

A Study on the Digital Era's Influential Factors on Policy Organizations

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디지털시대의 정책조직에 미치는 영향요인에 관한 연구

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ABSTRACT

Alvin Toffler는 인류 발전 과정을 세 가지 변화의 물결, 즉 유목 채집 사회에서 농경 사회로의 변화, 산업혁명에 의한 농경 사회에서 산업 사회로의 변화, 그리고 1950년대부터의 후기 산업화 사회로의 변혁으로, 산업 사회에서 정보 사회로의 변혁이 일어나기 시작했으며 탈대량화, 다양화, 지식기반 생산과 변화의 가속이 시작된 시기였다.

Herman Maynard와 Susan Mehrtens는 ICT (Information Communication Technology: 휴대폰 등), 인터넷의 발달로 제4의 물결이 시작되고 있다고 주장한다. 이전의 사회 변혁들은 물질 생산이 따르는 가시적인 변혁들이었으나, 디지털 혁명은 시민사회의 참여 확대를 통한 민주주의의 진화된 형태를 가능하게 하고 있다. 지금 우리가 경험하고 있는 제4의 물결의 시작은, 시민사회의 정책 참여와 견제가 효과적이고 효율적으로 이루어지기 시작하는 초고도 정보화 사회의 시작을 의미하며, 정책 결정자들은 정책 결정 과정에서 그들이 보유하던 절대 영향력의 일부분을 시민사회에 이양됨을 막을 수 없을 것이다. 이러한 대변혁의 시대에 관료주의, Digital Divide, 그리고 시민 참여와의 상관관계를 이해하는 것은 매우 중요하다.

본 논문에서는 시민 참여에 대한 관료주의의 방침과 태도, 제4의 물결의 정책 민주화와 Digital Divide로의 영향 분석을 통하여 정책 결정자들과 그들의 환경으로의 파급 효과를 논증한다. 본 연구는 이러한 분석과 논증을 통하여, 정책조직들과 시민사회와의 신세기의 바람직한 동반자적 입지 구축에 기여할 것이다.

key words : Fourth Wave, Policy Makers, Digital Era

1. Introduction

Today, the Fourth Wave, particularly the Internet, is changing not only our daily lives, but also changing

our paradigm for policy participation. For example, citizens do not need to visit city hall to express their opinions to the policy makers. They can express their opinions online. Also, citizens can check out policy organizations more easily, and get policy-related

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information by using the Internet. The Fourth Wave is more innovative in transforming the business of policy organizations than the previous Waves were. A large volume of policy-related information can be accessed by a large number of citizens simultaneously, and the Internet transactions between citizens can be conducted 24 hours a day and seven days a week. In addition, citizens can register their opinions on policy organizations' web sites anywhere & anytime.

So, with the advent of the Internet, new forms of communication are possible between government and citizens. Through government web sites and e-mail, communication between governments and citizens is easier and faster. Policy discussions and opinion polls can be conducted online more frequently and conveniently. Thus, the concept of digital democracy has emerged[22]. New electronic means have the potential to increase citizen participation in government and to ensure that citizen's preferences are reflected in the policy-making process.

We can view the diffusion of technological innovation both at the macro and micro level in policy organizations. The macro level concerns decisions about adopting a new technology at the organizational level, while the micro level deals with an individual's acceptance and use of the technology. In conclusion, policy agencies can introduce and adopt new technologies, but the ultimate success of innovation depends on whether individual employees accept and use the new technology in their everyday work.

The Fourth Wave will cause serious challenges for the policy makers in the near future, and there is no magic bullet to solve this problem. However, by analyzing the splendid works of great minds of our time, namely Kranz[6], Krislov[7], North[12], Polanyi[16], Pollitt[17], Putnam[18], and many more, this study aims to provide a passage not only for the policy makers but also for civil society for harmonious coexistence in this New World.

2. Bureaucracy's Orientation Toward Citizen Participation

2.1 Characteristics of Bureaucracy

According to Max Weber, there are three types of legitimate authority: legal, traditional, and charismatic authority[18]. Bureaucracy is a means of exercising rational-legal authority which is based on rational grounds and anchored in impersonal rules[17]. Weber identified the ideal-type bureaucracy, with such characteristics as hierarchy of authority, specialization, and management of office by written rules and documents. Weber argued that, with these features, bureaucracy can attain highest degree of rationality and efficiency[1].

Since bureaucracy operates in a democratic society, the relationship between bureaucracy and democracy has been debated a great deal among scholars. Bureaucracy requires hierarchy, command, unity, expertise, and secrecy, while democracy requires equity, freedom, pluralism, citizen participation, and openness. Thus, many scholars have pointed out that bureaucratic rules are in conflict with democratic values[6, 7, 17]. Pollitt analyzes the rise of bureaucratic democracy in the U.S. and argues that the conflicting concepts are embodied in the design of American government institutions: pluralist democracy and administrative efficiency[17]. The model of pluralist democracy was advocated by the U.S. founding fathers such as Madison and Jefferson, and Robert Dahl[18]. This model assumes checks and balances in government through multiple power centers, and bargaining and compromise between multiple interest groups in the process. By contrast, the administrative efficiency model, proposed by Woodrow Wilson, prescribes a different approach to the operation of government. In this model, efficiency is the most important value in policy organizations for making rational, objective decisions and executing policies at the least possible cost.

2.2 Dominant Types of Bureaucracy

When the discipline of policy organizations began, the weaknesses of the pluralist model were emphasized, including the waste and abuse of power by political factions. Instead, neutrality and efficiency were proposed. However, the emphasis on efficiency unintentionally encourages the unresponsiveness of policy bureaucracy. I contrast these two models as follows.

(1) In the pluralist model, power is dispersed and divided; in the efficiency model, power is concentrated. Related to this, in the pluralist model, governmental policy-making is decentralized; in the efficiency model, it is centralized.

(2) In the pluralist model, there is a suspicion of executive power; in the efficiency model, great emphasis is placed on centralizing power in the hands of the chief executive.

(3) In the pluralist model, power is given to politicians, interest groups, and citizens; in the efficiency model, much power is given to experts and professional policy bureaucrats.

(4) In the pluralist model, political bargaining and accommodation are considered to be at the heart of the democratic process; in the efficiency model, there is a strong urge to keep politics out of administration.

(5) The pluralist model emphasizes individuals' and political policy players' own determination of interest and utility; the efficiency model emphasizes technical or scientific rationality.

Since both democracy and efficiency are indispensable values in policy organizations, the question is how to reconcile these two conflicting values. To solve this problem, various remedies have been tried, including reducing the size and power of bureaucracy, strengthening accountability mechanisms, introducing representative bureaucracy, and increasing private sector participation. Private sector's direct participation in policy-making in bureaucracy is an active remedy, whereas other remedies are relatively passive. In the Digital Era, there is a growing need for private sector participation

in policy organizations[3, 8, 11, 23]. If democracy means a form of government in which the people rule directly or indirectly through representatives, then the private sector's voices must be effectively reflected in public policies.

The concept of citizen participation has a long history. Policy-making occurred through direct citizen participation in Greek city-states; but direct democracy was transformed into representative democracy in large nation-states in which representatives make policies on behalf of citizens and bureaucracy implements those policies[17]. In the course of dealing with complex social problems, modern bureaucracy has grown immensely. Since representatives necessarily lack the knowledge and time to make detailed policies, bureaucrats perform quasi-legislative functions in addition to implementing laws and policies. In this system, citizens may feel that representatives are influenced by powerful lobbying groups and government bureaucrats are not responding to citizen's demands. Thus, citizens have become dissatisfied with both their representatives and their bureaucrats. Accordingly, direct citizen participation in government is increasingly important to overcoming public cynicism about government.

If policy bureaucrats have negative attitudes toward citizen participation, their behavior toward such citizen participation can also be negative. Winner found that policy administrators' willingness to be accountable is an important predictor for citizen participation in local governments[23]. Putnam studied the responsiveness of bureaucrats to the needs and demands of the public and its representatives, and he classified them into two types: classical bureaucrats and political bureaucrats[18]. A classical bureaucrat is defined as a public official who believes that public issues can be resolved in terms of some objective standard of justice, of legality, or of technical practicality. Accordingly, the classical bureaucrat distrusts or rejects the institutions of politics such as the National Assembly, parties, and pressure groups. By contrast, a political bureaucrat believes in the ideals of pluralist democracy and understands conflicting interests among different groups in society. Therefore, the

political bureaucrat feels comfortable about bargaining and compromises in the policy-making process and is more willing to accept political influences on policy-making.

2.3 Changing Environments for Bureaucracy

Policy organizations do not exist in a vacuum. They are deeply embedded in their social and economic “environments”[4, 5, 16]. For example, existing institutional arrangements – both formal and informal – provide the rules of the game, which create incentives and guide policy organizational behavior. At the same time, the institutional environment generates normative expectations, which morally obligate policy organizations to operate according to a certain code of behavior. Likewise, operating on the cultural / cognitive level, institutions give rise to shared understandings and ‘logics of action.’

Although policy organizations give rise to a certain amount of inertia and societal lock-in, they are subject to major structural disruptions over the long term. As described by Schotter, “Economic and social systems evolve the way species do. To ensure their survival and growth, they must solve a whole set of problems that arise as the system evolves[19].” Each problem creates the need for some adaptive feature, that is, a social institution. Every evolutionary economy problem requires a social institution to solve it. Those societies that create the proper set of institutions survive and flourish; those that do not, falter and die. The distressing fact is that what is functional to meet today’s problems may be totally inadequate in meeting the tests our society faces tomorrow. To survive in a new environment, institutions and the organizations embedded in them must effectively adapt. A nation may be handicapped in its struggle for survival by the fact that its institutions, or some of them, belong to a type that happens to be on the down grade – the gold standard in World War II was an instance of such an antiquated outfit. Countries, on the other hand, which for reasons of their own are opposed to the status quo, would be quick to discover the weaknesses of the existing institutional order and to anticipate the

creation of institutions to better adapt to their interests. Those that fail to do so, will fall by the wayside, while those that succeed will take the lead. Thus, for example, the U.S. economy gained advantage over many European economies during the industrial era because mass production required a large market, which existed in the United States but not in Europe. Today, however, the U.S. may lose this advantage because market conditions now require small batch, flexible industrial processes that differ significantly from the traditional U.S. manufacturing. Similarly, although the British economy was successful in the nineteenth century, it declined in the twentieth because, unlike the Germans and others, the British failed to anticipate the emergence of new markets and the growing importance of knowledge resources[11].

South Korea was transformed into a modern industrialized society through government-led economic planning and implementation, but that very bureaucracy is now blamed for its inefficiency and authoritarianism. The influence of Confucian morality and military government brought authoritarianism into policy organizations for a long period of time. Comprised of the elites of society, the bureaucracy controlled the economy and monopolized policy-making until the 1980s. Citizens were mere subjects of the policy organizations. Now, South Korean policy organizations are changing toward citizen-centered and democratic governance as a result of economic development, the growth of the middle class, and the democratization of society since the active promotion of Government Renovation and e-Government from former Korean President Moo-Hyun Noh. In addition, the Reinventing Government and the New Public Management affected bureaucracy’s orientation toward citizens. New programs have been introducing, such as citizen satisfaction surveys, citizen coproduction, and the citizen’s charter which defines missions, values, and customer service standards. Accordingly, policy organizations began to treat citizens as customers. However, the model of New Public Management does not include the concept of viewing citizens as the

equals of policy officials, which is more appropriate than the customer metaphor or the business model in public administration. In a survey, Korean policy officials recognized the importance of treating citizens as customers in the service delivery process (more than 4.4 points out of 5), but put less value on citizen participation in the policy-making process (between 3.1 and 3.4 points out of 5)[15]. When Putnam's questionnaire[18] was administered to South Korean policy officials in the central government, South Korean policy officials had much in common with Italian ones, sharing the characteristics of classical bureaucrats[14].

With regard to the forms of policy-making citizen participation, there exist various types, including public hearings, town meetings, citizen advisory committees, referenda, petitions, and neighborhood governments. However, it is often argued that citizens are not active participants in policy-making affairs. According to a study, only 17% of citizens had worked informally with others in the neighborhood or community to deal with some community issue or problems, 14% attended local board meetings, and 6% attended a protest or demonstration on some national or local policy issues. They suggest that citizen participation requires free time, money, and civic skills[21]. As the Internet use is widespread and penetrate to everywhere in the societies, citizens and policy-making officials have a new means of citizen participation. The Internet is a convenient tool for disseminating information to citizens, and informed citizens can register their opinion on policy organizations' web sites. In addition, online discussion is possible regardless of time and space. The Internet can reduce costs and time for the deliberative process as it can reach a large population in a short period time. As a result, policy makers will have to deal with civil societies' participation to the policy issues more and more as the Fourth Wave matures.

3. The Effects of The Fourth Wave on Democracy and The Digital Divide

3.1 The Effects on Digital Democracy

As the Internet increasingly affects various aspects of people's lives, including recreation, shopping, education, social life, and political activities, debates have arisen about whether it brings positive or negative impacts to society. Before the Internet was widely used, Arterton argued that new communication technology contributes to minor improvements in democracy without a major transformation because of the lack of citizens' interest in public affairs and the political power of elites[2]. Scholars point out that it took about 15 years for television to affect campaign politics despite the popularity of that media when it first appeared[1]. Scholars also found that neither television nor cable television increased citizen participation in public affairs[2, 20]. With the advent of the Internet, cyber-optimists asserted that it makes the public more knowledgeable and expands political participation and civic engagement, while cyber-skeptics argue that the Internet will further widen the gap between the technology "haves" and "have-nots"[11]. Cyber optimism was spread initially by the works of Alvin Toffler and Nicholas Negroponte[23]. In particular, Negroponte wrote that the digital age would bring decentralizing, global, harmonizing, and empowering effects[10]. Budge contended that mass participation in politics and online deliberation is possible because new communication technology can lessen the cost associated with participation[4]. However, cyber pessimists presented counterarguments that while the Internet provides good cyber space for expressing individual opinions, it nonetheless cannot be a public place for meaningful deliberation because the characteristics of the Internet - such as anonymity - do not guarantee reciprocity and responsibility in online discussion[22]. Barber suggests that democracy does not depend on technology being used, but on the quality of political institutions and citizenship[3].

3.2 The Effects on Digital Divide

The term digital divide refers to the gap between those people with effective access to digital and information technology and those without access to it. It includes the imbalances in physical access to technology as well as the imbalances in resources and skills needed to effectively participate as a digital citizen. In other words, it's the unequal access by some members of the society to information and communications technology, and the unequal acquisition of related skills. Groups often discussed in the context of a digital divide include socioeconomic (rich/poor), racial (majority/minority), generational (young/old) or geographical (urban/rural). The term global digital divide refers to differences in technology access between countries.

A large body of literature suggests that the digital divide is the most important issue in the Digital Era[4, 8, 11, 22, 23]. The digital divide is "the gap between individuals, households, businesses and geographic areas at different socio-economic levels with regard both to their opportunities to access ICTs and their use of the Internet for a wide variety of activities"[13]. While many studies of the digital divide have addressed physical access to ICTs (the access divide) and the use of them (the skills divide), others have suggests that an economic opportunity divide and a democratic divide also exist because computers and the Internet are a means of policy participation in the digital economy and the political arena for digital democracy[8]. Dahl provided some criteria for accessing the ideal democratic process: (1) equality in voting, (2) effective participation, (3) enlightened understanding, (4) control of the agenda, and (5) inclusiveness of citizenship. The digital divide inhibits fulfilling these requirements of policy democracy[5].

3.3 Digital Divide and Policy Democracy in South Korea

The problem of the digital divide exists in South Korea. In terms of age brackets, young people use of the Internet heavily. In 2007, the Internet usage rate

was 99.3% for young generation in their twenties and 96.5% in their thirties, while it was only 46.5% for those in their fifties, and 17.6% for those above sixty[9]. About 80.8% of men accessed the Internet compared to 70.3% of women, and 10.5 percentage difference. Among the general public, excluding students, the Internet usage rate is much lower for the less-educated groups than that for the highly-educated groups. About 96.9% of college graduates or above used the Internet, but only 33.8% of junior high school graduates accessed it. In December 2007, the Internet usage rate of residents in large cities was 82.9%, higher than that in rural areas (65.3%)[9]. Possible solutions for the digital divide include public Internet kiosks in public libraries and social service centers, free classes on Internet skills, equal education opportunity, and public investment in lifelong learning. Considering both the positive and negative effects of the Internet, we cannot state that it is superior to off-line communication[4][8]. Online deliberation should be used as a complement to face-to-face policy discussion, and both formats should combined to strengthen policy democracy.

4. Conclusion

Today, a number of structural changes are once again taking place, brought about - for the most part - by the advent and wide scale diffusion of advanced information-based technologies. The result has been the emergence of a globally networked economy, in which many countries, regions, and city regions within countries interact more often and more quickly; are more extensively as well as more densely interconnected; and hence are much more interdependent. As a result, there are now many new and increasingly diverse actors - all with their own agendas - making decisions that give rise not only to local effects but also to non-linear system-wide global outcomes. Thus, in addition to an Information Revolution, we are, today, truly experiencing a Complexity Revolution, in which outcomes are both more uncertain as well as difficult to predict. If

complexity is often rooted in patterns of interaction among policy-making agents, then we might expect policy-related systems to exhibit increasingly complex dynamics when changes occur that intensify interaction among their elements. This, of course, is exactly what the Information Revolution is doing: reducing the barriers to interaction among policy-making processes that were previously isolated from each other in time or space. Information can be understood as a mediator of interaction. Decreasing the costs of its propagation and storage inherently increases possibilities for interaction effects. An Information Revolution is therefore likely to beget a complexity revolution.

As Knowledge / Information Industries advance to the extreme mechanization that the Industrial Revolution did, the Fourth Wave will be taking hold on the social fabric. This appears to be inevitable. Recall that in the Third Wave affairs, the dominant relationships driving social governance were market focused, and they took precedence over traditional relationships; human worth was measured in commercial terms. As the progressing of the Fourth Wave, the market sector and government will play a diminishing role in day-to-day affairs. Social economy refers to a third sector in economies between the private sector and business or, the public sector and government. It includes organizations such as cooperatives, non-governmental organizations and charities[18]. As Norris[11] note down it, the digital era will evolve the social economy such as community activities, non-profit organizations, volunteerism and advocacy organizations. Inevitably, the evolving social economy triggers new policy-related systems which will take shape as the Fourth Wave takes its roots.

So, what will be the effects of the Fourth Wave on the policy makers? The policy organizations will continue to mandate compulsory work, much like we mandate compulsory conscription to military service and compulsory education in Korea; however, it will change the way we think and care about our neighbors. Most people could begin to see the connectedness of everything, and it will demand a new vision for education and life skills training. It was the

U.S. president George Walker Bush in his inaugural address who said the volunteer sector was the spiritual backbone of the democratic way. I couldn't vote for Bush because I'm a Korean, but I liked his ideals. Clinton has done the same with his renewal of Kennedy's peace corps initiative. Like the previous Waves of revolutionizing social changes, the U.S. presidents didn't just come about. Each president was embedded in the tissues of society, evolved & emerged as technologies, ideas & ideals shaped the thoughts, emotions & collective will of humankind, which are urgently needed for Korean policy makers in the Fourth Wave. The Fourth Wave was emerged amidst the chaos of the Third Wave, and it will most definitely affect the policy makers in a good or bad way since the policy makers have to consider the reaction, counteraction, and the response from the civil society more seriously. As a result, the Fourth Wave will help to achieve the true spirit of democracy by reducing the absolute powers formerly occupied by the elite policy makers.

The challenge for policy organizations and policy makers will be especially difficult in this new environment, the Fourth Wave. Not only policy makers need to develop new methodologies and tools for understanding the dynamics of complex systems and their policy consequences, but also they must adapt their organizational operations and procedures to the Fourth Wave so as to maintain their legitimacy and support. More than any other type of organizations, policy organizations are dependent on external sources for their funding as well as for their legitimacy in the policy making arena.

Further research will be required to explore the potential impact that the Complexity Revolution has on policy organizations. In particular, it considers what types of changes in policy organizational structure, culture, and cognitive skills and procedures might be required for them to successfully adapt to their increasingly complex digital environments.

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