

Korean Public Administration Research 1999-2009: Research Themes, Methodologies, and Scholarship

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Abstract

This article examines three major characteristics—themes, research methods, and authorship—of Korean public administration research written in the Korean language during 1999 to 2009. It suggests that this research has evolved and advanced both quantitatively and qualitatively. Recent Korean scholarship can be characterized as consisting of more reform-oriented topics, more quantitative methods, and more diversified authorship. These characteristics were partially caused by increasing social demand for government reform and growing emphasis on methodological rigor in public administration research, as well as increased government research funding for graduate programs. This also concludes that the Korean public administration research has advanced greatly in past decades but needs a better thematic and methodological balance as well as balance between theoretical and prescriptive studies.

Keywords

comparative administration, public administration, generally

Introduction

Korea has been known as an administrative state where the administrative apparatus and its functions have driven the advancement of society while affording public servants appreciation and respect (Caiden & Kim, 1991; Moon & Ingraham, 1998; Ro, 1993). The public administration discipline in Korea also plays a pivotal role in training potential public employees, as well as producing and disseminating the intellectual products of society (such as knowledge and information) on public administration and policy issues. With the growing influence of public administration over Korean society, the public administration academic community has continued to grow since the Korean Association of Public Administration (KAPA) was founded in 1956.¹ The number of KAPA members has increased 24-fold from 80 in 1956 to 1,906 in 2012.

Despite incredible growth in the academic public administration community for last decades, there is a long-standing question of whether and how far Korean public administration scholarship has been rigorously advanced. It has been often criticized for largely importing ideas and

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theories developed in the United States and the West and not necessarily examining the unique nature of the Korean public administration phenomenon from its own theoretical perspective. Unfortunately, the public administration research written in Korean is not well known to or underestimated by non-Korean scholars due to the language barrier. It is unfortunate and ironic, because there are more Korean-written research products than English-written ones in the Korean public administration community though an increasing number of Korean public administration scholars are actively involved in international public administration communities through journal publications, professional activities, and conference participation.

This study was designed to investigate the “what” (research themes), “how” (methods), and “who” (authors) of Korean public administration research conducted between 1999 and 2009. It focused particularly on research that is written in Korean and therefore unknown to the international intellectual community. Research themes, the level of analysis, styles, and methods, as well as authors were examined based on meta-analyses of 1,677 articles published between 1999 and 2009 in the *Korean Public Administration Review* (KPAR, *Haengjunghakbo* in Korean), the *Korean Journal of Public Administration* (KJPA, *Haengjunnonchong*), and the *Korean Policy Studies Review* (KPSR, *Jungchekhakheobo*). It should be noted that there were several meta-analysis-based studies which attempted to examine major trends in the Korean public administration research (Ahn, 1986; Choi & Park, 2011; Ju, 2002; Kwon, 1996; 2009; Lee, 1994; Lee, 2006; Mok & Park, 2002; Rhee, 1992). However, some of them focused on only one particular journal like KPAR or did not cover most recent research development which is in fact the primary interest of this study. Moreover, none of them were written in English nor were designed to introduce the nature of recent development of Korean public administration research to international public administration community based on similar analytical framework for the comparison of public administration research in other parts of the Asian region.

The Evolution of Korean Public Administration and Meta-Analysis-Based Studies of Korean Public Administration Research

Over the last six decades, the Korean public administration discipline has exploded, witnessing rapid growth in the number of programs, students, and faculty members as well as the quantity and quality of research. Public administration began as a modern academic discipline in Korea in 1956, when the Korean Public Administration Group (forerunner of KAPA) was founded. Reviewing the evolution of Korean public administration research, Cho (2006) identifies four different stages: (a) an initial stage, up to 1969, (b) an emerging stage, 1970 to 1971, (c) a growth stage, 1971 to 2005, and (d) a maturing period, after 2006. The growth and maturing periods are further divided into four substages: (a) the stimulus period (1971-1975), when empirical studies were extensively introduced and practical understanding of the field was encouraged; (b) the expanding period (1976-1985), when the range of research topics was expanded to include policy studies, local and urban studies, management science, and information technologies; (c) the take-off period (1986-1995), when the issues of relevance and integration were heavily considered and diverse emerging topics (including ethics, democracy, globalism, and the uniqueness of Korean public administration) were studied; and (d) the reflection period (after 2006), in which more relevant and contextual studies are expected to emerge and become more internationally competitive (Cho, 2006).²

The number of academic public administration programs grew rapidly from the beginning of 1990s. According to statistics compiled by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology,³ the number of master's programs (including both traditional and mid-career programs) also increased from 270 in 1999 to 322 in 2011, while that of doctoral programs increased from 45 in

1999 to 119 in 2011. The number of faculty members doubled between 1999 and 2012, from 484 to 967 (Korean Association of Public Administration, 2012)).

With the interest in the development of Korean public administration research, a few scholars conducted meta-analysis-based studies on Korean public administration research by reviewing academic journals, textbooks, and doctoral dissertations (Ahn, 1986; Choi & Park, 2011; Ju, 2002; Kwon, 1996; 2009; Lee, 1994; Lee, 2006; Mok & Park, 2002; Rhee, 1992). For example, Ahn (1986) analyzed 291 articles published in KPAR focused on the changes in research themes. Rhee (1992) analyzed 52 textbooks and examined major organizational behavior themes, while Lee (1994) analyzed 339 doctoral dissertations in public administration and observed research approaches and sub-majors between 1974 and 1994. Analyzing research areas and research methods in 541 KPAR articles published in Korean between 1967 and 1995, Kwon (1996) found that organizational theory (28.4%), organizational behavior (23.9%), bureaucracy (22.4%), and organizational change (17.9%) were the most popular topics.

Entering the 2000s, Mok and Park (2002) analyzed 277 articles published in KPSR focused on policy types, policy areas, policy processes, data, and research methods, while Lee (2006) analyzed 77 KPAR articles that studied organization-related topics. Analyzing 455 articles published in KPAR between 1995 and 2001, Ju (2002) concluded that there was a great increase in local and urban administration and quantitative studies, especially those using advanced statistical methods. Recently, Choi and Park (2011) analyzed 296 KPAR articles published from 2005 to 2009. Conducting a text-network analysis of abstracts, they found the words *organization*, *administration*, *society*, and *institution* positioned in the center of public administration studies. They also found that the concept of *organization* is connected with the terms *information technology*, *leadership*, *organizational culture*, *performance*, *innovation*, and *knowledge management*, while *administration* is connected with *reform*, *pragmatism*, and *bureaucracy*.

Acknowledging the continued efforts to examine the research trends in Korean public administration, this study is particularly designed to examine and introduce the nature of the most recent Korean public administration research conducted in the local language to international public administration community for the comparison of public administration research in other parts of the Asian region.

Data Collection and Method

Many academic journals in public administration and related disciplines have been published in Korea. Some of them represent academic associations such as KAPA and the Korean Association of Policy Studies. Other journals are published by region-based academic associations, theme-based associations, academic programs, as well as government-funded research institutes such as the Korean Institute of Public Administration. Among the academic journals in the public administration field, the KPAR, KPSR, and KJPA were selected for analysis, the first two representing an academic association and the latter published by an academic program. The KPAR has been published by KAPA since 1967 and is representative of journals for academic associations, while the Graduate School of Public Administration at Seoul National University has published the KJPA since 1962, biannually until 2000 and now quarterly. The KPSR has been published by the Korean Association of Policy Studies since 1992, with an emphasis on policy research. Since 2005, three journals have been recognized as certified journals by the National Research Foundation of Korea.⁴

We examined 1,677 articles published in KPAR, KJPA, and KPSR between 1999 and 2009. A total of 744 out of the 1,677 articles were published in KPAR (volumes 32-43),⁵ 412 in KJPA (volumes 38-47), and 521 in KPSR (volumes 8-18). Of these articles, 4.8% ($n = 36$) in KPAR, 6.8% ($n = 28$) in KJPA, and 6.0% ($n = 31$) in KPSR were published as special symposium articles.

Each article published between 1999 and 2009 was carefully reviewed and coded. The coding items were selected based on previous literature (Choi & Lee, 2009; Choi & Park, 2011; Houston & Delevan, 1990; Ju, 2002; Kwon, 1996; 2009; Perry & Kraemer, 1986; Stallings & Ferris, 1988).⁶ The coding items include research theme, method, unit of analysis, purpose, and other research-related topics as discussed in the introduction of this special symposium.

A number of additions were made to the coding protocol. To code research themes, we carefully reviewed keywords, abstracts, and the contents of each article.⁷ Based on the micro-level themes, we attempted to group related topics for intermediate-level themes, which were again regrouped into macro-level themes: public administration theory (including ethics, accountability and public values, Korean public administration and research trends), public management (governance, e-governance, human resource management [HRM], managerial reform, performance management, and related topics), public policy (social policy, environmental policy, public policy tools, policy conflict, and related topics), public finance and budgeting, local government, methodologies, and political environment.

Methodology was also coded into four categories: pure theoretical research, quantitative methods, qualitative methods, and reviews of secondary sources such as meta-analyses. We applied double-counting if a study employed more than one method. Each method was also further coded into subcategories for specific methods such as mean analyses, regression analyses, and structural equation models/path analyses. The authors were also coded as full-time faculty members, part-time lecturers, researchers, graduate students, and practitioners.

Research Themes

The research themes suggest the foci of research conducted by Korean public administration scholars. In order to examine them, we carefully reviewed the title, keywords, abstract, and contents of each article in the three selected Korean journals between 1999 and 2009. Table 1 summarizes the results.

The most popular research themes in Korea seem to be managerial reform, governance, performance management, HRM, and social policy. The five topics represent almost half (49.1%) of all publications. The particular interest in managerial reform and governance is likely to reflect the fact that the Korean government has been continuously planning and implementing public sector reforms and attempting to emphasize intersectoral collaborative management and networks for the last 10 years. It is also partially because public sector reform is becoming a buzzword as new public leadership tends to draw attention to public sector reforms as a key to upgrading national competitiveness (Kim, 2004; Kim & Moon, 2002; Moon & Kim, 2006).

The current popular research themes are very different from those of the past. According to Kwon (1996), public administration theory was the most popular research theme in the 1970s and 1980s. In the early 1990s, city and local government became the primary research theme, reflecting the significance attached to local autonomy systems and the reintroduction of local government elections. Diversification of research themes is increasing and involving relatively new and unexplored themes such as NGOs, gender equality, and diversity in addition to conventional themes such as public organization, public finance, and local government (Koo, 2009).

The popularity of research themes has changed over time. For example, managerial reform and performance management were very popular in 2004, 2005, and 2006. This reflects the Roh Moo-hyun administration's (2004-2007) promotion of administrative reform initiatives focusing on business process reengineering, organizational cultural change, learning organization, and performance management. The Roh Moo-hyun administration promoted administrative reform through the Presidential Committee for Administrative Reform and Decentralization. The administration also appointed a senior secretary in the Presidential Office to manage major reform initiatives. The popularity of the managerial reform research theme is also partially associated

Table 1. Research Themes in Korean Public Administration Research.

Theme	Frequency	%
Managerial reform	190	11.3
Governance	187	11.2
Performance management	166	9.9
HRM	147	8.8
Social policy	132	7.9
Local administration	112	6.7
Other public management topics	100	6.0
Public finance	95	5.7
Public administration theory	94	5.6
Public policy tools	90	5.4
Other policy topics	84	5.0
E-government	66	3.9
Ethics, accountability, and public values	45	2.7
Environmental policy	43	2.6
Policy conflict	43	2.6
Korean public administration and research trend	32	1.9
Methodology	29	1.7
Politics	22	1.3
Total	1,677	100.0

Note: HRM = human resource management.

with various changes in public personnel administration such as the introduction of pay-for-performance, evaluation systems, and similar approaches. New reform initiatives such as the reorganization of public agencies, the executive agency system, and public service improvement initiatives also seem to contribute to the popularity of the managerial reform research theme.

Governance in the forms of networking and collaboration has become a popular research topic in Korea along with managerial reform (privatization and outsourcing). This suggests that Korean public administration research reflects trends in international public management research (Pitts & Fernandez, 2009). There was a substantial amount of research on governance at the beginning of the 2000s.⁸

As Table 1 indicates, about 7.9% of the published articles in the three selected journals focus on social policy, which seems to reflect the increasing significance of social welfare programs in Korea. Environmental policy (about 2.6% of published articles) is the second most popular policy research area. This suggests that social welfare policy and environmental policy are two compelling policy areas that Korean public administration scholars are interested in partially because there might be more policy debates and policy conflicts in those two areas than other policy areas. Public administration theory and public finance also account for more than 10% of published articles. It seems that Korean public administration scholars are interested in various policy tools such as regulation, privatization, and contracting out. E-government (3.9%) is another research area where many scholars conduct both normative and empirical research as the Korean government has actively promoted e-government solutions through both back-office and front-office IT applications.

We also examined the themes of funded research by funding source. As Table 2 suggests, 23.3% (390 out of 1,677) of the articles we reviewed are the result of research funded by universities, the National Research Foundation of Korea, government agencies, and private foundations. Of these, universities (200 articles, 11.9%) and the National Research Foundation of Korea

Table 2. Research Topics by Funding Sources.

Research topics	Funded research												Unfunded research		Total	
	University		Korea research foundation		Government agency		Private foundation		Total		Unfunded research		Total			
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%		
Governance	27	1.6	27	1.6	1	0.1	1	0.1	56	3.3	131	7.8	187	11.2		
Performance management	24	1.4	17	1.0	0	0.0	1	0.1	42	2.5	124	7.4	166	9.9		
HRM	21	1.3	14	0.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	35	2.1	112	6.7	147	8.8		
Local administration	19	1.1	16	1.0	3	0.2	0	0.0	38	2.3	74	4.4	112	6.7		
Managerial reform	18	1.1	17	1.0	1	0.1	1	0.1	37	2.2	153	9.1	190	11.3		
Social policy	16	1.0	13	0.8	3	0.2	0	0.0	32	1.9	100	6.0	132	7.9		
Other Public management topics	15	0.9	9	0.5	2	0.1	2	0.1	28	1.7	72	4.3	100	6.0		
Public administration theory	13	0.8	7	0.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	20	1.2	74	4.4	94	5.6		
Public finance	8	0.5	10	0.6	1	0.1	1	0.1	20	1.2	75	4.5	95	5.7		
Public policy tools	7	0.4	9	0.5	1	0.1	0	0.0	17	1.0	73	4.4	90	5.4		
Korean public administration and research trend	6	0.4	1	0.1	2	0.1	0	0.0	9	0.5	23	1.4	32	1.9		
E-government	5	0.3	4	0.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	9	0.5	57	3.4	66	3.9		
Politics	5	0.3	1	0.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	6	0.4	16	1.0	22	1.3		
Ethics, accountability, and public values	4	0.2	5	0.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	9	0.5	36	2.1	45	2.7		
Environmental policy	4	0.2	3	0.2	0	0.0	1	0.1	8	0.5	35	2.1	43	2.6		
Other policy topics	4	0.2	6	0.4	1	0.1	0	0.0	11	0.7	73	4.4	84	5.0		
Methodology	2	0.1	3	0.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	5	0.3	24	1.4	29	1.7		
Policy conflict	2	0.1	4	0.2	1	0.1	1	0.1	8	0.5	35	2.1	43	2.6		
Total	200	11.9	166	9.9	16	1.0	8	0.5	390	23.3	1,287	76.7	1,677	100		

Note: HRM = human resource management.

(166 articles, 9.9%) were the two major funding sources. Governance was the most popular research topic in both university-funded articles and research funded by the National Research Foundation of Korea.

Some of research projects are funded by Korean government agencies, and many of them are eventually published in academic journals. It is possible that some of the journal publications resulted from agency-funded research but did not acknowledge this because of absence of acknowledgement requirements. It seems likely that the actual proportion of agency-funded public administration research in Korea is much higher than it appears.⁹ While agency funding promotes and facilitates practical policy research opportunities, this funding might also cause financial dependence and pro-government orientation of academic communities.¹⁰ This might also make a partial contribution to the increase in the proportion of prescription-oriented research than theory-based research.

Table 3. International Comparative Studies.

International comparative studies	Frequency	%
Comparison of foreign cases	102	48.6
Comparison of foreign case(s) with the Korean case	92	43.8
One single foreign case	16	7.6
Total	210	100

International Comparative Studies

Korean public administration scholars are also interested in conducting comparative studies. Many scholars try to find benchmarking cases from other countries and draw policy implications for the Korean context. There were 210 international comparative studies published in the KPAR, KJPA, and KPSR between 1999 and 2009. As summarized in Table 3, 92 articles out of 210 (43.8%) examined foreign cases in comparison with Korean cases, while 102 articles (48.6%) investigated foreign cases only. A total of 16 articles (7.6%) conducted comparative studies among foreign cases. Most international comparative studies were conducted in the areas of social policy and managerial reform.

Table 3 summarizes the frequency with which countries were examined in 210 international comparative studies, by research theme. The United States was the most frequently examined country with 98 articles (34.3%). Among the topics examined by these articles were HRM (10 articles), managerial reform (11 articles), governance (8 articles), and performance management (7 articles). Specifically speaking, the United States as a country of interest was followed by Japan (41 articles, 14.3%) and the United Kingdom (23 articles, 8.0%). Articles on Japan focused particularly on local government (7 articles), managerial reform (4 articles), and public finance (4 articles). Many articles on the United Kingdom focused on social policy (4 articles), local government (3 articles), or managerial reform (6 articles).

Other countries examined in international comparative studies included Germany (19 articles), France (20 articles), Canada (4 articles), China (9 articles), Australia (4 articles), New Zealand (5 articles), and Sweden (8 articles). Except for Sweden, which is often benchmarked for its social policy, most of these countries were frequently examined as benchmarking cases for social policies, managerial reforms, HRM, and performance management, which were referred to in New Public Management literature. Korean scholars also investigated local government and social policy in their international comparative studies.

Analyzing the coded data, we found that Korean scholars have explored various public administration topics but have shown the strongest interest in reform- or change-oriented topics such as

managerial reform, governance, performance management, and HRM. This reflects the fact that the Korean academic public administration community has a keen interest in practical public administration agendas and is closely tied to government agencies, which tends to lead to prescriptive studies.

Thanks to the emphasis on methodological rigor, there are more empirical studies than essay-style studies, while quantitative methods seem to be preferred over qualitative methods. Research methods seem to become more instrumental, quantified, and sophisticated for theory-testing purposes. Regression analysis and single case studies are dominant research methods in quantitative and qualitative studies, respectively. The authors are more diverse as an increasing number of nonfaculty scholars, such as researchers, practitioners, and graduate students, become active in academic publication. The number of international comparative studies is also increasing, in particular for benchmarking purposes.

Table 4. Purposes of Study.

Purpose	Empirical		Essay		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Explanatory	679	40.5	5	0.3	684	40.8
Exploratory	385	23.0	50	3.0	435	25.9
Descriptive	225	13.4	333	19.9	558	33.3
Total	1,289	76.9	388	23.1	1,677	100

Research Styles, Methods, and Approaches

Scholars conduct research for different purposes with different research styles (empirical and essay) by employing various research methods to make their research as rigorous as possible.¹¹ This section examines the purposes, research styles, and research methods adopted by Korean authors.

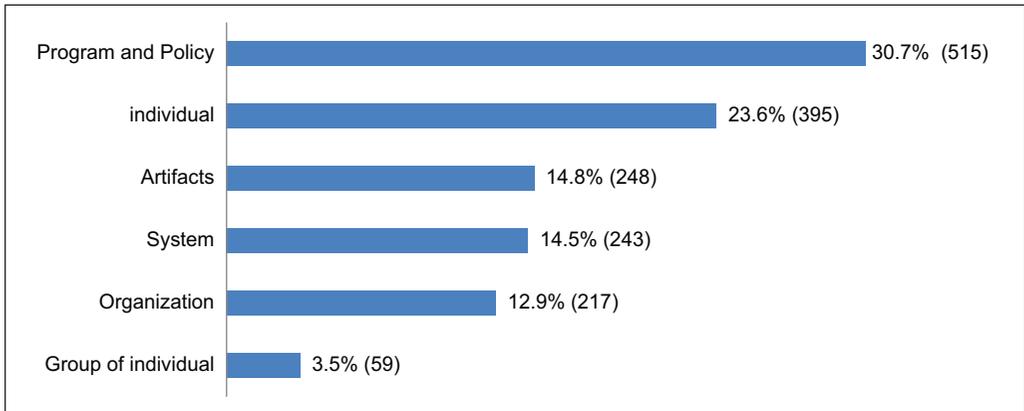
As Table 4 suggests, Korean journal articles seem to be written primarily for explanatory purposes and often aim to identify causal relationships. A total of 684 articles (40.8%) were based on explanatory studies, while 435 (25.9%) and 558 (33.3%) were based on exploratory and descriptive studies, respectively. It seems that relatively junior scholars who are actively involved in reviewing and writing journal articles appreciate explanatory research with hypothesis testing and empirical research, rather than traditional descriptive research.

Given the emphasis on explanatory research, it is not surprising to see that empirical studies are dominant in Korean public administration research. In fact, 1,289 out of 1,677 articles (76.9%) were empirical, drawing upon qualitative or quantitative data, while 388 articles (23.1%) were written in the style of an argument using an essay style (see Table 5). For example, most of the studies on public finance (80 out of 95, 84.21%) and local government (94 out of 112, 83.93%) were empirical. This is because much of the public finance research requires data and economic analysis. Significant local government research was also large N analysis based on data collected from more than 200 Korean local governments. Similarly, many e-government studies collected survey data or developed data-driven case studies. A large proportion of the studies examining managerial reform were also empirical—a total of 156 out of 190 articles (82.11%). Essay-type research seems to be more frequently conducted for some topics such as public administration theory (88 out of 94 articles, 93.62%), Korean public administration research (20 out of 32 articles, 62.50%), and social policy (23 out of 132 articles, 17.42%).

Figure 1 indicates that Korean scholars investigate public administration phenomena at the individual level most frequently: 395 articles (23.6%) out of 1,677 focused on the individual

Table 5. Research Methods.

	Methods	Frequency	%
Research methods (double counted)	Quantitative	729	41.9
	Qualitative	565	32.5
	Pure theoretical	238	13.7
	Review of secondary sources	207	11.9
	Total	1,739	100
Qualitative methods	Case study	403	71.3
	Comparative study	110	19.5
	In-depth interviews	37	6.5
	Others	15	2.7
	Total	565	100
Quantitative methods	Regression	300	41.2
	Descriptive statistics	143	19.6
	Mean tests	112	15.4
	Path analysis	59	8.1
	Modeling/others	46	6.3
	Factor/cluster analysis	28	3.8
	Data envelopment analysis	22	3.0
	Network analysis	19	2.6
	Total	729	100

**Figure 1.** Level of analysis.

level and 243 articles (14.5%) on the system level. This is partially because many scholars conduct survey data-based research, which often deals with public administration issues at this level. For example, Jeong, Im, and Ryoo (2009) and Kim (2009) examined the determinants of public service motivation and organizational commitment, respectively, by analyzing perception data collected from public employees, and Park (2008) conducted a research project on public trust in government based on citizen survey data.

We also found many studies focusing on policy on a national level, based on case study research on various policies and institutions, as well as international comparative studies. Only 59 articles (3.5%) focused on the group level. This suggests that scholars tend to examine public administration subjects at either the micro (individual) or macro (government/systems) level.

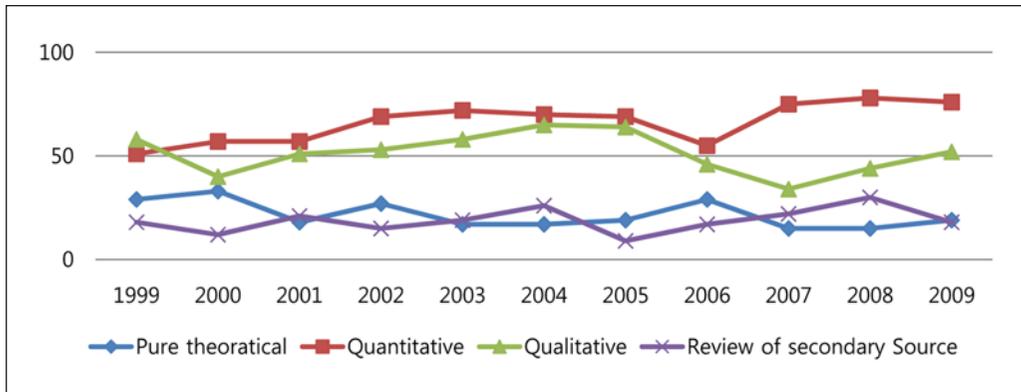


Figure 2. Research methods by year.

Group-level analysis was not widely conducted, partially because it might be more difficult to collect data at this level. Research topics at the group level might also be somewhat more limited (e.g., groupthink and teamwork) than they are at the individual (motivation, satisfaction, and commitment) and systems (culture, reform, government) levels.

Table 5 summarizes methods adopted in the studies.¹² The data confirm that Korean public administration scholars most often employ the quantitative method. A total of 729 (41.9%) studies were conducted based on quantitative research methods, while 565 (32.5%) were conducted based on qualitative methods such as case studies. Only 238 (13.7%) articles employed a purely theoretical approach and 207 (11.9%) were written as review essays. Similar to public administration research in the United States (Perry & Kraemer, 1986), among quantitative methods, regression analysis is a dominant method in Korea. About 41.2% of quantitative studies used regression analysis, while 19.6% and 15.4% used descriptive statistics and mean difference tests (such as the *t*-test and chi-square test), respectively. Path analysis and structural equation models were used on a reasonably regular basis and accounted for 8.6% of quantitative studies in 2009. Network analysis (using specific network analysis software) was also introduced in 2002 and has gradually become popular. Based on two-step neighborhood ego-network analysis, for example, Park and Ko (2009) analyze how public administration information is searched and consumed throughout major academic portal sites. Examining cohesion, structural equivalence, and centrality with UCINET-based analysis, Lee (2007) analyzes collaborative and network structure among central agencies.

Looking at the number of studies using quantitative methods per annum during the period under review, we find that 81 articles used this method in 2009, an increase from 57 in 1999. As Figure 2 indicates, the number of articles based on quantitative methods continues to grow, while that for articles with a purely theoretical approach has generally declined. This trend of increasing empirical and quantitative method-based research has also been identified by other public administration scholars. Reviewing four different journals—*KPAR*, *KPSR*, *Korean Society and Administration Research*, and *Korean Policy Analysis Journal*—Shim and Joo (2005) suggest that quantitative research comprised about 83.6% of all published articles between 2000 and 2005.

Qualitative methods include qualitative case studies, comparative case studies, in-depth interviews, and structured surveys. Most (403 or 71.3%) of the 565 qualitative studies relied on single case studies. Comparative studies were the second most popular qualitative method, followed by in-depth interviews. These statistics suggest that Korean researchers employ qualitative methods substantially, but most qualitative research seems to be conducted through single or comparative case studies rather than through in-depth interviews or participative observations.

Table 6. Time Dimension.

	Cross sectional		Longitudinal (2-5 years)		Longitudinal (5+ years)		Time series		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1999	39	4.1	14	1.5	26	2.7	2	0.2	81	8.5
2000	37	3.9	10	1.0	21	2.2	8	0.8	76	7.9
2001	42	4.4	19	2.0	18	1.9	3	0.3	82	8.6
2002	54	5.6	16	1.7	13	1.4	6	0.6	89	9.3
2003	56	5.9	11	1.2	15	1.6	5	0.5	87	9.1
2004	71	7.4	7	0.7	15	1.6	6	0.6	99	10.4
2005	48	5.0	23	2.4	18	1.9	6	0.6	95	9.9
2006	45	4.7	10	1.0	11	1.2	6	0.6	72	7.5
2007	57	6.0	9	0.9	17	1.8	10	1.0	93	9.7
2008	57	6.0	9	0.9	16	1.7	8	0.8	90	9.4
2009	58	6.1	8	0.8	16	1.7	10	1.0	92	9.6
Total	564	59.0	136	14.2	186	19.5	70	7.3	956	100

As Shim and Joo (2005) argue, a triangulation approach with mixed methods has become a new alternative approach for future Korean public administration research. To examine fiscal sustainability in Korea and Japan, for example, Kim (2006) triangulates quantitative and qualitative methods by analyzing Korean and Japanese fiscal data separately and examines the two cases from a comparative perspective.

If authors are to begin to unpack relationships between variables, it is beneficial to conduct research with a longer scope of time, irrespective of method. Regarding the time dimension, studies can be categorized into cross-sectional studies (using 1-year cross-sectional data), short-term longitudinal studies (mostly case studies with 2- to 5-year time frames), long-term longitudinal studies (mostly case studies with longer than 5-year time frames),¹³ and panel data (cross-sectional and time-series). Table 6 summarizes the number of studies by different time dimensions and years. Normative studies and theory-building studies are excluded because they do not have a time dimension; this drops the total number of articles from 1,667 to 956.

The number of panel data analysis studies with time-series and cross-sectional data is increasing. This is because more systemic data collection efforts have been made by academic institutions as well as government agencies. For example, many studies use panel data (cross-section and time-series) collected by local governments, central agencies, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (cross-country and time-series). In particular, Korean scholars have begun to take advantage of available data on various government affairs that the Korean government has made a concerted effort to collect for the last 10 years, including budget, public information, and performance data.

Authors

We also investigated who wrote the journal articles. As Table 7 shows, the authors do not seem to be highly diverse. Full-time faculty members are made up about two-thirds (61.1%) of the contributors of journal articles, while researchers who hold positions in various research institutions made up 19.9%. Only 3.0% of article contributors were part-time lecturers. This suggests that Korean public administration research is still primarily produced by full-time faculty members, though other scholars, such as part-time lecturers and researchers, have begun to contribute as well.

Table 7. Types of Authors.

Authors	Frequency	Percent
Full-time faculty	1,492	61.1
Researchers	487	19.9
Graduate students	197	8.1
Practitioners	174	7.1
Lecturers	73	3.0
Others	20	0.8
Total	2,443	100

Note: *Double counted.

Traditionally, some academic journals in Korea did not allow graduate students to publish a single-authored article. However, graduate students have become strikingly important players in the academic community, now authoring 8.1% of articles reviewed. Graduate students are highly motivated to present papers at academic conferences and to publish their work in journals. In particular, government-funded programs like Brain Korea 21 (BK21), designed to promote the research capacity of graduate programs, enabled both graduate programs and graduate students to participate in the competition. The BK21 program was introduced in 1999 and launched its first programs between 1999 and 2005, with a budget of about US\$1.3 billion to promote research capacity and international competitiveness in selected research programs.

The second round of BK21, which ran from 2006 to 2012 with a budget of about US\$2 billion, also sought to establish competitive research infrastructure and promote specialization of graduate programs and competitive research programs. The second round of BK21 mandated that participating graduate programs develop an internal competition mechanism through which the research activities and output of participating faculty members and graduate students are systematically monitored and evaluated. Research performance of participants is an important factor for mid-term evaluations and grant amounts.

Thanks to the increasing competition among BK21 participating programs and emphasis on research performance in universities in general, some doctoral programs require journal publication prior to graduation, which also puts research pressure on graduate students. The number of student-authored (including single- and co-authored) articles is 168 (10%) out of 1,677. In fact, the proportion of student-authored articles was 6.8% (68 articles out of 1,065) in the first round of BK21 program (1999-2005) and increased to 16.3% (100 articles out of 612) in the second round of the program (2006-2009). This statistic suggests that student research activities have been greatly improved during recent years. However, only 2.98% (50 articles) out of 1,677 articles were written by students as first authors, while 66.19% (1,110 articles) were written by faculty members as first authors. Recently, the proportion of articles first authored by students increased from 1.2% (13 articles out of 1,065) in the first round of BK21 program to 6.0% (37 articles out of 612) in the second round of the program. Practitioners are also becoming more active in publication as more practitioners earn doctoral degrees; in addition, some PhD holders obtain positions in government through a special recruitment system that is designed to enhance professionalism in government.

Conclusions

This study reviewed the “what” (research themes), “how” (research methods), and “who” (authors) of recent Korean academic research published in the Korean language, which remains largely inaccessible and unknown to the international public administration community. Selecting

the KPAR, KJPA, and KPSR and reviewing 1,677 articles published between 1999 and 2009, we identified the major research topics, purposes, methods, and authors of these articles.

The academic field of public administration has flowered in Korea, partially because of the existence in that country of a historically strong administrative state with government-led economic development and bureaucracy-dominant policy-making processes (Koo, 2009). Will this advancement continue? Many might say “no,” because public expectations regarding the role of bureaucracy and government have diminished (or at least changed) with the emphasis on more participative and democratic governance. It appears that Korean public administration research is entering a new era, in which it should and can advance based on both theoretical and practical understanding of Korean public administration. Going beyond the current academic achievements built upon Western public administration theories and best practices, as well as rigorous research methods, the Korean academic community should make additional efforts to study the unique Korean public administration experience, to develop its own theories, and to share them with the international community.

Recently, the Korean public administration community has begun to seriously discuss alternative ways of “searching for Korean public administration” (Park, Yoon, & Kim, 2011). The discussion began as a critical self-assessment of the past and present status of Korean public administration research.¹⁴ It has been noted that Korean public administration has been greatly skewed by American public administration scholarship in terms of theories, research themes, methods, and even education curricula, largely because many Korean public administration scholars were trained in American institutions from the beginning of 1970s (Park, 2011). Park (2011) asserts that this skewed nature of Korean public administration research partially results in overflow of imitative and prescriptive research based on western models, fragmentation of public administration knowledge, and excessive quantitative research. Many Korean scholars seem to believe that the Korean public administration academic community should make additional efforts to pursue theoretical maturity by sinking deep roots into unique Korean public administration phenomena and developing unique theoretical frameworks to explain them.

Korean public administration research needs to become more balanced in several ways. First, it needs a balance in methodologies. As noted in the previous section, Korean public administration research seems to favor quantitative research methods. Though this in itself should not be a problem, substantial reduction in the number of rigorous qualitative research is a serious problem. It is particularly important to have methodological balance because good qualitative research, based on in-depth studies of unique Korean public administration phenomena, is critical to theory development. A better balance is also necessary even in quantitative methods. The majority of quantitative studies have used regression analysis, descriptive statistics, or mean tests, while other methods such as network analysis and factor analysis have rarely been applied.

Second, Korean public administration research needs a balance in research themes. The bulk of current research focuses on administrative reform, governance, and performance management. Though these are all important, Korean scholars also need to explore other important topics, including public ethics and values, as well as diverse policy areas other than social and environmental policy. Responding to the increasing significance of official development assistance programs in Korea, development administration needs to be revisited.

Third, Korean public administration research also needs a balance between theoretical studies and prescriptive studies. Despite increasing emphasis on methodological rigor and theory-based research, prescriptive studies have been more popular than theoretical studies, partially because of their emphasis on problem solving and practical implications as well as the strong tie between the academic community and government in Korea. It is fair to note that there is also a voice of concern about financial dependence of the public administration academic community on public agencies because of possible negative impact on the content and objectivity of research.

Despite some limitations, the Korean public administration research has continued to advance in terms of quality and quantity. It is encouraging that the unique nature of Korean administrative culture and other Korean phenomena have been seriously examined and discussed in recent Korean studies. It is also encouraging that Korean public administration scholars have attempted to go beyond creative imitations and applications of theories learned from western literature and have begun to deeply understand their country's unique administrative experiences and phenomena and attempt to turn them into their own studies. We also note that more non-Korean public administration scholars began to pay attention to research and practices of Korean public administration from a comparative perspective

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Notes

1. As of May 2012, the membership includes 967 professors, 89 part-time lecturers, 319 researchers, 222 civil servants, 35 public corporation employees, 76 private sector employees, and 198 others (including graduate students).
2. For more information on the development of Korean public administration, see Kim (2012).
3. The information is found in the following URL: cesi.kedi.re.kr
4. The National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF) developed the Korean Citation Index to measure the quality of academic journals. Journals that are certified, or selected for the Index, are considered to be major journals in their respective disciplines. We acknowledge that there are more than 30 NRF-recognized journals in the field of public administration and policy in Korea. Though this study does not cover all the journals thanks to a practical reason, the selection of three journals in the study was carefully made primarily based on representativeness and longevity by excluding section journals and regional journals. Many of section journals on informatization, public personnel administration, local government, public organization management and others are excluded for this reason.
5. KPAR's volume 32, issue 4 was published in spring 1999.
6. Previous Korean studies (Choi & Lee, 2009; Kwon, 1996; 2009) used different categories of research themes. For example, Kwon (2009) proposed nine categories: theory of public administration, methodology, organizational theory, personnel administration, public finance and budgeting, policy and planning, and public policy.
7. Originally, we selected 20 research themes; we added 26 more themes as we coded the articles. The original themes were accountability; city and local government; collaboration, coordination, and networking; corruption; development; disaster management; e-government; environmental policy; foreign policy; human resource management (HRM); international/global governance; management reform; methodology; nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); performance management and state capacity; privatization; public administration theory; public finance; regulation; and social policy (including education and health). The added themes were citizenship, culture, decision making, ethics, government structure, history of public administration, information policy, knowledge management, Korean public administration, leadership, participation, Congress, policy conflict, policy tools, politics, public value, science and information technology, trust, and other specific policy topics (for example, defense, industry, energy, and minorities).
8. It seems that Korean public administration scholars are mostly interested in introducing the concept of governance as an alternative solution to conventional bureaucracy-centered or closed policy-making processes. For example, Chun (2003) discusses different types of governance and the role of NGOs,

- then presents participative and interactional governance as a desirable mechanism for local governments. Some studies also attempt to explore the concepts of collaboration, cooperation, and networking within the governance framework (Eom, 2008; Kim, Lee, & Kim, 2005; Yoo & So, 2005; Yoo & Lee, 2008; Kim & Oh's study, 2007) Many early studies on governance introduce and discuss values, definitions, and characteristics of governance primarily as an essay-type research (38 out of 187), but more empirical research (149 out of 187) on governance including increasing research on collaboration and networks (Kim, 2009; Kim & Jeong, 2007; Lee, 2007).
9. One research (Hwang & Moon, 2012) found that about 30% of government agency-funded policy research is conducted by universities and about 20% is conducted by academic associations and professional association.
 10. One of anonymous reviewers offered this point regarding the potential negative impact of government funding on the Korean public administration research.
 11. We categorized any research based on rigorous case studies or quantitative studies as empirical, while normative and descriptive studies were categorized as essay-style research.
 12. Specific research methods were codified as quantitative or qualitative. Articles that triangulate different methods were codified in both categories. Studies using multiple methods in a single category (either quantitative or qualitative) were codified based on the most sophisticated analytical method. For example, a study using both descriptive statistics and path analysis was codified as using path analysis. The structural equation model was codified as part of path analysis, while studies developing different indicators and measurements were categorized as using descriptive statistics.
 13. Most longitudinal studies are case studies, because quantitative analysis is not likely to be adopted with a small number of observations. Panel data with cross-sectional and time-series data are examined by quantitative methods.
 14. Choi (2011) considers the recent discussions on Koreanization of public administration (developing theories based on unique Korean public administration phenomena) as self-torturing and void. He argues that it is important to deeply understand the nature of various theories prior to arguing that they are not applicable to Korean public administration.

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