

## Reforming Public Entities in Korea: Reality and Some Evaluation Issues\*

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The recent environmental change led by globalization, localization and informatization has profoundly affected all aspects of society. Among the changes imposed upon the society, especially upon government, enhancing competitiveness or making public entities more competitive and, thus, productive is the major theme of reform. Despite several attempts to reform public entities (PE), it is not easy to find any previous administration that succeeded in actual reforms. That's why the Roh Administration employed a different approach to PE's reform, mainly focusing on institutionalizing the reform mechanism rather than solely targeting at restructuring PE's like merging or terminating the very existence of, say, those organizations in red. One major aspect of building the reform mechanism was to monitor and evaluate the performance of PE's. This is what this paper is interested in examining. As a major tool for PE reform, evaluation has been actively put in to use and expected to help both government and PE's manage the process of reforming public entities. With the use of evaluation, some critical problems, however, have been also put forward, which could affect the validity and reliability of evaluation results. Since 2007 the Ministry of Strategy and Finance (then, Ministry of Planning and Budget) made an active effort to completely revise the existing evaluation model. No doubt the new evaluation model would work better than the old model. But this paper adds that there are still some issues worth noting for enhancing the validity of the new evaluation model.

■ Key Words: public entities, reform, evaluation, monitoring

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## I. Environmental Change and Innovating PE's

National competitiveness has been the main theme of government, not to mention major pledges of political parties and candidates in national elections. President Roh, Muhyun was not an exception and took national innovation as the one and only goal of his administration. In his administration, innovation was, thus, considered the major policy measure for enhancing national competitiveness domestically and globally. In the process of planning and implementing national innovation, public sector reform was on the highest list of agendas. Among the wide spectrum of the public sector, public entity (PE)<sup>1)</sup> was one of the areas that high reform activities were sought, not to mention the government.

Key characteristics of reforming PE can be understood from a variety of perspectives, and many different policy tools were, in fact, utilized to approach the reform in a systematic way and to speed up the reform process. Among many different, but related, policy tools, evaluation has played a pivotal role in monitoring and steering the whole process. In so doing, government could sense that the PE reform proceeded the way they were designed. Likewise, public entities also could know what might be real or potential problems in reforming themselves and, more importantly, how to resolve them.

PE evaluation has a somewhat long history. Government has evaluated government-invested entities since 1984 and non-departmental entities since 2005. With the implementation of PE evaluation, some evaluation related issues have been raised. Most importantly, uncontrolled operation of PE has been the essence of critiques, though PE evaluation made certain contribution to

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1) Old classification of public entities, based on the Framework Act on Government-Invested Institutions, can be summarized as follows: state-owned enterprises, state invested enterprises, government-funded institutes, government-subsidized institutes, and government-commissioned institutes.

New classification, based on The Framework Act on Managing Public Entities of 2007, consists of market-type public enterprises, semi-market-type public enterprises, fund-managing semi-government agencies, commissioned semi-government agencies, other public entities.

improving efficiency of business operation. In 2004, the Framework Act on Managing Public Entities was enacted, and it contained fundamental changes in PE management by government like ownership, management and evaluation systems (Chotak, 2007).

PE evaluation was also changed in such aspects as resolving duplication of evaluations, enhancing reliability of evaluation results, and establishing a new organization solely in charge of PE evaluation. Most significant is changing evaluation indicators. Evaluation indicators have been at the center of critiques in terms of securing reliability and validity of PE evaluation. In this regard, selecting a set of reliable and relevant indicators can be the key to the success or failure of PE evaluation.

Under the circumstances, this paper intends to examine the changes in PE evaluation, that is, to see what changes were made by comparing the old evaluation model and newly suggested one. In this sense, this paper is in nature descriptive or fact-finding rather than intend to provide an explanation or a prediction based on hypothesis testing. To this end, this paper will first touch upon some background issues for PE evaluation like unique features of recent environmental change, the Roh Administration's blue print for innovation and need for PE evaluation. Secondly, some results of the Roh administration's reform efforts will be also presented. Thirdly, the so-called old PE evaluation model will be examined and some aspects of new evaluation model will be discussed. In so doing, this paper addresses the following questions: What are the major characteristics of the PE reform during the Roh administration? What are problems of the old model and how are they resolved in new evaluation model?

## 1. Characteristics of New Environment

The recent environment change led by so-called globalization, localization and informatization has profoundly affected all aspects of society. Among the changes imposed upon the society, especially on government, enhancing

competitiveness or making government more competitive and, thus, productive is the major theme of reform. As geographical borders separating nations tumbled down, the borderless society has rapidly turned the world into a heavily networked, interdependent community.

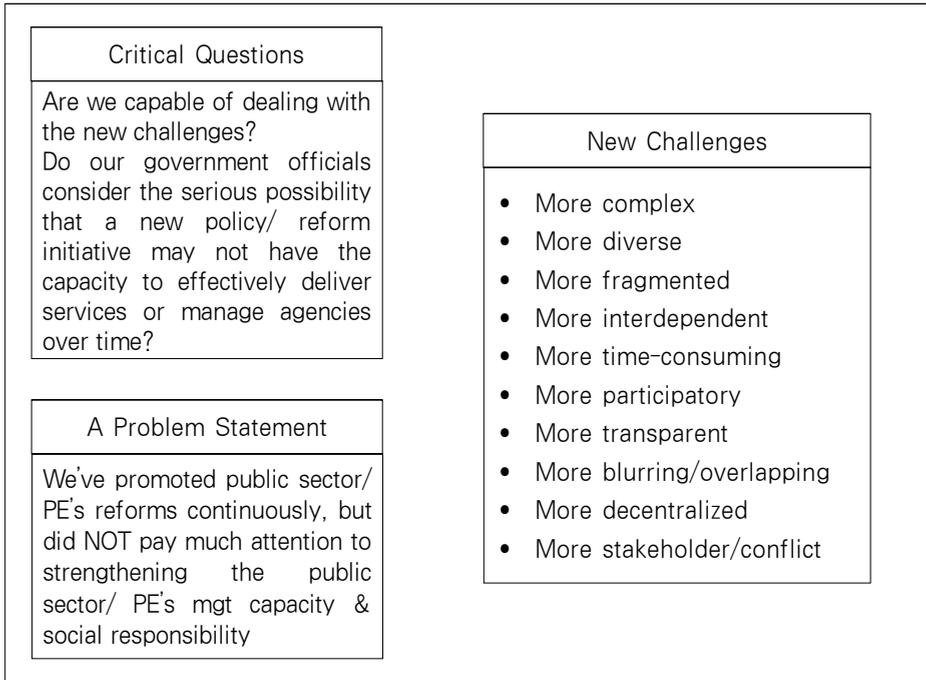
The previous Roh Administration keenly sensed such a change and tried to make the best of it, That is, putting forward innovation as the major strategy for improving Korea's competitiveness and, thus, the quality of life. Most importantly, reforming government and the public sector, of which a major icon is public entity, used to be the first step toward innovation led by government in Korea.

Perhaps, the implication of environmental change can be understood depending on what aspect of it we're looking at. As it is related to public entities, we, students of social sciences, may be interested in its implications. In this regard, many different challenges can be perceived. For example, policy issues gets more complex, and, thus, one policy option is not sufficient to resolve the problem. Likewise, policy makers are expected to analyze and understand different but related nature of policy problems rather than highlighting specific features. A set of challenges eventually leads us to a series of questions about government's or public capacity. For example, to what extent can we be sure our government deals with such challenges? More specifically, can our government handle the pressure of reforming the public sector, resulting in a successful restructuring of public enterprises?

Despite several attempts to reform public entities, it is not easy to find any previous administration that succeeded in actual reforms. When it comes to reforming public enterprises, failed reform efforts of previous administrations left a bad legacy. That's why the Roh Administration employed a different approach to PE's reform, mainly focusing on institutionalizing the reform mechanism rather than solely targeting at restructuring PE's like merging or terminating the very existence of, say, those in red. The latter is often led by external forces and faced a harsh and sometimes violent resistance from inside. One major aspect of building the reform mechanism is to monitor and evaluate

the performance of PE's. This is what this paper is interested in examining. Before getting to the point, some characteristics of changing environment is summarized as follows.

〈Figure 1〉 Characteristics of New Environment



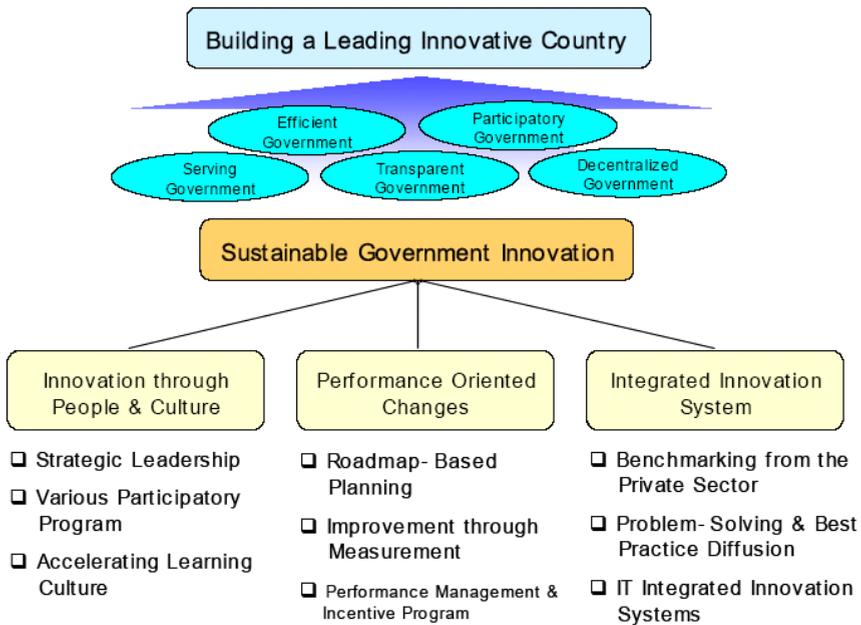
Note: the author substantially revised the table in Kim (2006: 7)

## 2. The Roh Administration's Blue Print for Innovation

The vision of the Rho Administration's innovation was to "build a leading innovative country" and make the Republic of Korea one of the top ten countries in terms of national competitiveness. As such, Korean government worked hard to become a transparent and productive government" as the initial steps toward becoming an advanced country of innovation (Yoon, 2006: 1). The Participatory Government, which was the slogan for the Roh Administration and began in 2003, recognized that a more fundamental and

sustainable innovation efforts were needed. Such sustained innovation strategies targeted innovation through people and culture, performance oriented change, and integrated approach.

〈Figure 2〉 Structure of Korea's Innovation Vision and Strategies



Source: Yoon, 2006: 3

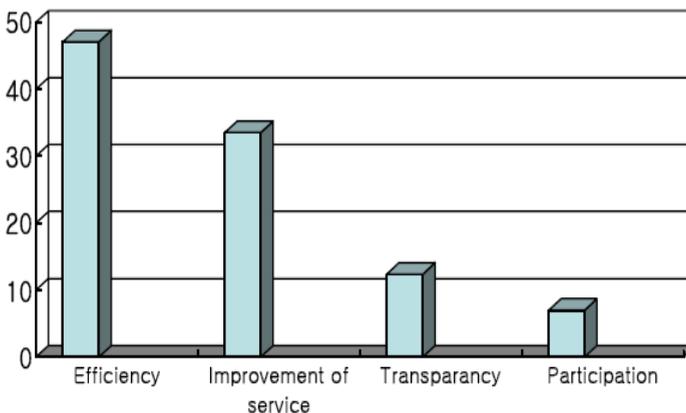
In short, the Roh Administration's innovation efforts evolved through three phases. The first phase was to make so-called roadmaps and establish infrastructures that outlined the vision and will for innovation and formulated a master plan, selected tasks for innovation, and laid down an infrastructure for innovation in 2003-2004. In 2005, the government focused on implementation and expansion of innovation initiatives, and it continued to internalize and systematize the benefits of innovation in government (see Yoon, 2006). Among the areas that saw the benefit of nation wide innovation efforts were public entities.

### 3. Policy Directions for PE Reform during the Roh Administration (2003–2007): Seen from a Survey

Reforms have one thing in common, that is, they are an endless effort to revise wrong doings, ineffective institutions or traditions. In this sense, reforming public entities also share the same purpose: i.e., a systematic effort to resolve a variety of problems facing PE's such as irrational processes of decision making, lack of efficient personnel management, decreasing the quality of services, to name a few.

To provide a sense of reality about what went on with reforming PE's, this paper presents a recent survey data from Park's study (2007) Park's study surveyed all PE's that are registered in ALIO (ALI public Information in One), but 125 PE's responded to the survey. The survey consists of three parts: the first part is on the PE itself, and the second is on the major features of each best practice, and the third is on the utilization of the benchmarking in the reform efforts. that expects to guide us along the major issues of PE reform and to help us imagine its current state. According to Park, the five major objectives of innovation under President Roh were efficiency, improvement of service, transparency, public participation and local empowerment. The survey results show how PE's saw the importance of innovation objectives. Efficiency

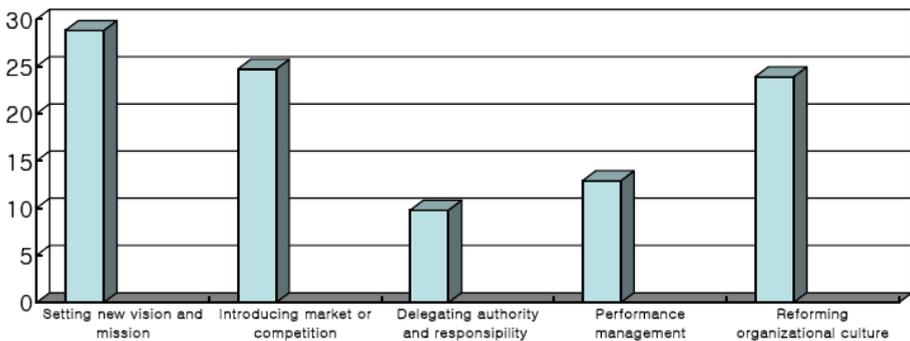
(Figure 3) Objective of Innovation



is followed by improvement of service. Transparency and public participation turns out to be less emphasized. It can be said that the efficiency is a more important goal for small PE's, whereas service improvement is perceived relatively more important for PE's with more than 5,000 employees. This result makes a sense because large PE's tend to have more service-related missions.

Secondly, among 5 reform strategies suggested by Osborne and Plastrick (2000), setting new visions and mission (28.2%), introducing market or competition (24.7%), and reforming organizational culture (23.9%) were three major answers, followed by delegating authority (9.8%) and performance management (12.9%). Introducing market or competition is also of interest. We can confirm this result in the following graph that only 14.3% of organizations that are in the most advanced reform level chose the new vision, while 42.9% chose the introducing market or competition.

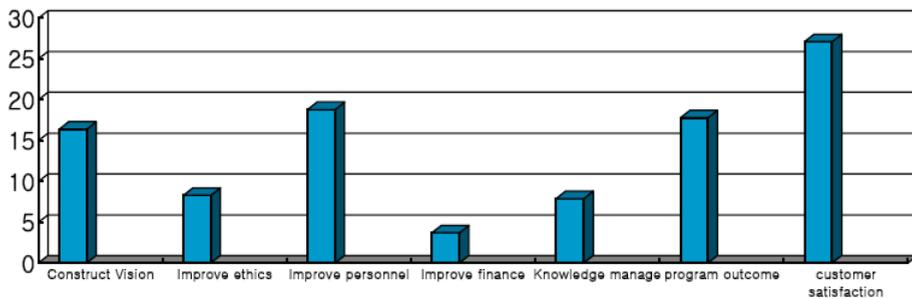
〈Figure 4〉 Strategy of Innovation



Thirdly, as for the area that needs reform, customer satisfaction ranked number one, followed by personnel management, program outcome and construct a new vision. Improving ethics, finance and knowledge management were not major concern of PE's. As shown in the innovation strategy, advanced organizations tend to focus less on the new visions and personnel management, but more on the program outcome and knowledge management. This implies that the internal preparation should be given a priority when

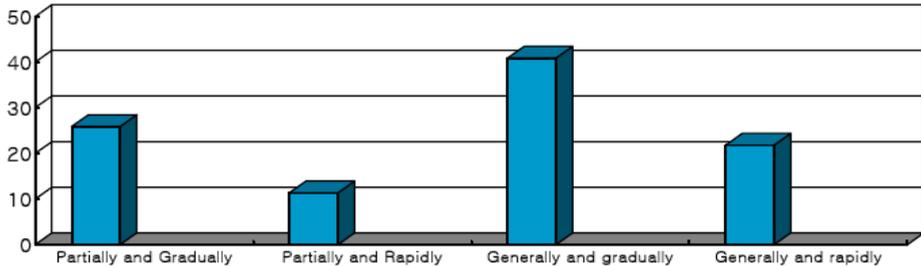
organizations are at the initial stage of innovation. As reform advances, the gravity, however, should be shifted toward more on the external innovation such as service or program outcome. Knowledge management seems to be a luxury good that appeals to only the advanced PE, though it is part of the internal reform(Park, 2007: 7).

〈Figure 5〉 Innovation Areas



Finally, among four approaches of reform, ‘overall and gradual’ was the number one (40.9%) followed by ‘partial and gradual’ (25.9%) and ‘overall and rapid’ (21.8%). The partial and rapid approach was not a popular option (11.4%). The partial and gradual, a most conservative approach, started with 37.1% in the year of 2003 and turns out to be 16.5% in 2007. On the contrary, the revolutionary method, an overall and rapid approach, recorded only 15.7% in 2003 but reached up to 26.8% in 2006. As the innovation level proceeds, the most conservative approach becomes less important, whereas the revolutionary approach emerges as a major option. The ratio between the most conservative and the revolutionary approach was 38.7% vs 6.5% for PE’s at the first level of innovation but 0% vs 57.1% for PE’s at the sixth level. This may imply that PE’s need to adopt a revolutionary approach to make a good innovation performance as they advance to higher level of innovation.

〈Figure 6〉 Reform Strategy



## II. Results of Reforming PE's in the Roh Administration during 2003-2007

### 1. Institutional Changes

First, establishing institutional mechanisms (or measures) were made for sustainable innovation. Most importantly, several-interrelated but focusing on different purposes-evaluations were introduced and executed. For example, scope of business performance evaluation was expanded including non-departmental enterprises. In addition, different types of evaluation like evaluation of innovation level, customer satisfaction and anti-corruption were newly implemented.

Secondly, the Framework Act on Managing Public Entities of 2007 was enacted. This law in large measure focuses on improving the ownership structure of public entities by strengthening inspection/evaluation and management of public entities. Further, the public information provision system called ALIO was established, resulting in dramatically reducing the cost for monitoring public entities.

Thirdly, changing organizational culture of PE's was pursued in a form of an innovation movement. That is, government attempted to improve business/working processes through changing organizational culture and the mind-set of

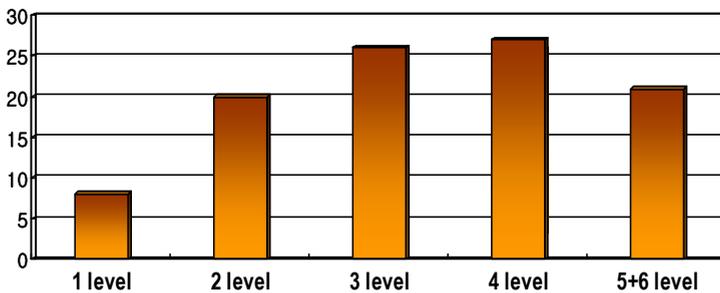
employees of PE's in order to increase business efficiency and customer's satisfaction. Among noteworthy attempts is providing learning opportunities by preparing a doable manual for each organization/agency. Likewise, developing the management system based on quantifiable measures (or data) and by introducing a variety of performance evaluation was introduced.

## 2. Some Performance

Previous administration's effort to reform PE's also has some outputs, some of which may be called performance in a general sense. The following is just an example of them, implying that the reform effort of the Roh Administration did not result in nothing.

First, the innovation level of each firm increases each year. In 2003, the ratio between PE's at the 1st level and those at the 5th and 6th level is 38.6 % and 5.49%. In 2007, the same ratio shows 5.8% and 37.7% respectively (for more detail, see Park, 2007).

〈Figure 7〉 PE's at Different Innovation Levels



Secondly, one of outcome-related indicators is customer's satisfaction (the following data in tables are cited from Kim, 2007). The ultimate goal of reforming or innovating PE's is to enhance its competitiveness and to improve the delivery of high quality service. Consequently, this is expected to level up

the customer's satisfaction, though customers can vary depending on types of PE's. As <Table 1> shows, the overall customer's satisfaction with PE's has increased more than the average nationwide. Although it is not clear or analytically proven that such an increase of satisfaction is indeed influenced by PE's reform, it is somewhat plausible to make a conjecture that way.

<Table 1> Increasing Customer Satisfaction

Types/year	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Nationwide	60	63.5	64.8	66.9	68.1	69.9	70.6	71.3
Public Entities	59.0	62.7	66.3	72.3	76.2	74.1	80.6	83.6

Thirdly, according to <Table 2>, PE's efficiency shows a dismal change over the time, which is almost status quo. Rather, the estimated efficiency of 2006 is lower than that of 2002. This raises a critical question about the effect of reform efforts during the Rho Administration. To this end, further studies are needed to examine the reasons for the lower level of efficiency despite a variety of policy measures.

<Table 2> Overall Tendency for Improving Efficiency & Productivity

Category \ Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Efficiency	27.2%	27.1%	24.2%	25.8%	25.0%
Productivity	366	378	435	450	486
Publicness	-	-	40,362	45,849	48,985

Note: Efficiency: operating budget/(program budget+personnel budget+ operating budget)  
 Productivity: program budget/number of employees  
 Publicness: (program budget \* CS)/number of employees

Fourth, an interesting question is whether innovation is associated with performance. A plausible hypothesis is the two variables are associated in such a way that the higher innovation, the higher performance. As <Table 3>

indicates, as the level of innovation goes up to the highest, the indicators measuring performance also show better results. This indirectly means that government keeps using innovation as a major policy tool for improving PE's performance.

<Table 3> Level of Innovation and Performance

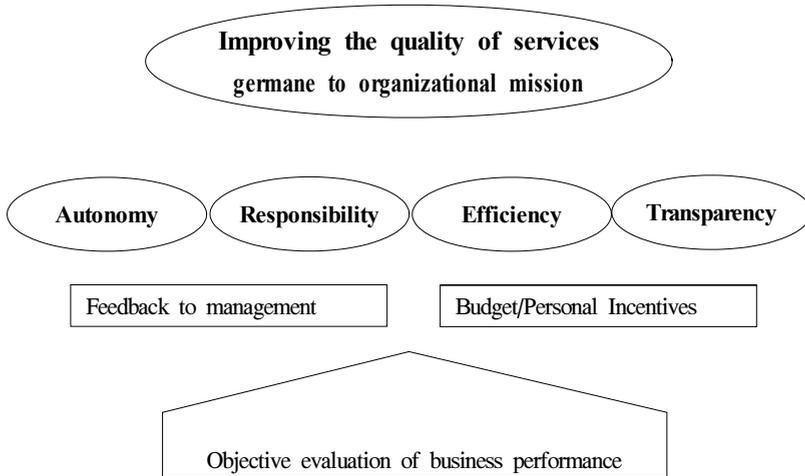
Performance Level	Business performance evaluation	Customer satisfaction	Efficiency	Productivity	Publicness
Beginning(1-2)	63.6	72.7	3.9%	419	44,213
Take-off(3-4)	70.9	77.0	14.4%	569	57,927

### III. Evaluating PE's: A Mechanism for Monitoring PE's Activities and Performance

#### 1. The Purpose of PE Evaluation

Public enterprises have faced several problems or pressures from outside. Achieving organizational goals, establishing a system of responsible management, enhancing efficiency of business operation, and keeping a balance between publicness and profit making are critical of them. As a way of tackling those problems, evaluation of business performance has been utilized. Most importantly, government wants to improve the quality of services from public enterprises, which is expected to affect general public's satisfaction. The key concepts of PE evaluation can be summarized in <Figure 8>.

〈Figure 8〉 The Purpose of PE Evaluation



## 2. An Overview of the Old Evaluation Model: 2004 - 2007

The way and method of PE evaluation has been so far implemented will be changed starting 2008. Since the launching of PE evaluation, several issues have been forwarded, asking for revision of the evaluation system. Government, more specifically the Ministry of Strategy and Finance, has examined and studied a list of critical problems of the current evaluation and finally offered a new evaluation system in late 2007. Based on the new evaluation system or model, PE's were asked to revise evaluation indicators of their own agencies for the evaluation that will proceed in 2009.

The current evaluation model (hereafter, called the old evaluation model) covers such agencies as state-owned enterprises, state invested enterprises, government-funded institutes, government-subsidized institutes, and government-commissioned institutes. The area of evaluation ranges from innovation, business performance, anti-corruption and others. It can be summarized as follows:

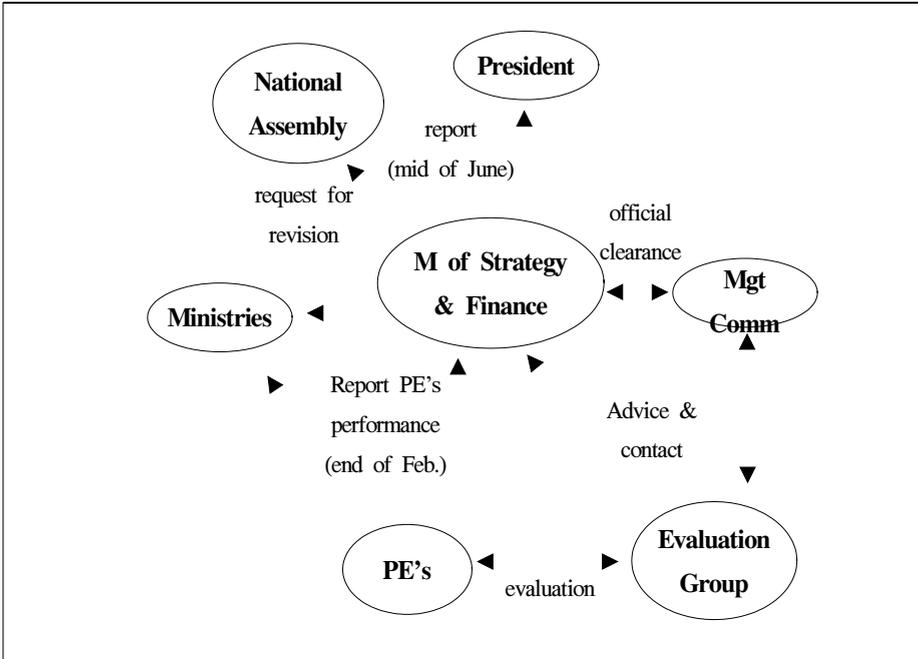
**<Table 4>The Types and Components of PE Evaluation**

Category	Content	Indicators
Strategies	organizational efforts to innovate to meet environmental changes	business innovation, enhancing the responsibility of board of directors, customer satisfaction, etc
Major programs	Performance of programs	specific indicators for 2-4 major programs
Mgt	overall management aspects	organization, personnel, finance, labor relation, etc

As for implementing organizations, separate evaluation organizations were employed for each type of evaluation (e.g., an independent evaluation organization for evaluating business performance of non-departmental entities however, a common evaluation organization was utilized for evaluating the state of innovation irrespective different types of evaluation. In doing evaluation, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was used. That is, categorization of best and worst cases, or sorting out the ranks of enterprises was mainly based on the evaluation results, adding up scores of both qualitative and quantitative indicators.

Among the different types of evaluation against PE's, business performance evaluation is the core. Business performance evaluation of PE's was initiated as a way of enhancing PE's responsibility, efficiency and transparency in order to improve customer's satisfaction by improving the quality of service. It is based on the article 48 of the Framework Act on Managing Public Enterprise, and consists of systematic categorization of several indicators. The business performance evaluation covers 24 public enterprises and 77 semi-government agencies as the target agencies of evaluation. The evaluation begins around March and ends by June of every year. The organization in charge of the evaluation (i.e., the Ministry of Strategy and Finance) is responsible for reporting the result of PE's business performance evaluation to both National Assembly and President by 20th of June (see <Figure 9>).

〈Figure 9〉 Organizational Systems

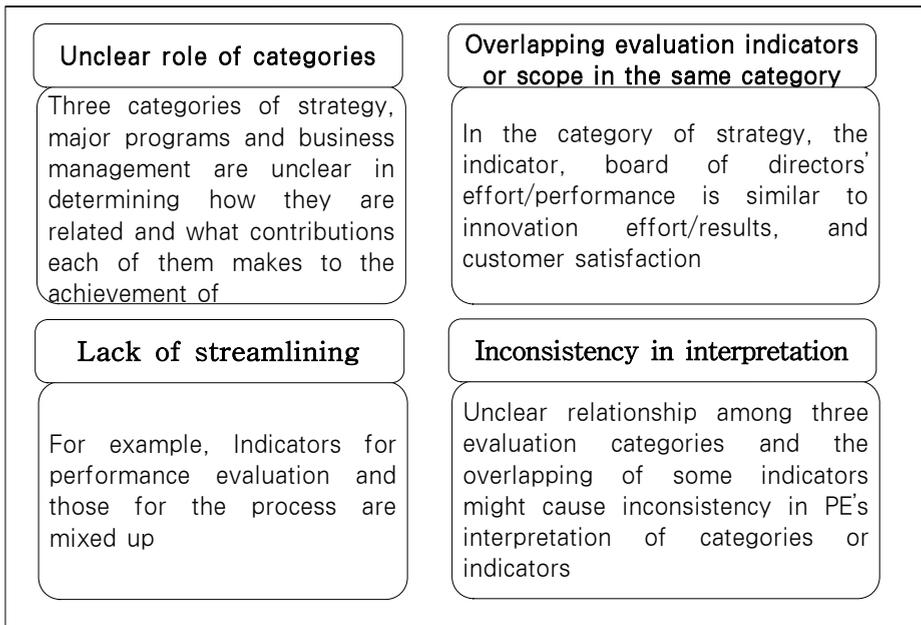


As mentioned earlier, the old model has been criticized for several reasons. For example, it's been criticized because it's overall framework is not well laid out. In particular, lack of connection between the mission of a firm, the nature of programs and strategies was a frequently mentioned problem together with lack of considering the unique characteristics of a firm. Likewise, there seems to be some problems with evaluation methods (e.g., objectivity and independence of qualitative evaluation, etc). As a related issue, evaluation weight on indicators was hard to justify why the current weight is given to indicators as it is. In addition, organizing and managing the evaluation group and the use of evaluation results are also on the list of thorny issues. Among the problems, the system of evaluation indicators is most sensitive methodologically. In fact, the result of a public enterprise's evaluation can in a large measure depend on what the indicators are.

As for the evaluation indicators, problems that are generally mentioned are as follows: paying little attention to the importance of strategies, lack of logical

connection between evaluation categories, lack of connection between quantitative and qualitative indicators, lack of causal analysis between programs and their output or outcome and insufficient consideration of learning. <Figure 10> summarizes major problems of the old model.

<Figure 10> Problems of the Old Model



### 3. A Glimpse at the New Model: 2008 and beyond

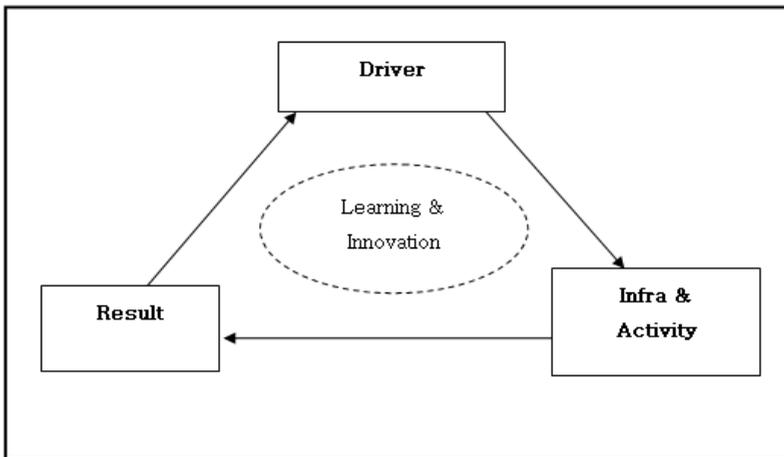
The Ministry of Strategy and Finance set the direction for revising the old evaluation model in such ways as linking the evaluation to real output of business operation; improving the management efficiency of evaluation; enhancing the objectivity of evaluation; and securing more responsibility by establishing a standing organization in charge of reviewing the result of evaluation, doing research on issues related to evaluation.

As a result, we can find some changes in the new evaluation model that was developed in accordance with the general direction. Some of them are worth noting. For example, major changes are (1) improving the area/target and

indicators of evaluation, (2) reclassifying categories of evaluation and securing causality of indicators, (3) separating business activities from (and) output/performance, (4) clarifying the guideline for evaluation indicators (e.g., meaning and how to apply etc), (5) incorporating unique features of PE's into developing evaluation indicators, and (6) strengthening the connection between planning-action-performance (for a detailed discussion, see KMAC, 2007).

One of interesting aspects of the new model is its emphasis on a theoretical scheme. In fact, one of weaknesses associated with the old model is the lack of causal relations between evaluation categories, not to mention among indicators. The new model attempts to put its base on a theoretical ground like the logic of the Malcolm Baldrige model or implications of some evaluation-related theoretical schemes like Singapore and European Foundation for Quality Management etc. The Malcolm Baldrige model aims for a systematic management and business excellence. It attempts to enhance the capacity of organizational survival by providing customers and stakeholders with valuable information, improve the overall performance and the capability of organizations, and strengthen organizational and individual learning (For more details, see Chotak, 2007). The basic theoretical scheme is shown in <Figure 11>.

<Figure 11> The Theoretical Scheme of the New Model

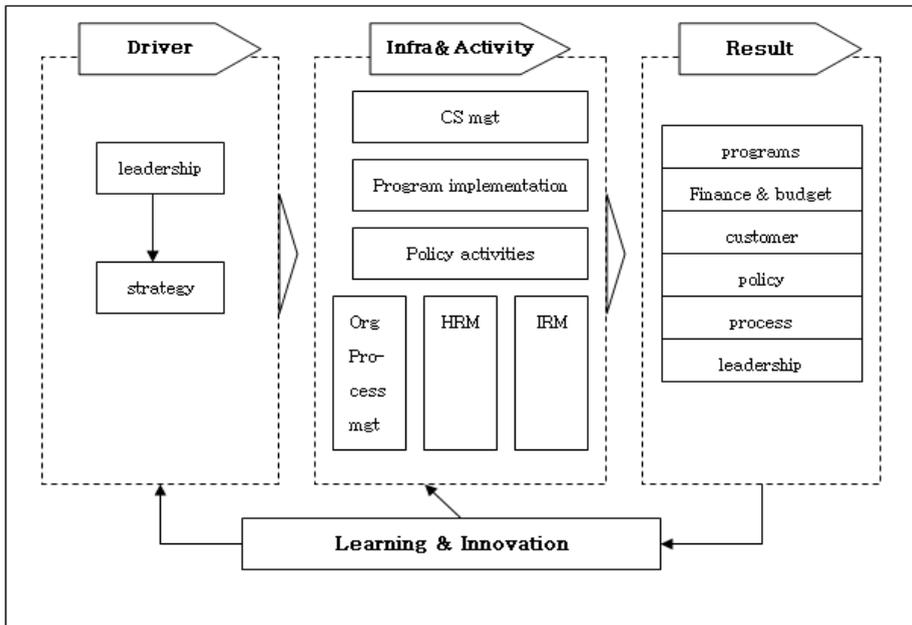


Note: 'Driver' means vision, goals, objectives d/r strategies 'Infra & Activity' means business activities + efficient use of resources and 'Result' implies

for program-related result, financial results + other results reflecting unique features of PE's and business management/operation (see KMAC, 2007: 38)

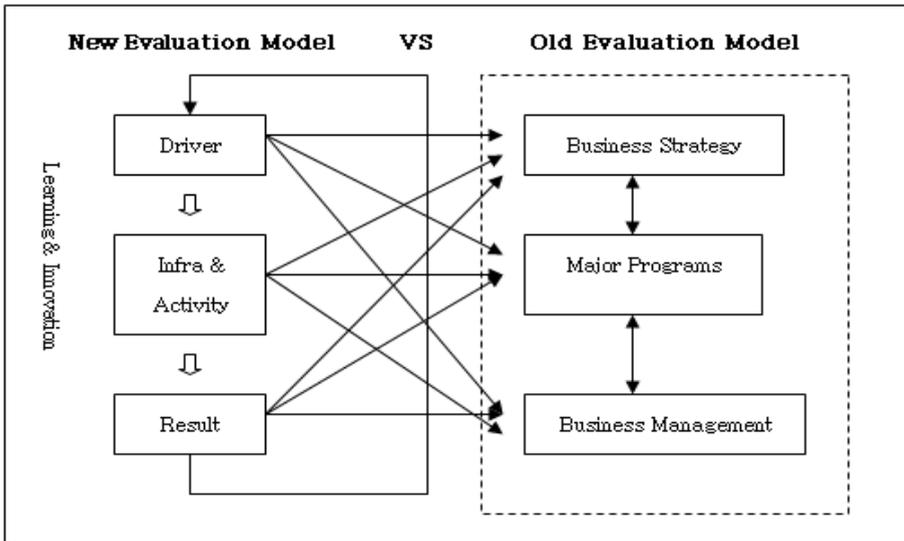
Most notable aspect of the new model is to structure the evaluation from a process perspective rather than a functional approach. The old model focuses on performance of each function like overall management, major programs and organizational management. This functional approach could not be of help to the general public in understanding the meaning of both the functional performance and the overall performance of a firm. Therefore, as a way of resolving the problem, the indicators of the new model were rearranged into leadership and strategy - management systems - business performance from the perspective of planning - implementation - performance. The overall framework of the new model can be presented in <Figure 12>. Further, <Figure 12> also shows the fundamental difference between the two models.

<Figure 12> An Overall Framework for New Evaluation Model



Note: the author simplified the figure in KMAC, 2007: 52

〈 Figure 13〉 A Comparison between the Old and New Model



Note: the author substantially revised the figure in KMAC, 2007: 39

#### IV. Conclusion

Reforming PEs used to be at the center of the public sector reform, not to mention reforming government. Since previous administration, a variety of governmental efforts have been made to reform PE's. This paper briefly examined the nuts and bolts of the Roh Administration's policy direction for innovation and more specifically the blue print for reforming PE's. From the survey data, we can realize that a firm needs to approach innovation or reform step by step. Such steps are the systematic grouping of factors that can determine the success of reform. First step is properly setting an objective, strategies, orientation, and the area of reform. The extent to which such factors are set depends on the level of reform or innovation. The second step is to choose the right initiator, driver and plan-drafter. Though an initiator and a driver may vary depending on the level of a specific public enterprise's reform level, a well acceptable plan needs be made by cooperation between insiders

and outsiders (Park, 2007). Most importantly, support for the reform is a crucial success factor, which asks for guaranteeing a long-term tenure for those in charge of operating and managing PE's (e.g., CEOs).

On the other hand, among many different policy measures for reform, this paper focuses on the evaluation system of public entities. As a major tool for PE reform, evaluation has been actively put in to use and expected to help both government and PE's manage the process of reforming public enterprises. With the use of evaluation, some critical problems have been also put forward, which could affect the validity and reliability of evaluation results. Since 2007 the Ministry of Strategy and Finance (then, Ministry of Planning and Budget) made an active effort to completely revise the existing evaluation model.

No doubt the new evaluation model would expect to work better than the old model. There are, however, some issues worth noting for the new evaluation model. For example, we need to wait and see whether the new model will produce the evaluation result as they are expected. The new model will be used starting 2009. After a few trials of evaluation with the new model, we may have some solid evidence for judging its utility. In the meanwhile, a simulation for the new model tells us some issues for consideration. For example, enhancing the logical connection between categories and indicators are needed, though some improvement is already made. Further, we need to see if reality meets the model, we can secure empirical supports for it (for more detail on empirical validity of evaluation, see Oh, 2007).

In addition, there seems to be lack of clear-cut criteria for quantifiable results of programs in the public sector.

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**오철호(吳徹虎)**: 미국일리노이대학교(University of Illinois-Urbana)에서 정책학박사학위(1992)를 취득하였으며 미국알칸소주립대학교 행정학교수 겸 Delta 연구소 소장을 거쳐 현재 숭실대학교 행정학부 교수로 재직중이다. 국가정보화평가위원회 위원, 지역정보화학회 회장 및 한국정책분석평가학회 회장을 역임하였으며 현재 정보화추진위원회 실무위원 및 공공기관경영평가단 간사로 활동 중이다. 주요관심분야는 정책정보론, 정책이론, 방법론 및 정보화평가 등이다. 주요 연구로는 "Rationality and Use of Information in Policy Decisions"(2000, Policy Studies Review), "ICT and New University: A View on eLearning"(2002, The Annals of American Academy of Political and Social Science), "Toward Participatory and Transparent Governance"(2005, Public Administration Review, coauthored), "A Critical Review on Measuring Knowledge Utilization"(2007) "정책연구 어떻게 할 것인가"(2007), <정보사회의 이론과 실제>(공저, 2004) 등이 있다(coh@ssu.ac.kr)