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New Public Management in Korean Higher Education: Is It Reality or Another Fad?

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The purpose of this study is to analyze changing patterns of governance in Korean higher education through the window of the NPM, so as to compare policy developments in Korea to wider international trends. Building upon Braun & Merrien (1999)'s earlier analytical framework on university governance, the study focuses on the following dimensions in analyzing the Korean case: (1) the belief system of the government regarding the role of universities; (2) the university-state relationship in terms of both 'procedural' and 'substantive' autonomy; and (3) the distribution of power and authority within individual universities. The results of the analysis suggest that, although some typical elements of the NPM governance model can be found, the NPM principles have yet to be firmly incorporated into Korean higher education. The study argues that the main reasons for this retardation in the implementation of the NPM driven reforms in Korea would be: (1) the general cynical attitude of professors towards the NPM governance model which was considered as the legacy of the former military regime and (2) the lack of a necessary coherence of government policies over the past two decades (i.e., the heavy emphasis on accountability without an accompanying increase in institutional autonomy). The study recommends, as a conclusion, that a more systematic and integrated implementation strategy would be needed so as to create the necessary preconditions for the NPM principles to be able to work properly in Korean higher education.

Key words: New public management, higher education, governance, Korea

Introduction

Since the mid-1980s, the notion of New Public Management (NPM hereafter) or New Managerialism has emerged as a key principle penetrating recent shifts in governing modes in higher education[2] in many OECD countries (Braun & Merrien, 1999; de Boer & Goedegebuure, 2003). NPM - which can be regarded as the policy expression of neo-liberalism (notably based on 'public choice theory' and 'principle-agent theory')[3] - has challenged many prevailing assumptions about the basic characteristics of universities, posing fundamental questions regarding the role of universities and the way in which higher education is governed in an age of mass higher education. Some typical characteristics of the reforms associated with the NPM principles were: (1) a significant change in the role of the central government from direct control (by rules and regulations) to indirect involvement ('steering at a distance' using contractual policy and/or an incentive system based on performance assessment); (2) an increased procedural autonomy but less substantive autonomy in terms of strategic priority setting for universities; (3) a strengthening of the administrative and leadership functions within universities, but a weakening of the traditional 'collegial' principle; (4) a greater emphasis on

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external involvement (i.e., industry, local government) in university decision making so as to introduce a service philosophy; and (5) an emphasis on 'competition between service providers' and 'consumer choice' to promote a market orientation of universities (Capano, 1999, p. 202; Leisytë & Kizniene, 2006, pp. 378-382; De Boer & Goedegebuure, 2003, p. 210). This new mode of governmental coordination mechanism soon became a kind of 'policy fashion' in many OECD countries, and, for some political decision-makers, it was perceived as 'a cure-all' for the ills of academic self-governance for situations such as spending public funds without accountability to government and to society (Leisytë & Kizniene, 2006, p. 378).

In this context, it is not surprising at all that, as many commentators (i.e., Sung, 2003; Kim, 2003) in Korea have argued, recent governance reforms in Korean higher education have also been considerably affected, though at a different pace and to a different extent, by the general principles of NPM. What is surprising, given the enormous attention being paid to this issue in Korea, would be a lack of empirical research on this topic, in particular, conducted in the international context. With very few exceptions (i.e., Kim & Lee, 2004; Park, 2002; Lee, 2000a), most previous research has been conducted domestically (hence written in Korean) and the arguments made in these studies were too narrowly-focused, often without concrete empirical evidence. With this situation in mind, this study attempts to investigate the emerging patterns of governance in Korean higher education through the window of the NPM so as to compare policy developments in Korea to wider international trends. More specifically, the study tries to examine: (1) to what extent the patterns of higher education governance in Korea have changed over the past twenty years; (2) whether these changes represent a shift that fully, or partially, incorporates the NPM model of governance; and (3) what are the facilitating and restricting factors in implementing the NPM principles in Korean higher education governance reform.

With regard to the scope of the analysis, the study will focus on the university sector only so as to make a more focused and in-depth analysis. In addition, considering the fact that private universities in Korea have been traditionally treated as quasi-public institutions, at least in terms of government regulations and their expected roles, the study will include these private institutions for the analysis as well. However, particular emphasis will be put on the public universities[4] as NPM was basically introduced as a strategy for the reform of public sector organizations.

Analytical Framework: Revised Braun & Merrien (1999)'s Governance Models

In order to more systemically structure the analysis, the study basically adopts an analytical framework employed in Braun and Merrien (1999). They developed a useful typology of governance systems in higher education, after a critical evaluation of earlier studies on university governance (notably, Clark,1983; van Vught, 1989; Berdahl, 1990), to allow a better understanding of the complexity of national governance arrangements. The typology incorporated the following three dimensions as the core elements of classifying individual countries' governance systems: (1) the belief system of the government regarding the role of universities (universities as cultural institutions vs. universities as social service institutions), (2) the role of the government with regard to priority setting for universities (tight vs. loose control of 'substantive autonomy'), (3) the administrative control of universities by the government (tight vs. loose control of 'procedural autonomy'). In accordance with these three dimensions, they classified the existing governance systems in the core of the OECD countries into six groups as shown in Table 1**,** concluding that the new managerialism (NPM) model emerged as the predominant governance mode in these countries.

In the present study, however, unlike the Braun and Merrien (1999)'s original classification scheme, the fourth dimension of 'institutional governance' (the distribution of power and authority within universities: representative vs. executive leadership) was introduced so as to more explicitly take into account the characteristics of leadership function (or power structures) within universities in the models.

According to de Boer and Huisman (1999), there are conceptually two different arrangements for the distribution of formal powers within institutions. One is 'a representative leadership' in which most of the formal powers reside in elected assemblies, councils or other bodies; and the other is 'an executive leadership' where the balance of power is tilted in favor of executive boards or university administration. In practice, the former is usually characterized by an elected president typically described as

Table 1
Revised Braun and Merrien (1999)'s Governance Models

Model	Belief System		Institutional Autonomy*				Institutional Governance	
			Procedural		Substantive			
	Cultural	Utilitarian	tight	loose	tight	loose	Representative (collegial)	Executive (entrepreneurial)
① Collegium (UK in 1983)	O			O		O	O	
② Market (U.S. in 1983)		O		O		O		O
③ Bureaucratic-Oligarchic (W. Germany, Italy, Switzerland in 1983)	O		O			O	O	
④ New Managerialism (NPM) (Most Western Countries in the 1990s)		O		O	O			O
⑤ Bureaucratic-Statist (Sweden in 1983)	O		O		O		O	
⑥ Coporatist-Statist (Former Soviet Union)		O	O		O			O

Note. The distinction between substantive ('what to do') and procedural autonomy ('how to do' in order to fulfill the different functions of universities) was originally made by Berdahl (1990 in Braun & Merrien, 1999, p. 21)

'first among equals' and a larger representative governing body composed mostly or sometimes exclusively of full-time professors while the latter is typically represented by a CEO-like president with strengthened power and a smaller, executive type governing body with a majority, usually external and appointed. According to this slightly revised classification scheme, the new managerialism (NPM) model is characterized as the mix of a state which adheres to (1) a more utilitarian stance, (2) an increased procedural autonomy (loose administrative control of universities by the government), (3) a less substantive autonomy for universities (a reinforced role of the government regarding target-setting), and (4) a more executive form of institutional governance.

Introduction of a New Governance Model based on the NPM Principles: Are we there yet?

In relation to governance reform in Korean higher education, two of the most important turning points would be (1) 'the June 10 democratization movement' in 1987 and (2) 'the May 31 education reform plan' in 1995. 'The June 10 democratization movement' in 1987 was the single most important historical turning point in Korea's democratization process which brought about not only the collapse of the former military regime but fundamental changes in governance patterns within universities. 'The May 31 Education Reform Plan' would be the first and foremost comprehensive attempt at making real changes to the way in which the higher education system is governed, and at the same time represented the first step in an attempt to build a policy strategy based on the principles of NPM. As described below, these two symbolic events had a massive impact on the developments of higher education governance in Korea over the past twenty years.

Belief System of the Government regarding the Role of Universities

The belief system of the government concerning the role of universities resides in a continuum based on either cultural or utilitarian values. Cultural values would emphasize (1) the disinterested pursuit of knowledge unconnected to the trivial realities of the world of economics,

given the understanding that in such pursuit, the goals of society are best met in the long run; (2) the performance of universities should and could not be measured in market terms as the worthiness of universities cannot soley be measured in market terms; and (3) academic liberty is a sacred value and the academic defends the intrinsic value of his or her goals, rejecting all potentially corrupting attempts to pressurize or intervene. On the contrary, utilitarian values emphasize that (1) knowledge should be pursued for the purpose of meeting socially determined goals, thereby being more responsive to social, political, and economic demands; (2) quasi-public institutions, such as universities, visibly present useful and applicable results linked to an assessment procedure in terms of money input and output; and (3) the state should steer in a supervisory instead of an interventionist fashion and market-like relations would render more efficient the public administration's service (Braun & Merrien, 1999; Kogan & Marton, 2000). As Braun and Merrien (1999) contended, over the last two decades, there has been a remarkable change in government attitude concerning the role of universities above all in Europe: from the belief system based on cultural values to the one which regards universities more and more in a utilitarian fashion as public service institutions. According to them, this very shift in government belief systems, indeed, evoked a new policy framework (NPM) affecting the new mode of governance in higher education.

The belief system of the Korean government has been generally following a similar direction as observed in the European countries. As the legacy of the Kyung-sung Imperial University (the first 'modern' university on the Korean peninsula and the predecessor of Seoul National University, SNU hereafter)[5] - established during Japanese colonial rule and deriving its founding principles from the Humboldtian research university - the cultural belief system was deep-rooted in the mindset of most professors, particularly in humanities and law disciplines, which were most heavily influenced by the European cultural tradition(Jeong, 2006; Umakoshi, 2000).

On top of this colonial or European heritage, since the liberation from colonial rule in 1945, a strong U.S. influence has swept through the formation and subsequent developments of the Korean higher education system, which has made the situation more complicated. In particular, U.S. assistance for the re-training and nurturing of faculty members at SNU and a few other reputable private universities (i.e., Korea and Yonsei university) at an early stage of Korean higher education development (in the 1950s-60s) had a profound impact on subsequent developments of Korean higher education (Umakoshi, 2000). Actually, with this strong U.S. support as a springboard, those who had studied in the U.S. soon made up the majority of the faculty in the major Korean universities (including SNU)[6] and started to serve as a kind of channel through which the U.S. belief systems and institutions were introduced into Korean universities. In this context, it is not unreasonable to assume that the utilitarian belief systems rooted in the U.S. universities has been gradually infiltrated since then into the Korean academic community. However, overall, as Jeong (2006) has argued, it may be fair to say that both the cultural and utilitarian belief systems had been quite balanced up until the early 1990s in governing the higher education system in Korea.

From the early 1990s, and in particular since 1995, however, the balance between the two belief systems seems to have been tilting in favor of the utilitarian belief system. 'The May 31 education reform plan' represents an important and critical turning point in this regard. The plan and subsequent reports prepared by the Presidential Commission on Education Reform (PCER hereafter) reiterated that 'the universities as the prime source of knowledge production and delivery should be encouraged to become more market-oriented and to link their development more closely to societal needs, most notably to the changing needs of the labor market' (i.e., Park, 2000; PCER, 1996). Since then, the government has more overtly than before announced its intention to vigorously introduce a service philosophy and a market orientation into Korean higher education institutions. Such symbolic keywords as 'higher education industry', 'consumer orientation', 'competition' and 'marketization' representing this changed belief system, are now commonly found in Presidential addresses, government documents and legislation in Korea. In this regard, one may conclude that, at least at the formal and legal levels, there has been a clear shift in the ideas on the purpose of the universities in Korea over the past two decades.

After all, "the referential institution - the prime source of 'good practice' from which standards are set and procedures taken over and emulated (Neave, 2001, p. 60)" for the Korean universities has become more and more 'a corporate enterprise' rather than a traditional notion of a

cultural institution (a so-called 'ivory tower').

Relationship between the State and Universities (Institutional Autonomy)

Procedural autonomy *(administrative control of universities by the government).* Traditionally, the Korean government has maintained tight control over both public and private university operations[7]. Up until the early 1990s, almost all aspects of university operations even for the private sector institutions were subject to detailed government regulations which included: (1) the establishment of a university; (2) the establishment of an academic program or department, (3) enrollment quotas, (4) the admission procedures and methods, (5) tuition levels, (6) the requirements for graduation, and (7) qualification of professors (Lee, 2000a, pp. 413-414).

In 1995, however, there was a major shift in the regulatory policy on higher education taking 'the May 31 education reform plan' as an important platform. 'Full development of school autonomy and reduction of government regulation' was, indeed, one of the five reform principles laid out in the plan (Park, 2000, pp. 16-17). The reforms carried out since then have generally aimed at increasing the autonomy of the universities, in particular, for private universities. Enrollment quotas were eliminated for private universities except those in the Capital region (Seoul, Incheon Metropolitan City and the surrounding Gyung-gi Province). The rules for the establishment of a new private institution were liberalized and the government guidelines for tuition fees were abolished. Greater freedom has been granted to the universities to establish new departments, design curricular, decide requirements for graduation, and the nature of their teaching activities (KEDI, 2006; Kim & Lee, 2004). As a result, private universities currently enjoy considerable freedom in a wide range of their activities, although the government still maintains control over some areas of university management (i.e., setting the student selection criteria, the composition of governing boards) to protect 'wider public interests.'

For public universities, however, the government still maintains a higher degree of control over most areas of institutional management including personnel, organization, and capital even after the series of reforms since 1995. Despite considerable time and effort spent by the government so far[8], regulations are still pervasive and institutional autonomy has not been substantially increased. Table 2 highlights the current situation of institutional autonomy in Korean public universities compared to their counterparts in other OECD countries.

As is manifest in Table 2, Korean public universities have very limited autonomy over a large part of university management which has resulted in the Korean universities being ranked last, in terms of the extent of institutional autonomy, among the 9 OECD countries concerned. On the contrary, it is interesting to note that national universities in Japan have made fundamental progress with regard to institutional autonomy when comparing the present rank to the one in 2003 before being transformed into national university cooperation in 2004. As shown in Table 2, the Japanese national universities at the present time enjoy a higher level of autonomy over most areas of institutional management. Judging from this empirical reality, one may assume that without having to change their legal status, it would be hardly possible to fundamentally increase institutional autonomy of public universities in Korea.

Substantive autonomy (*the role of the government regarding priority setting for universities).* Braun and Merrien (1999) indicated that, "[t]he increased role of governments with regard to priority setting, which is engendered by the new managerialism [NPM] model implies [1] the earmarking of university funds, [2] the contractualization of state-university relations and [3] the assessment of goal achievement and the quality of the university output by evaluation measures (27)." As will be shown below, these three features represent precisely the developments having taken place in Korean higher education since the mid-1990s.

In 1994, for the first time, the government initiated a competitive grant program ('Guk-Chak-Gong-Dae Sa-up': which roughly translates as 'National Engineering College Fostering Project') to provide (earmarked) resources for strengthening engineering programs and developing new ties between universities, business and industry. Before 1994, in fact, all government money for universities was basically allocated using mathematical formulae, only reflecting incremental changes in personnel, enrolment, and unit cost without designating specific strategic goals for the grants by the government.

Table 2

Extent of autonomy experienced by universities across 9 OECD countries in 2007

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Institutions are free to:	Own their buildings and equipment	Borrow funds	Spend budgets to achieve their objectives	Set academic structure /course content	Employ and dismiss academic staff[2]	Set salaries[2]	Decide size of student enrolment[3]	Decide level of tuition fees
Netherlandsss	●	●	●	◐	●	●	●	◐
Poland[4]	●	●	●	◐	●	◐	●	◐
Australia	●	◐	●	●	●	●	◐	◐
UK	●	◐	●	●	●	●	◐	◐
Japan[5]	●	◐	●	◐	●	●	◐	◐
Denmark	◐	●	●	◐	●	◐	●	◐
Sweden	◐	◐	●	●	●	●	◐	
Finland	◐		●	◐	●	●	◐	
Korea[6]				◐	◐			●
Japan (2003)				◐	◐			

Legend: Aspects in which institutions: ● have autonomy; ◐ have autonomy in some respects.

Notes: 1. Data in Table 2 are based on responses to a follow-up of the 2003 OECD survey of university governance administered by the author in July 2007. National experts mostly participating in the OECD project 'Thematic review of tertiary education' were consulted whether or not any changes in university autonomy have taken place since 2003 when the first survey was originally administered. Out of 14 countries included in OECD (2003), 9 countries responded to the follow-up survey. Countries are ranked in order of the number of areas in which universities reported autonomy. Details on aspects of university autonomy in Poland, Japan, and Korea are provided in Notes 4, 5, and 6, respectively. See the Appendix of OECD(2003) for the rest of the countries where the situation has basically remained unchanged since 2003. The number in parenthesis refers to the column in the Table.

2. "Employ and dismiss academic staff" (column 5) and "Set salaries" (column 6) include cases where any legal requirements for minimum qualifications and minimum salaries have to be met.

3. "Decide size of student enrolment" (column 7) includes cases where some departments or study fields have limits on the number of students able to enroll.

4. *Poland*: (4) The decision on the establishment of a new degree program and the entrance capacity in a given field and at a given level of study is taken by the government based on the opinion of the State Accreditation Committee.

5. *Japan(National)*: (2) Long-term borrowing should be approved by the government; (4) Changes in the organization of a faculty should be approved by the government if the type of degree awarded is changed accordingly (*The organizational structure of national universities should be written in a mid-term plan of each individual institution with its revision subject to government approval*); (7) Institutions can determine their entrance capacity provided that they can meet the criteria pre-set by the government (i.e., the student/faculty ratio, per capita facilities etc); (8) Tuition fees are subject to government ceilings (less than 20% higher than the standard tuition fee level).

6. *Korea (National/Public)*: (4) The creation of new academic departments at the undergraduate level requires government approval. At the graduate level, the decision to create departments and majors is devolved to individual institutions if it falls within a total enrollment quota; (5) The decisions regarding employment and dismissal of academic staff are taken by the university concerned. The number of positions, however, is subject to government control; (8) At the present time, there is no official guideline or ceiling for tuition levels. In reality, however, it is practically very difficult for individual universities to drastically increase tuition levels because of strong opposition from students and (some) politicians.

Greater critical momentum accelerating this new funding framework, however, was initiated by 'the May 31 Education Reform Plan' in 1995. In this plan, the PCER made a recommendation to the President of the Republic that "[t]he autonomy of a university entails its educational programs to be evaluated, and government support will inevitably be linked to the result of the evaluation…The governmental support of a university will be based on the results of the self-evaluation and the external evaluation (PCER, 1996, pp. 38-39)." Actually, this recommendation has had a great impact on the government's subsequent funding policy. Since then, all the major funding programs have been rearranged following this direction where the government has played an important role through the mechanism of evaluating institutions' achievement against pre-determined criteria.

In particular, for 'the BK(Brain Korea) 21 Project (the Phase one: 1999~2005; the Phase two: 2006~12)' and 'the NURI (New universities for Regional Innovation) Project (2002~2008)' which are regarded as the largest government funding programs for universities[9], a contractualization arrangement was introduced between the government and individual universities to better ensure institutional accountability. For instance, universities selected to participate in the BK 21 project in 1999 were required to implement restructuring programs by contracts made between each individual university and the government. Some of the main points of these requirements included: (1) to reform the university's admission policy and procedures following the governmental framework; (2) to restructure narrowly specialized organization of undergraduate programs into broader clusters of courses of study and to expand the enrolment of graduate programs by reducing undergraduate enrolment by 25 percent; and (3) to improve the faculty appointment system by introducing a systematic evaluation of individual performance against international standards and a contract system (Lee, 2000a, p. 421). In the case of universities' breaching the contract or being unable to meet pre-agreed goals between the two parties, there were penalties imposed by the government usually in the form of suspension or reduction of government grants. As OECD (2003) aptly pointed out, a critical point in this context would be, namely, 'who determines the goals and the criteria' on which performance assessments will be based. When the goals and evaluation criteria are largely determined by the government, driven by administrative or political interests, they then, in practice, function as a kind of regulatory device for universities. In this situation, "a government that is not directly managing an institution can exert an indirect, yet powerful form of control (OECD, 2003, p. 71)."

In sum, the role of the government with regard to priority setting for universities has been increased, rather than decreased, over the past two decades. Put another way, substantive autonomy from the individual institutions' point of view has been largely decreased in both public and private universities in Korea.

Institutional Governance (the distribution of power and authority within universities)[10]

Traditionally, internal governance in public universities in Korea was the exclusive domain of a single person, the president of a university appointed by the government[11]. As described earlier, 'the June 10 democratization movement' in 1987 and subsequent reforms in higher education brought this dominance to an end. In the higher education area, one of the first steps after social democratization in 1987 was (1) to establish a professors' association and a University Senate (the Senate hereafter) as a representative body of the professors' association[12] at an institutional level and (2) to introduce an election system by full-time professors for a university president. These two newly introduced features were rapidly incorporated into the institutional governance structure, and the principle of self-government by full-time professors was firmly established and has been largely unchallenged since then in most public universities (including some reputable private institutions as well).

As a result of these reforms, both the president and deans are elected by full-time professors and accountable mainly to the academic community which is represented by the Senate. Therefore, the president finds it difficult to adopt unpopular decisions as their election and re-election depend on the academics. Furthermore, in many public institutions, university statutes require that for many important decisions, a president 'should' receive the Senate's approval[13] regardless of the current legislation seemingly prohibiting such practices (Song & Han, 2005; Lee, 2000b). In this respect, the powers of the administrative staff (notably a president) are limited, and on many occasions the university

administration becomes 'a hostage of the Senate majority (Želvys, 2004).' Some academics (i.e., Kim, 2003) have argued that Korean universities have been traditionally characterized by a higher concentration of power in the hands of a president and that the previous two decades have not appreciably weakened the president's position. This argument is true in a sense that the president still has, at least by a legal definition, the ultimate authority on all important institutional matters. However, at the public universities at least (and some reputable private universities as well), it is an illusion to believe that a president can impose important decisions against the will of the academics. Under the existing scheme of self-government by professors, therefore, essential structural and functional internal reforms in the public universities are hardly possible (Park, 2004, pp. 9-13).

Another important issue with regard to institutional governance would be to bring external representatives (i.e., industry, local governments) into higher education governance. In Korea, participation from external stakeholders on university governing or supervisory bodies is very rare, if at all, and usually plays a rather passive role. An analysis of the current statutes of 23 four-year national universities in Korea revealed that only 3 universities (SNU, Busan National University, and Changwon National University) currently allow, though in limited numbers, external representatives to participate in the University Senate. Moreover, the average attendance rate of these external members at the general meetings of the Senate has been reported to be fairly low[14], which in turn, signifies the very limited role played by the external members in university decision making in Korea.

In summary, the Senate, dominated by full-time professors, has indeed emerged as the *de facto* supreme governing body at most public universities over the past two decades in Korea. Despite drastically increased powers granted to the Senate, however, it seems that the academics in Korean universities constituting the Senate are still not used to accepting practical responsibility for the consequence of their managerial decisions[15]. As Želvys (2004) has put it, "[p]ower without responsibility is a dangerous combination in governing any organization, especially such a large and complicated organization as university (p. 9)."

An Overview of Changing Patterns of Governance in Korean Higher Education

Figure 1 shows changing patterns of governance in Korean higher education over the last twenty years (from 1987 to 2007). The outermost quadrangle represents a conceptual NPM governance model characterized by: (1) the predominance of the utilitarian belief system, (2) increased autonomy in procedural matters, (3) less substantive autonomy for priority setting, and (4) strong executive leadership. Of course, this is a considerably simplified version of the model to lend clarity to the arguments of the study. The other two inner quadrangles represent the governance models for Korean universities in 1987(indicated by the dotted line) and in 2007(by the bold line), respectively.

From Figure 1, as indicated by the arrows, one can observe general shifts, on the first three dimensions, towards the conceptual NPM governance model (in the direction of a more utilitarian belief system, more procedural freedom, and less substantive autonomy) with considerable variations among these three dimensions. However, in general, it seems that these shifts have not yet reached the extent which the conceptual model envisaged, in particular, on the dimension of procedural autonomy. When it comes to the fourth dimension of institutional governance, however, the direction of the shift is opposite to the conceptual model of NPM governance which indicates a new mode of institutional governance based on the NPM principles ('executive' or 'entrepreneurial' leadership model) has not gained a foothold within universities in Korea. Quite the contrary, over the past two decades, features of a representative (or collegial) leadership model seem to have become more and more reinforced in Korean universities.

Based on the analysis of the study, therefore, although some typical elements of the NPM governance model (i.e., the utilitarian belief system of the government, tight control of substantive autonomy for universities) are now evident in the patterns of governance in Korean higher education, it would hardly be true to say at the moment that the NPM principles have been firmly incorporated into Korean higher education governance. Rather, it would be safe to conclude that introducing the NPM principles into Korean higher education is still one of the major governmental reform aims for which a more appropriate implementation approach should be sought. The remaining section of this study will be devoted to exploring (1) why this retardation in implementation of the NPM-based reforms has occurred despite all the efforts the government has invested so far;

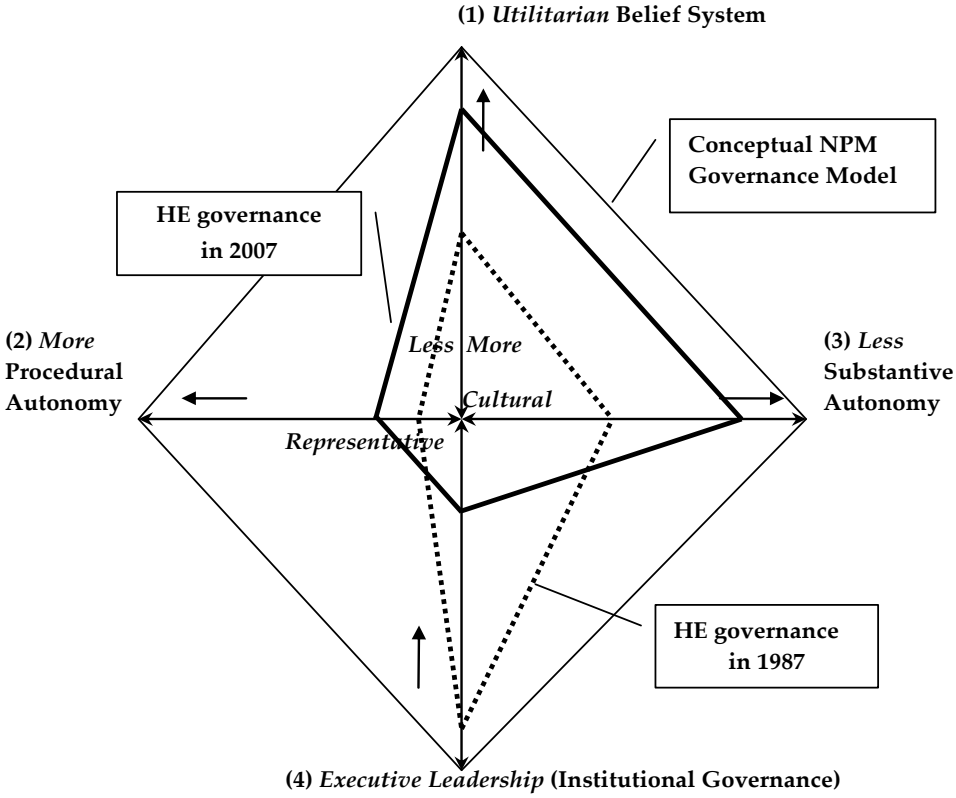

Figure 1. Changing patterns of governance in Korean higher education

and (2) how to successfully implement the NPM principles in the Korean higher education context.

Implementation of the NPM principles in Korean Higher Education: Issues & Problems

The most common account for the retardation in the implementation of the NPM-based reforms may be explained by the general problems associated with the 'top-down' approach adopted by the Korean government. As is often the case in many other OECD countries, including Korea, the central government was the prime mover to introduce the NPM-driven policy initiatives. Under this implementation scheme, faculty and institutional leadership rarely became stakeholders or were committed to the desired reform efforts and thus, the results seem to lend themselves more to a paper-based performance and accountability rather than any substantial, enduring change in the educational process. This lack of legitimacy within universities and the ensuing half-heartedness of university constituencies have led to the delay in the implementation of the reforms based on the NPM principles. Clearly, this line of explanation which is frequently found in many previous studies (i.e., KEDI, 2006; Shin, 2005; Sung, 2003) in Korea has some value. However, more fundamental factors behind this common account seem far more nuanced in explaining the Korean case.

In Korea, there are still considerable forces in the political and academic community which oppose the NPM governance model based on neo-liberal ideology. In particular, most academics remained skeptical with regard to the introduction of the NPM principles in universities and above all to change the existing governance structures within universities (notably, an election system of a university president) which was frequently celebrated as a major triumph of broader social democratization during the late 1980s. This study argues that these general cynical attitudes held by most professors towards the NPM governance model (in particular towards strong executive leadership and state

intervention by means of various accountability measures) could be said to be one of the main reasons which has hindered the NPM governance principles from being deeply incorporated into the Korean universities over the last two decades.

The study goes on to argue that the prevailing atmosphere of Korean professors against the NPM governance model is, at least in part, due to the legacy of the former military regime. The 30 years' experience of authoritarian governments under the military regime has left a deep mark on social structures and rules, on cultural values, beliefs and norms. Therefore, it is quite reasonable to assume that a distrust and explicit rejection of the role of the government and of a strong institutional leader in university affairs had been developed and embodied in the mindset of most academics (and to some extent the general public) in Korea. As a result of this, at least in the immediate period following 'the June 10 democratization movement' in 1987, anything evocative of the former military regime was abolished at both public and private universities, including appointed presidents or deans as government representatives (or representatives of founders in the case of private universities). Election, without any question, became a common method of selecting institutional leaders in most universities and there was no room at all to consider any other alternatives in terms of the powers and competencies of presidents or deans as effective managers of higher education institutions. The prevailing atmosphere at that time was a radical ideological stance with as little as possible of any type of external intervention and with an almost unlimited faith in collegial self-government borrowed from the classical Humboldtian-type governance model[16].

These reactions were quite understandable at a time of vigorous social democratization after a long period of highly authoritative and bureaucratized government control over university governance. In addition, it is no wonder that the academics seem to be quite content with the current governance structure where full-time professors dominate all important decisions of university management and oppose any reforms that could challenge the existing status quo. As indicated by Matějů & Simonová (2003) for the Czech case, however, "almost complete self-government granted to universities in advance of a much deeper and more consistent reform of the system made future reforms more difficult, if not impossible (pp. 6-7)." In other words, in the Korean context, already institutionalized self-government by full-time professors (in particular at public universities) during the late 1980s might have been used (or was actually used) to block subsequent reforms based on the NPM principles[17]. In fact, this line of observation seems to provide a more plausible explanation as to why the NPM strategy as a guiding principle of higher education reforms has had difficulty taking root in Korean universities.

In relation to this issue, in a slightly more theoretical vein, Braun and Merrien (1999) has argued that "[a] decisive precondition for the success of the new managerialism is the formation of a corporate identity of universities. Only when universities do regard themselves as individual competitors, operating in a 'quasi-market', and rearrange their internal organization according to the necessities which service delivery and contractualization demand, will it be possible to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of universities (p. 25)." According to their argument, therefore, the current model of institutional governance in Korean public universities where 'collegiality' plays an important role, does not create preconditions for successful implementation of the NPM principles within universities. Seen from this perspective, without making changes to the 'collegial' decision making style, the goals of the NPM based reforms will be difficult to fulfill.

Another explanation may come from the absence of a necessary coherence of government policies. The heavy emphasis on accountability without accompanying substantially increased institutional autonomy in particular for public universities; the ever-increasing rhetoric of 'maketization', 'provider competition', 'consumer choice' without any effort to disclose necessary information (i.e., the results of institutional & program evaluation, more sophisticated information about institutional employment rates, research performance etc.) to the public in order for the educational consumers to make rational decisions are some examples in point. The lack of policy coherence can be partly explained by the strategy taken by the Presidential Commission on Education Reform. According to Park (2000), the Commission decided that politically highly sensitive issues would be dealt with later in order not to lose the momentum of reform by being plunged into intractable issues from the beginning. However, major legislative reforms introduced later - which are often a precondition for an 'already introduced' reform to work properly - have

largely failed because of intensive opposition from the vested interest groups which then resulted in a lack of coherence of government policies[18].

In relation to this issue, institutional autonomy should deserve special attention as institutional autonomy is indeed one of the most important pre-requisites for the NPM governance model to be able to function properly because where there is no autonomy, it makes little sense to assess institutional performance and to require accountability from the institution.

As discussed earlier in Section 3.2, as far as public universities are concerned, institutional autonomy has not been increased to any great degree over the last two decades. The highly restricted nature of institutional autonomy of Korean public universities is mainly due to their legal status as a part of the government. As a corollary of this legal status, all organizational, financial, and personnel matters in public universities are therefore subject to governmental laws and budgetary regulations. Given this situation, there was no room for the NPM governance principles to play a role in improving system efficiency. 'The draft Act on the National University Incorporation' submitted to the National Assembly in June 2007 was in a sense the government's response to cope with this situation[19]. The draft Act envisaged a drastic increase of institutional autonomy in all areas of university management by changing the legal status of national universities into public corporations. The prospects of the draft Act being passed by the National Assembly, however, do not seem bright at the moment due to strong resistance of academics, staff, and students as well as a significant number of assemblymen against the idea of incorporating the national universities. In any case, it is clear that, without increased institutional autonomy, the effectiveness of the new governance model based on the NPM principles would be significantly decreased, and that, maybe the only and viable solution to drastically increasing institutional autonomy of public universities, as manifest in the Japanese case (See Table 2 in Section 3), would be to change the legal status of public universities by separating them from the government.

Conclusion

After a decade of reform efforts based on the NPM principles, despite all the rhetoric in government documents, the real working of the governance system in Korean higher education seems to have hardly changed at all. The new policy framework has had a very limited impact, if at all, at least up until now, on institutional and/or system performance in term of both international rankings of Korean universities and the general public's belief or trust in the capability of Korean higher education institutions to survive in a highly competitive world higher education market[20]. This study has tried to show, above all, that the introduction of the new framework of governance based on the NPM principles could bring about a number of challenges rather than provide solutions if it is not accompanied by the necessary preconditions for the new governance model to be able to work properly. As such, it was indeed not the main point of this study whether or not a new governance model based on the NPM principles is better than other types of governance models. The real argument this study sought to make was that a more systematic and integrated implementation strategy would be needed to assure a successful implementation of the NPM principles in the reform of Korean higher education governance. Seen from this perspective, in the Korean context, without making changes to (1) the existing collegial self-government by full-time professors within universities and (2) the strong tradition of bureaucratic government control over university management, the NPM governance model will not be able to work effectively.

After all, the concepts of accountability, institutional autonomy, and institutional leadership are all closely inter-related. Thus, it is evident that: (1) an emphasis on accountability without accompanying increased institutional autonomy would lead either to 'permanent immobilism' with half-hearted compliance to the government policy or to mere market-driven organizations with 'calculate frameworks' where the academics are playing a 'managerial game' (Braun, 1999, p. 261); and that (2) an increased institutional autonomy without securing strong administrative leadership and nurturing an entrepreneurial culture within a university would also inevitably lead to under-performance of the overall system where, in the Korean context, only the built-in interests of university constituencies (notably, professors) are likely to be protected and strengthened.

Notes

[1] Birnbaum(2000) provided a comprehensive analysis on management 'fads' in higher education which investigated a wide range of issues including: (1) what are academic management fads and where they come from?; (2) how they evolve, in other words, what is the life cycle of management fads?; (3) why they fail? and why they have been adopted even though they seemingly continuously fail?; and (4) what are some consequences and problems that they have contributed to in higher education and how educational administrators can deal with management fads? For those interested in these issues, see Birnbaum(2000).

[2] As used in OECD(2003), 'higher education' in the study refers to "universities and other tertiary institutions that award degrees and advanced research qualifications(p. 61)." There are many types of higher education institutions (i.e., 152 junior colleges, 14 industrial universities, 11 universities for primary teacher education, and others) in Korea other than 175 universities in 2006 (www.moe.go.kr).

[3] For detailed account of the principal theoretical bases for the new public management reforms, see Tolofari (2005).

[4] The public universities in this study refer to both 'national (established by the central government)' and 'public (by local governments)' universities unless otherwise specified.

[5] In 1924, the Japanese government established the Kyung-Sung Imperial University based on the model of the Japanese Imperial universities which was in turn modeled after the modern European universities such as the Berlin University in Germany. The Kyung-Sung Imperial University was reorganized, based on the U.S. public research university model, into the Seoul National University (SNU) in 1946 after liberation from Japanese colonial rule. The SNU was the first comprehensive modern Korean university that had undergraduate and graduate degree programs (Kim & Lee, 2004). Although the SNU was re-organized based on the U.S. public research university model, because of strong opposition from the university community against the idea of introducing the U.S. style Board of Trustees in the SNU (so-called Guk-Dae-An-Pa-Dong, roughly translated into 'Opposition movement against the Seoul National University establishment plan of 1946'), the governance structure of the SNU was different from that of the U.S. which was based on the principle of laymen or external control. According to Umakoshi (2000, pp. 163-187), the governance structure which most professors had in mind at that time was the model rooted in the Japanese Imperial Universities similar to the Humboldtian model in Europe where a University Senate (and a faculty senate at a faculty level) played an important role in university decision-making.

[6] In particular, from 1954, under an agreement between the SNU and the University of Minnesota in the U.S., around 300 SNU faculty members had a chance to study in the University of Minnesota which sparked a rush for many potential Korean professors to study in U.S. universities. For instance, according to Jung (1967 cited in Umakoshi, 2000), 62 percent of full-time professors in the SNU in 1967 had had experience of studying abroad with more than 80 percent of those professors studying in U.S. universities.

[7] Strict government control for private universities may sound odd for those who are not familiar with the Korean higher education system. In order to fully understand institutional autonomy in the Korean context, however, one should first take into account the unique characteristics of the Korean higher education development. One of the most conspicuous features of the Korean higher education system is the heavy reliance on private sector institutions. In fact, the enrollment share of the private sector for four-year universities in Korea was 79 percent in 2006(MOE&HRD & KEDI, 2006). This heavy reliance on the private sector is largely due to the government's strategy to mobilize private resources in expanding higher education so as to cope with a great demand for higher education and, at the same time, to overcome the severe budgetary constraints which existed at earlier stages of higher education development. However, as the government was focusing its financial resources almost exclusively on public universities, and the enrollment quotas for universities, regardless of their legal status (private or public) were strictly controlled by the government to maintain quality of education, most private universities suffered chronic problems of financial deficiency. The response of private universities to the situation was to retain as many illegal admissions as possible regardless of the educational capacity or qualifications of the applicants to make more profits which often led to corruption or embezzlement. As these practices by many private universities created serious social problems, the military government introduced strict regulations to control the administration of private universities in 1963 in the form of 'the Private School Act.' From that time on, the Korean government has maintained heavy control over most aspects of private university administration as well (Kim & Lee, 2004; Lee, 2000a; Umakoshi, 2000).

[8] As a part of the implementation process of 'the May 31 education reform', 'the Educational Deregulation Committee' was introduced in 1995 in the Ministry of Education which has vigorously committed to deregulation in a wide range of educational administration since then (Park, 2000). Moreover, in 2007, 'the Deregulation Committee for Higher Education' was

newly established and recommended a comprehensive deregulation plan for higher education which was primarily based on the opinions suggested by higher education institutions themselves in several rounds of a consultation process. But, overall, it seems that this plan will not fundamentally change the current highly restricted nature of institutional autonomy in Korean public universities as it also did not address the issue of the legal status of public universities as an underlying reason for the restricted institutional autonomy.

[9] For more information regarding these programs, see Moon & Kim (2001); and Ryu et al. (2006).

[10] This section will focus mainly on institutional governance in public universities. Institutional governance in private universities has quite a different history and is based on different rationales. The governance structure of private universities is stipulated in 'the Private School Act' which is very similar, in substance, to a U.S. model: a Board of Trustees as a supreme decision making body and the president as a chief executive officer. However, on taking a closer look at the composition and actual operation of the Board, one can easily recognize that the situation is totally different between the two countries. One of the chronic problems of some private universities (mainly, less prestigious, smaller private universities) was the strong influence of the founders of the institutions and his/her spouse & relatives over all aspects of university operations which frequently lead to internal conflicts and/or corruption. The main issue in private university governance reforms over the past two decades was indeed how to effectively introduce more external members on to the Board of private institutions to protect wider public interests from those founders of private institutions. In other words, the emphasis was put on the promotion of broader social democratization, not on the implantation of the business mind into private university management. It would be interesting to fully investigate this issue, but it is obviously beyond the scope of this study.

[11] According to Byun (2007), the traditional form of institutional governance until the late 1980s in Korea can be classified as 'a rector dictatorship model' where the rector (or president) is the sole authority to make final decisions regarding institutional management as well as to implement them together. For the purpose of this study, however, 'a rector dictatorship model' is regarded as a unique form of the executive leadership model. For in-depth exploration of this issue, see Byun (2007).

[12] The University Senate is generally composed of full-time professors only. The involvement of the university constituencies other than full-time professors in university decision making has been very limited in Korea. Student representation is not allowed in the Senate which seems to be very odd considering international trends widening the opportunities for students to participate in the governing body (See, for example, Byun, 2007). Administrative staff have voiced their rights to participate in the university decision making process and have recently made some progress (i.e., some universities including the SNU allowed the administrative staff to take part in the election of the president with less weight given to their votes). But, overall, the administrative staff's role in institutional governance still remains extremely limited in Korea.

[13] In the case of the SNU, the Senate has the final say for the following matters: (1) Basic direction for education and the management of academic affairs; (2) establishment and abolishment of colleges and graduate schools within the SNU and affiliated facilities; (3) establishment and abolishment of academic programs (i.e., faculties and departments); (4) Basic principles on personnel policy for academic staff; (5) Selection method of the final candidate for the university president (whose name will then be submitted to the government for approval –as a pure formality); and (6) Revision of the university statute and other regulations in relation to the items pertaining to the aforementioned matters. Although the president reserves the right to submit the Senate's decision for reconsideration, the Senate's decision will be finalized if the Senate passes a resolution again by a majority of two-thirds or more (The SNU Statute, Clause 42 on the University Senate).

[14] The University Senate of the SNU is composed of 54 professors elected among and by full-time professors and 13 external members appointed by the university president. According to recent statistics provided by the senate secretariat at the SNU, however, the average attendance rate of these external members for a general meeting of the Senate has been less than a quarter percent over the past four years (from Nov. 1, 2003 to Sep. 11, 2007).

[15] A similar argument for the Lituanian universities may be found in Želvys (2004).

[16] A similar observation for the Eastern and Central European countries which experienced communist regimes may be found in de Boer and Goedegebuure (2003).

[17] The subsequent developments in the 1990s and afterwards with regard to the implementation of the NPM-based reforms seem to justify this concern.

[18] Recently in May 2007, the Korean Assembly passed 'the Special Act on disclosing the information of education-related institutions.' According to the Act, from 2008, all higher education institutions must release, more than once a year, such key information as employment rate, research performance, level of tuition, financial situation to the public. However, given the year-long strong opposition from the group of less prestigious

universities, whether or not the system works properly in line with the original intention stipulated in the Act remains to be seen.

[19] The proposed Act on National University Incorporation is a comprehensive package of government reforms which contains most of the elements of the NPM governance principles. The main elements of the proposed act include: (1) the transformation of national universities into a national university corporation thus drastically increasing autonomy of individual institutions; (2) introduction of a four-year performance contract between the central government and each individual university; (3) establishment of a governing board (benchmarked conceptually from a U.S. style Board of Trustees) within individual institutions composed of 15 appointed members with an external majority; and (4) granting the final authority of determining a university president to the board.

[20] In terms of 'university education meeting the needs of a competitive economy', Korean university education ranked 40th out of 55 countries included in the 2007 IMD World Competitiveness Survey. Although there is an indication that the situation in Korea has gradually improved as shown by a yearly performance of this rank (59th in 2004 → 52nd in 2005 → 50th in 2006 → 40th in 2007), the level of satisfaction towards university education perceived by the business world seems still fairly low as suggested by the moderately low score of 4.46 on this survey item on a 10 point (maximum) scale (IMD, World Competitiveness Yearbook 2007).

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