APPROACHES AND MEANS OF INNOVATION IN KOREAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the characteristics of innovation in Korean local government with a classification scheme highlighting the approaches and means taken in implementing innovation. The most frequently found approach is an outcome orientation through which specific tasks are carried out by making formal or informal plans. The next most common approach is reconceptualization or reinvention of roles whereby new uses are found for existing resources. In terms of the means used for innovation, creation of new programs is the most favored method, followed by promotional activities like advertising, public relations and education. Compared to findings from other studies, holism and empowerment are innovation characteristics more related to advanced countries than countries like Korea. Consistent with other similar studies, creation of a new program is the most commonly used means for innovation and crisis is rarely a motive or cause for innovation.

Keywords: Government innovation, characteristics of innovation, approaches and means of innovation, innovative program, Korea, local government.

INTRODUCTION

The dilemmas of innovation[1] confounding the public sector are more compelling for local governments, which have more limited authority and resources compared to central governments. For this reason, innovative efforts exerted by local governments should be evaluated in the context of the greater constraints they face. However, the perception that local governments are more inefficient and prone to corruption than central governments is still prevalent. This more negative view of local governments may be due less to their passive attitude to change than to the lack of information or knowledge of the innovation projects actually implemented by local governments. With a shortage of understanding of what and how innovations are implemented in local governments, their innovative efforts cannot be fairly evaluated.

Studies based on participants in innovation award programs provide some insight into successful local government innovation but they are predominantly done on advanced western

countries (Altshuler and Behn 1997; Barzelay 1992; Borins 1998, 2001a, 2001b; Golden 1990; Jenkins 1989; Kim 1999; Levin and Sanger 1994; Wheeler 1993). With the purpose of gaining a broader-based understanding of the nature of innovation in local government, this article examines various characteristics of innovative programs undertaken by local governments in Korea. In keeping abreast with world trends, the central government of Korea has been pursuing a major reform agenda covering almost all sectors of the government. Local governments also have been undertaking a variety of innovative programs in their struggle to change for the better, particularly since the establishment of the Local Autonomy System in the early 1990's.

In order to highlight the 'means' aspect of innovation, this article focuses on approaches and means taken to innovate local public services and relates them to other characteristics of innovative programs. This kind of empirical research could help clarify the meaning of innovation as perceived by local governments and the predominant approaches and means they take for its realization.

Cases utilized for data analysis are those presented in the Local Government Benchmarking Fair in Korea, through which most successful local government innovations were introduced. Following a discussion of the concept of innovation in the public sector and how characteristics of innovation were categorized in earlier studies, the analytical framework for this study is presented. The section on data analysis examines approaches and means of local governments' innovative programs in association with other general characteristics. Based on the findings from the analysis, the current state of Korean local government innovation is assessed and relevant policy implications are discussed in the concluding section.

THE CONCEPT OF INNOVATION

Innovation is defined in various ways depending on the disciplinary area or subject of study. Rogers defines innovation in general as "any idea perceived as new by a person or system" (1992, 7). Regarding innovation in the public sector different scholars emphasize different aspects. The time factor is emphasized by Bingham who accepts the definition of innovation as "the first or early use of an idea by one of a set of organizations with similar goals" (1976, 4). Altshuler and Zegans stress action by defining innovation as "novelty in action" (1990, 20). Innovation can be means or ends according to Downs Jr. and Mohr who define it as "adoption of means or ends that are new to the adopting unit" (1976, 701). Change is the key point in Moore, Sparrow and Spelman's definition of innovation, "any reasonably significant change in the way an organization operates, is administered or defines its basic mission," (1997, 276) and in Lynn's definition, "an original, disruptive and fundamental transformation of an organization's core

tasks" (1997, 96). Thus, innovation is a novel idea, action, means or ends that can bring about change. Novelty can be subjective or objective and change can be reasonably big or disruptive and fundamental.

In the practitioners' field, public managers' concepts of innovation are somewhat different from that of scholars. To public managers innovation is "a tool for improving agency performance," it is about means and not ends (Zegans 1997, 108-9). This definition is most appropriate for the purpose of this article since it is based on a selection of cases submitted by local government officials as their most innovative programs.

CLASSIFYING THE CHARACTERISTICS OF INNOVATION

If what constitutes the central concept of innovation varies among scholars and practitioners, characteristics of innovation are classified in even greater diversity (see, e.g., Downs, Jr. and Mohr 1976; Fennell 1984; Moore, Rogers 1995, p.15-16; Sparrow, and Spelman 1997) and often, in a rather obscure manner.

In analyzing cases of semifinalists in the Innovations in American Government Awards operated by the Ford Foundation and the Kennedy School of Government, Borins (1998, 20) classifies the 'characteristics' of innovation, based on local officials' descriptions, as the following:

Holistic	Use of volunteers
Technology	New management philosophy
Process Improvement	Attitude change
Empowerment	Groundwork for others
Prevention	Spillover benefits
Uses incentives	Pilot program
Use of private sector	

He also categorizes the characteristics on his own as the following (Borins 1998, 26):

New program	Better marketing
Partnership	Organizational change
Uses improved technology	Privatization/competition
Empowerment of clients	

Using cases also in the Ford-Kennedy School's Innovation Awards, Levin and Sanger (1994, 94-97) classify innovations according to the following 'types':

Application of new technology	Capital improvement
Administrative and management	Productivity improvement
Direct client service	Legislative
Information	

They distinguish the 'character' of innovation as (Levin and Sanger 1994, 104-109):

Evolutionary tinkering   Using novel combination
Using old stuff in new ways   Changing relationship between existing institutions

Not only is it unclear what is meant by 'types' or 'characters' of innovation, but also the criteria or rationales underlying their lists are ambiguous. The above classifications are confusing mixtures of attitudes, approaches, methods, goals and results of innovation. These studies indicate that there is a need to develop a more consistent and systematic set of categories in characterizing innovations.

FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

In examining the characteristics of innovations undertaken by local governments, a classification scheme was developed for this research, consisting of approaches, means, and other characteristics. In keeping with Zegans' (1997) argument that for public managers innovation is a tool or means for improving agency performance, this article focuses on the approaches and means taken to innovate public service. In figure 1 *approach* refers to fundamental approaches taken for the innovative programs and its categories are drawn, to a large extent, from the types of reinventing government in Osborne and Gaebler (1992). *Means* are more specific methods or actions involved in implementing the program. Both approaches and means are related to the question of how innovation is undertaken in the public sector.[2]   They will be compared to each other, as well as to other characteristics of innovation to identify patterns of association between the sets.

Figure 1
Characteristics of Innovation

APPROACH	MEANS
-Comprehensive/integrated service	-Use of Technology
-Reconceptualization /reinvention of role	-New Program
-Client oriented/community outreach	-Advertising/public relations/education
-Outcome/goal oriented	-Legal/institutional setup
-Citizen participation/volunteers	-Physical facility
-Market principle/competition	-Organizational restructuring
-Devolution/empowerment	-Process improvement
-Use of private sector	
-Partnership	

OTHER CHARACTERISTICS

-Policy area

-Target group
-Agency type
-Local government type
-Goal
-Motive
-Duration

ANALYSIS OF INNOVATION

The Sample

Cases utilized in this study are local government innovation programs presented in the First and the Second Local Government Benchmarking Fair held in 2000 and 2002, respectively. Organized by the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs and a major civil society, the purpose of the fair is to promote, publicize, and share information on local government innovation. Each of the 248 local governments was asked to submit materials providing detailed accounts of its best policies, projects or programs which were innovative or significant improvements.[3] Evaluation committees composed of university professors, NGO representatives, and public officials reviewed these with the criteria of innovativeness, promotion of public interest, and effectiveness. One hundred forty-two programs for the First Fair and 82 for the Second Fair were selected as outstanding enough for presentation.

In this research provincial and metropolitan government cases are omitted to examine innovation in the lowest level of government - cities, counties and districts.[4] The reason is to focus on what and how innovation is pursued by public agencies with the least authority and resources. As a result 126 cases from the First Fair and 65 cases from the Second Fair, a total of 191 cases, were included in the analysis. The innovation cases showed a great diversity in terms of function and scope of service. They included programs such as simplifying the real estate registration process, which had required people to visit several different agencies, by setting up a one-stop service counter; improving the maintenance of public facilities by organizing a network of citizen volunteers to monitor the condition of facilities; increasing crop yield by providing fertilizers tailored to soil conditions; transforming an old mine area into a tourist spot; boosting the sales of local products by issuing discount vouchers, and many others.

With the information provided in each case description the author classified its characteristics according to figure 1. The author used her own judgment in categorizing the approach, means, motive, and goal of innovation by identifying the key features of each program. Since the data are mostly coded case descriptions, statistical analysis more rigorous than correlation coefficients is deemed inappropriate. Before examining the approaches and means of innovation, general characteristics of the cases are discussed below.

General Characteristics

Table 1 shows the distributions of the cases for a number of characteristics. More than 70 percent of the innovation programs started in 1998 or later, suggesting that innovation in local government proliferated after the selection of government heads was changed from an appointment

system to an election system in 1995, and in particular after the 1997 economic crisis. Consequently, the durations of the programs are relatively short, averaging thirty-two months. Out of the total, 72.8 percent are on-going programs while the rest have been terminated.

Table 1   Distribution of Various Characteristics with Mean Duration

	Number of Cases	Frequency (%)	Mean Duration (Months)
Starting Year			
Before 1995	7	3.7	97
1995	12	6.3	65
1996	17	8.9	57
1997	20	10.5	39
1998	47	24.6	29
1999	45	23.6	21
2000 or after	43	22.5	15
Policy Area			
Administration/Finance	45	23.6	24
Environment/Transportation	42	22.0	31
Information technology	8	4.2	18
Culture/Tourism	27	14.1	47
Welfare/Women	17	8.9	30
Community development	20	10.5	35
Local economy	32	16.8	37
Local Govt. Type			
City	60	31.4	34
County	70	36.6	36
District	61	31.9	27
Agency Type			*
Staff	48	25.1	27
Line	143	74.9	34
Motive			
Problem/Crisis	10	5.2	21
Need	67	35.1	32
Improvement	113	59.2	33
Campaign promise	1	0.5	60
Goal			
Efficiency/ Effectiveness	176	92.1	33
Democracy	8	4.2	31
Transparency	7	3.7	25
Target Group			
General	145	75.9	32
Minority	35	18.3	37
Local govt.	11	5.8	19
Total	191	100.0	32

Distribution by policy area shows that innovation is most frequent in the administration and finance (23.6 percent) and environment and transportation (22.0 percent) areas. The information technology area has the least number of innovatiove programs (4.2 percent), reflecting the weakness of local governments in this field. It also has the shortest duration, implying that most of their programs started only recently. In terms of numbers, programs dealing with welfare and gender equality (8.9 percent) also fall behind other areas.

The type of local government is quite evenly distributed among city, county and district governments. About three-fourths of the programs are undertaken by line agencies and except for a few cases most of them are single line operations rather than collaborative projects by multiple departments.

Based on the information provided in the case description regarding why the program was undertaken and what its objectives were, the author coded the *motive* and the *goal* of innovation. The motive in most cases is improvement of pre-existing conditions, while for about a third, a need for change induced innovation. Only 5.2 percent faced a serious problem or crisis that led to innovation. This result is consistent result with that of Borins (1998, 46) who found that, contrary to conventional wisdom, crisis is not the primary cause for innovation in the public sector.

Over 90 percent of the programs have efficiency-related goals, such as improving performance, proficiency or effectiveness. Goals related to democratization or enhancing transparency or accountability make up only 3–4% of the cases. The majority (75.9 percent) of the innovation programs have general citizens as the target group or primary beneficiaries of the program. Only 18.3 percent have minority groups such as elderly, children or women as prime beneficiaries and 5.8 percent are targeted for the benefit of the local government itself.

Approach to Innovation

For each case the author tried to identify the innovative approach taken for the program. Although several cases could be considered as having more than one type of approach, only one fundamental approach that best characterizes the innovation program was considered. Of the seven types of approaches shown in figure 1 there were no cases of devolution or empowerment. This is quite a contrast compared to innovations in other countries. Substantial portions of innovation cases—13.5-34%—involved empowerment in American governments (Borins 2001a, 10; Kim 1999, 9). Among the applicants to the international innovation award of the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management, 14–33% cited empowerment as a salient feature of their innovations (Borins 2001a, 2001b).[4]

The most frequently used approach in the Korean sample is outcome or goal orientation (44.0 percent), as shown in table 2. Although the author looked for cases that developed benchmarking, performance measurement or strategic planning for this category, only a few cases employed these kinds of techniques. Rather, most of the cases in this category are those that had a specific task or a tangible goal. A few had comprehensive plans but most made informal plans for the task. Making plans is an effective way of working in government for it sets clarity of mission, which has been noted in public management studies as being invaluable in achieving results (Osborn and

Gaebler 1992, 130; Behn 1988, 644). What was novel for local governments in many of these cases was the task or the goal itself, such as making energy-conserving street lights, mapping water supply pipes to facilitate easy detection of leaks, and building an industrial cluster for medical equipment.

Table 2
Innovation Approach and Other Characteristics

	Approach						
	Comprehensive Integrated	**Reconcep-Tualization Reinvention**	**Outcome Goal oriented**	**Client Oriented Community outreach**	**Citizen Participation Volunteers**	**Market principle Competition**	**Total**
Policy area							
Administration/Finance	17.8	17.8	22.2 (-0..243)	22.2 (0.297)	13.3	6.7	100.0
Environment/Transportation	11.9	28.6	42.9	0.0 (-0.155)	11.9	4.8	100.0
Information technology	62.5 (0.324)	0.0	37.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Culture/Tourism	3.7	25.9	66.7 (0.185)	0.0	3.7	0.0	100.0
Welfare/Women	17.6	11.8	17.6 (-0.166)	29.4 (0.250)	17.6	5.9	100.0
Community development	0.0 (-0.127)	35.0	40.0	0.0	25.0 (0.162)	0.0	100.0
Local economy	3.1 (-0.123)	21.9	75.0 (0.280)	0.0 (-0.131)	0.0 (-0.153)	0.0	100.0
Local Govt. Type							
City	10.0	18.3	48.3	8.3	11.7	3.3	100.0
County	12.9	18.6	58.6 (0.224)	2.9 (-0.141)	4.3 (-0.154)	2.9	100.0
District	13.1	31.1 (0.142)	23.0 (-0.290)	13.1 (0.134)	16.4 (0.132)	3.3	100.0
Agency Type							
Staff	16.7	12.5 (-0.139)	41.7	12.5	10.4	6.3	100.0
Line	10.5	25.9 (0.139)	44.8	6.3	10.5	2.1	100.0
Motive							
Problem/Crisis	10.0	20.0	40.0	0.0	10.0	20.0 (0.227)	100.0
Need	16.4	23.9	38.8	6.0	11.9	3.0	100.0
Improvement	9.7	22.1	46.9	9.7	9.7	1.8	100.0
Campaign promise	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Goal							
Efficiency/Effectiveness	13.1	23.9	47.2 (0.219)	8.0	6.3 (-0.472)	1.7 (-0.282)	100.0
Democracy	0.0	0.0	0.0 (-0.185)	0.0	100.0 (0.611)	0.0	100.0
Transparency	0.0	14.3	14.3	14.3	14.3	42.9 (0.444)	100.0
Target Group							
General	11.7	24.8	41.4	7.6	11.0	3.4	100.0
Minority	11.4	11.4 (-0.126)	54.3	11.4	11.4	0.0	100.0
Local govt.	18.2	27.3	45.5	0.0	0.0	9.1	100.0
Total	**12.0**	**22.5**	**44.0**	**7.9**	**10.5**	**3.1**	**100.0**

Note: Entries are percentages. Only correlation coefficients significant at 0.10 or better are shown in parentheses.

About a third of the programs with outcome orientations were promotions of local products, such as apples, ginseng, garlic and wild flowers, or fairs and festivals featuring traditional music, dance, drama, bull fights and other attractions. Albeit being one-time or annual events, these activities were evaluated to be quite effective in place marketing and boosting the local economy.

The next most frequently used approach to innovation is reconceptualization or reinvention of roles (22.5 percent). These involve doing away with old, fixated ways of thinking or making new uses of existing resources. Some examples in this category are utilizing unemployed people to build a community park, transforming an old prison into a place of historic interest, and converting an administrative building into a support center for small businesses.

While a holistic or comprehensive approach was the most frequently found in public sector innovation in the United States, Canada and some Commonwealth countries (Borins 1998, 2001a, 2001b; Kim 1999), it ranked third in the Korean sample, accounting for 12 percent. Comprehensive planning, one-stop counters offering multiple services, collaborative programs by multiple agencies, all fall in this category. Borins found a lower frequency of holism in the non-OECD countries and noted that public agencies in these countries may be "struggling with the challenge of improving the operation of individual agencies before attempting to coordinate their operations" (2001a, 10). A similar explanation seems to be applicable to Korea, although it is a member of the OECD.

Citizen participation, volunteers or self-help made up 10.5 percent of the approaches. Some examples are resolving public disputes through citizen jury, organizing a network of volunteers to assist low income people, and setting up scholarship funds contributed by residents. Client orientation means providing services according to citizens' needs or convenience, and community outreach is a form of ubiquitous government, making services available where the citizens are located. These, making up 7.9 percent in the Korean sample, included cases such as operating a mobile service team to settle complaints and sending text messages to residents' cellular phones to notify them of the results of services they requested. Only 3.1 percent applied the market principle or competition for innovation. Beginning to have competitive bidding in procurement and contracts for child care centers and street cleaning, and attracting private capital for a waste disposal plant were some of the notable cases.

Examining the cases by policy areas, innovation in the areas of administration, finance, welfare, and women tend to have less of an outcome orientation but more of a client orientation and outreach, compared to other areas (see table 2). In fact the latter approach can be observed

in only these policy areas. As expected, about two-thirds of innovations in information technology take comprehensive or systems approaches.   Programs on culture, tourism and the local economy show the highest tendency to be outcome oriented. Innovation in community development is more likely to involve citizen participation or volunteers compared to other program areas.

Cross tabulations and correlations between categories in table 2 shed some light on the characteristics associated with the different approaches. District governments, which are in metropolises, tend to take less of an outcome orientation but more reconceptualization, client orientation, and citizen participation compared to other local governments.   On the other hand, county governments, which are in rural areas, are most likely to have outcome orientations in their innovation, and least likely to have client orientations or citizen participation. Rural governments seem to be less familiar with involving residents in shaping and providing services.

Innovation through reconceptualization showed a contrast in agency type in that it is associated negatively with staff agency and positively with line agency. This indicates that flexibility of ideas or roles is more likely to come from line agencies which have more direct contact with citizens.

Not surprisingly, all the innovations with goals related to democratization utilized citizen participation, volunteers or self-help.   Innovations with efficiency-related goals have a positive correlation with an outcome orientation, while those with goals of democratization have a negative correlation.   Introducing competition is the favored approach when the major purpose is enhancing transparency or accountability rather than efficiency. Innovation in programs with minorities as the target group is least likely to come from reconceptualization and most likely to have an outcome orientation, compared to innovation with other target groups.

Means of Innovation

In the majority of the cases several means were employed in implementing innovation. For data analysis, only those means that the author thought were primary or essential in executing the programs were coded. As a result two major means were identified for 114 cases and one major means for the rest, with a total of 305 identifiable means used for innovation. Table 3 shows the distribution of means used for innovation, cross-tabulated with innovation approach.

Table 3

Means by Approach

Approach	Means						
	Technology	New program	Advertise/ PR/ Education	Legal/ Institutional setup	Physical facility	Other	Total
Comprehensive/ Integrated	39.1 (0.165)	39.1	17.4 (-0.137)	8.7	26.1	30.4	160.9
Reconceptualization/ Reinvention	9.3 (-0.154)	25.6 (-0.189)	27.9	20.9 (0.125)	44.2 (0.253)	20.9	148.8
Outcome/ Goal oriented	28.6 (0.166)	44.0	47.6 (0.233)	14.3	20.2	13.1 (-0.181)	167.9
Client oriented/ Community outreach	6.7	73.3 (0.179)	20.0	0.0	13.3	33.3	146.7
Citizen participation/ Volunteers	5.0 (-0.134)	70.0 (0.187)	40.0	0.0 (-0.133)	10.0	25.0	150.0
Market principle/ Competition	16.7	0.0 (-0.156)	0.0 (-0.132)	33.3	0.0	133.3 (0.344)	183.3
Total	20.9	42.9	35.1	13.1	24.1	23.6	159.7

Note: Entries are percentages. Only correlation coefficients significant at 0.10 or better are shown in parentheses.

The most frequently used means in implementing innovation is creation of a new program (42.9 percent), a finding consistent with Borins (1998, 27) who observed that innovation occurs most often in doing "something the jurisdiction had not been doing before as opposed to the improved delivery of an existing service." Innovation through creation of new programs is more likely to have a client orientation and citizen participation, while less likely to involve reconceptualization. As shown in table 4 new programs are most popular as an innovation means in culture and tourism (63 percent) and welfare and women (70.6 percent)-related areas. However, policy areas such as environment, transportation, information technology, and community development are less likely to create new programs.

Table 4:
Means and Other Characteristics

	Means						
	Technology	New program	Advertise/ PR/ Education	Legal/ Institutional setup	Physical facility	Other	Total
Policy Area							
Administration/Finance	22.2	51.1	20.0 (-0.175)	8.9	0.0 (-0.313)	46.7 (0.251)	148.9
Environment/Transportation	21.4	28.6 (-0.154)	40.5	11.9	40.5 (0.204)	11.9 (0.124)	154.8
Information technology	100.0 (0.406)	12.5 (-0.129)	25.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	137.5
Culture/Tourism	3.7 (-0.172)	63.0 (0.164)	44.4	7.4	37.0 (0.123)	11.1	166.7
Welfare/Women	5.9	70.6 (0.175)	11.8 (-0.153)	41.2 (0.260)	17.6	23.5	170.6
Community development	15.0	25.0 (-0.124)	15.0 (-0.144)	15.0	50.0 (0.207)	40.0	160.0
Local economy	25.0	37.5	68.8 (0.317)	12.5	18.8	12.5	175.0
Local Govt. Type							
City	11.7 (-0.154)	46.7	36.7	16.7	28.3	21.7	161.7
County	31.4 (0.196)	40.0	42.9 (0.124)	8.6	20.0	22.9	165.7
District	18.0	42.6	24.6 (-0.151)	14.8	24.6	26.2	150.8
Agency type							
Staff	20.8	52.1	27.1	12.5	14.6 (-0.129)	33.3	160.4
Line	21.0	39.9	37.8	13.3	27.3 (0.129)	20.3	159.4
Motive							
Problem/Crisis	50.0 (0.168)	30.0	0.0 (-0.173)	20.0	0.0 (-0.132)	40.0	140.0
Need	23.9	34.3 (-0.128)	26.9 (-0.127)	22.4 (0.203)	25.4	29.9	162.7
Improvement	16.8 (-0.122)	49.6 (0.161)	43.4 (0.209)	7.1 (-0.214)	25.7	17.7 (-0.136)	160.2
Campaign promise	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0 (0.139)	100.0
Goal							
Efficiency/Effectiveness	22.2	40.9 (-0.140)	34.1	13.1	26.1 (0.164)	22.2	158.5
Democracy	0.0	87.5 (0.188)	50.0	0.0	0.0	25.0	162.5
Transparency	14.3	42.9	42.9	28.6	0.0	57.1	185.7
Target group							
General	15.2 (-0.252)	44.1	33.8	11.7	30.3 (0.260)	24.8	160.0
Minority	34.3 (0.155)	51.4	48.6 (0.134)	17.1	2.9 (-0.235)	17.1	171.4
Local govt.	54.5 (0.204)	0.0 (-0.214)	9.1 (-0.135)	18.2	9.1	27.3	118.2
Total	20.9	42.9	35.1	13.1	24.1	23.6	159.7

Note: Entries are percentages. Only correlation coefficients significant at 0.10 or better are shown in parentheses.

Promotional activities, such as advertising, public relations, or education, are the next most frequently used means in innovation. They are positively correlated with outcome oriented approach but negatively with comprehensive and competitive approaches. Economic programs are most likely to use advertising as a means of innovation (68.8 percent), while administration, finance, welfare, women and community development programs are not likely to use this method.

About a quarter of the cases involved construction or renovation of physical facilities like parks, community centers, parking lots and tourist attractions. Understandably, better spatial management is effective in producing visible results. Many of them innovated by finding new uses of underutilized or abandoned facilities. This explains why they are more likely to be associated with reconceptualization or reinvention of functions. Innovation with physical facilities is the most common in community development, environment, transportation, culture, and tourism programs.

Innovating through application of technology is found in 20.9 percent of the cases and is positively related to comprehensive approach and outcome orientation. It is negatively related to reconceptualization and citizen participation.   As expected, technological means is observed in all of the innovations in the area of information technology.

Organizational restructuring, use of private sector and process improvement were rarely used, each with less than ten cases. This result suggests that these means are more difficult and less feasible for local government. They are grouped together in the tables as *Other* with a few other miscellaneous means. Innovation in administration and finance shows positive correlation with this category.

Examining the means of innovation by other program characteristics, one can see that county governments have the greatest tendency to employ technology and advertising (see table 4). Use of physical facility is less likely in staff agencies while more likely in line agencies. When problem or crisis is the motive for innovation, technology is most often used (50 percent). Innovations motivated by a need for change have a higher chance of engaging in legal or institutional changes, while less likely to involve new programs or advertising methods. The opposite is true for innovations undertaken to improve existing situations.

Programs with efficiency-related goals are positively related to the use of physical facility. New programs are negatively associated with goals of efficiency and positively associated with those of democratization. When an innovation has general citizens as the target group, provision of physical facilities is more likely and use of technology is less likely, while the

opposite is true for innovation with a minority group as the prime beneficiary. When innovating for the benefit of the local government itself, technological improvement is the most favored method (54.5 percent).

Partnerships

Out of the total of 191 innovations, ninety-seven cases formed some kind of partnership in addition to a major type of means, and consequently, *partnership* was recorded separately from the other categories of means. Most of the partnerships were informal or loose arrangements. They were formed more often for the purpose of garnering wider attention and support, rather than for collaborative provision of services.

Thirty-two cases had partnerships with private organizations such as firms, NGO's, universities, and research institutions. Twenty-six had collaborative arrangements with citizens or community groups while only seven cases had public-public partnerships. Another thirty-two cases were identified as having multiple partnerships with private, public and citizen groups.

For programs forming partnerships with citizens, the predominant approach to innovation is citizen participation, use of volunteers or self-help, and the most likely means is creation of new programs (see tables 5 and 6). Multiple partnerships are most likely to be found in outcome oriented programs and those with advertising as primary means.

Table 5
Approach by Partnership

Partnership	Approach						
	Comprehensive/ Integrated	Reconceptualization/ Reinvention	Outcome/ Goal oriented	Client oriented/ Community outreach	Citizen participation/ Volunteers	Market Principle/ Competition	Total
Public	28.6	14.3	57.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Private org.	6.1	21.2	51.5	12.1	3.0	6.1	100.0
Citizens	11.5	15.4	11.5 (-0.259)	3.8	57.7 (0.612)	0.0	100.0
Multiple	9.7	19.4	58.1 (0.125)	0.0 (-0.129)	12.9	0.0	100.0
None	13.8	26.6	44.7	10.6	0.0 (-0.337)	4.3	100.0
Total	12.0	22.5	44.0	7.9	10.5	3.1	100.0

Note: Entries are percentages. Only correlation coefficients significant at 0.10 or better are shown in parentheses.

Table 6
Means by Partnership

Partnership	Means						
	Technology	New program	Advertise/ PR/ Education	Legal/ Institutional setup	Physical facility	Other	Total
Public	28.6	28.6	42.9	28.6	14.3	14.3	157.1
Private org.	24.2	36.4	39.4	18.2	27.3	21.2	166.7
Citizens	0.0 (-0.204)	69.2 (0.211)	23.1	11.5	15.4	26.9	146.2
Multiple	12.9	48.4	58.1 (0.212)	6.5	25.8	12.9	164.5
None	27.7 (0.163)	37.2	28.7 (-0.131)	12.8	25.5	27.7	159.6
Total	20.9	42.9	35.1	13.1	24.1	23.6	159.7

Note: Entries are percentages. Only correlation coefficients significant at 0.10 or better are shown in parentheses.

CONCLUSION

Government innovation is defined and perceived differently by scholars, practitioners and the general public. The lack of consensus is perpetuated by the confounded way of characterizing innovation in the academic literature. In an attempt to better understand what constitutes an innovation to public officials and how it is done, this study examined empirically the characteristics of local government innovation focusing on the approaches and means taken for innovation.

The cases from Korea that were recognized as being successful innovations or best practices reflected much diversity in nature and scope of the programs. However, there are some identifiable patterns that can enhance our understanding of innovation in local government. The most frequent approach to innovation is having a tangible goal and making plans for it, which can be best described as being outcome or goal oriented. Outcome orientation is most likely to be observed in programs on culture, tourism and local economy, and is associated with uses of technology and promotional activities.

Other approaches, such as reconceptualization, a comprehensive or integrated approach and citizen participation, together make up about as much as the goal oriented cases. District governments show greater potential for using these approaches, which are more frequently observed in programs on information technology, welfare and community development. Innovations with these approaches, more often than others, employ technology, legislative actions and institutional setup.

In terms of the specific means used for innovation, creation of new programs and advertising are observed in about half of the cases. Construction or renovation of physical facilities, such as parks, community centers and tourist sites, is the third most popular means used in local government innovation. Only a handful of programs involved organizational restructuring, process improvement or use of the private sector.

Compared to earlier studies based on other countries, there are some consistent as well as contrasting findings. While holistic or a comprehensive approach was the most frequently found in the United States and some Commonwealth countries, it ranked third or 12% in the Korean cases. There were no cases involving empowerment or devolution in the Korean sample while the advanced countries' cases showed significant proportions. This may suggest that holism and empowerment are characteristics more related to advanced countries than countries like Korea with relatively short experience in local autonomy.

Findings consistent with other similar studies are that creation of a new program is the most commonly used means in innovation and that crisis is rarely a motive or cause for innovation.

The system of local self-government in Korea was only introduced in the 1990's and is almost as new as the innovations the localities pursued. The Korean cases examined in this study indicate that despite the common perception that local governments are resistant to change, there are numerous initiatives, whether small or big, being undertaken to improve public service. Even though many of them may not have brought about fundamental transformations or used state-of-the-art techniques of public management fashionably mentioned today, the local governments did improve performance, which, according to Zegans, suffices as innovation to public officials.

Innovation in Korean local government can be said to be in an inchoative stage. To enable upgraded and more diversified innovations, attention directed to the following areas may have some merits: launching government-wide innovations rather than single commodity oriented development programs that have topical effects; implementing programs with interdepartmental coordination rather than single agency projects; and devising more innovations in staff agencies. As introducing competition is the least observed in local government innovation, meeting conditions more conducive to inviting competition in the public sector would be a worthy challenge. Finally, as most of the innovations currently undertaken are aimed at improving efficiency – not that they are of any less value – designing more innovations for the purpose of enhancing democracy, transparency and accountability could bring about more far-reaching improvements in local government performance in the future.

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ENDNOTES:

1   According to Behn the dilemmas of government innovation are related to questions such as what is the motive for innovation, who will be accountable to whom, how much analysis should be done, what kind of organizational structure is required, and how success or replicability is to be evaluated (1997).

2   Innovation can be divided into adoption, or the decision to use an innovation, and implementation, or putting the innovation into use (Rogers 1995; Van de Ven and Rogers 1988). This research does not make this distinction since all the cases examined here are implemented innovations.

3   The upper level governments (the 16 provinces and metropolises) and the lower level governments (the 232 cities, counties and districts), could submit up to 3 and 2 cases each, respectively. In 2000 a total of 432 cases were submitted by 221 local governments. In 2002 repeated entry was not allowed and as a result, a total of 284 cases were submitted by 161 local governments.

4   Counties are rural areas and districts are subdivisions of metropolises which have over one million population.

5   Since these other studies do not use the same classification scheme, comparison of percentages should be taken with qualification.

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