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Welfare Reform and Future Challenges in the Republic of Korea

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Item Type	Preprint
Authors	Kwon, Huck-jo
Publisher	UNRISD
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Download date	2026-06-12 04:53:11
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/179618

**Welfare reform and future challenges
in the Republic of Korea:
Beyond the developmental welfare state?**

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This is an electronic version of an article published in
International Social Security Review, Vol.55, No.4, 2002, pp.23-38.
<http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/journals/issr/>

Abstract

Since the economic crisis of 1997-98, the Republic of Korea has carried out vigorous social policy initiatives including the reform of National Pension Programme and the National Health Insurance. This paper seeks to answer whether the Korean welfare state has moved beyond the welfare developmentalism by examining the cases of those two programmes. By the reform, the coverage of the National Pension Programme was extended to all population; its financial sustainability and accountability were enhanced. Regarding National Health Insurance, efficiency reform was taken in the management structure, while the reform regarding the financing was on hold. These reforms were in clear contrast to the welfare developmentalism that used to place overwhelming emphasis on economic considerations. Despite these reforms, however, the Republic of Korea's welfare state faces the issues of ineffectual implementation and lack of financial sustainability of social policy. The National Pension Programme has failed to cover the majority of irregular workers, whose numbers are on the increase, and National Health Insurance needs to find a way to meet increasing health expenditure.

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The economic crisis of 1997-98 has made a profound impact on society in the Republic of Korea (hereafter, “Korea”). The country that had been used to full employment has been faced with high unemployment. The official unemployment rate reached 8.6 per cent in February 1999, the highest point since the 1980s. At the end of 2001, it came down to 3.2 per cent, but people can no longer be complacent about their jobs. Many new graduates who used to be able to choose one of the best job offers experience a great deal of difficulty in finding their first jobs, while older employees are under pressure to leave the workplaces where they took it for granted that their jobs would be life-long (Kwon, 2001a: 220-222). This is partly because of the labour market reform in 1998 that allowed the firms to lay off their work-force easily if necessary; and partly because of continual structural reforms since the crisis, which saw many firms to go out of business. Perhaps this story sounds familiar to readers in many OECD countries that had carried out structural reforms throughout the 1980s and the 1990s, but the social challenge imposed by such reforms was tough one for Korea since it had only a rudimentary welfare state.

Four years on after the crisis, however, Korean economy has now recovered well compared not only with the countries hit by the Asian economic crisis but also with other East Asian countries like Japan, Taiwan (China) and Singapore. The recovery stemmed not only from economic reforms affecting the labour market, corporate governance and the financial market, but also from active social policy initiatives that aimed to provide social protection to those who had lost their job or fallen into poverty during the economic restructuring.

The Korean government vigorously implemented social policy initiatives that aimed to establish so-called the “Productive Welfare State” (Chung, 2001; Gilbert, 2001; Kuhnle 2001). The Kim Dae-jung government, elected at the end of 1997 during the economic crisis, extended the Employment Insurance Programme swiftly during 1998, and also overhauled the Public Assistance Programme, which is now renamed the Minimum Living Standard Guarantee. This programme is designed to recognize the social right to a decent standard of living for every citizen. The Korean government also reformed the National Pension Programme and National Health Insurance, the main contours of the Korean welfare state.

Do these reforms suggest that the Korean welfare state has moved beyond the welfare developmentalism? This paper seeks to answer this question with reference to the cases of the National Pension Programme and National Health Insurance reforms since 1997. Before we proceed to the analysis of those programmes, it is necessary to

trace the change in the paradigm of social policy.

Welfare developmentalism and productive welfare

In a previous study (1999), I argued that in the history of the contemporary Korean welfare state, economic development was the overwhelming concern, taking priority over social protection. For instance, Industrial Accident Insurance was chosen as the first social welfare programme by the government in 1961, since it could provide social protection for industrial workers and reduce employers' financial uncertainty in the wake of industrialisation. Industrial Accident Insurance did not impose a great financial burden on the government, because the government simply introduced insurance as a mechanism which would pool the risks of employers that were already liable for industrial accidents. In the case of National Health Insurance and the National Pension Programme, industrial workers employed in big business were the first group of people to be protected, while more vulnerable people were left unprotected. It is also important to note that all these programmes were based on the arrangement of social insurance, in which the government did not take responsibility for financing. The government enforced the rules that made those programme compulsory. I have called this role of the State in financing welfare programmes that of a "regulator" (Kwon, 1998: 66-67).

The legitimization of authoritarian political power also explains the characteristics of the Korean welfare state. It shows why programmes like Industrial Accident Insurance, the Public Assistance Programme and the National Pension Programme were introduced at certain points in time. The first two programmes were implemented from 1964 and 1965 respectively, following the promise of military-general-turned-president Park after *coup d'état* in 1961. In the case of the National Pension Programme, the president first examined its feasibility in 1972, just after the so-called "Yushin reform", which effectively granted him a lifetime presidency. Of course, social welfare initiatives were neither the sole measure nor the most salient tactics for legitimisation. For instance, President Park's main strategy of legitimation was to justify the authoritarian regime through economic development. Nevertheless, social policy played its parts in his legitimization strategy. These characteristics can be well captured by the notion of the developmental welfare state, where elite policy makers set economic growth as the fundamental goal, pursue a coherent strategy to achieve it and use social policy as an instrument for attaining that goal (Gough, 2001). Such characteristics of the welfare state, to be sure, are not confined to Korea: one can find similarities in Japan and Taiwan to say the least. Holliday (2000) goes further, arguing

that Northeast Asia comprises a fourth welfare regime of “productivist” welfare capitalism in relation to the much-discussed three welfare regimes of Esping-Andersen’s.¹ Although it is a matter of debate to justify a fourth regime type, Holliday is certainly right in emphasizing that the developmental state always placed policy priority on economic development and that social policy was only considered in that context.

Welfare developmentalism, while it contributed to the incremental but steady development of the welfare state in Korea, has some downsides. We may note three important drawbacks among such legacies. First, redistribution took place in such a way that the lion’s share went to the high income earners, reflecting the fact that the wage earners in large-scale business and state sector employees were the first groups of people covered by the social policy programmes (Kwon 1997; 2001b). Second, social policymaking was confined only to a small number of top policy makers, leaving most citizens without a voice. This reflects the fact that social decisions were made under the authoritarian government. Even after the programmes were introduced, there were little effort to develop an institutional arrangement that would ensure accountability and transparency in the governance of those programmes. Third, the welfare state was organized mainly for the wage and salary earners and based on the implicit assumption that unemployment could be kept to a minimum. In this system, unemployed people had to rely on their savings or private help to make their living because the social safety net for them within the welfare system was nominal. This system proved unworkable at the time of massive unemployment.

President Kim Dea-jung, who was elected to the presidency at the end of 1997 during the economic crisis, extended the Employment Insurance Programme swiftly and implemented the public works projects to provide emergency help for those hit by the economic crisis.² Of course, the Korean government vigorously carried out structural reform programmes in a number of areas, ranging from government bureaucracy, corporate governance, and the financial market, to the labour market, which led to the high rise in unemployment (Ministry of Economy and Finance, 1998). President Kim convened the Employees-Employers-Government Committee, a tripartite body, to carry out the structural reform with a social consensus, which proved successful at the beginning.³ These social policy measures immediately after the economic crisis were mainly to deal with social issues arising from the structural reforms. In August 1999, however, President Kim launched a new policy initiative, called “productive welfare”, in his address on National Liberation Day. This new idea, influenced by the Blairite “third way” according to the president’s office, placed emphasis on welfare that could

be instrumental in the rise of economic productivity (Presidential Office, 1999). He claimed this approach to social policy was different from those of the past, since it recognises the social right to decent living for every citizen and acknowledges the State responsibility for delivering that goal.

The introduction of the Minimum Living Standard Guarantee (MLSG) in 2000 was one of the main agenda items of the productive welfare initiatives. It became clear during the economic crisis that there was a gap in income maintenance policy in Korea. The Public Assistance Programme introduced in 1961 (implemented from 1965) was based on the idea of poor relief, and provided cash or in-kind support to the poor as officially defined, depending on the recipients' situation. In 1997, people receiving benefits from the Public Assistance Programme were 3.1 per cent of the population (Ministry of Health and Welfare 2000a). The level of cash benefits was estimated at half of the official poverty line defined in absolute terms (Kwon 2001b), and it had a strict means test provision. The Public Assistance Programme also had a "demographic test", in which those aged between 18 and 65 were automatically disqualified from receiving cash benefits. They were regarded as having earning ability and not deserving income support. The MLSG was designed to change this approach to the policy to combat poverty.

First, it changed the concept of poverty from an absolute to a relative one. This means that those who were previously not qualified would now be entitled, since the poverty line rose significantly. It also means that the level of benefits would increase, because the MLSG would guarantee a living standard equal to the relative poverty line. Second, the MLSG abolished the "demographic test" and provided benefits to those aged between 18 and 65 if their income fell below the poverty line. There are, however, conditions that require these beneficiaries to participate in job training programmes, public works projects or community services. These are similar conditions to those welfare-to-work programmes. The Korean government implemented the MLSG from October 2000. Does the policy paradigm of productive welfare suggest that the welfare state has moved beyond the welfare developmentalism? In the following sections, we will seek to answer that question.

The reform of the National Pension Programme and National Health Insurance.

The National Pension Programme

The National Pension Programme was one of the first social security programmes that

the Kim Dae-jung government took on for reform. It was, however, on the reform agenda before the economic crisis of 1997-98. The previous Korean government published a discussion paper entitled *Institutional reform of the National Pension Programme*. The paper's main purpose was to invite contributions to a social debate on how the National Pension Programme should be reformed.

It acknowledged that without reform the programme would be faced with financial crisis. According to its projections, the fund for the programme would run out by the year 2033 (Committee for Social Security 1997: 33). In other words, either the National Pension Programme would not be able to deliver pensions as it had promised, or the Korean government would have to put money into the Pension Fund, unless the existing conditions were changed.

In my previous study (Kwon, 1999), I argued that the National Pension Programme promised internal return rate too high to deliver. This projection was based on the assumption that Korea's economic growth would be modest in the future compared with the past, such as the 1970s and 1980s, and that the National Pension Fund would be an average institutional investor in the money market. While my study used a simulation of participants' individual life cycles, another study by Moon (1995) conducted a macro-level simulation based on certain assumptions on macro-economic indicators in the future, notably the prediction that the Korean economy would have stable interest and inflation rates. Having applied a different methodology, Moon also concluded that the level of pensions was too high to sustain.

In contrast to these studies, some pressure groups such as the Citizens' Coalition for Participatory Democracy argued that inefficiency of management would cause a crisis in the financing of the National Pension Programme. The group pointed out that the Korean government had borrowed more than half of the National Pension Fund by 1996. It went on to argue that it was unconstitutional for the government to borrow capital from the National Pension Fund at a cheaper interest rate than that of the money market.⁴ However, this argument did not take into account risks involved in high-yielding investment. The National Pension Fund would have lost a great deal of investment during the economic crisis if it had put money into the money market. Nevertheless, we need to contemplate why such criticisms were raised about the National Pension Programme. It was largely due to the lack of accountability and transparency in operating the programme. Many past directors of the Corporation of the National Pension Programme, quasigovernmental agency responsible for operating the Programme, were political appointees, often without proven records in the field. With respect to the investment, the Minister of Finance and Economy made most decisions

on the basis of the Public Management Law without consulting the parties involved. The National Assembly was not able to hold the Minister effectively accountable since the governing party had an overall majority most of the time.⁵

The Kim Dae-jung government made three important policy decisions for reforming the programme. First, the level of pensions would be lowered so that the expenditure in the future would be smaller. Second, the programme was to cover the self-employees, farmers and urban informal sector workers, who were previously excluded. Lastly, a steering committee was set up to consult the ministers of Finance and Economy and of Health and Social Welfare on investment decisions. This committee includes policy experts, business and trade union representatives, and pressure group activists, as well as officials from the government. The new rules were implemented from December 1998.

Does this reform of the National Pension Programme suggest a change in the paradigm of social policy? It is difficult to answer the question in a conclusive manner, since the reform was carried out in the midst of the crisis, long before the government launched the initiative of “productive welfare”. Nevertheless, the reform tackled difficult issues, such as lowering internal return rate, extending the coverage and enhancing accountability. What was also significant in this reform was what was not included in it. The previous government wanted to part-privatize the National Pension Programme. According to this idea, the National Pension Programme would only retain the basic pension component, and the earning-related component would be privatized (Kim, Yon-myung, 2001). The Kim Dae-jung government rejected this idea and maintained the structure of the National Pension Programme. Despite the reform in 1998, financial sustainability is still in question as some provisional estimations had suggested (Kim, Won-sik, 2001). In a nutshell, the Korean government consolidated the National Pension Programme through the 1998 reform, but it did not follow the privatisation route that was advocated by many neoliberal experts.

National Health Insurance

National Health Insurance was introduced in Korea in 1977 and began to cover the whole population from 1988 in association with the Health Assistance Programme. In the year 2000, the fragmented health insurance funds were integrated into a National Health Insurance Fund, although the financial integration was postponed until 2003. Despite this relatively rapid development in public healthcare, National Health Insurance has been subject to intense political debate over the past 25 years.

At the beginning, National Health Insurance had the typical characteristics of a developmental welfare programme. It started with large-scale companies with more than 500 employees in 1977, and was extended to public sector workers and private school teachers in the following year. The role of the state in the financing of National Health Insurance was as a regulator, which means that the government only enforced the rules but did not provide funding. Thereafter, the National Health Insurance scheme rapidly expanded its coverage to salaried worker and wage earners employed in smaller companies. In contrast, those who had no recognized employers, such as farmers, self-employed and informal sector employees and unemployed workers, remained outside the scheme. This was partly because of the arrangement for contribution, under which the employers and employees each paid half of the contributions to National Health Insurance. (The average contribution rate was 1.9 per cent of wages in 1980 and 2.62 percent in 1999.)⁶ The above-mentioned groups did not have employers to pay their half of the contributions, and the government was not prepared to pay the equivalent share for them. There were also other reasons for this, as Mills (1985: 80) explained:

“Social Insurance schemes are concentrated in the industrial sector in developing countries not least because wages and profits are high enough for compulsory levies to be paid, and the structure of wage employment makes collection of the levies feasible.”

Table 1. Coverage of National Health Insurance 1977- 89 (% of total population)

	Industrial	Public	Occupational	Regional	Others	Total
1977	10.33	--	--	--	--	10.33
1978	10.34	10.15	--	--	--	20.49
1981	18.70	10.27	0.06	0.47	0.19	29.69
1984	28.75	10.11	2.02	0.97	0.53	42.38
1987	36.01	10.50	3.17	0.76	0.69	51.13
1988	38.76	9.67	2.58	16.15	0.64	67.8
1989	38.96	10.55	0.00	44.69	0.00	94.2

Note: Percentages comprise members and their families.

Source: National Health Insurance Agency (1990).

It was the 1988 presidential election that gave a rise to a change in the developmental characteristics of National Health Insurance. The election was held under the democratic constitution, and no candidate could ignore the grievance of people left outside National Health Insurance in a very competitive election. All candidates,

including Roh Tae-woo who eventually won the election, promised that National Health Insurance would cover all citizens. After this change, the State began to play the role of provider for the regional members in the financing of National Health Insurance, while it maintained the role of regulator with regard to various employees' insurance funds.

Even after National Health Insurance became universal, the health funds within it were managed separately in terms of collecting contributions and paying hospitals for treatment of their members. There were 409 health funds at its highest point, and their financial situations varied considerably. For example, the health fund for public employees and private school teachers was in a good shape since the levies were deducted directly through their salaries. In contrast, the regional health funds, which covered self-employed workers, informal sector workers, and older persons, had difficulties in collecting levies, which in turn made their financial situations precarious, despite the low spending of their members compared with other groups (see Table 2).

Table 2. The relative health expenditure of National Health Insurance by groups

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Public employees	100	100	100	100	100	100
Industrial workers	83.6	86.0	82.6	83.9	82.4	88.2
Regional members	86.4	86.7	83.8	86.4	77.6	82.6

Source: National Health Insurance Agency (2000).

After the 1988 general election for the National Assembly, the opposition parties passed a bill to unify all health funds into a national fund, taking advantage of the unusual situation in which the opposition parties had more seats in total than the governing party. A national health fund would have paved the way for financial transfers between different categories of people. Industrial workers and public employees made clear their strong objection to the merger of health funds, since they would lose out. In the end, this initiative was defeated by a presidential veto.

This situation was ended only in 2000 by the Kim Dae-jung government, elected in the middle of the economic crisis of 1997-98. The government decided to merge all health funds into a National Health Insurance Fund, which had long been Kim's policy while in opposition. A central agency, the National Health Insurance Corporation, was set up to manage the national fund and administer the insurance process. Despite the merger, three separate financial accounts for public employees, industrial workers and regional members have been maintained.

In short, National Health Insurance started with typical characteristics of welfare developmentalism, but it has evolved to become a universal programme with wider pooling of risk. The State has also taken more responsibility for financing. The Kim government played an important role in this process, but National Health Insurance is faced with many problems, as we shall see in the following section.

Future challenges for the welfare state

Since the economic crisis, Korea has witnessed a rapid expansion of the welfare system following a series of economic reforms. Such an active policy, however, led to a number of challenges which should be addressed in the near future. First, it is necessary to consolidate the welfare programmes that were expanded or introduced during the economic crisis. In particular, the Employment Insurance Programme was extended to cover almost the entirety of employees. It is so in theory, but does it really cover them all? The National Health Insurance scheme and the National Pension Programme are faced with similar challenges in enforcing programmes effectively. National Health Insurance became a universal programme in 1989 and the National Pension Programme was extended in 1999 to cover the entire working population except those in other statutory pension programmes such as the Public Employees' Pension Programme and the Private School Teachers' Pension Programme. Since these are insurance programmes, people need to pay contribution to be eligible for benefits. There are a number of citizens who have not been paying contributions for some time, and in consequence they are not actually entitled to benefits. Table 3 shows the proportion of people who are paying for social insurance among the employed population. It shows that most regular employees, who are by and large employed in large-scale firms, are paying contributions for their entitlements, but temporary workers, who are mostly employed medium- and small-scale firms, failed to do so. The quasigovernmental agency in charge of the management of the programme seems to find it difficult to enforce the rules for all categories of workers. Those who do not pay contributions to National Health Insurance as employees are likely to do so as residents. However, for the National Pension Programme and the Employment Insurance Programme, this possibility is remote. This strongly suggests that we are a long way off from the universal coverage of social insurance.

Table 3. Social insurance coverage by employment status in 2001 (%)

	National Pension Programme	National Health Insurance	Employment Insurance Programme
Wage and salary earners	51.8	54.3	46.9
Regular employees	92.7	94.8	80.0
Temporary employees	19.3	22.2	20.7

Wage and salary earners comprise both regular and temporary employees

Source: Kim, Yuson (2001).

Second, there is a growing concern about the sustainability of the programmes, especially National Health Insurance and the National Pension Programme. The finance of National Health Insurance fell into deficit partly because patients could now use health services all year round instead of up to a limit of 300 days previously. In addition, the government decision to increase fees for physicians and hospitals dealt the finance of National Health Insurance a severe blow during 2000. Medical doctors were on strike against the government policy to redefine the division of labour between physicians and pharmacists.⁷ Citizens, having to suffer a number of disruptions to the healthcare system, did not show strong support for the reform. It is also worth remembering that President Kim failed to win an overall majority in the parliamentary election in April 2000. His government had to make concessions to carry through the reform given its weakness in the National Assembly. It increased doctor and hospital fees by almost 60 per cent during 2000. In March 2001, the chief executive of National Health Insurance announced that it would be financially bankrupt in a month's time unless the government provided the extra funding (see Table 4). The government provided emergency funding, but the situation caused a national outcry about the Kim government's policy. It is an urgent task for the government, the National Health Insurance Corporation, medical professionals and ordinary citizens to find a sustainable formula for financing National Health Insurance.

With respect to the National Pension Programme, there is also a similar problem, though not as urgent as for National Health Insurance. The National Pension Programme has an unsustainable structure in which the internal return rate is set too high to deliver in an era of low economic growth, despite the reform of 1998. Kwon (1997) pointed out that this was strongly related to the developmental paradigm of social policy, which regarded the National Pension Programme as a measure of mobilizing capital rather than a public pension programme. Since the National Pension Programme requires at least 20 years contribution to provide eligibility for full pensions, it has only accumulated funds since its introduction. Once pensions are being paid out

from 2003, the fund will run out in 30 years' time unless there is a reform in the financing structure.

Table 4. The current accounts of health insurance funds (billion of won)

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Revenue	5,614	6,631	7,554	8,230	8,892	9,529	10,953 ¹
Expenditure	5,076	6,464	7,795	8,788	9,610	10,538	13,623 ¹
Current accounts	538	167	-241	-558	-718	-1,009	-3,971 ²
Reserve fund	4,120	4,002	3,785	3,036	2,243	919	-3,053 ²

¹ By November 2001; ² projection.

Source: Ministry of Health and Welfare (2000b); National Health Insurance Agency (2000).

Third, there is an equity issue in burden sharing for the welfare programmes. Since social insurance premiums are decided not by the risks involved but by a person's ability to pay, it is essential to have correct information about the income of the insured person. At the same time, however, in most societies, there is a tendency to underreporting income, particularly in the cases of self-employed workers. Korea is no exception, but the problem it is faced with is that the number of people and businesses that are waived from filing tax documents is exceptionally large owing to the antiquated tax system (see Table 5). Among those who pay taxes, only 43.3 per cent pay do so on the basis of bookkeeping. Because of this problem, it is believed that a great number of the high earning self-employed, and professionals such as practising lawyers and physicians, pay far less taxes and social insurance contributions than they should do, while wage and salary earners taxes and contributions are directly deducted from their pay cheque. As the country's social insurance programme have been extended and integrated, there has been growing unease among wage and salary earners about the inequity in burden sharing. This problem, however, needs to be tackled in terms of tax reform rather than that of the welfare system. Most Korean governments in the recent history, including the Kim Dae-jung government, have been reluctant to take up such a challenge, but it will cause great concerns and many problems in the future unless the necessary steps are taken.

Table 5. Tax returns of other than wage and salary earners (total tax payers) 1999

Total taxpayers	3,407,662	Taxpayers to file return	1,342,153
Those under tax threshold	2,047,371	Based on estimated income	748,762

Taxpayers due to file returns	1,360,291	Based on bookkeeping	593,391
Ratio of those filing	39.9 %	Ratio of those bookkeeping	43.3 %

Source: National Tax Service (2000).

Concluding remarks

Korea's social policy response should be of much interest for policymakers in the East Asian region and beyond. Confronted with the economic crisis of 1997-98, Korea adopted active social policy initiatives to overcome problems, and appears to have succeeded with these strategies in terms of social stability, cohesion and prospects for renewed economic development. In the process of social policy decision, Korea was able to create a broad-based social and political consensus across major political actors and organizations in the labour market, notably business, labour and the government. The Korean government wanted to develop the welfare state beyond meeting social policy requirements arising from the economic crisis. President Kim advocated the idea of productive welfare, which places emphasis not only on social policies that are instrumental in economic competitiveness but also on social rights for every citizen. This paper has sought to answer the question whether the Korean welfare state shook off the characteristics that are typical of welfare developmentalism through such social policy responses after the economic crisis.

It would, however, be difficult to answer such a question without reservation. The reforms of the National Pension Programme and National Health Insurance took place before President Kim explicitly launched his new initiative of productive welfare in 1999, but there were important changes, which tackled the problems arising in the period of welfare developmentalism. Those programmes became universal in the sense that the coverage was extended to all citizens and risk pooling became wider. New institutional arrangements were set up to enhance accountability in the governance of the social welfare programmes. Although I have analysed elsewhere (Kwon 2002), the reform of the public assistance programme is one of the clear examples that indicate that the welfare state in Korea has moved beyond the welfare developmentalism that subordinated social concern to economic consideration. At the same time, it is important to note that the basic structure of the welfare state remains almost same and that economic considerations such as enhancing competitiveness are still placed high on the government agenda.

There are also many challenges for the Korean welfare state to address in the near future. Although the coverage of the social programmes was extended, they have

not reached all the population targeted. It is also a big challenge for the Korean government, and citizens who have to pay for the social programmes in the end, to ensure the financial sustainability of the welfare state. Recently, the Korean government has increased duties on tobacco, an easy solution in the short-term, to provide extra funding to National Health Insurance. For the longer term, it has to decide whether it will reform the antiquated tax system. It will be a real test in the future.

Notes

¹ Esping-Andersen (1997) disagrees with the suggestion of a fourth welfare regime. Instead, he argues that Northeast Asian welfare systems are a hybrid of the conservative and liberal regimes.

² The Employment Insurance Programme was introduced in 1995 but it was applied to only small part of the working population working at the large-scale firms.

³ The Employees-Employers-Government Committee began to falter after the country came out from the emergency situation. There emerged a critical weakness in this tripartite committee after the initial success. The participants were often unable to get their house in order so as to carry out the reform measures, an essential requirement for honouring the compromise (Park 2000).

⁴ *News Plus*, 7 March 1996 (in Korean).

⁵ The overall majority of the governing party was often constructed artificially after the general elections, which had failed to produce such an outcome. In order to entice some opposition members to cross the floor, the government put them under pressure, threatening to reveal their wrongdoings.

⁶ “Wages” here means not actual take-home pay but the so-called Standard Monthly Wage, arranged in 35 bands.

⁷ For many years physicians have been allowed to sell medicines as well as to diagnose patients, while pharmacists have been allowed to sell medicines without prescriptions. The government wanted to correct this through the redefinition policy.

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