

A behavioral approach to administrative reform: a case study of promoting proactive administration in South Korea

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Abstract

Purpose – The South Korean government launched the proactive administration initiative in mid-2017, which has been widely implemented throughout the public sector. Accordingly, the purpose of this paper is to review a behavioral approach to promote proactive administration in the South Korean government.

Design/methodology/approach – The research questions are as follows: (1) How did the South Korean government initiate a behavioral approach to administrative reform by promoting proactive administration? (2) What systems or mechanisms has the South Korean government utilized to promote proactive administration? (3) What kind of constraints did the government face in the process of administrative reform and how did it resolve them? (4) What was the preliminary reaction to or evaluation of such reforms in public administration communities?

Findings – Although it is still too early to evaluate the overall impact of administrative reform to promote proactive administration on civil servants' behavior, it has nonetheless contributed greatly to the substantial change in perception that public officials in the administrative field should pursue their work as actively as they can.

Originality/value – This study is meaningful because while many countries have promoted administrative reforms such as structural reorganization, downsizing of human resources, cutback management and fiscal innovation, privatization, regulatory reform and promotion of digital government, cases of behavioral innovation, such as proactive administration, have been relatively scarce. Since a behavioral approach to administrative reform would be essential in many countries, this paper will serve as a useful reference for the consideration of their governments.

Keywords Behavioral approach, Proactive administration, Administrative reform, South Korean government

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The approach to administrative reform refers to the criteria whereby administrative reform issues are selected and what information is obtained and processed. In fact, the approach typically varies across administrative issues and years. The most common or important reform approaches can be categorized as follows: structural, process, behavioral, cultural, technological, and integrated. The central government of South Korea (hereafter, Korea) has long devoted substantial efforts to reorganizing central agencies, improving the efficiency and performance of the government under the framework of new public management (NPM), reforming regulations, and implementing digital government utilizing information and communication technology and artificial intelligence. In the past, almost every new government has attempted administrative reform for various reasons, including establishing



democratic government, ethical government, competitive government, efficient and effective government, or e-government or digital government (Kim, 1996, 2000; Light, 1997). Moreover, previous governments have frequently changed organizational structures by reorganizing central agencies. Accordingly, a certain degree of reform fatigue has crept into the views of both public officials and the general public. Consequently, the Moon Jae-in administration (2017–2022) has chosen a different, behavioral approach to administrative reform – “proactive administration” (PrA), a key reform initiative since the President’s inauguration in mid-2017.

The research questions are as follows: (1) How did the Korean government initiate a behavioral approach to administrative reform by promoting PrA among public officials? (2) What systems or mechanisms has the Korean government utilized to promote PrA among public officials? (3) What constraints did the government face in the process of administrative reform and how did it resolve them? (4) What was the preliminary reaction to or evaluation of such reforms in public administration communities? This study undertakes a literature review of legislation, government documents, and scholarly materials, including legal documents, guidelines, and strategies for promoting PrA among public officials, as well as related literature from public administration journals in Korea and overseas.

Since administrative reform focusing on PrA is a new behavioral approach in the Korean context, this study will briefly review the historical development of proactive administration initiatives by the South Korean government, then explore the Korean government’s attempts to establish a legal framework for the PrA movement and institutional issues such as incentives to promote proactive behavior, action plans and evaluation of PrA. Lastly, challenges to and constraints on PrA will be discussed, followed by the policy implications and conclusion.

The historical development of proactive administration initiatives in government

The last decade has witnessed remarkable growth in the field of behavioral public administration, both in practice and in academia (Cantarelli *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, public organizations increasingly apply behavioral insights to improve administrative work practices, facilitate access to public information and services, and improve outcomes (Jilke *et al.*, 2018). Applications of behavioral science to policy problems have advanced at breakneck speed (Bhanot and Linos, 2020; James *et al.*, 2020). Grimmelikhuijsen *et al.* (2017) envision a broad variety of research questions in public administration that can be addressed by behavioral public administration, and James *et al.* (2020) emphasize a behavioral approach to public performance. Accordingly, this study specifically examines the Korean government’s behavioral approach to administrative reform.

The issue of proactive behavior has been analyzed in the literature as guiding employees in their search for solutions, persistence, and ability to obtain the desired results (Grant and Ashford, 2008; Rauch *et al.*, 2009). It is defined as taking the initiative to improve current circumstances and involves challenging the status quo, rather than passively adapting to present conditions (Crant, 2000, p. 436; Ohly and Fritz, 2007, p. 623). Instead of performing narrowly defined tasks (job performance), employees are expected to engage in broad work roles (Parker, 2000, p. 449). It also refers to pioneering behaviors, risk-taking initiatives to discover opportunities, and efforts to innovate and lead (Segarra-Ciprés and Escrig-Tena, 2019, p. 866). Grant and Ashford (2008, p. 8) define it as an anticipatory action that employees take to change themselves and/or their environments.

Seibert *et al.* (2001) assert that proactivity improves individual outcomes such as employees’ task performance. Furthermore, it can contribute to organizational innovation, particularly in dynamic technological environments, where there is intense pressure to

innovate, and employees with self-starting behaviors and change orientation take on a more critical role (Covin and Slevin, 1989; Sonnentag, 2003; Wiklund and Shepherd, 2005; Rauch *et al.*, 2009; Kraus *et al.*, 2012). Proactivity refers to self-starting, change-focused, and future-oriented behaviors (Crant, 2000; Frese and Fay, 2001; Unsworth and Parker, 2003). It facilitates employees' capacity to shape their environments by highlighting individual strengths and improves performance (Crant, 2000).

In Korea, the term "proactive administration" (PrA) first appeared in the initial phase of the Lee Myung-bak administration (2008–2013) in the announcement of a new PrA exemption system introduced by the Board of Audit and Inspection. As public officials are concerned about being audited by the Board of Audit and Inspection if they actively pursue initiative, the Board established a new mechanism to encourage PrA among public officials, enacting the "Operation Regulations on Immunity System for PrA" in early 2009 (Board of Audit and Inspection, 2021a, 2021b). However, there were no further developments during the Lee Myung-bak administration.

Later, the Park Geun-hye administration (2013–2017) revised the Board of Audit and Inspection Act and the Act on Public Sector Audits in 2015. The Board of Audit and Inspection Act established a policy on proactive administrative immunity (Article 34-3) for "persons subject to audit by the Board of Audit and Inspection". Article 34-3 of the Board of Audit and Inspection Act, revised in February 2015, states: (1) Where a person subject to inspection by the Board of Audit and Inspection proactively exercises duties in the public interest, such as the improvement of unreasonable regulations, they shall not be held responsible for the results thereof by way of disciplinary actions or reprimands, provided they are found not to have acted intentionally or with gross negligence; and (2) the specific criteria and operational procedures for exemption from responsibility referred to in the previous paragraph and other necessary matters shall be prescribed by the Board of Audit and Inspection regulations. In addition, the Act on Public Sector Audits created a legal basis for proactive administrative immunity by establishing a policy for the same (Article 23-2) while targeting "persons subject to self-audit". Nonetheless, the discussion initiated by the Board of Audit and Inspection on the issue of proactive administrative immunity was not extended beyond the area of auditing, either academically or practically. That is, the Board of Audit and Inspection tried to introduce a proactive administrative immunity system, but it did not gain the attention of the government sector or academic community.

When the new Moon Jae-in administration was established in 2017, initiatives on PrA were renewed and expanded. When the Board of Audit and Inspection reintroduced the concept of PrA, the Ministry of Personnel Management (MPM) supported this idea as a timely subject for possible administrative reform. In particular, the then MPM minister openly advocated for the idea at a State Council meeting in 2017-2018. When President Moon Jae-in emphasized the need for PrA at a State Council meeting on February 12, 2019, PrA emerged as a new method for administrative reform. The President emphasized that public officials should undertake proactive administrative actions. PrA was under the spotlight after the President's following remarks at the State Council, "We set a standard to encourage PrA without reproach under the responsibility of the minister and actively encourage it, reprimanding those officials who engage in passive administration."

Consequently, a joint task force was established with personnel from the relevant agencies, including the Office for Government Policy Coordination in the Office of the Prime Minister, Board of Audit and Inspection, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of the Interior and Safety, Ministry of SMEs and Startups, Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission, Ministry of Personnel Management, and Ministry of Government Legislation. These organizations collectively formulated the Operation Regulations for PrA, which were enacted by presidential decree on August 6, 2019.

Since then, administrative reforms have focused on PrA to reduce distrust in the government sector by emphasizing proactive work performance and service provision through improvements in the passive work practices prevalent in public policy and public service delivery. PrA has been understood to increase trust in government by improving the quality of administrative services based on changes in public officials, public policy, and public service delivery.

The legal foundation of proactive administration in government

In the past, efforts aimed at governmental innovation viewed public officials as the object of innovation. However, recent initiatives have focused on inducing changes in the behavior and attitudes of individual public officials, who are considered the main agents of innovation. PrA emphasizes the behavior and attitudes of public officials (MPM, 2019b). That is, PrA presupposes that changes in public officials' perceptions are crucial to achieve the desired improvements.

As displayed in Table 1, Article 2-1 of the Operation Regulations for PrA, PrA refers to any act in the public interest whereby public officials actively deal with work based on their creativity and expertise, such as improving unreasonable regulations, while according to Article 2-2, passive administration refers to any act infringing the rights and interests of the people or causing national financial loss as a result of passive working behavior, such as public officials' negligence of their jobs or dereliction of duty. Additionally, Article 2-1 of the Board of Audit and Inspection's Rules on the Operation of the Audit Vindication System for Proactive Administrative Immunity (ROAVSPAI) describes PrA as any act that a person audited by the Board of Audit and Inspection performed sincerely and actively to promote public interest, such as improving unreasonable regulations or promoting public service projects. Furthermore, Article 2-2 stipulates that a person audited by the Board is exempt from responsibility for the results of any actions taken proactively if the outcomes were unintentional or did not arise from gross negligence (Board of Audit and Inspection, 2021a, 2021b).

In fact, the definition of PrA under the Board of Audit and Inspection's ROAVSPAI is somewhat narrower than that in the Operation Regulations for PrA, as it only refers to auditing activities by the Board of Audit and Inspection. In general, in the statutes/administrative rules, PrA is intended to improve the quality of administrative services by improving public officials' awareness and behavior, as well as their work culture. PrA focuses on both improving the credibility of the government and innovating the way public offices work. PrA emphasizes

Category	Operation Regulations for PrA	ROAVSPAI
Proactive Administration	An act in the public interest, whereby public officials actively deal with work based on their creativity and expertise, such as improving unreasonable regulations (Article 2-1)	An act that a person who is audited by the Board of Audit and Inspection performs sincerely and actively to promote public interest, such as improving unreasonable regulations or promoting public service projects (Article 2-1)
Passive Administration	An act infringing on the rights and interests of the people or causing national financial loss as a result of passive working behavior, such as negligence of a public official's job or dereliction of duty (Article 2-2)	An act of infringing on the rights and interests of the people or causing losses to the national finances by the omission or negligence of a public official's job or dereliction of duty (Article 2-8)

Table 1. Proactive Administration and Passive Administration under the Operation Regulations for PrA and the ROAVSPAI

Sources: Ministry of Personnel Management (2019a, 2019b)

assertiveness, proactiveness, responsibility, ownership, and risk-taking initiative on the part of public officials. Thus, it includes the behavioral aspects of individual public officials and the administrative value that public officials must achieve through administrative actions.

The [MPM \(2019b\)](#) analyzed various concepts related to PrA, defined it at a more practical level, and tried to establish it by comparing it with passive administration. [Table 2](#) delineates the differences between passive administration and PrA in practical terms. Here, PrA is defined as “an act in the public interest, in which a public official proactively conducts business based on their own creativity and expertise, such as improvement of unreasonable regulations.” This regulation views PrA as the proactive and creative business actions of public officials undertaken in the business process. PrA is related to the moral and subjective responsibilities of public officials with reference to the actions of responsible public officials. Passive administration is, however, the opposite of PrA: It refers to a passive way of operating in which public officials handle business with minimal effort but within the scope of their duties; do not handle business actively in a routine manner and take action without consideration of the effect of the outcome; and do not take responsibility.

Institutionalization of proactive administration in government

President Moon Jae-in declared that “PrA needs to be firmly established as a new public culture” and called for a change in public service, emphasizing the importance of and need for PrA at a state council meeting in February 2019. To this end, the Office for Government Policy Coordination, the Board of Audit and Inspection, the Ministry of Personnel Management, the Ministry of the Interior and Safety, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of SMEs and Startups, the Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission, and the Ministry of Legislation assembled a taskforce on how to institutionalize PrA. As public officials would be the ones to practice PrA, the key was to change how they provide public services. Meanwhile, institutionalizing PrA is critical if Korea were to make it a sustainable long-term practice, not merely a policy or administrative slogan. In this process, the MPM became a leading change

Passive Administration	Proactive Administration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procrastinates for no reason or for internal review (this phenomenon could be called “no action, only talk”). • Makes an arbitrary judgment without sufficiently reviewing the purpose and facts of the law. • Rejects legitimate applications due to concerns about conflict of interest or civil complaints. • Refers to unfounded or unpublished internal guidelines in superior laws in the legislative systems and procedures (this phenomenon could be called “no precedent, no action”). • Handles business according to existing regulations and practices even though they are unreasonable. • Requires additional documents besides statutory documents to avoid liability. • Contrary to the purpose of the law, rejects an application following limited interpretation of the law, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promptly processes applications within the processing deadline, but explains in advance if any reason for delay arises. • Fully reviews all matters and makes reasonable judgments from the public standpoint. • Resolves civil complaints through active interest adjustment, such as suggesting rational alternatives. • Processes work based on legitimate delegation and in accordance with published guidelines. • Works more creatively, without being bound by irrational regulations and practices. • Asks for only the minimum documents necessary for review and examination. • Actively interprets and applies laws and regulations in line with new environmental changes, etc.

Table 2.
Comparison between
Passive and Proactive
Administration

Sources: [Ministry of Personnel Management \(2019a, 2019b\)](#)

agent, in collaboration with the Office for Government Policy Coordination in the Office of the Prime Minister, the Board of Audit and Inspection, and other related central agencies.

It would be counterproductive if the practice of proactive public service might result in audit inspections or disciplinary consequences or if there are no incentives for those who act proactively. Accordingly, the Korean government has introduced institutional measures to protect public officials from being the target of audit inspections or disciplinary actions, and established incentives for those who act proactively. Furthermore, to raise awareness of PrA, various training programs have been made available by public training institutes. Moreover, the MPM regularly evaluates government organizations' performance to encourage their proactive practice.

Protection for public officials who practice PrA

In May 2018, the MPM revised the "Enforcement Rule of the Decree on Disciplinary Action against Public Officials" to add a new provision on "Exemption from disciplinary consequences due to PrA." Under the revised Enforcement Rule, the disciplinary committee shall not impose disciplinary measures if a public servant is found to have practiced PrA (MPM, 2019a).

In August 2019, the MPM enacted the Operation Regulations for PrA to provide an institutional framework for PrA, under which the heads of central administrative agencies are required to implement "Action Plans on PrA" every year and meet with the PrA Committee in their respective agencies. Moreover, the Decree stipulates that excellent public officials who promoted PrA will be selected every 6 months to receive promotion-related advantages, such as special promotions, and that public officials who deliver proactive services will be protected from disciplinary actions.

The Decree specifically provides that public officials shall not be subject to disciplinary consequences if they performed their duties based on advice from the PrA Committee or prior consultation from an audit institution, if there was no willful misconduct or gross negligence, and if no personal interest existed between them and their work. Additionally, the MPM implemented assistance programs, such as public officials' liability insurance and litigation support services, to allow public officials subject to disciplinary actions or litigation to receive attorney fees from their employers (MPM, 2019a).

Incentives for excellent public officials who conduct PrA

The Operation Regulations for PrA require that each central administrative agency identify public officials who practiced excellent PrA and reward them with promotion-related advantages, such as special promotions. From 2020 onward, more than 50 percent of the selected public officials shall be offered extraordinary incentives, including special promotion and the highest-level performance-based bonus (MPM, 2019a).

Every year, the MPM hosts PrA Best Practice Competitions for all central administrative agencies, local governments, and public organizations so that participant organizations can share and benchmark best practices. Until 2019, the Competition was held only once a year, but it has been held semi-annually from 2020. The Competition encourages not only experts but also ordinary citizens to participate in the evaluation process so that cases that make a real difference to citizens' lives are promoted. Public officials who contribute to best practice receive merit and special awards. The Competition also solicits citizens' nominations and invites them to the evaluation process so that public officials who genuinely work for the public's interest may be recognized.

Systems to assist public officials' proactive decision-making

Most public officials are likely to make passive decisions while performing their duties so as to avoid unnecessary trouble in the absence of clear legal guidelines or precedents. To prevent

this problem, the Korean government has implemented a system through which public officials can request directions for their work by means of obtaining advice from the PrA Committee or arranging a prior consultation with an audit institution.

The PrA Committee was first established in all central administrative agencies in 2019. To ensure objectivity and transparency in decision-making, Article 12 of the Operation Regulations for PrA requires that more than half of the members of the PrA Committee be from the private sector; moreover, PrA Committee stakeholders can participate in a committee meeting and voice their opinions. Meanwhile, prior consultations have been made available to all central administrative agencies since 2019 by the Board of Audit and Inspection and internal audit divisions at each administrative agency — in the past, they were only available in certain organizations.

Education and training for PrA

Even if an institutional framework is well established, PrA cannot be fully realized if public officials are not familiar with the details of PrA. Therefore, providing systematic education and training for public officials is essential. To this end, the MPM introduced workplace education and training programs and required each administrative agency to provide PrA training for all public officials at least twice a year. Furthermore, the National Human Resources Development Institute, under the MPM, prepared mandatory courses related to PrA as part of its general staff programs for new recruits and promoted (or soon-to-be-promoted) officials.

Effective educational materials and teaching staff are critical for providing quality education and training. Therefore, the MPM prepared and distributed a “standard curriculum on PrA” to ensure that basic and essential contents are included in all training courses. The standard curriculum covers the concept of PrA, what the PrA Committee does and how prior consultation works, best practices, the protection and promotional advantages available to public officials who provide proactive public services, and similar matters.

The MPM has trained many designated lecturers and assigned them to various training courses. The lecturers, who are either public officials recommended by central government agencies or professional instructors at public servant training centers, oversee the workplace training programs. Additionally, to provide case-based education and training, the MPM organizes additional programs, in which 38 winners of the PrA Best Practice Competition share their best practice (MPM, 2020a). The MPM has also developed e-learning programs such as “Understanding PrA” and “PrA Strategy” to afford officials access to education and training regardless of time and place. In particular, during the recent COVID-19 pandemic, e-learning programs became a safer training option.

Action plans and evaluation of PrA

All central administrative agencies are required to formulate and implement the “Action Plans on PrA” every year while comprehensively considering the nature of the agency’s work, unusual circumstances, and other factors. The “Action Plans on PrA”, as a comprehensive annual plan for PrA, include specific strategies to promote PrA, key tasks, assistance programs (i.e., the PrA Committee, prior consultation), plans to protect and provide advantages to public officials who act proactively, and educational and promotional schemes.

As planning alone is inadequate, the MPM ensures that each administrative agency’s performance is evaluated during a mid-year self-review, with the results presented at the vice-ministers’ meeting. At year-end, the MPM evaluates each agency’s annual performance and reports the results to the Cabinet Meeting presided by the President. The MPM establishes the Performance Management Plan every year. At the end of each year, experts in fields such as science, law, civil society (university professors, head of enterprises or civic groups,

lawyers, researchers, and others), and public service users evaluate performance from various perspectives. A total of 10 to 20 experts assesses the performance of all ministers and agencies, while an assessment group of public service users comprising 100 to 150 citizens assesses a single ministry or agency. In 2019, additional indicators for performance evaluation were included reflecting the usual steps of policy implementation: improvement of public service quality, degree of administrative efficiency improvement, regulatory innovation or conflict resolution, implementation of new policies and collaboration with related stakeholders, and goal achievement levels and policy effectiveness.

The assessment conducted in 2019 concludes that PrA is vital for future transformations. The MPM reported the results of the 2019 PrA evaluation for central administrative agencies to the State Council on January 15, 2020. In all, 44 central administrative agencies were evaluated in accordance with the Operation Regulations for PrA enacted in 2019, and the results of the survey on public opinion were evaluated under the criteria of: (1) the faithfulness of the action plan; (2) efforts to revitalize PrA; (3) achievements such as best practices; and (4) people's opinions (MPM, 2020b).

In 2019, out of 23 ministerial-level agencies, 9 — the Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission; Ministry of Defense; Ministry of Economy and Finance; Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ministry of SMEs and Startups; Ministry of the Interior and Safety; and Ministry of the Environment — were selected as excellent organizations; 10 agencies were rated average and 4 unsatisfactory (MPM, 2020b). Out of 21 vice-ministerial-level agencies, 8 — the Ministry of Legislation; Ministry of Food and Drug Safety; Ministry of Personnel Management; National Policy Agency; Korean Customs Service; Military Manpower Administration; Korean Intellectual Property Office; and Korean Coast Guard — were selected as excellent organizations; 9 were rated average; and 4 unsatisfactory (MPM, 2020b).

In 2020, the MPM reported the results of the 2020 PrA evaluation for central administrative agencies to the State Council on February 2, 2021. A total of 43 central administrative agencies were evaluated in accordance with the Operation Regulations for PrA. Out of 23 ministerial-level agencies, 7 — the Ministry of Employment and Labor; the Ministry of Science and ICT; the Ministry of SMEs and Startups; the Ministry of Health and Welfare; the Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs; the Ministry of the Interior and Safety; and the Ministry of the Environment — were selected as excellent organizations; 12 were rated average and 4 unsatisfactory (MPM, 2021b). Out of 20 vice-minister-level agencies, 6 — the Ministry of Food and Drug Safety; Ministry of Personnel Management; Korean Customs Service; Rural Development Administration; Military Manpower Administration; and Korean Coast Guard — were selected as excellent organizations; 10 were rated average and 4 unsatisfactory (MPM, 2021b).

Constraints in the reform process and possible resolutions

Public officials face several challenges in PrA. If issues arise, officials fear they will be audited by the Board of Audit and Inspection. Due to the possibility of disciplinary action as a result of such audits, public officials are often cautious and passive. Therefore, to promote PrA, a corresponding incentive system is required. The MPM identifies the constraints on PrA by dividing them into the following: fear of audit, lack of incentives, and rigidity of existing laws (as shown in Table 3). Each factor can be understood from the viewpoint of how they discourage public officials from participating in daily public service due to, for example, fear of being audited and receiving disciplinary sanctions (MPM, 2021a).

Public officials may experience personal fear of audit or disciplinary action due to the ambiguity of regulations and restrictions on the scope of discretion, that is, they may be concerned that an audit may be resumed even on previously exempt matters with changes in

Table 3.
Constraints on
Proactive
Administration

Category	Content
Fear of auditing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Fear of audit) Experience of audit and disciplinary action; fear of resumption of audit when policy direction changes • (Attribution of personal responsibility) Individuals are responsible for unforeseen circumstances caused by PrA • (Responsibility for decision-making) When a problem arises in relation to an important matter, the person in charge is responsible for it.
Lack of incentives and awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Lack of incentives) Insufficient incentives and insufficient sense of authenticity • (Lack of awareness) Even if active operation is possible, it is rejected without any sufficient explanation. • (PrA culture) Individuals take responsibility in the event of a problem; no internal atmosphere to support and encourage PrA within the organization.
Rigidity of existing statutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Rigid legal regulations) Responses to environmental changes are insufficient, and most statutes do not allow even discretionary powers for PrA. • (Restriction of subordinate laws) Although a measure may be possible under the main laws and regulations, there are frequent cases where measures are rejected based on sub-regulations or guidelines. • (Lack of sharing and understanding) Comprehensive dissemination of the system improvement content is insufficient, the understanding of field officials is insufficient, etc.

Source: [Ministry of Personnel Management \(2019a\)](#)

government and policy direction (Cho, 2019). The fear of being audited limits the proactive interpretation of laws and regulations and the improvement of regulations, for if the government official does not conduct PrA, there is no audit threat. Therefore, public officials are not motivated to pursue PrA. In addition, the incentives offered to undertake PrA are insufficient. PrA requires higher attention to one’s work and in some cases leads to an increased workload (Cho, 2019). While extra effort is required, monetary and non-monetary incentives for the effort are needed. Moreover, PrA can be revitalized by loosening the stringency of statutes and regulations that hinder creativity and proactivity.

To institutionalize PrA, it is necessary to: (1) clearly define the concept of PrA; and (2) establish a clear legal basis for it through the National Public Officials Act and the Local Public Officials Act, in addition to the Operation Regulations for PrA and other related regulations, to incentivize public officials to make judgments based on PrA. In fact, Article 56 of the National Public Officials Act and Article 48 of the Local Public Officials Act stipulate that “every public official shall observe statutes, and faithfully perform his/her duties.” However, the concept of PrA does not ask “How far is the aggressiveness beyond normal business performance permissible?”. The greatest difficulty in conceptualizing PrA or passive administration is that these concepts are multifaceted. Therefore, they need to be subdivided on a more granular basis, and specific behavioral indicators must be identified.

First, to revitalize PrA, the exercise of autonomous responsibility by public officials must be emphasized. The autonomous responsibility of public officials refers to the administrative responsibility secured as a result of the autonomous discretion of public officials based on their sense of professional responsibility and ethics. In the era of the 4th industrial revolution and during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, for example, the government must be able to provide services people need, and should focus on enhancing administrative transparency and accountability by monitoring the process and results of the service in real time. This requires public officials to display both autonomous responsibility and professional ethics.

Second, to enhance practical feasibility, public officials should autonomously conduct PrA according to their inner values and standards and select rational or best alternatives, as well as being able to respond proactively. The government must have an internal control system that can effectively conduct ethical activities on its own. The main strategy to dilute risks within the organization is to implement internal control, either preventative or exploratory. Effective communication is critical to the operation and control of an organization. Therefore, an organization's managers should be able to communicate relevant, reliable, accurate, and timely details of events inside and outside the organization.

Third, Article 57 (Obligation of Obedience) of the National Public Officials Act stipulates that "every public official shall obey each request of his/her superior officer with respect to his/her duties". However, it is not easy to expect subordinates to proactively ponder the value of public service given the obligation to obey their superiors. These regulations make it difficult for a public official who performs administrative acts to become a proactive official. Therefore, as a premise for institutionalization of PrA, reasonable grounds for refusal to obey illegal requests should be stipulated through legal provisions. In other words, if the request of the superior is clearly illegal, there is a need for clear legal provision that the subordinate has no obligation to comply with such request.

Fourth, evidence-based administration should be undertaken by including the provision of proactive communication and cooperation with the public in the definition of sincere duty in the National Public Service Act. Evidence-based administration refers to administration based on evidence from research studies that incorporate valid, reliable, and appropriate professional judgment and knowledge. It is necessary to redefine the act of performing sincere duty more specifically, including the obligation to present evidence of the act, by supplementing the relevant provisions of the National Public Service Act.

Furthermore, an approach that continuously re-evaluates the concept and type of administration is needed. It is necessary to host contests to recognize administrative innovation and continuously check the limitations of prevalent methods for recognizing and awarding excellent cases. PrA aims to improve the status quo, weed out unreasonable practices, and encourage proactive and progressive working behaviors. Thus, there is a need to develop a more comprehensive approach to improving the working climate of institutions and departments.

Conclusion

PrA guides individual public officials in performing their jobs as a complex concept that includes such factors as behavioral aspects (activeness, responsibility, integrity, initiative, etc.) and the inherent values of individuals (responsiveness, democracy, compliance, etc.). The MPM enacted the Operation Regulations for PrA in August 2019 to institutionalize PrA in Korea. The Decree protects public officials engaged in PrA from audit inspections or disciplinary actions, and provides officials with advantages such as special promotion. Furthermore, the PrA Committee supports public officials in performing their duties. Government ministries and agencies self-review their performance on a quarterly basis, and external experts and citizens assess the outcome at the end of each year. Based on this framework, these tasks have strengthened the protection of and expanded the benefits for public officials, and added tangible value for citizens. In light of the differences among government ministries and agencies in their capacity to implement PrA and their members' participation, the government offered tailored consulting, provided education and training programs, and raised awareness of best practices through brochures and videoclips. The most motivating measure was unconventional incentives for excellent public officials.

Generally, a public official who does not follow laws or procedures will pay a price for such violations, even if their actions were in public interest. However, the Moon Jae-in

administration established a new principle of protecting public officials who practice PrA and of rewarding excellent results that exempts public officials from audit inspections or disciplinary actions for the results of proactive service, and ensures that their achievements are rewarded through special promotion and similar measures.

The PrA initiative was implemented by the central government and local governments simultaneously in Korea, and has been broadly implemented throughout the public sector. The MPM has issued a manual detailing the operation of the initiative for government ministries and agencies and is providing various education and awareness programs. At the end of each year, a group of experts and citizens assesses the task result, and their evaluation is made public for better transparency. Although it is still too early to evaluate the overall impact on civil servants' behavior of administrative reform to promote proactive administration, it has contributed greatly to a significant change in the perception that public officials in the administrative field should actively pursue their work. With the change of government to the Yun Suk-yeol administration on May 10, 2022, policy changes are expected in many areas. However, since the MPM has an established division for PrA, administrative reform for PrA is expected to continue unwaveringly in the future.

As PrA is emerging as a new topic in Korean public service, this study has examined the Korean government's experience from the perspectives of organizational behavior theory and bureaucratic behavior. Of course, there are also limitations of this paper. It will be necessary to conduct empirical research on the concept and cause of PrA, as well as theoretically investigate the tendency of individual risk avoidance studied by organizational behavior theory. Furthermore, there are few reference materials for behavioral administrative reform studies. Therefore, a case study of the Korean experience of proactive administration can be a useful for administrative reform studies in other countries.

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