

Work Integration of People with Disabilities in Korean Social Enterprises

Yonghyun Kim¹

(Yonsei University)

Abstract

In this study, I question whether social enterprise can significantly help work integration of persons with disabilities (or *PWDs*). Particularly, I analyze the case of Korea which recently passed a bill (or *Social Enterprise Support Law, SESL*) setting the disabled as one of four target groups. Unlike former state-led policies, not all but some cases showed that social enterprises can create numerous decent jobs for the disabled if some conditions are met.

The result illustrates four issues. First, people with disabilities are excluded in the labor market: not only their chance of getting a job is more restricted than other socially disadvantaged groups, but also the insufficient jobs allotted to the disabled are unevenly distributed by the type and severity of illness. Second, the tendency of state-led initiative distinguishes Korean social enterprises both from European ones and U.S. non-profit organizations. Third, although people with disabilities were excluded from the legislation process, they actively adopted themselves in order to participate as a social enterprise. Fourth, networking with other organizations, especially with for-profit firms is essential for work integration of the disabled.

By this study, I hope Korea's experience to be a worthy guideline for other Asian countries in initiating social enterprises which stands for the disabled. If further cross-national studies are followed, it will be much beneficial in modeling Asian disabled-centered social enterprises.

Keywords: Social Enterprise, Work Integration, People with Disabilities, Disability-Employment

1 Direct correspondence to Yonghyun Kim, Department of Sociology, Yonsei University, 134 Shinchon-dong, Seodaemun-ku, Seoul, Korea 120-749 (yonghyunkim@yonsei.ac.kr)

I. Introduction

Since the 1990s, at least in western industrialized countries, there has been a remarkable growth in the third sector or so-called social economy. In social economy, unlike market or private economy, public utility comes first than market competition and profit-maximizing. Following this path, a new kind of organization which pursues both managerial profit and social purpose, broadly called “social enterprise” has emerged (Defourny 2001). Even considering their different origins between Europe and the United States, most social enterprises follow the definition that social enterprises are “any private activity conducted in the public interest, organized with an entrepreneurial strategy but whose main purpose is not the maximization of profit but the attainment of certain economic and social goals, and which has a capacity for bringing innovative solutions to the problems of social exclusion and unemployment (OECD 1999:10)”.

In Asia, at the same time, transformation toward ‘productive welfare’ or ‘workfare’ became tangible (Jessop 1993; Wad 1999). Although it did not coincide with the experience of European welfare states (Torfing 1999), achieving considerable productivity has been highlighted as much as offering decent jobs and social services. Following this trend, Korea, one of the leading countries of welfare in Asia, passed a bill (or *Social Enterprise Support Law, SESL*) designed to certify and support social enterprises in 2005. However, in the case of Korea, social enterprises were introduced mainly by the government (Lim *et al* 2007; Moon 2006). This state-led initiative distinguishes Korean social enterprises not only from European ones that emerged as an adaptation to the retrenchment of welfare states, but also from U.S. non-profit organizations which underlines revenue generation for the economically weak (Kim 2008). Policy makers believed social enterprises to be the *deus ex machine* from every problem caused by prior welfare institutions. Specifically, it came right after the ‘self-support program (1999~)’ and ‘social workplace act (2003~)’. In those policies, people with disabilities were somewhat excluded. Even the insufficient jobs made by social enterprises are going to relatively “less disabled” persons. There may be several reasons, but I suggest two main problems.

First, for the government, revenue generation outweighed work integration, and second, even disability-related associations and institutions held their punch-line in corporates' social contribution or direct support by the government.

Social Enterprise Support Law (SESL) sets four target groups which are the unemployed, the elderly, sexual abuse victims, and people with disabilities as the socially disadvantaged groups. However, there are few studies which view social enterprise in disabled-centered perspective. Most disability-employment studies in Korea focus on other policies such as governmental subsidy or disability vocational rehabilitation program. However, I am certain that the trend toward social enterprise is inevitable in welfare policy, and there is no exception for people with disabilities, either.

Therefore, in this study I question if social enterprise can be a remedy for work integration of people with disabilities. This is specified into three stages. First, I briefly trace back the position of the disabled and the change of disability-related programs and other important welfare policies. Second, I figure out how the social enterprise was introduced and its support law was initiated in Korea. Especially, the policy competition among the state (Ministry of Labor and Ministry of Health and Welfare), for-profit firms in the market, and civil society (or the third sector) will be highlighted, because it made considerable changes about what social enterprises are and how they ought to be managed (Roh 2005-2007). Third, I vet how work integration of people with disabilities is taking place in Korean social enterprises.

I expect to find out how social enterprise can be adapted successfully in Asian context. I believe that the experience of Korea can be a valuable precedent under the situation that social enterprises are being considered as the most attractive alternative to prior welfare programs and policies. At last, I try to propose how we can maximize the effect of work integration of the disabled via social enterprise.

II. Disability employment in Korea and East Asia

When looking through the disability employment in Korea, one can notice the disabled are being

dually excluded in the labor market. First, their chance of getting a job is more restricted than other socially weak groups. For example, their labor force participation rate (44.4% in 2005) is lower than women's (50.2% in 2008). Besides, there is no large scale support program which could maintain their jobs in the long term. This differs from other government procurement programs for so-called women-business or small fry enterprises. Affirmative action plan is also being rather female-focused. Furthermore, low wage and precarious position in the market make the workers with disabilities to become the working poor.

Second, the insufficient jobs allotted to them are being unevenly distributed. Official reports show the severer one has physical/mental impairment, the lesser probability for one to get a job. Also, it seems that new jobs are almost only for persons with the 'lightest' disabilities.

Table 1. PWD employment rate by degree of disability in Korea

degree of disability	2007	2008	2008-2007	growth rate(%)
1	21.48	19.31	-2.17	-10.10
2	26.28	22.97	-3.31	-12.60
3	25.01	22.27	-2.74	-10.96
4	26.96	27.53	0.57	2.11
5	26.79	26.34	-0.45	-1.68
6	27.70	27.95	0.25	0.90
7	26.32	34.38	8.06	30.62
Overall	24.61	24.47	-0.14	-0.57

Source: Korean Employment Promotion Agency for the Disabled (KEPAD) (2007-2008)

Note: The smaller degree indicates that one has more severe physical/mental disability.

I note that this is not happening in Korea alone. In general, there is a very wide range of variation in the prospects faced by individual disabled people – immensely wider than the range for the population as a whole (Berthoud 2003). For example, in United Kingdom, it is shown that employment rates vary greatly according to the type of impairment. People with Mental illness,

phobias, panics or other nervous disorders have the lowest employment rates of all impairment categories at only 13.3%. On the other hand, those suffering from diabetes (67%) or chest/breathing problem (62.8%) were much more likely to get a job (UK Office for National Statistics 2006).

This implies the necessities for disabled-centered policy, especially which is related with their work integration into the labor market. There were and are several programs supporting work integration of the disabled. However, some were too state-led and finally incurred heavy financial burden (Lee 2005). Others depended too much on private firms' free choice, which led corporate managers to pay the surcharge instead of hiring a person with disability. For example, in Korea it is enforced to keep 2% of disability employment quota. However, 65 large enterprises (at least 300 employees) and even 23 public institutions do not hire any person with a disability. Instead they pay KW 750,000 (about USD 800) monthly (MOLAB 2008).

Furthermore, one should note that PWD employment rate differs substantially from other types of welfare index such as spending on housing, health, unemployment, etc. According to Gough (2001:181), most of East Asian countries are the examples of "productivist welfare capitalism" where social policy subordinated to economic policy and the imperatives of growth. He also highlights that their social expenditures were small bit relatively well targeted on education and health as part of a productive strategy investment. However, although profit generation from labor is one of the main features of productive welfare or workfare, the image of persons with disabilities remained as 'patient' rather than 'potential worker'.

Throughout the world, social policies on work integration of persons with disabilities mainly focus on two purposes: first, legally prohibiting discrimination in the labor market, and second, enhancing their employment by quota system and government subsidy (Byun et al 2003). There are some trade-off between those two goals-"equal opportunity" and "strengthening the disability employment quota", and the balance between them is contingent on each country's sociopolitical settings (Heyer 2008). In general, European countries show approximately 5~7% of employment quota, whereas Asian countries keep it around 2% (KEPAD 2006).

Furthermore, as mentioned above, the economic crisis in the late 1990s largely influenced the

trend of social policy in East Asia (Gough 2001). The disability policy faced two constraints: First, disability policy remained out of the gist of social policy regardless of economic crisis. Second, managerial profit became much important even in the welfare domain. Who were not ready to become economically active suffered severely from transformation from welfare to workfare. However, the change also entailed the condition for social enterprise to be initiated and nurtured.

III. The rise of social enterprise in Korea

In this paper, I vet the process of social enterprise in Korea mainly through its legislation. Again, I divide it into three stages: i) pre-legislation period (1998~2004), ii) legislation in the administration (2005) and iii) legislation in the congress (2006). I also set three key actors: government, market, and civil society (or the third sector). In each stage, they actively pursued their goals, although sometimes it did not match with their class or organizational needs. Also, the relationship among them varied by situations they faced. As Eckstein (1960) highlights, policy is built by various actors who have their own autonomy, interest, political mobilization, and drive to form network with others.

Many preceding policy studies used to focus only on the relationship between state and market, or class structure in given society. However, social enterprise lies in the intersection of state, market, and civil society (Defourny 2001). Therefore, considering the 'third sector' is important not only because of the nature of social enterprise itself, but also because majority of the third sector practitioners have had close relation with persons with disabilities.

Table 2. Main feature and key events during the institutionalization of SESL

	Stage 1 (1998~2004)	Stage 2 (2005)	Stage 3(2006)
Main Feature	Transformation into productivist welfare	Prepare for institutionalization	Legislature in the Congress
Key Events	<p>public works program (1998~1999)</p> <p>self-support program (1999~)</p> <p>social workplace program (2003~)</p>	<p>government employees, company interested, scholars, social workers organized “social workplace T/F”, and framed the draft bill for social enterprise (2005.3~12)</p>	<p>proposal by Grand National Party (GNP) (2005.12)</p> <p>consultation between government and Uri Party (ruling party) (2006.1)</p> <p>proposal by Uri Party (2006.3)</p> <p>SESL passes the congress (2006.12)</p>

In the pre-legislation period, everyone agreed with former welfare policy was problematic, but disagreed with each others’ remedy. Budget burden and high unemployment after the economic crisis remained as a social problem. While Ministry of Labor was eager to keep the “social workplace program” which was close to an employment policy, Ministry of Welfare and Health defended desperately the “self-support program” which was rather a welfare policy aimed at rehabilitation of the socially disadvantaged groups (Koh 2007). At the same time, in the market, the issue of corporate social responsibility emerged as a kind of global standard such as UNGC (United Nations Global Compact) or ISO26000. Social workers also agreed that some kind of different program should be initiated (Kim 2006), but for them, it had to be an extended version of “self-support program”, not to lose their great stake in that.

In March 2005, the “social workplace T/F” was organized with 23 specialists who were

government employees, company interested, scholars, and social workers. Their purpose was to discuss and decide how social enterprise should be modeled. However, out of 23 members, eleven were from for-profit firms and seven from government. Due to this unbalanced proportion, the interest of state and market was strongly pursued and realized. They claimed that Korean social enterprise should be an employment policy rather than welfare policy, and American model rather than European model (MOLAB 2006). However, one should note that the term “American model” they used was not such non-profit organization with social purpose (e.g. Anheier and Salamon 2006; Kerlin and Pollack 2006). It was just an “enterprise” which is guided by the invisible hand, so both government and for-profit firms barely have duty to support. Under such circumstances, the third sector practitioners channeled all their energy to preserve the “social support program”. For example, in 2005, “Self-support Organization Association (SOA)” radically demonstrated against the government, demanding for normalization of self-support program and increase in government subsidy. Eventually, they succeeded in keeping the program until nowadays, but at the cost of being excluded from the social enterprise (Kim 2008).

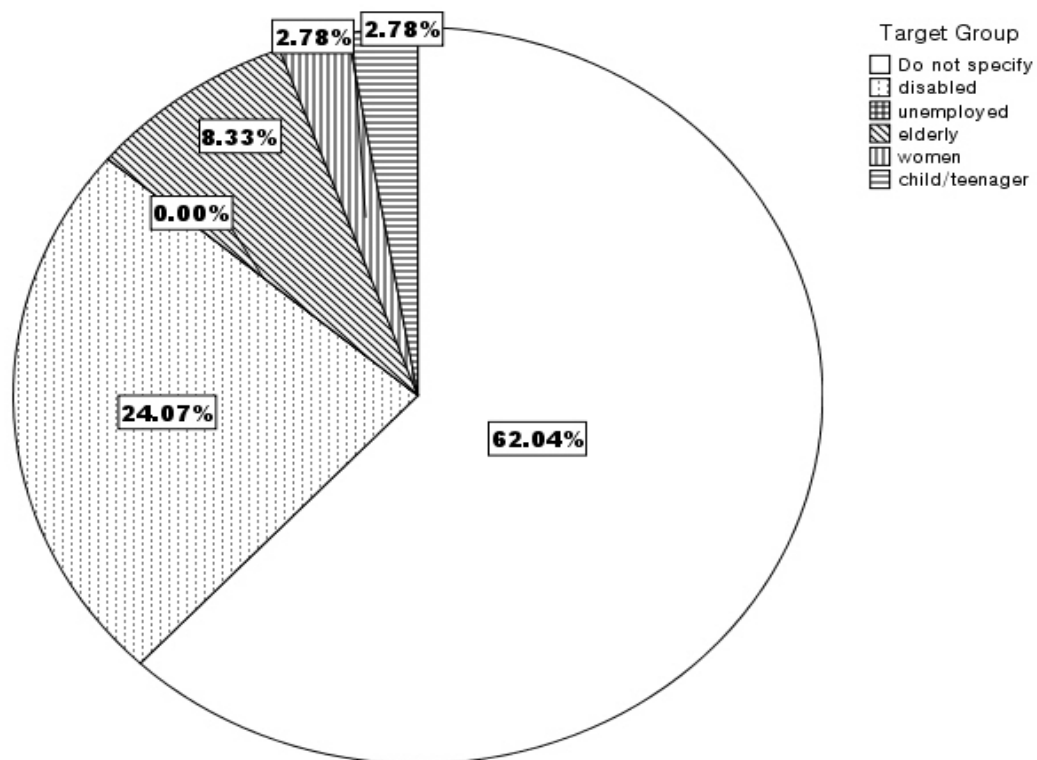
When the SESL bill was proposed in the congress, it was by no means a political issue. It was quite unlikely for any politician to refuse such program. However, the movement of the third sector in this stage is noteworthy. Right after the proposal, various non-governmental organizations and welfare institutions organized so-called “Joint Committee of Civil Society for Social Enterprise (JCCSE)”. The goal of this committee was clear: to take a big role in social enterprise by mobilizing their political power (JCCSE 2006). 24 organizations joined the newborn organization, and tried to arouse pan-national sympathy of their image of social enterprise. In this process, it is paradoxical that they made an effort to network with parties regardless of their class identity. Rather than only depending on “Democratic Labor Party”, the committee was eager to get close not only with “Uri Party”, the ruling party, but also far more conservative Grand National Party (GNP). However, it seemed to be too late to bring it all back. As a result, during the formation of social enterprise in Korea was thoroughly initiated by the state for the state and the markets sake: Lessening their financial and legal burden as much as possible (Lee 2007). Third sector steadily focused on “self-support program”. It is

still in force, but in the cost of being excluded from the social enterprise legislature.

IV. Work integration of people with disabilities in social enterprises in Korea

As I mentioned above, social enterprise was introduced to benefit not only the socially disadvantaged groups by offering decent jobs, but also social enterprises themselves by revenue generation. In this study, I analyzed 108 social enterprises which have been certified since SESL was enforced in 2006. Putting aside the small-N problem, there are no reliable data which cover all of them and many places do not even run a website. Although it is difficult to do such quantitative analysis, there are some implications for considering social enterprise as an alternative for disability employment.

Table 3. Target groups of Korean social enterprise (n=108)



As table 3 shows, about 62% of social enterprises tend not to specify their target group. Nevertheless, among those who set their target group, persons with disabilities form the majority. This brings upon two questions: First, how were the disabled able to take the leading positions among other target groups, although the third sector was excluded in the institutionalization of social enterprise? Second, how well are the disabled represented in social enterprises where no target group is set?

After SESL passed the congress, the Ministry of Labor, authorities in charge of social enterprise, announced that they would help existing social workplaces and self-support organizations to transform into social enterprise in the long term (Kim 2007; MOLAB 2007). However, what actually self-support organizations did was unexpected. They claimed that “self-support organizations have no qualitative difference with social enterprises”, and actively moved on to be certified as a social enterprise. It was somewhat strategic decision to fulfill their organizational mission that is promotion of their participants. This strategy takes place even when their goal or mode mismatch with their class or political mobilization power (Immergut and Anderson 2008). The result is not bad so far. 77.7% of social enterprises were founded before the enforcement of SESL. This indicates majority of social enterprises were derived from other types of organizations. As table 5 (below) also shows, stock companies and corporation aggregates constitute more than half of entire social enterprises. At the same time, social welfare corporations, NPOs, and co-operatives which were the main type of self-support organizations together form about one-third. It still is another important issue whether those newly transformed social enterprises have solved or just concealed structural problems of self-support program (Roh 2007). Nonetheless, most of the institutions which hired and represented the disabled are successfully joining the transform toward social enterprise. Besides there are several stock companies which links state-market-civil society, and especially set their target groups as the disabled seems to be viable even faced with market competition. I will introduce them later in this paper.

Table 4. Organizational type of social enterprises (n=108)

	Frequency	Percent
social welfare corporation	14	12.96
stock company	36	33.33
corporation aggregate	22	20.37
foundation	5	4.63
non-profit organization	12	11.11
limited company	6	5.56
co-operative	11	10.19
others	2	1.85
Total	108	100

Social enterprise is an emergent form rather than an artifact (Borzaga and Defourny 2001). Therefore, it is hard to define them strictly, but most social enterprises pursue two main goals: first, providing proper social services, and second, integrating the socially excluded into the labor market (OECD 1999). Table 5 (below) shows the joint distribution of Korean social enterprises' organizational purpose and their target group.

Table 5. Cross table between target group and organizational purpose (n=108)

	Organizational Purpose			total
	work integration	provide social service	both	
elderly	6 (8.7)	3 (9.1)	0 (0.0)	9 (8.3)
women	2 (2.9)	1 (3.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (2.8)
disabled	21 (30.4)	3 (9.1)	2 (33.3)	26 (24.1)
child/teenager	3 (4.3)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (2.8)
Do not specify	37 (53.6)	26 (78.8)	4 (66.7)	67 (62.0)
Total	69 (100)	33 (100)	6 (100)	108 (100)

Note: numbers in the parentheses indicates column percent.

It is shown that the disabled are relatively more represented in work integration social enterprise

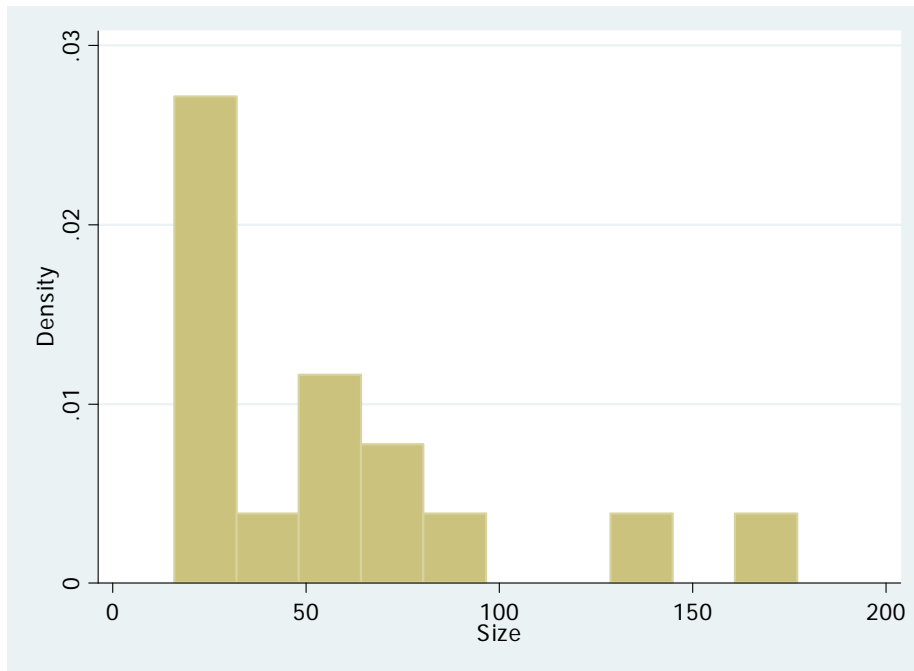
(WISE), whereas in social enterprises focused on providing social service, they usually do not specify their target group. However, when target group is not clarified, jobs are unintentionally allocated to people with higher productivity and capacity to work, that are not the disabled in many cases. Especially in Korea, there is a strong tendency of married women occupying in social service field as a secondary earner, because wages of social enterprise are not enough to meet the cost-of-living of a family in most cases (Kim 2007).

Now I vet twenty-six Korean social enterprises which their target group as the disabled. As I already mentioned, there are no exhaustive data about social enterprises yet. Therefore, I mainly collected relevant data from their websites and other secondary reports.

Table 6. Locations of disabled-centered social enterprises (n=26)

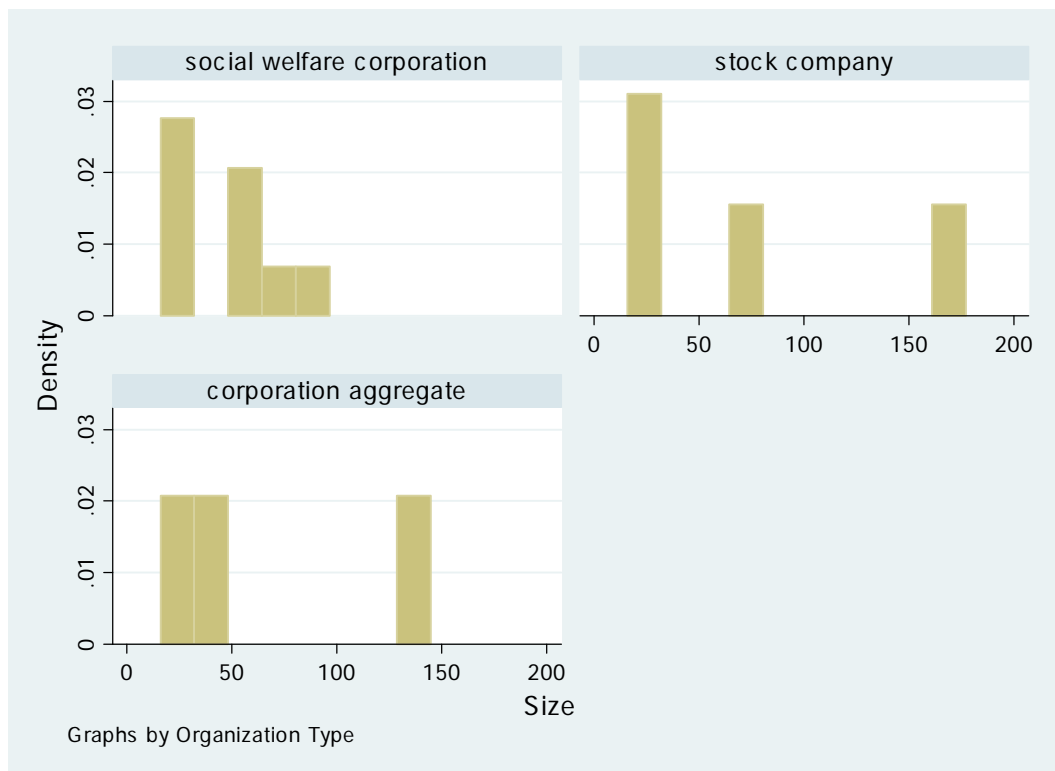
	Frequency	Percent
metropolitan area	13	50.00
city level	6	23.08
town level	7	26.92

Figure 1. Size of disabled-centered social enterprises (n=16)



Note: n=16, min=16, max=177, mean=57.19, std. deviation=45.56

Figure 2. Size of disabled-centered social enterprises by organizational type (n=16)



Location was classified into three groups; Metropolitan area was defined as Seoul and Kyunggi Province which surrounds Seoul, the capital of Korea. City-level indicated large city such as Daejun, Daegu, Inchon, Kwangju, Busan and Ulsan. Others were coded as town-level. Organizational size was measured by the number of employees. When official data was unavailable, I counted the personnel appeared in their websites. As table 6 clearly shows, disabled-centered social enterprises are located in or nearby Seoul which indicate high market accessibility. By figure 1, one can see that the graph of size is strongly skewed to the right. However, on average they hire about 57 persons and it is about 26.35% larger than other type of social enterprises (mean=45.26). Figure 2 implies the reason of skew. More than a half of disabled-centered places were founded as a social welfare corporation (57.7%) where usually pursue rehabilitation with small-scale. On the other hand, there are some large-scale stock companies and corporation aggregates. Although the difference in size between organization types is not statistically significant ($F(2,13)=0.413$), it may have derived from all type of organizations' sizes showing distribution skewed to the right as well.

Table 7. Industries of disabled-centered social enterprises (n=26)

	Frequency	Percent
technology-intensive	2	7.69
labor-intensive	17	65.38
service	7	26.92
Total	26	100.00

Now, what actually are the disabled-centered social enterprises do? As table 7 (above) indicates, the majority participate in labor-intensive industry. They make various products such as candles, disposable chopsticks, toothbrushes, but neither of them requires high level of skill nor technology. This is a kind of a double-edged sword; it is easy to learn and train, but difficult to survive under price competition in the market (KOWPAD 2006). Among twenty-six places, only two were classified as technology-intensive. One develops software and performs system integration (SI), and

the other makes sample products of the contractors. In seven social enterprises which provide social services, the disabled are rather the object of service (e.g. care service or housework aid for a people with disability). Services they provide are for the disabled, not by the disabled.

It is undeniable that the productivity of the disabled is difficult to match other “average” workers in the market (Graffam *et al* 2002; Samorodov 1996). For this reason, there have been public procurement policies to purchase products made by workers with disabilities. These programs resemble government contracting under the Javits-Wagner-O’Day Act in the United States (e.g. McCrudden 2004), but there are some differences. First, the demand force of the public area cannot fulfill the supply by the disabled. Second, the procurement program in Korea is not forced, but only recommended, so many public institutions do not observe the program. Third, their products are relatively squeezed out by the products of women or small-fry industries whose programs are forced to observe.

Under these circumstances, the state or the public area cannot be the only helper. Moreover, one of the main purposes of social enterprise is to let them achieve self support without exogenous aid. This makes it crucial to network with other organizations. It is essential for social enterprises to network with other for-profit firms and governmental organizations in order to mobilize key resources and maintain sustainable management. Financial support, human resources, and technology all flow within the network with other organizations.

In the case of Korean social enterprises, all of them are officially certified by the government. So they all have network with the state. Most of them have close relation with civil society or the third sector too because of their tradition as a social welfare corporation. What really important is the network with for-profit firms. Especially, postsecondary vocational education and training (VET) is vital for people with disabilities (Buys *et al* 2003). It is difficult to qualify what the labor market needs without help of those already participating in the market.

Table 8. Established network with for-profit firms (n=23)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
yes	12	46.15	52.17
no	11	42.31	42.83
Total	23	88.46	100.00
Missing*	3	11.54	
	26	100.00	

*: social enterprises which only provides social service without production

Table 8 shows whether social enterprises centered on people with disabilities have an established network with other for-profit firms. Among twenty-three places which produce any kind of products, more than half had direct networks with well-known large companies. For example, “We Can” which produces organic cookies has gained a priority to sell their products in Hyundai Department Stores (see figure 3). “Dongchun Cap” supplies their products to world-wide famous companies such as FUBU, Converse, and Head Sport. “Ever-green” also supplies their thermal papers to Korean Airlines and Lotte Group. The relation between social enterprise and for-profit firms are substantially different from former financial support by the companies. For-profit firms can fulfill their social responsibility as well as generate revenue (although somewhat less profitable). Simultaneously, social enterprises can generate revenue as well as become guaranteed a relatively reliable supply chain. This win-win strategy is gist of American social enterprise model (e.g. Ben & Jerry’s), and seems to be the ideal type which can satisfy all the government, firms, and the third sector (Lim et al 2007).

Figure 3. Cooperation model of "We Can"

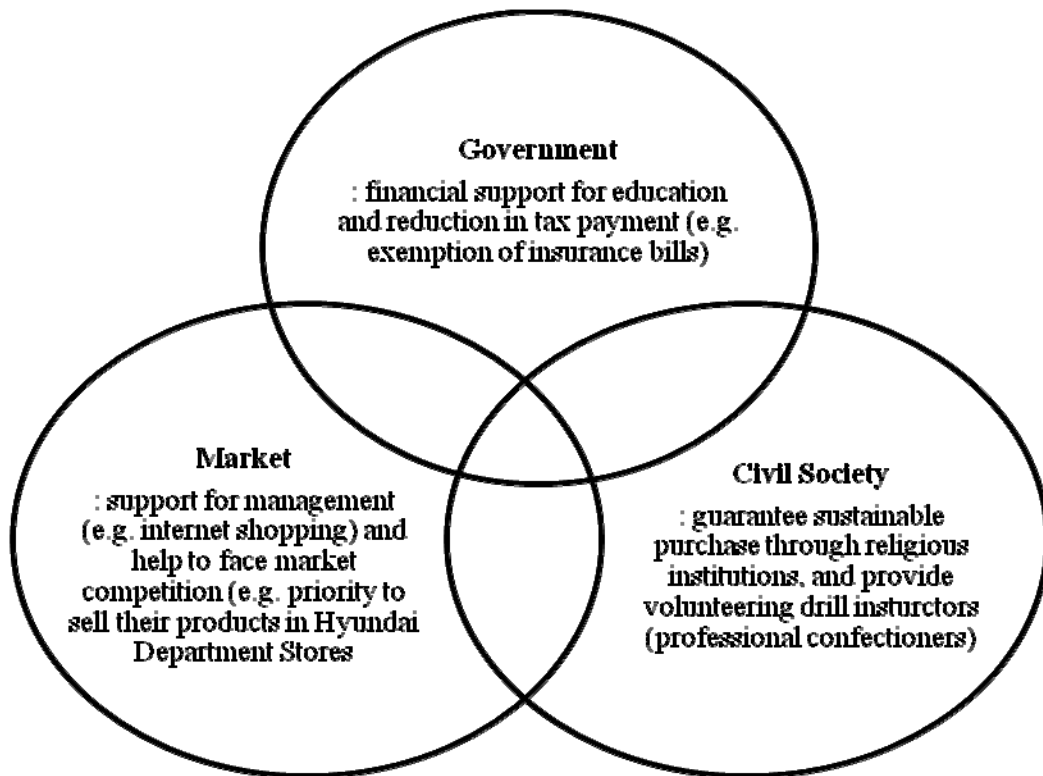


Table 9. Cross table between industry and existence of network with for-profit firm

	tech-intensive	labor-intensive	service	Total
network	2	8	3	13
no network	0	9	4	13
Total	2	17	7	26

In table 9, I classify disabled-centered social enterprises by industry and existence of established network with for-profit firms. It seems that industry has little relation with the possibility of having a network with for-profit firms, at least between labor-intensive and service industry. However, I distinguish one from another because the flow through network differs by industry. In labor intensive industry there is a two way flow. For example, social enterprise produces, and for-profit firms buy them as a contractor. On the other hand, in service industry, the resource only flows from firms to social enterprises. In this case, for-profit firms are nearly donators. It is also hard to suppose technology-intensive social enterprise without support from for-profit firms. Few social

enterprises can achieve such high level technology by themselves and fewer can afford all the sunk cost. However, the relation with other hi-tech companies enables social enterprise to accumulate relevant technology. It is difficult to achieve, but once achieved one can get higher salary as well as better job security.

V. Conclusion

Throughout this paper, I propose social enterprise as a new alternative for work integration for the disabled. At first, by showing prior disability employment policies and the legislation process of social enterprise in Korea, I argue the disadvantages and dangers of the disabled face in the labor market. Also, in the productivist welfare regime, they are forced to develop maneuvers to self support under market competition. The third sector, more specifically the disabled in this study, was excluded in the rise of social enterprise. But they actively adopted themselves and now possess in the social enterprise domain. I argue this transformation was enabled because prior existing disabled-related welfare organizations made a strategic decision to participate in an new employment policy, although it may not match with their class' or politic goal and mode. By analyzing twenty-six disabled-centered Korean social enterprises, I argue that they should network actively with other for-profit firms and governmental organizations in order to mitigate the market competition as well as develop vocational education and training program (VET) which is costly without the support of market participants.

Although there are still many problems social enterprise must solve, I believe that social enterprise can significantly help work integration for people with disabilities. With reciprocal support from the state, market, and civil society, and as some successful models diffuse, it will achieve both revenue generation and pursuit of social purpose earlier than policy makers expect. By this study, I hope Korea's experience to be a worthy guideline for other Asian countries to initiate social enterprises which stands for the disabled. However, there are several problems unsolved yet. Above all, it is crucial that social enterprise is qualitatively different organizations from prior self-support

group or social workplace. There may be a possibility that only the term has changed, while other things being the same. Second, we should find out disabled-centered social enterprises which have failed to achieve sustainable management. Such case studies as I propose in this study may undersampling the failure, thereby leading to vicarious learning (Denrell 2003). Third, it is true that each country's socio-political context affects how social policies emerge and activates (Gough 2001). However, in order to argue social enterprise as a new alternative for disability-employment, cross-national studies based on their institutional background should be performed. If such studies mentioned above are followed, it will be much beneficial in modeling an Asian disabled-centered social enterprise.

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