

Achievable or Ambitious?: A Comparative and Critical View of Government 3.0 in Korea

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ABSTRACT

Government 3.0 emerged as a new paradigm of the government workings in Korea. The previous administration's (2013–2017) strong pledge for public sector reform through the Government 3.0 initiative envisions a transparent, competent, and service-oriented government. The paper, with comparison of the Government 3.0 initiative with Government 2.0 as a precedent paradigm and national initiatives of other countries, discusses what kind of challenges the initiative faces and how the government could overcome the challenges. Government 3.0 seems like a policy package of diverse programs. Novel is how the policy package is labeled rather than what the substance is. The initiative delivers normative messages to public employees. Prioritizing quantitative transparency may cause such a side effect as extra tasks of public employees and failure in guaranteeing information security and accuracy. Since a policy package differs and varies with the administration and political parties, what the initiative sheds light on may not last long after the presidential term.

KEYWORDS

E-Government, Government 2.0, Government 3.0, Government Innovation

INTRODUCTION

Government 3.0 emerged as a new paradigm of the government workings in Korea. The previous administration's (2013–2017) strong pledge for public sector reform through the Government 3.0 initiative envisions a transparent, competent, and service-oriented government. The initiative underpins four core values for better government and administration: openness, sharing, communication, and collaboration. These values are of growing importance to the global society such as Open Government Partnership (see <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/>), and thus Government 3.0 in Korea deserves keen attention from the global society.

The attention includes both hopeful expectations and also concerns. In particular, concerns of academics, journalists, ordinary citizens, and even public employees have generated harsh critiques on real effects of the Government 3.0 initiative. Its deliverables are not actually feasible, since it puts too much into a single five-year term of the Korean presidency. One may say that Government 3.0 at best is a symbol of the prime national policy directive overarching many public programs. The rhetorical use of Government 3.0 as a magic bullet merits discussion with the global audience, who is interested in opportunities and challenges that this kind of government reform makes. With regard to this national initiative, there are an increasing number of commentaries but only few pieces of academic research readable to the global audience. This article takes a close and deep look at what concerns inherited in the national initiative are and how the global society could learn from the Korean case.

The paper is structured into six sections, including the foregoing introduction. The next section discusses how the Korean government describes Government 3.0. The subsequent three sections compare the Government 3.0 initiative with Government 2.0 as a precedence of Government 3.0 and similar national initiatives (Digital Europe 2030 and the U.S. Open Government Initiative). Each comparative study addresses what concerns of the Government 3.0 initiative are and how the concerns could be overcome in a comparative standpoint. The final section concludes this comparative and critical study.

GOVERNMENT 3.0 IN KOREA

According to the National Information Society Agency of Korea (2013), future governments are expected to advance toward Government 3.0 as a customized and intelligent government using Semantic Web technology (a smart web that thinks for itself), which “enables computers to define, understand, and logically deduct the meaning of information, further to help better search of requested information” (National Information Society Agency, 2008). The Korean government defined Government 3.0 as a “Semantic Web-based government that personalizes all government services according to the conditions and preferences of each individual” (National Information Society Agency, 2008). This earlier definition constrained Government 3.0 to adoption of new technological potentials, but the Park Geun-Hye administration of Korea (2013–2017) embraces it as a new paradigm and umbrella initiative for public sector reform, as addressed in her speech: “Government 3.0 is a new paradigm for government operation to promote active sharing of public information and removal of barriers existing among government ministries for better collaboration” (see <http://www.gov30.go.kr>).

As shown in Table 1, the Park administration envisioned Government 3.0 as a paradigmatic transition. The Government 3.0 initiative aims at two goals: providing services customized for and tailored to various needs and demands, and creating new jobs and reboosting development engines. In order to accomplish these goals, the administration presented three strategic orientations: service-oriented government, transparent government, and competent government. In turn, strategies for the service-oriented, transparent, and competent government are centered upon four core values: openness, sharing, communication, and collaboration.

Table 2 summarizes the Government 3.0 initiative. For the service-oriented government, the administration sees Government 3.0 as “a pack of low-cost but high-quality services for customized citizen happiness” (<http://www.gov30.go.kr>). The Government 3.0 initiative enhances more efficient and effective access to public information and services, personalizes public services tailored for individual needs through using new technologies, and customizes services for entrepreneurs and small businesses. For transparency, open government in terms of data and information means the transition from supply-driven transparency (reactive, responsive disclosure of public information) to demand-driven transparency (proactive sharing prior to requests for releasing information). The

Table 1. Korean e-government paradigms

Government 1.0 (1995–2000)	Government 2.0 (2005–2010)	Government 3.0 (2015–2020)
• World Wide Web	• Web 2.0	• Real-World Web
• First stop	• One stop	• Customized portal
• One-way service	• Bilateral interaction	• Customized intelligent service
• Time and place restrictions for services	• Mobile services	• Seamless services anytime and anywhere

Note: Adapted from the homepage of Government 3.0 (<http://www.gov30.go.kr>).

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