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# Local Governments' Policy on the Utilization of Women's Resources

Youngmi Kim<sup>†</sup>, Kyoo-Sung Noh<sup>††</sup>

## 지방정부의 여성인력 활용정책

김영미<sup>†</sup>, 노규성<sup>††</sup>

**Abstract** In the knowledge-based society, utilization of women's resources has significant implications as the key to success of national competitiveness. The space and conditions for women to show their abilities in all areas should be provided. Policies on women's resources, which aim to achieve gender equality, should not be limited to the area of social welfare as usual, but should be treated in-depth with relation to political, economic, social, and cultural areas. Local women policies do not reflect the distinct characteristics of the local areas and realities of women, furthermore, even the concept of women policies is not delivered to local women. In this study, directions to shift local women policies from the marginalization to the mainstream of policy are discussed focusing on utilization of women's resources.

**Key Words** : local government, Career interruption of women, gender governance, women's resources

**요약** 지식기반사회에서 여성인력의 활용은 국가경쟁력 성패의 관건이라는 점에서 중요한 의미를 갖는다. 여성들이 모든 분야에서 자신의 능력을 발휘할 수 있는 공간과 여건이 마련되어야 할 것이다. 남녀평등 실현을 목표로 하는 여성인력의 정책적 과제는 종전과 같이 사회복지정책의 과제로만 한정되어서는 안 되며, 정치·경제·사회·문화와의 관련 속에서 심도 있게 다루어져야 한다. 지방에서의 여성정책은 그 지방의 특수성과 여성의 현실을 반영하지 못하고 있으며 여성정책에 대한 개념 자체도 지역여성에게 전달되지 못하고 있는 실정이다. 이에 본 연구에서는 지방여성정책이 주변화를 벗어나 정책의 주류가 되기 위한 측면에서 여성인력활용을 중심으로 방향성에 대해 개진하고 있다.

**주제어** : 지방정부, 경력단절여성, 젠더거버넌스, 여성인력

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### 1. Introduction

Although women show quantitative growth in terms of contribution to industrial development due to increasing participation in economic activities, distortion of the female labor appears, such as a large number of female workers belonging to lower-paid production labor, low-level office work, and non-regular work in urban areas. This phenomenon emerges as a social problem, and consequently, it requires a solution. It is no exaggeration to say that

national competitiveness in a knowledge-based society depends on creative knowledge and technology of human resources.

The space and conditions for women to show their abilities in all areas should be provided, and therefore utilization of women's resources has significant implications as the key to success of national competitiveness. And policies on women's resources, which aim to achieve gender equality, should not be limited to the area of social welfare as usual, but should be treated in-depth with relation to political, economic,

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<sup>†</sup> 상명대학교 행정학과 교수(교신저자)

<sup>††</sup> 신문대학교 경영학과 교수(공동저자)

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social, and cultural areas. In particular, since the overall implementation of local autonomy system, decentralization for regional balanced development has been carried out continuously.

Local women policies means that women decide solutions to their problems for themselves and put the decisions into practice through the consensus of the community, therefore specific policies that can understand and fulfill the needs of women living in the local area are important before everything. However, until now, local women policies do not reflect the distinct characteristics of the local areas and the realities of women, furthermore, even the concept of women policies is not delivered to local women.

In addition, in some local governments, implementation of policies related to women follows the same path of central government's women policies, or too much emphasis is placed on instructions, directions, and orders of policies. This situation not only shows that women policies implemented in each local government do not properly reflect the needs of local women and but also means that development and implementation of women policies suitable for the distinct characteristics of the local areas are not carried out.

In this study, directions to shift local women policies from the marginalization to the mainstream of policy are discussed focusing on utilization of women's resources.

## 2. Discussion on the Employment of Career-interrupted Women

### 2.1 Meaning of career-interrupted women

#### 2.1.1 Career interruption of women

The career interruption of women is being discussed, mostly centering around gender roles related to child care after marriage. Preference for working is also a part of the process of gender role socialization; and gendered identity is reflected on the selection of a

job, as well. That is, a women who is expecting a baby or is about to get married has a strong tendency to select a job that is easy to withdraw from, while men pursue economic activities that differentiate them from women-responsibilities for being the main breadwinners of families- and express their symbolic gender role. Further, it may be said that women's concentration on housework rather than engagement in economic activities during a period of childbirth or child care is one expression of women's gender role socialization. [1][2]

The stereotype of the 'feminine' gender role has effects on women's selection of their jobs, and men try to fulfill their gender role as 'males' by engaging in type of jobs in which they have power and wield influence. Thus, men and women come to found their selection of jobs on predominant understanding of what job is suitable to them based on gender role socialization, which results in the phenomenon of occupational gender segregation in which men and women concentrate on different types of jobs. After all, such stereotypes about genders manifest themselves as inequality in the labor market, which is thought to become the major obstacle that keeps women from getting a job after marriage and childbirth.

In connection with gender role socialization, radical feminists insist that patriarchy promotes women's unequal position in the labor market. They regard patriarchy as a universal phenomenon that has existed beyond space and time.

Labor policies for women in South Korea have been formulated according to national necessity. The most distinguished feature found in Korean female laborers is that even when they have entered the public sphere of labor market, they are still influenced in the public sphere by their private sphere. This shows the *raison d'être* of female laborers also lies in the role as a woman taking charge of the private sphere. Therefore, it is considered that a male laborer and a female laborer cannot be treated as equal in their value; and that the career interruption of women due to reasons arising from the private sphere such as childbirth, child care,

etc. is taken for granted.[2][4]

Recent social changes show various types of forms according to the circumstances of the times which cannot but be based on the premise of women's participation in society. On the one hand, women's inflow into the labor market is taken for granted, while on the other hand, the interruption of women's resources due to career interruption and its supplementation should be groped for anew.

## **2.2 Governance for overcoming career interruption**

Women's inferior political power can be overcome by the 'concept of governance.' The governance emerged as the concept of the horizontal administration of state affairs in the form of a network of various subjects of a state or society, compared with the past perpendicular concept of the governing state and governed society, was emphasized and its necessity increased. It is found that gender governance as the keynote that enables changes in public policies for women has been applied and groped for.

With regard to this, it is found that changes in the women employment system have been made by governance. Women have appeared as a new group among pluralistic interest groups, out of the concept of 'governance' that the government and civil society manage a country together. Women's political expression in the labor market is their own move toward the realization of true governance, and the true governance could be realized through such political expression.

## **3. Present Condition of the Utilization of Women's Resources**

### **3.1. Actual State of the South Korea's Utilization of Women's Resources**

#### **3.1.1 Non-regular work-based employment**

At present, most companies employ women as

temporary workers or non-regular workers rather than core personnel, with the intention of saving labor expenses. And the enforcement of the non-regular worker law in 2007 has forced non-regular women workers out of their jobs. The law that was enforced to protect non-regular workers is rather increasing the instability of women's employment.[5]

#### **3.1.2 Discrimination in employment**

Laws protect women against discrimination in employment; in actuality, however, men are preferentially employed over women. The higher rate of successful female applicants for civil service examination than that for large companies may be seen as the evidence that companies avoid women in their employment.

#### **3.1.3 Invisible discrimination in arrangement and promotion**

Even when women have been employed as regular workers, there are invisible discrimination against them under the current environment of personnel management where male-centered personnel management is dominant. For this reason, they are discriminated against men, in assignment to core departments or promotion, with no reasonable standards.[6]

#### **3.1.4 Discrimination in human resources restructuring**

In the event of human resources restructuring such as corporate de-hiring, etc., in fact, women are subject to restructuring earlier than men. Particularly, when a woman worker is married, she becomes the target of de-hiring.[7]

### **3.2. Rate of Women's Resources Employment and Distribution by Industry**

To look into the rate of increase in the employment of women's resources and rates of employment and managers among them are gradually increasing. As for distribution by industry, most concentrate in health &

social welfare services and lodging & restaurants industries. As demands for women's participation in society increase, the role of women's resources becomes important; most of them, however, remains concentrated in some types of jobs, and it is deemed that policy support in terms of this is necessary.

### 3.3. Trends of the Utilization of Women Resources

The labor force participation rate of women in the 25-29 age bracket increased in last 2006, compared with 2001. In general, however, the rate peaks in their early twenties and in their forties, and then shows downward trend; which indicates that female employment still has no stable base.

In the case of the USA, it is said that it took 70 years for the rate of female managers to increase from 4% to 16%; once the rate reached 16%, however, the tenure and the rate of promotion increased rapidly. In South Korea also, the recent increase in women's advancement makes it possible to expect that the ratio of women in a company will increase rapidly. The female share of new employees also increased greatly in 2010, compared with the past. However, many college-graduate women still fail to find their vision in their organization, and a considerable number of them decide to retire, taking childbirth or child care as an opportunity.

Women entering the high-quality human resources market have increased greatly in the past 10 years; however, the rate of their wastage has seldom decreased. According to the Statistics Korea, women's share of the total employees has increased every year, however, the percentage of women who remain in large companies for 10 years or longer is still low, compared with men.

### 3.4. Utilization of Women's Resources in Provincial Areas

#### 3.4.1 Comparison of Economic Activities

The overall present condition of women's economic

activities in provincial areas. The district that shows the highest labor force participation rate of men is Incheon with 75.42%, while women shows 49.9%. As for the present condition of employment, it is shown that women engage chiefly in services and sales industries. The district of the lowest labor force participation rate of women is Busan Metropolitan City with 45.6%; and generally, women's employment rate is low, compared with men.

As of 2010, the female population is 16.7%, the productive population 73.1%, and the aged population 10.2%. As for the composition ratio of childbirth by the age group of mother, it is highest in the 20-24 age group of 29.2% in 1987, in the 25-29 age group of 24.7% in 1997, and in the 30-34 age group of 42.6% in 2007; and so the childbirth age of mother has risen gradually. The distribution of female householders has also increased steadily from 18.5% in 2000 to 22.4% in 2005 and 23.1% in 2010.

As for the present condition of the educational background of women population in metropolitan cities, all the remaining areas surpass 10% or more, except Incheon and Ulsan, and the educational background of women tends to continue to rise sharply.

#### 3.4.2 Comparison of local governmental organizations exclusively responsible for women resources

Subjects of networks in local governments. It can be summarized as follows:[8][9]

They mention, as the subjects of each network necessary for the efficient promotion of local women policy, the head of local government, women's organization, mass media, local women, and other administrative departments; and compare the size of their influences on local women policy. It was found that the head of local government exercises the greatest influence of 4.41 on average, followed by women's organizations of 3.95 on average, and mass media of 3.68 on average. Local women ranked 4th with 3.64 on average, which is similar to the third, and so

seem to have small effects on women policy. Other administrative departments are found to be 3.13 on average, and so have the smallest effects on women policy. It may be said the above findings show that the weight of provincial women policy is determined by the will of the head of local government, as shown in the existing findings. Therefore, it is necessary[7][8] to build a cooperative network with every subject, taking into account the above influences, in order to promote efficiently future local women policies.[10]

### **3.5. Obstacles to the Utilization of Women's Resources**

#### **3.5.1 Male-centered corporate culture**

For most members who are accustomed to male-centered corporate culture, there are many cases where they have insufficient understanding of women as well as they are shackled by patriarchal values. The existing men are not used to working with women, for they have not worked with women as colleagues. Women may also show attitudes different from behavior patterns ordinarily accepted in an organization, for they have not received training on male culture. After all, too much male-centered corporate culture makes it difficult to accept diversity, and results in the alienation of women particularly.

The examination of details on how male-centered corporate culture obstructs the utilization of women's resources shows that not a few systems and habits block the employment of women from the stages of recruitment and hiring, or exclude women from types of high-wage, high-stability occupations. It is also true that deep-rooted male-centered corporate culture acts adversely on women in promotion or business affairs. Particularly, there are many cases where women are excluded from job education or from assignment to jobs permitting the cultivation of core management and business capacity, which results in gender difference in promotion.

There is the strong negative image of a feminine role left within a place of work. Particularly, there are

stereotypes such as 'Women are weak,' and 'Women are those who play an assistant role.' It is well reflected by the fact that male managers frequently point out the following as a reason why they avoid female workers[11].

#### **3.5.2 The burdens of child care such as pregnancy, childbirth, etc.**

It is also an obstacle to the utilization of women's resources that the burdens of child care such as pregnancy and childbirth have not been relieved. This has been the chief obstacle to women's working life. At present, 'Equal Employment Opportunity (and Work / Family Balance Assistance) Act' and 'Maternity Protection Act' have been institutionally prepared; however, there are still many companies that express disapproval of maternity leave. For they feel burdened by lack of an alternative to a vacuum in business. For example, the survey of domestic 100 companies conducted by the Ministry of Labor (The Ministry of Employment and Labor) last year shows that more than 90% of the companies are implementing various systems in connection with the Equal Employment Opportunity Act. A closer examination of these companies, however, reveals that such systems are being operated only on a formal basis. Among the companies that are implementing relevant systems, those that actually guarantee maternity leave do not surpass 30%. In this respect, the understanding of an organization beyond the mere implementation of the maternity protection system and the efforts of an individual who benefits from the system are required at the same time.

#### **3.5.3 Obstacle to the Training of Women's Resources**

The supply of human resources that is disproportionate to demand is also an obstacle to the maximum utilization of women's resources. That is, the primary obstacle to the utilization of women's resources consists in the fact that majors chosen by

women are concentrated in those that are unfavorable to employment. Gender inequality in the labor market is linked directly to the education field; and factors of sexual discrimination in the contents of education at educational facilities of all levels as well as inequality in the rate of entrance to higher education and in the fields of major are prominent.

The analysis of the selection of majors in higher educational institutions shows that female students still concentrate in domestic science, arts, humanities, and teacher training that agree with the traditional roles of women. While female students have already much difficulty in finding jobs, their concentrated selection of impractical disciplines such as humanities, where both male and female students have difficulty in finding jobs, aggravates the problem of women unemployment.

On the other hand, the fields of engineering including computer and communication are found to be dominated by male students. Nelly Stromquist expresses such a tendency, "discriminatory attributes against women have not disappeared, but appear in the other form of sex discrimination in majors at higher education, rather than discrimination in educational opportunities." [8]

As for vocational and technical education, women and men are split into commercial specialty and technical specialty, respectively; and as for education & training in production sites as well, major contents for women are skill training requiring simple repetitive operation. Also, the contents of education are different according to gender, which leads to or reinforces the differentiation of types of occupations or the differentiation of jobs after employment.

#### 3.5.4 Change of perception on the part of local government

In the case of fundamental local governments, it is deemed that the current women policies contribute to the quality of life for women, that is, the promotion of gender equality, the expansion of women's participation in society, and the achievement of the goals of welfare

improvement. As for network subjects that influence local women policies, it is perceived that the head of local government's concern with women policies is great. Therefore, it is necessary that partnership approach with subjects of a network that influence women policy should be strengthened, and that devices for its implementation should be prepared, so that local women policies may be carried out more efficiently, overcoming many difficulties and obstacles and guaranteeing the democracy and responsibility of policy making process. As such a device, a women policy network, where the head of local government, local women's organizations, other administrative departments, etc. participate, may be formed so as to vitalize conversations on women policy issues among them, form a bond of understanding and sympathy, and enhance support. When a foundation for cooperation and coordination as well as the promotion of understanding among subjects of a network on issues of across-the-board local women policies is prepared like this, it will be possible to push ahead with local women policies more efficiently.

## 4. Proposals for Local Government's Women Policy

It may be said that it's time to prepare a concrete alternative on the level of local government for inducing women's advance into society as well as for supporting women who participate. Hence, I am going to make proposals as follows:

### 4.1. Expansion of a pool of talent

The reality is that the women's resources are not sufficiently utilized, compared with a quantitative increase in women's resources. To improve such situation, it is deemed necessary to improve the supply side on the one hand, through training and supplying women's resources that can meet demands from industries, and to improve the demand side on the other

hand, through expanding demands so that women's resources may be actively utilized. Also, it may be said that the construction of infrastructure to support women's economic activities actively is also important.[12]

Above all, the strategic training of women's resources should be worked out to grasp the demand structure of human resources in industrial fields and to satisfy their demands. Expansion of investment in education capable of enhancing substantially productivity at the labor market, not mere in higher education, is necessary. Because producing highly educated women in large quantities in the existing way will distort the labor market where structural inequality has already been deepened, and perpetuate highly educated women's becoming idle manpower.

It is necessary to strengthen career guidance whose core is providing strong consciousness of occupation and information on a variety of careers. Despite rapid progress in women's becoming highly educated, women's consciousness of occupation still remains at a level of consciousness that sees vocation as optional activities in such a manner that 'it does not matter whether women have a job or not.' And active career guidance programs should be provided to improve their consciousness of occupation that is concentrated on so-called pink-collar jobs such as teachers, fashion-related jobs, and so on.

For this, it is necessary to include career education in regular curricula as well as to provide realistic educational programs or briefing sessions to female students, which are sponsored by the Korea Science and Engineering Foundation, academic societies, associations by industry, or women organizations. And laws and systems should be supplemented so as to expand the continuing education services of the government or public institutions; and most of all, educational conditions for real equality in educational opportunity should be created overall. all.[11]

#### 4.2. Tasks for Complementing Laws, Systems, and Policies

It is necessary to complement infant care policies designed to help the coexistence of women's family life and work life. Child-care supporting systems in most advanced countries revolve on the three axes of child care services, children's allowances, and systems of leave for childbirth and child care.

For the proper utilization of women's resources, continuous work life should be guaranteed, for which it is necessary to expand infant care facilities where babies can be entrusted just after maternity leave. The infant care facilities, however, involve great expense, and thus private facilities have a lot of difficulties in taking charge of them. Unlike foreign countries, South Korea's infant care facilities excessively rely on the private sector; and thus there are only 1,344 (5.3%) national or public facilities among 25,319 infant care facilities. It is necessary to establish national or public infant care facilities in terms of the utilization of women labor, as well.[9][11][12]

### 5. Conclusion

One of definitely important factors for South Korea to join the ranks of the advanced countries is support of women's resources. Women's resources are the driving force playing an important role in the national economy.

Although more and more women's resources are produced to activate social participation, the obstacles encountered while social activities are not eliminated and still remain as barriers. Factors impeding social participation of women can be classified into two.

First one is the socio-cultural factors such as social consciousness on the basis of traditional female role, and second one is the institutional factors such as lack of childcare facilities to ensure women's social life. If such inducements to encourage women's participation in economic activities as prohibition of discrimination

and childcare allowances are assigned to companies, they can be raising corporate burden, and consequently companies can avoid hiring female employees.

Recent trend of women to avoid birth for work can lead our economy to weakness of growth potential, therefore a variety of measures to support child care facilities for working women by local governments should be strengthened continuously, lest social activities of women be constrained by child birth.

Thus, a variety of good conditions for women's resources to show their abilities supported by local governments is almost meaningless without women's own efforts to development and growth. Women need to try to do their best to show their abilities with dreams about success in society in long-term point of view.

Finally, practical alternatives that reflect social reality should be included in women policies. What we need is policies aimed at women in conjunction with long-term vision rather than short-term bombast for the visual and exterior effect of government. Women policies are the policies of the networks. Networks of women policies linked with the characteristics of local politics and even with local communities are should be supported.

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[www.peoplepower21.org](http://www.peoplepower21.org)

### Youngmi Kim



• 1986년 : Sangmyung Womens University(BA, Public Administration)

• 1988년 : Hankook University of Foreign Studies(MA, Public Administration)

• 1992년 : Hankook University of Foreign Studies (Ph.D, Public



Administration)

- 1995년 : Sangmyung University, Professor
- 2007년 ~ 2008년 : Korean Association for Regional Information Policy(Vice President)
- Interest areas : digital divide, e-government, IT Service, Gender policy
- E-Mail : young@smu.ac.kr

### Kyoo-Sung Noh



- 1984년 : Hankook University of Foreign Studies(BA, Business Administration)
- 1986년 : Hankook University of Foreign Studies(MBA, Management Information Systems)
- 1995년 : Hankook University of Foreign Studies(Ph.D, Management Information Systems)
- 2000년 : Sunmoon Univ, Professor
- 2003년 4월 : The Society of Digital Policy and Management, President
- 2008년 6월 : Korea Association of Software Manpower, President
- Interest areas : digital policy, e-government, digital industry policy, EC & e-Business
- E-Mail : ksnoh@sunmoon.ac.kr