct of serious inquiry: articulation of theory, matching the theory with facts, and discovery or determination of facts and events deemed important under a given paradigm⁽⁴⁾.

In sum, an academic inquiry develops along three lines: first, along the line of identifying area of interest, with shifting emphasis from time to time; second, along the line of paradigmatic development; and third, along the line of theoretical development under a given paradigm. All of these of course interact with each other.

Paradigmatic development and theoretical development are basically different in their nature. The former is directed to a search for a basic outlook or guideline for theoretical endeavor. The latter is directed to developing or extending new or existing theories whose framework have been provided by a paradigm. Paradigmatic development is revolutionary, while theoretical development is evolutionary. Paradigm change is discontinuous, but a theoretical development should be continuous, otherwise, there apparently is emerging a new theory.⁽⁵⁾ A paradigm is prior to theory.

A. Pre-Paradigm Approaches

Paradigmatic development is generally confined to pre-paradigm activities. Before an academic discipline agrees upon a particular paradigm for serious inquiries, there are constant searches for, and debate about, the proper nature and scope of its researches. (This must be differentiated from the whole varieties of activities related to an academic area, such as teaching, consulting, practical application or research proper.) It is generally recognized that many fields of social sciences do not yet possess dominant paradigms, the symptom of which is manifested in constant quibbling among the scholars without understanding each other. The study of public administration is no exception, especially in dealing with emergent phenomena of the "developing" areas.

B. Post-Paradigm Activities

If it is found that some of the scholars are agreed upon some kind of outlook or world-view

(4) Kuhn, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-34.

(5) *Ibid.*

for serious inquiries, then, it is possible to evaluate the development of their activities by three phases of inquiry stated above, namely, articulation of theory, matching the theory with facts or events, and discovery and determination of important facts. These three phases are of course never distinct or separate.

C. Modes of Analysis

For want of better terms, various ways of analysis will be called "modes of analysis" in this essay. A mode of analysis has almost all of the characteristics of a theory, yet somewhat less structured. Using such a concept for our review, we will be able to cover various ways of analysis which otherwise might be excluded from consideration if we impose stricter requirements of theory.

Thus, a mode of analysis may or may not be a theory, being only a candidate for a theory.

A theory is the structured empirical terms having some logical and empirical truth potential. It is a system of inter-related ideas formulated for a better understanding and explanation of phenomenon.

Examples of modes of analysis are: systems analysis, structural-functional analysis, behavioral approach, organization theory, decision-making theory, ecological approach, communication theory, etc.

V. DEVELOPMENT OF THE STUDY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN KOREA

Development of the study of public administration in Korea during the past two decades is a highly remarkable event in itself. Despite of its late entry into Korean academic community as a relatively distinct discipline, it has quickly gained full recognition through rapid growth and continuous achievements.

There are now about twenty departments of public administration at the universities and colleges. Four professional graduate schools, which are generally administered independently of the graduate schools of arts and sciences, are offering graduate courses to pre-service and in-service students.⁽⁶⁾ More than thirty textbooks, 700 master's theses, and 3,000 articles have been produced in the past fifteen years.⁽⁷⁾

(6) Woo-Tai Kim, *op. cit.*; *KJPA, op. cit.*

(7) See, Dong-Suh Bark and Jai-Poong Yoon, "Bibliography of Korean Public Administration, September 1945-April 1966," Reproduced by the United States Operations Mission in Korea (July 1966).

The study of public administration as a modern academic discipline in Korea began as a study of public and administrative laws. Such a legally oriented study continued until American public administration was introduced to some of the training courses for government officials.

Radical change, in emphasis, from law to liberal arts and sciences occurred with the opening of the Graduate School of Public Administration at the Seoul National University in 1959. That was the beginning of a new era - formative years of "new" public administration in Korea.

A. Formative Years - Exogenous Origin and Legal Minds

1. *Assumed Paradigm.* The first textbook in public administration was written by a political scientist⁽⁸⁾ in 1955. The book was a systematic exposition of Germanic and American ideas of public administration. A few years later, American textbooks of public administration⁽⁹⁾ were translated by a group of scholars and administrators and translation of terms were made.⁽¹⁰⁾ In 1959, the first systematic textbook of public administration⁽¹¹⁾ was published based on American textbooks and the author's educational experience in the United States. However, the main body of scholars who took active role in the teaching and dissemination of the ideas of American public administration were those who had been trained in laws and later in public administration in the United States. For example, eight out of ten original members of the faculty of the Graduate School of Public Administration at the Seoul National University were LL. B.-turned public administration scholars.

This writer is not implying that they could not get out of their legal framework for viewing administration. He is only guessing what would have been a factor which influenced the professionals to be more receptive to the formal-structural approach of American public administration at that time.

The formal-structural approach which was composed mainly of Organization and Management, Public Personnel Administration, and Public Financial Administration was more acceptable or understandable to the Japanese-educated bureaucrats and the candidates for higher civil

(8) In-Hung Chung, *Public Administration* (Seoul: Jeil Munwha Sa, 1955)

(9) Dong-Won Kim, Byung-Tai Min, Se-Chang Yun, Hahn-Been Lee, In-Hung Chung, and Hyo-Won Cho, (trans. L.D. White), *Introduction to the Study of Public Administration* (Seoul: Eulu Munwhasa, 1958); Young-Hoon Kim, (tras. H.A. Simon, D.W. Smithburg, and V.A. Thompson), *Public Administration* (Seoul: The Ministry of Education, 1958).

(10) The Korean Association for Public Administration (ed.), *Public Administration Terms and Phrases* (Seoul: Hanmi Hapdong Gyonje Wiwonhoe, 1959).

(11) Woon-Tai Kim, *Elements of Public Administration* (Seoul: Minjung Sokwan, 1959).

service examination who viewed the new discipline, it seems in retrospect, as similar as the administrative laws with more "scientific" flavor.

A paradigm was thus assumed by filtering through legal minds instead of being identified or formulated. Since no paradigm was consciously identified, it is not possible to characterize the paradigm of the period, but we may get some idea from the curriculum originally adopted by the Graduate School of Public Administration, Seoul National University.⁽¹²⁾

Even at that time, some of the authors treated extensively the philosophical and methodological issues of the study of public administration and noted the differences among the several approaches,⁽¹³⁾ but the discussions did not culminate in developing an explicit paradigm.

2. *Theory Articulation.* Under an assumed paradigm of viewing public administration as a structured instrument for "better" democratic government, theory articulation took the form of exegeses of adopted "principles" contained in the adopted books. Validity of theory was not at issue. The important thing to know then was who said what. Many of the textbooks, especially those which were geared to the audiences who were preparing for the higher civil service examinations, belonged to this category.

3. *Matching Theory with Facts and Fact Finding.* Along the same line of development as the theory articulation, empirical facts were compared with theories or principles, and recommendations for change of administrative practices were made accordingly. The standard format was:

In the United States (or some other country), so and so;

In Korea, such and such;

Therefore, we have to change this and that.

This kind of logic was most notable in the works of master's theses and in the articles carried by semi-academic, or semi-official public journals oriented to the government officials and pre-service candidates such as *Haengjong Kwanri*, *Jaemu Wolbo*, *Jibang Haengjong*, *Kamsa Wolbo*, *Kosige*, etc.*

(12) See, Woon-Tai Kim, "Reflection and Perspects on the Science of Public Administration: Its Scope and Methodology," *KPAR*, *op. cit.*, p. 43. *Required Courses*: Organization and Management, Public Financial Administration, Public Personnel Administration, Korean Government, Research Methods, Accounting, Statistics; *Elective Required Courses*: Seminar on Public Financial Administration, Seminar on Public Financial Administration, Seminar on Public Law.

(13) Woon-Tai Kim, *Elements of Public Administration*, *op., cit.*; Moon-Ok Park, *Public Administration* (Seoul: Pakyoungsa, 1962).

*Ministry of Government Administration, *Haengjong Kwanri* (Administrative Management Quarterly); Korean Financial Association, *Jaemu Wolbo* (Finance Monthly);

In order to determine the nature of a book or an article, a careful content-analysis is necessary. Since this essay is only a prologue, no rigorous survey was made. Thus, the works cited in the following discussion may or may not belong to the category of theory testing. They are used here to illustrate this part of our scheme.

While the majority of the article writers, especially those in government, were engaged in the exercise of exegeses, some scholars directed their effort to addressing to Korean administrative problems in a somewhat more structured manner. This effort was represented by the case studies, historical descriptions, and comprehensive description of the contemporary administrative practices and phenomena.⁽¹⁴⁾ Regular academic research activities, aside from the textbook writings, from the early formative years to the present belong to this category.

B. Focus on Korea

The early attention to Korean problems has made the scholars to be aware of inadequacies of imported principles and techniques for understanding and solving Korean administrative problems.

1. *Search for New Paradigm.* Such an awareness of crisis and anomaly of imported theory or principle led the students toward two directions: one, toward minor modifications and extensions of original theories to cover Korean phenomena; another, toward a search for new outlook for public administration. The first effort still belongs to "matching theories with facts and fact finding" under the assumed paradigm alluded above. The second effort is represented by such interests in development administration "theory," indigenous theory building, interdisciplinary approach, and policy orientation.

The current effort to formulate or identify a new paradigm has to resolve two points. The first is to self-identify the nature of the discipline of public administration in Korea. On this point, the opinions in the professional community are still more or less ambivalent. Some argue for a complete turn-about of academic interest from "administration" to economics,

*Korean Association for Local Administration, *Jibang Haengjong* (Local Administration, monthly); Board of Audit and Inspection, *Kamsa Wolbo* (Auditor's Monthly); Association for National Examination, *Kosige* (The World of Examination, monthly).

(14) For example, Dong-Suh Bark, *A Historical Development of the Bureaucracy in Korea* (Seoul: Hanguk Yonguwon, 1961); Hoon Yu, *Public Financial Administration* (Seoul: Bum Moonsa, 1963), several sections on Korean budgetary practices; Suk-Choon Cho, "Administrative Decentralization in the Government of the Republic of Korea," unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Minnesota (1965); and the most of the articles and reports carried by the *Korean Journal of Public Administration*, published by the Graduate School of Public Administration of the Seoul National University since 1962.

while others oscillate between politics and management in a broader sense of the terms. The current emphasis on inter-disciplinary approach for "integration" without articulating specifically what to integrate and emphasis on policy are symptoms of another sort of ambivalent opinions.⁽¹⁵⁾

The second point to be resolved is whether it is really possible or not to talk about a uniquely Korean theory of public administration. The phenomenon might be uniquely "Korean," but the theory employed to explain the phenomenon may not or cannot be Korean. The only claim we can make is that the "Korean scholar" has extended existing theory or formulated new one to explain uniquely Korean events. In other words, the mark of "indigeneness" of a theory might be found in its authorship, not in its generality. If the theory is in such a status that it cannot be generalized, then it may not be a theory.

At the present stage of the development, it seems that the most of the scholars are deeply conscious of the need for a new paradigm. Their rationale is that "Korean administrative theory" should be useful to Korean administrative practices. It has strong normative bent. This author is still uncertain how to characterize the nature of new paradigm, if any, but it is noticeable that new outlook is sought by the scholars.

The search for new paradigm began when the scholars studied seriously the subject of comparative public administration with its ever-changing theoretical issues.⁽¹⁶⁾ Now, it has become fashionable to talk about "development administration" or modernization, and out of this new fashion is there fermenting a new paradigm.⁽¹⁷⁾

2. *Development of "Indigenous" Modes of Analysis or Theories.* The strong normative inclination of the Korean scholars found in the search for a new paradigm is manifested in recent reformulation of theories which are aimed at analyzing Korean administrative phenomena. They contain or imply credo-like propositions. This may be due to the fact that they are addressed to the development or modernization problems of Korea, and "development

(15) This was the impression this author had at the "Seminar on Decision-Making in Korean Government and Social Sciences," held under the auspices of the Korean Association for Public Administration at the Christian Academy House, Seoul, Korea, between March 28-29, 1970.

(16) See, Dong Suh Park, "The Methodology of Comparative Public Administration," *KJPA*, Vol.I, No.1, (1962), pp.1-35; Woon Tai Kim, "Reflections on Comparative Study of Public Administration in Underdeveloped Areas," *KJPA*, Vol.II, No.1, (1964), pp.1-54.

(17) See, Dong-Suh Park (ed.), *Introduction to Development Theory* (Seoul:Pakyong Sa, 1965); Hahn-Been Lee, "The Theoretical Context of Development Administration," *Korean Public Administration Review*, Vol. 2, (1968); this issue features a *Symposium: Establishing a Moral Bases for National Development.*

goal" is normative.

Professor Moon-yong Lee has unique model of administration composed of three objectives and seven areas. Three objectives are: sovereignty, effectiveness, and efficiency. Seven areas are: politics, value system, individual decision, organization, program, personnel, and finance. Combination of those three objectives and seven areas produces twenty-one items. Through this model, various characteristics of Korean government are described, and principles applicable to modernizing Korea are developed.⁽¹⁸⁾ The difficulty of this model is that the principles are derivable from the definitions themselves. This is why the principles are credo-like. On the other hand, the model provides a sense of direction for those who are in a position to direct or guide the development of Korean public administration. The focus of the model is on the man himself.

Professor Dong Suh Bark has published a series of articles dealing with Korean public administration.⁽¹⁹⁾ He has been evaluating Korean public administration from the perspectives of history, methodology, ideology, environment, man, and developmental goals. His motivation or methodological justification is that "we cannot derive suitable theory (to Korean public administration) from the foreign theory of public administration."⁽²⁰⁾ He continues,

If administration is generated from administrator, administrative structure, and ecological factors, then the theory of Korean public administration should differ from that of American public administration, since the above factors in these two countries are quite different.⁽²¹⁾

Along this line, he is now building a theory of public administration with its basic orientation to development.

(18) Moon-young Lee, "A Korean Theory of Administrative Reform," *Law and Administration Review* Korea University, No.7, (September 1964), pp.163-207; M. Lee, "Korean Administrative System under the Influence of the Constitutional and Enacted Laws," *Sixtieth Anniversary Commemoration Theses: Social Sciences*, Korea University (Seoul:Korea University, 1965), pp.77-141.

(19) Dong-Suh Bark, "A Prologue to the Korean Administrative Theory," *KJPA*, Vol. V, No.1(1967), pp. 43-62; "A Model on Historical "Development of Public Administration in Korea," *KJPA*, Vol. V, No.2 (1967), pp.9-26; "Development Administration and Korean Personnel Theory," *KJPA*, Vol. VI, No.1 (1968), pp.125-144; "Re-examination of History of Administrative Theory," *KJPA*, Vol. VII, No.1(1969), pp.191-204; "Public Administration and Ethics," *KPAR*, Vol.2 (1968), pp.186-233; "Korean Public Administration," a series in *Joong Ang Haeng Juong* (Public Administration Journal Monthly), Vol. 2, Nos. 2 & 3, (1970).

(20) Dong-Suh Bark, *KJPA*, Vol. VI, No. 1, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

(21) *Ibid.*

For the development and modernization of Korea, Dean Hahn-Been Lee has been analyzing the role of administrative elite that will developmentally cope with the challenges arising from the social changes.⁽²²⁾

Dean Lee's representative work is *Korea: Time, Change, and Administration*,⁽²³⁾ and we may get an idea about the nature of the book from a review of the book quoted below:

This thin volume is a significant contribution to the growing literature in development administration. It draws on two related concepts: (1) ecological analysis which focuses on the interactions between administration and its environment, a mode of analysis which is already well established in the literature; and (2) time orientation which relates governmental performance to the temporal values and attitudes of political leaders and administrators. The author's imaginative and skillful application of time perception to administrative behavior is the principle theoretical contribution of this book.⁽²⁴⁾

3. *Matching Theory with Facts.* New focus on Korean administrative problems are now intensified and extended by the author themselves of the indigenous theory building and by a younger generation of the students who are trained more in recent research methods and concepts. This trend is recognizable even in recent MPA theses.

4. *Description of Facts.* As mentioned earlier, "description of facts" here does not mean simply reporting a case. It is a discovery or determination of facts deemed important under a given paradigm. We mentioned also that various facts have been systematically presented under the "assumed" paradigm.

Since we observed that there is an effort to search for a new paradigm, it is logical that we find also a new sort of fact-finding effort. This effort is represented by recently published work, *Historical Analysis of Government Administration in Korea*, written by ten Korean scholars and practitioners.⁽²⁵⁾ The analysis was made from a broader perspective of "ecology" of

(22) Hahn-Been Lee, "POSDCORB Revisited," *KPAR*, No. 1 (1967), pp. 103-114; "From Ecology to Time: Orientation Approach to Development Administration," *KJPA*, Vol. IV, No. 2 (1966), pp. 1-26; "Political Changes and Bureaucracy Development Since Korean Liberation," *KJPA*, Vol. V, No. 1 (1967), pp. 1-24; "The Impact of Public Programs on Political Modernization in Asia," *KJPA*, Vol. V, No. 2 (1967), pp. 1-8; "A Handbook for Development Administration Curriculum—A Draft," *KJPA*, Vol. VI, No. 1 (1968), pp. 1-23; "University Planning for National Development and Modernization," *KJPA*, Vol. VI, No. 2 (1968), pp. 1-22.

(23) Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1968.

(24) Milton J. Esman, in Book Reviews, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, (September 1969),

(25) Conducted by Korean Research Institute of Public Administration, MOST-USAID Research Project, 1968.

Korean public administration, and various administrative programs were described as the responses to Korean ecological changes.

VI. CONCLUDING REMARKS

If the current emphasis on indigenous theory-building is to formulate a middle-range theory, then the future development of the study of public administration in Korea will be directed toward a "general theory" of public administration and the discipline may treat Korean phenomena only as specific cases under the general theory.