Childcare policy reform in 21st century South Korea



Sunwoo Ryu

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Social Policy

Hilary 2022

Wolfson College

University of Oxford

ABSTRACT

This thesis problematises the nature and politics of childcare policy reforms in 21st century South Korea in the face of precipitously changing socio-demographic and political environments. Although the country has been portrayed as an archetype of the unsupportive familialist regime due to its deep-rooted developmentalism and Confucianism, the mid-2000s saw a rapid expansion of public support for childcare alongside a wave of new ideas that emphasised the state's responsibility for childcare.

Whilst existing studies have described South Korea's childcare expansion as a path-departing change due to its rapidity and radicality, the reforms actually reveal that the state's role was limited to financially supporting and empowering the two other pillars of childcare provision: the market and the family. This implies deep-seated continuities in the private nature of the country's childcare. This thesis therefore addresses an overarching question of why the country's childcare policy reforms have taken the path where the state's role is oriented towards financially supporting the functioning of the market and the family.

Structurally, this thesis consists of four papers. In the first paper, the concepts of 'publicness' and 'privateness' are elaborated on within the childcare policy context, and official governmental documents are analysed in order to investigate how specifically childcare policy was developed. The second paper 'works backwards' and delves into the reforms by analysing government childcare discourses. Focusing on the interactions among ideas, actors (as their carriers) and institutions in childcare policymaking, the third and fourth papers utilise original interview evidence and provide a more explanatory

analysis on two key policy episodes: the politics of childcare service provision and that of child-related cash benefits (especially those for children being cared for at home).

Regarding the nature of the reforms, the empirical evidence confirms that the growth of the state's financial role in childcare policy proceeded with partial retrenchment in their public commitment by financially supporting market- and family-provided childcare. The evidence also uncovers that the expansion of public support for childcare was primarily driven by the aim of tackling low fertility rates and maintaining the number of taxpayers, thus retaining economic competitiveness, rather than promoting gender equality and/or social protection.

When it comes to the politics surrounding the reforms, this thesis suggests that despite the emergence of a new *Zeitgeist* of strengthening the state's childcare responsibility, it was not a single policy prescription, and the politicking surrounding its specific direction was intense among actors with heterogenous policy preferences. More importantly, this thesis contends that although ideas helped policy actors affect childcare policymaking by functioning as rhetorical weapons and as a coalition magnet, idea-policy translation was more decisively influenced by power relations among actors and enduring institutional legacy.

ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

CA	Content analysis
CDA	Critical discourse analysis
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
DNA	Discourse network analysis
ECEC	Early childhood education and care
FMA	Frame-mapping analysis
GDP	Gross domestic product
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SNA	Semantic network analysis
TFR	Total fertility rate
WPR	What's the problem represented to be
€	Euro
₩	South Korean Won

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ..... **iii**

ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS ..... **v**

TABLE OF CONTENTS ..... **vi**

LIST OF TABLES ..... **ix**

LIST OF FIGURES ..... **x**

1. INTRODUCTION **1**

1.1. Research puzzle and overarching research question 2

1.1.1. The welfare and care regime of South Korea 2

1.1.2. Socio-demographic challenges to South Korea 4

1.1.3. The rise of the idea to reshape the public-private mix of childcare 10

1.1.4. The rationale for studying South Korea as a single case 13

1.1.5. Overarching research question 18

1.2. Approach to answering the research question 18

1.2.1. Ideas as a source of policy change 21

1.2.2. Policy actors 25

1.2.3. Institutional contexts of policymaking 29

1.2.4. An integrated framework 32

1.3. Research design 35

1.3.1. Methodology 35

1.3.2. Data collection and modes of analysis 37

1.3.3. Time period 40

1.3.4. Policy domains 43

1.3.5. Thesis outline 46

2. PAPER I "CHILDCARE POLICY REFORMS IN 21ST CENTURY SOUTH KOREA: MOVING TOWARDS MORE 'PUBLICNESS'?" 49

2.1. Introduction 49

2.2. Conceptual framework 52

2.2.1. Understanding childcare publicness and privateness as dimensional concepts 52

2.2.2. Constructing different childcare models 56

2.3. Measuring childcare publicness and privateness 61

2.4. Results 65

2.4.1. The Roh Moo-hyun government (03/2003–02/2008) 65

2.4.2. The Lee Myung-bak government (03/2008–02/2013) 68
2.4.3. The Park Geun-hye government (03/2013–03/2017) 71
2.4.4. The Moon Jae-in government (05/2017–present) 73
2.5. Discussion: overall patterning in the development of childcare publicness and privateness 77
2.6. Concluding remarks 79
3. PAPER II "UNCOVERING PROBLEM REPRESENTATIONS IN SOUTH KOREA'S CHILDCARE EXPANSION: AN INTERROGATION OF GOVERNMENT DISCOURSES BY SEMANTIC NETWORK ANALYSIS 81
3.1. Introduction 81
3.2. Conceptual framework 84
3.2.1. Policy as a discourse 84
3.2.2. Childcare policy as a discourse: constructing a conceptual reference point 87
3.3. Data and methodology 89
3.3.1. Data collection 89
3.3.2. Research method 90
3.4. Results 96
3.4.1. The Roh Moo-hyun government (03/2003–02/2008) 97
3.4.2. The Lee Myung-bak government (03/2008–02/2013) 101
3.4.3. The Park Geun-hye government (03/2013–03/2017) 104
3.4.4. The Moon Jae-in government (05/2017–present) 108
3.5. Discussion 111
3.6. Concluding remarks 114
4. PAPER III "THE POLITICS OF CHILDCARE 'PUBLICNESS' IN SOUTH KOREA" 117
4.1. Introduction 117
4.2. Analytical framework 121
4.2.1. Ideas and political actors 121
4.2.2. Institutional legacy 125
4.2.3. Integrating ideational and institutional theories 126
4.3. Methodological approach and data 127
4.4. Roh Moo-hyun government (03/2003–02/2008) 130
4.5. Moon Jae-in government (05/2017–present) 142
4.5.1. The two competing coalitions of childcare publicness 142
4.5.2. Politicking surrounding the two competing childcare publicness ideas 145
4.6. Discussion 150
4.7. Concluding remarks 153

5. PAPER IV "THE POLITICS OF CASH BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN IN SOUTH KOREA" 154
5.1. Introduction 154
5.2. The development of financial assistance for childrearing in South Korea 158
5.3. Analytical framework 163
5.3.1. Ideas and windows of opportunity for policy change 164
5.3.2. The political and institutional context of policymaking 166
5.4. Methodological approach and data 168
5.5. Introduction of homecare allowances 169
5.6. Expansion of homecare allowances for all pre-school children 172
5.7. Resilience of homecare allowances and their *de facto* further expansion 177
5.8. Discussion 184
5.9. Concluding remarks 187
6. CONCLUSIONS 189
6.1. Revisiting the research puzzle and overarching research question 189
6.2. Revisiting ideas as a source of policy change 197
6.2.1. What are ideas really and what kind of role(s) do they play? 197
6.2.2. What are the preconditions for ideas to become a source of policy change? 199
6.2.3. How can researchers study ideas? 203
6.3. Avenues for further research 205
REFERENCES 210
APPENDIX I 245
APPENDIX II 248
APPENDIX III 254
APPENDIX IV 258

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1. South Korea's public spending on different policy areas as a percentage of GDP 4

Table 1.2. A summary of the interviewees by their type of organisational affiliation .. 39

Table 1.3. The Mid-/Long Term Basic Plans on Childcare in 21st century South Korea 42

Table 1.4. South Korea's child-related cash support (as of January 2022) 44

Table 2.1. The key features of the four ideal childcare models 61

Table 2.2. Indicators, measures, and data sources 64

Table 3.1. Comparison of different discourse analysis methods 92

Table 3.2. Two different problem representations of South Korea's childcare discourses 113

Table 4.1. Varieties of childcare publicness ideas and positions of the key stakeholders under the Roh government (03/2003–02/2008) 137

Table 4.2. Two competing childcare publicness ideas under the Moon government (05/2017–present) 145

Table 5.1. Expansion of financial assistance provided directly to families with pre-school children (unit: ₩1,000; per child per month) 159

Table 5.2. Financial assistance for children by age and care arrangement (as of January 2022) 163

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1. Female labour force (aged 15-64) participation rates in East Asia, 1990–2019/20 5

Figure 1.2. TFR trends in East Asia, 1960–2020 7

Figure 1.3. Female labour force participation rates by age groups in East Asia 9

Figure 1.4. Overarching theoretical framework of this thesis 34

Figure 2.1. OECD member states' public spending on ECEC as a percentage of GDP, 1990–2017/18 50

Figure 3.1. The six questions of the 'what's the problem represented to be' approach 86

Figure 3.2. Process of semantic network analysis 94

Figure 3.3. A semantic network of the Roh Moo-hyun government (03/2003–02/2008) 98

Figure 3.4. A semantic network of the Lee Myung-bak government (03/2008–02/2013) 102

Figure 3.5. A semantic network of the Park Geun-hye government (03/2013–03/2017) 105

Figure 3.6. A semantic network of the Moon Jae-in government (05/2017–present). 109

Figure 4.1. Changes in the number of childcare facilities by type, 2003–2020 119

Figure 4.2. Polysemy and the multi-layer of 'publicness' in the South Korean childcare context 125

Figure 4.3. Analytical framework 127

Figure 5.1. South Korea's public spending on family benefits as a percentage of GDP, 2000–2018 155

Figure 5.2. Statistics on births and deaths in South Korea, 2000–2020 165

Figure 5.3. Analytical framework 167

1. INTRODUCTION

In the literature on East Asian welfare states, South Korea has been depicted as an archetype of the unsupported familialist regime due to its deep-rooted developmentalism and Confucianism. However, alongside a tide of new ideas that emphasised the state's childcare responsibility in the mid-2000s, the country has shown unprecedented expansion of public support for childcare. Due to the radicality and rapidity of this expansion, a substantial number of studies have portrayed South Korea's childcare policy reforms in the 21st century as a sign of departure from its traditional welfare regime.

However, this thesis problematises this viewpoint through four individual papers, which coherently investigate the nature and politics of the reforms regarding the public-private mix of childcare provision. Before the empirical analysis, this introduction aims to provide theoretical, methodological and structural contours for the four papers as a whole. Some guiding questions in this chapter include: does the country's recent childcare policy reform really signal a departure from its traditional welfare regime? Has the state's responsibility for childcare really been strengthened as a result of this reform? If so, has the reform changed the role of the other two pillars of childcare provision: the family and the market? How can we better capture the nature of childcare reforms and explain the factors affecting the specific direction of the reform?

Structurally, this introduction consists of three main parts. In the first section, an overview is provided regarding the path which the South Korean welfare state traditionally took, the increasing socio-demographic threats to this path's stability, and the complexities in its recent childcare policy reforms. The second section visits relevant literature to develop a theoretical framework, which considers ideas, policy actors and insti-

tutions in turn, and integrates them in such a way as to address the research puzzle. The last section explains how this thesis is organised by providing details on the methodology, collected data, scope of analysis and outline of the four individual papers.

1.1. Research puzzle and overarching research question

1.1.1. The welfare and care regime of South Korea

In social policy literature, South Korea has been labelled as a quintessential case for understanding the East Asian welfare regime (see Holliday, 2000; Kwon, 2005; Ringen *et al.*, 2011; Tang, 2000). What then, is the East Asian welfare regime? Although this question remains open to discussion, one of the key features that define this regime is the existence of the government as a 'regulator' and the family as a primary 'provider' and 'financier' of welfare (Gough, 2004; Holliday, 2000; Kwon, 2005; White and Goodman, 1998).

On the one hand, the constrained role of the state in welfare provision in East Asia has often been explained by subordination of social policy to economic policy as a 'handmaiden' of state-led economic development. Some scholars, like Kwon (2005) and Holliday (2000), contend that the prime goal of expanding social policy in East Asian countries never lay in securing social protection or promoting redistribution. Rather, under strong welfare developmentalism (or productivism), East Asian countries selectively developed policy areas that were expected to contribute to economic growth, such as health, education and vocational training (Peng and Wong, 2008). The limited state-provided social protection was therefore geared towards productive populations, such as male workers of core industry, military, and public sectors (Fleckenstein and Lee, 2017a).

Public spending on supporting less productive sectors of the population—such as women, children and the elderly—was virtually non-existent (*ibid.*).

On the other hand, the social policy literature has depicted the restricted role of the state in social protection as a result of the common and pervasive Confucian heritage, which includes filial piety, patriarchy, the emphasis on the function of family and kinship, and deference to authority (Jones, 1990, 1993; Peng and Wong, 2010). More specifically, the literature explains that 'small-state-and-big-family' in the provision of welfare has been culturally legitimised by the inter-generational reciprocal provision of support (*e.g.* financial aid and informal caregiving) and a clear gendered division of labour with men as breadwinners and women as caregivers (Sung, 2018).

South Korea, as an archetype of the developmental and Confucian welfare regime, traditionally restricted public support for families and children. As Table 1.1 below shows, public spending on family benefits and early childhood education and care (ECEC) as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) in 1990 and 2000 was below 1.0% and until recently, remained the lowest across all social policy areas. From this perspective, South Korea has often been seen as one of the prototypes of the 'familialist' (Esping-Andersen, 1999; Saraceno, 2016), 'familistic' (Ochiai, 2009), or 'familialistic' (An and Peng, 2016; Estévez-Abe and Kim, 2013) welfare regimes that lack not only publicly provided (or subsidised) alternatives to family care but also financial support for the material and moral functioning of the home. Put differently, South Korea's (and other East Asian countries') familialist nature is the outcome of state non-interventionism. To borrow Saraceno's (2016: 316) expression, this strand of familialism is close to 'familialism by default' or 'unsupported familialism'. This is different from that of some European countries such as France, in which the state has seen the family as the basic unit and social institution in

society and played an active role in supporting family members in maintaining their financial and/or caring duties (Lenoir, 1991).[1]

Table 1.1. South Korea's public spending on different policy areas as a percentage of GDP

Policy areas	1980	1990	2000	2010	2018
Family benefits [1]	N/A	0.03	0.10	0.67	1.20
ECEC only	N/A	0.01	0.08	0.59	0.90
Pension	N/A	0.73	1.31	1.97	3.00
Education [2]	N/A	N/A	4.30	4.80	3.80
Health	0.69	1.45	2.10	3.61	4.51
Labour markets	N/A	N/A	0.43	0.59	0.75
Social benefits	0.99	1.25	1.86	3.35	5.14

[1] Family benefits include child-related cash transfers, public income support payments during periods of parental leave, income support for lone parents' families, and family-related benefits in kind.
[2] Education spending includes government spending on pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary education. Data from the year 2018 does not include spending on early education.

Sources: OECD (2021a), Statistics Korea (2021a)

1.1.2. Socio-demographic challenges to South Korea

Given the deep-rooted, familialist path associated with strong developmentalism and Confucianism, South Korea seemed unlikely to expand policy for families and children. However, its unsupportive familialist welfare regime has become increasingly precarious and societal demands for public childcare support have been on the rise. Then, what factors have increasingly threatened its familialist path?

In a broader context, Anttonen and Sipilä (2005: 119) argue that there are four well-known, inter-related reasons for why public support for childcare is required:

- changes in the labour market (*i.e.* increasing female labour force participation);
- shifts in demographic structure (*i.e.* rapidly dwindling fertility rates and increasing life expectancy);

[1] This does not mean that South Korea's familialism is completely different from European familialism. Indeed, families in South Korea were considered the basic unit for the management of individuals' social and economic activities. However, although South Korean families existed as a basic unit to maintain national stability, they were not supported by society or the state.

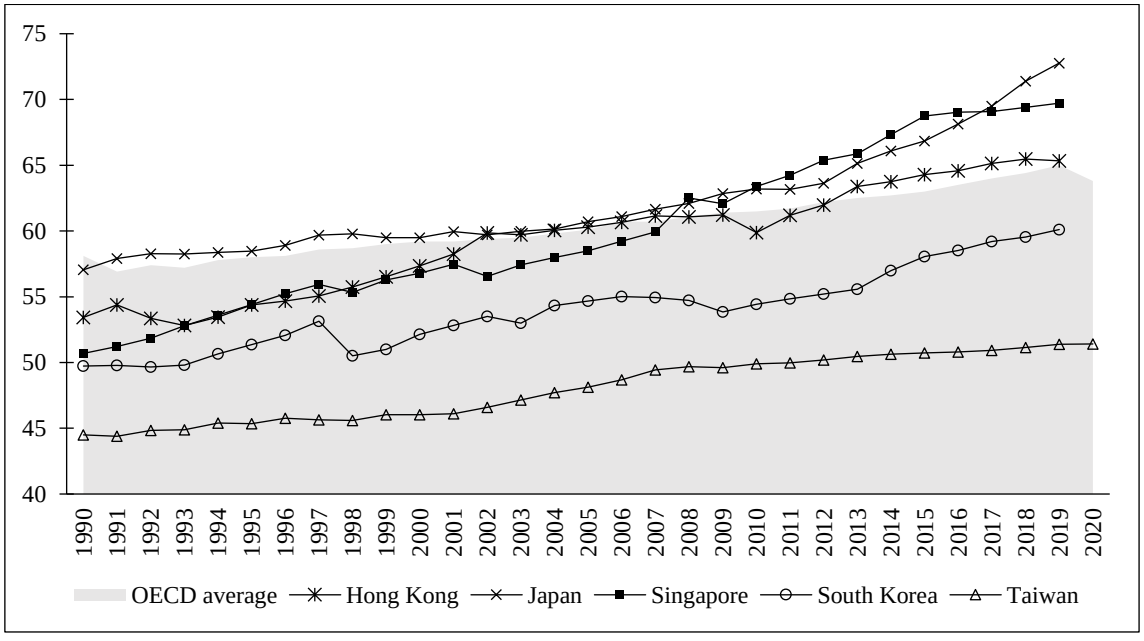
- development of democracy (*i.e.* women's increased political representation and interest in care-related issues); and
- changes in values and norms (*i.e.* the increasing importance of individualism compared to familialism in terms of lifestyle).

Among these four factors, the first two, in particular, have driven an increase in political interest for the socialisation of care in South Korea.

Increasing women's participation in the labour market

Figure 1.1 below shows changes in female labour force participation rates in East Asian countries and OECD member states since 1990. Although the increasing tendency for South Korean women to participate in the labour market is less dramatic than other countries, steady increases are observed.

Figure 1.1. Female labour force (aged 15-64) participation rates in East Asia, 1990–2019/20



Note: The Taiwanese data indicates female labour market participation rates of the population aged 15 and above, not between 15 and 64. This is due to a lack of data regarding female labour market participation rates of the productive population.

Sources: Taiwanese National Statistics (2021a); World Bank (2021a)

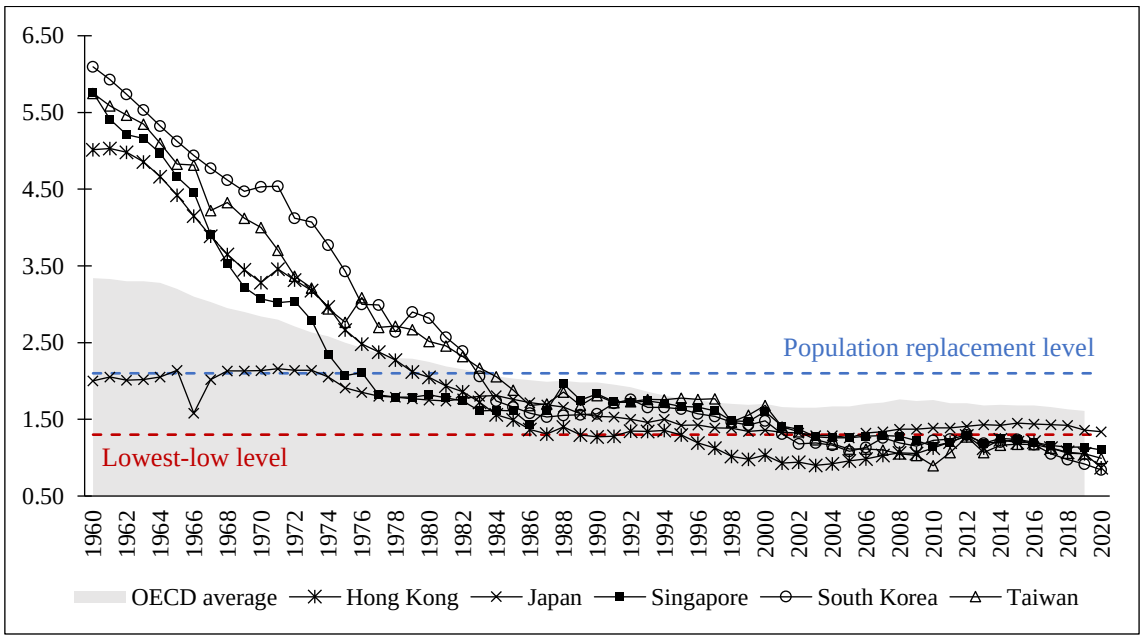
What are the factors driving these developments? The first driving force is exogenous. South Korea, much like other East Asian countries, came under increased economic globalisation pressures to liberalise markets in the 1990s, which in turn restricted the state's ability to manage the economy and sustain full employment (Peng, 2004). At the same time, South Korea was not an exception to global transitions towards a post-industrial society where labour markets are flexible and atypical and where manufacturing jobs are scarcer and service sector jobs are more plentiful (Lee, 2011). In particular, the 1997/98 Asian financial crisis and the subsequent neoliberal economic restructuring processes led by the International Monetary Fund were a decisive moment for married women's labour market participation: the power of employment security (*i.e.* securing stable employment for employees until retirement age) through a male breadwinning model declined and thus wives increasingly participated in the labour market (Peng, 2004, 2012).

Secondly, South Korean women have stopped withdrawing into housewifery after marriage due to changing norms on gender roles and family relations. These changes are explained by women's increasing educational attainments and by shifts in public attitudes towards women and work (Peng, 2004). For instance, the proportion of 25 to 34 year-old women with tertiary education rapidly increased in South Korea from 33.3% to 76.3% between 2000 and 2020, placing the country foremost among OECD member states in this aspect during the last decade (OECD, 2021b). According to a 2018 survey by the Korea Women's Development Institute, only 13.6% of 500 female respondents (aged between 24-44) disagreed to the statement that "my personal achievement is more important than marriage" (Hong *et al*. 2018: 122).

Declining fertility trends

Perhaps a more serious challenge facing South Korea and its regional neighbours is a rapid decline in fertility trends. As shown in Figure 1.2 below, South Korea once had very high total fertility rates (TFRs) (Jones *et al*., 2008).

Figure 1.2. TFR trends in East Asia, 1960–2020



Sources: Taiwanese National Statistics (2021b); World Bank (2021b)

In the 1960s, the country therefore even initiated family planning programmes as part of its economic development plan.[2] However, TFRs dwindled and rapidly reached the replacement level (2.1 children per woman) by the mid-1980s. In response, South

[2] In East Asian countries, anti-natalist policies were usually selective in the sense that birth control was encouraged only for the less-educated or for people in need. A representative example of the eugenics - based population approach can be found in Singapore where the government introduced the 'Graduate Mother Scheme' in order to give priority regarding primary school registration to children of female university graduates with at least three children (Jones *et al*., 2008; Teng and Gee, 2016). However, South Korea adopted relatively more universal anti-natalist policies in the early 1960s as part of its economic development policy. South Korea's family planning project consisted of three different measures: (1) promotion and enlightenment (*e.g.* the promulgation of poster and media campaigns and the organisation of local-level Mothers' Organisations for Family Planning); (2) rewarding (*e.g.* the provision of tax exemption for families with two children and the assignment of public housing biased in favour of couples who had permanent surgical sterilisation after having the first or second child); and (3) coercion (*e.g.* forced surgical sterilisation of people with disabilities) (Bae, 2012; Kim, 2002).

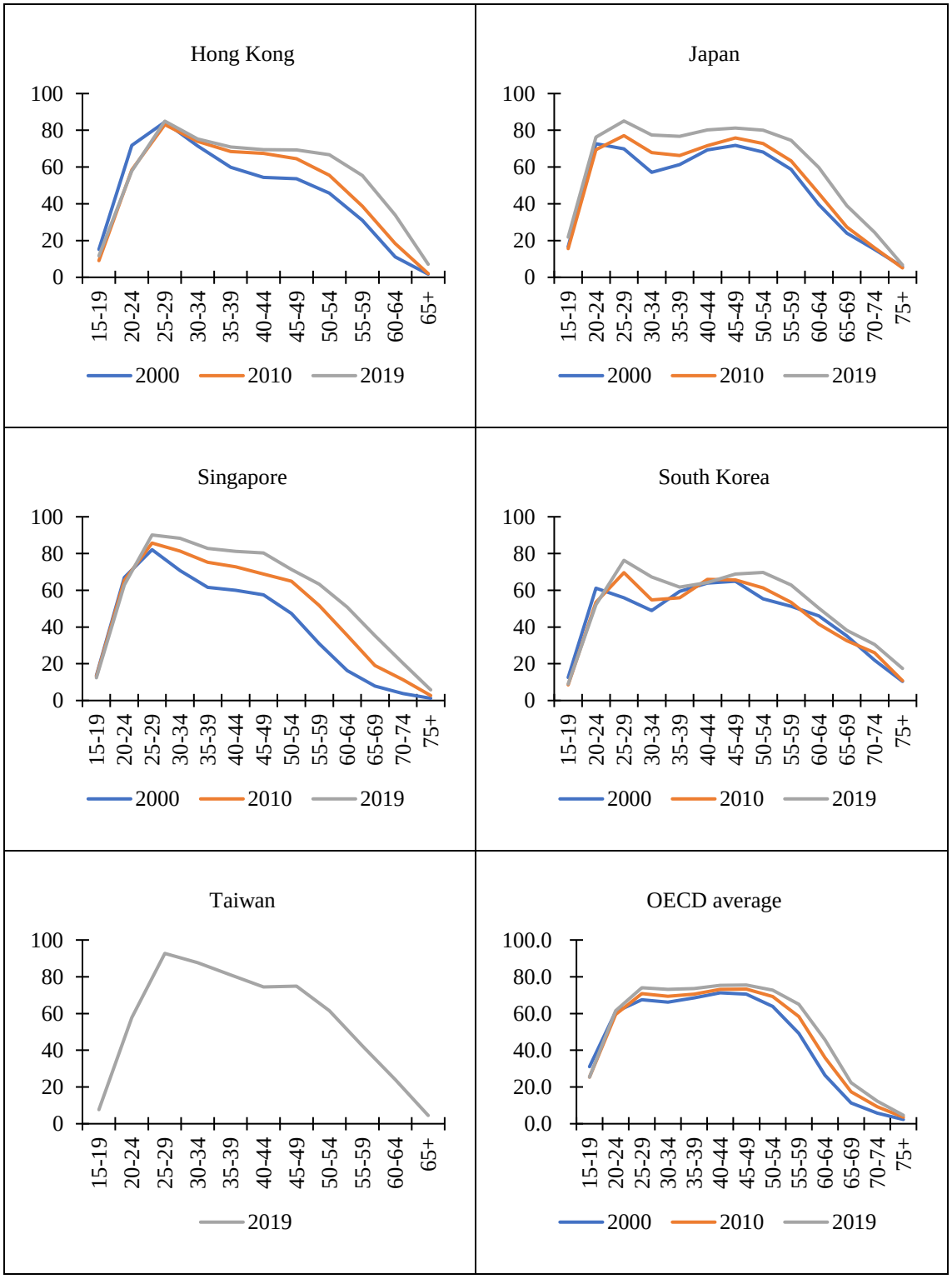
Korea abandoned its anti-natalist stance by withdrawing the provision of free contraceptive services in 1989 and officially abrogating its birth-control-centred population policy in 1996. Yet the fertility decline accelerated: in 2001, the TFR dropped below the so-called 'lowest-low level' (1.3 children per woman) (Kohler *et al.*, 2002); and since 2018, TFRs below 1.0 have been recorded. Due to the post-war baby boom and high life expectancy in the region, South Korea has been faced with more accelerated population ageing than any other part of the world.

Under-utilised female workforce in the face of rapid demographic ageing

The socioeconomic implications of rapidly declining TFRs are evident: shortage of workforces in the short term, eventually dwindling populations, an increased dependency ratio, declining economic productivity, and ultimately, the substantial weakening of the country's geopolitical position in the world.

Against this backdrop, utilising the female workforce has been seen as more important than ever before. In fact, as discussed earlier, East Asian countries have witnessed increases in the proportion of working women. Although South Korea's progress in female labour force participation is not as dramatic as its regional neighbours (particularly Japan and Singapore), one may interpret it as a weakening of the gendered division of labour at least in regard to paid employment in the public sphere. However, as Figure 1.3 below shows, a closer look at South Korean female participation in the labour market by age reveals a pattern of discontinuous female employment that sets the country apart from not only the vast majority of other advanced economies but also those from the region.

Figure 1.3. Female labour force participation rates by age groups in East Asia



Note: Hong Kong's data excludes foreign domestic helpers.

Sources: Census and Statistics Department (2021); OECD (2021c); Singapore Department of Statistics (2021)

In South Korea, female workforce participation continuously follows an M-shaped curve over the course of life, rather than the inverted U-shaped one that many advanced Western countries generally show. An M-shaped curve implies that women tend to exit the labour market at the age of marriage and childbirth and re-enter it in their 40s and 50s. Although Japan also showed a similar pattern, its once-sharp M-shaped curve has been considerably softened. South Korea's uniqueness stands out more when it is compared to other areas in the region. Unlike South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan reveal a skewed inverted V-shape pattern where women's exit from the labour market is accelerated in their late 40s or 50s, not in their late 20s or 30s. From a cross-national comparative perspective, this may be interpreted as South Korea having the strongest and most prevalent patriarchal norms that delineate mothers' childcare obligations in East Asia as well as among countries with advanced economies.

1.1.3. The rise of the idea to reshape the public-private mix of childcare

The discontinuous pattern of South Korean women's labour force participation during their childrearing age and world-leading low fertility have been considered the result of the failure of unsupportive familialism (Brinton *et al.*, 2001; Lee and Hirata, 2001; Ochiai, 2011). In particular, these intertwined social problems have been attributed to the state's heavy dependence on women for providing unpaid childcare and men for financing the family's welfare, which in turn led the country to search for policy lessons from other countries.

Here, it is important to note that the problems regarding female employment and fertility are not unique in South Korea and its regional neighbours, even though the region has experienced greater socio-demographic pressures than other parts of the world.

Indeed, the importance of state intervention to allow women to participate in the labour market without care-related career interruptions as well as to reverse low fertility trends has long been highlighted in many countries with advanced economies (particularly in Western and Scandinavian European countries). Although the specific forms of childcare arrangements are by no means identical across the countries and vary considerably within one country across different regions and/or over time, they reflected thinking that child-care should 'go public' (Anttonen and Sipilä, 2005; Daly, 2011; Daly and Ferragina; 2018; Lewis, 1998, 2009; Mahon, 2002; Rauhala, 2009).

However, South Korea's developmental and Confucian heritage has long impeded the development of state intervention in the childcare sector. Consequently, the country's childcare policy was of a private nature in two different ways. On the one side, childcare was primarily located in the private sphere of home by stay-at-home mothers or other (female) family members if both parents were working. This is because state intervention was limited to children or families in need. The clear division between the 'deserving' (*i.e.* children without appropriate familial protection due to parents' employment, ill-health, disappearance or death) and the 'undeserving' (*i.e.* children whose family member(s) can provide care) is mirrored in the early days of the country's child-related and childcare-related legislations:

> "This act intends to guarantee the healthy and happy development of children whose parents have disappeared, died, or not been able to take childcare responsibility […] by (1) admonishing the child or the child's parent(s) or legal guardian; (2) allowing child welfare workers to supervise the child or the child's parent(s) or legal guardian; (3) relegating the right to protect the child to a person who hopes to do so; and (4) enrolling the child into a childcare centre, a child rehabilitation centre, […] a centre for homeless children."
>
> – Child Welfare Act of 1961

> "This act intends to contribute to the improvement of family welfare through protection and sound education of infants and young children

> who cannot be cared for by their parents or legal guardians due to employment, disease or other reasons."
>
> – Childcare Act of 1991

On the other side, the provision of limited childcare services was also privatised in the sense that childcare services were considered private goods that parents had to purchase in the market on their own. As discussed earlier, South Korea prioritised economic development, and the role of social policies was generally subjugated to economic policy. During the period of rapid economic growth, it was natural that demands from working families for out-of-home care surged. The course of action taken by the country was to facilitate the private-led expansion of childcare services by allowing private persons to establish childcare facilities in 1968 (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2015).[3] Although childcare services (in primarily private settings) were provided only for low-income and farm or fishery households in early years due to limited capacity, the services became available for other households in 1978 if they paid the fees. In the 1990s, South Korea more actively boosted private-led childcare expansion by spending a total of approximately 1.29 trillion South Korean Won (₩) (971 million euros, €) as a loan for people who wished to establish and operate private childcare facilities (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2015).[4] The nature of these reforms further supports the non-interventionist stance that South Korea took.

Tracing more recent history, the country has witnessed a substantial weakening of the notion that childcare is a private responsibility and commodity. In the mid-2000s,

[3] This measure was removed in 1977, which in turn led to a sluggish growth of childcare facilities in the country (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2015).

[4] The budget for the expansion of childcare facilities was initially planned to be drawn from the National Pension Fund (42.7%), local governments (30.5%), the Ministry of Health and Welfare (22.5%) and the National Employment Insurance Fund (4.3%) (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2015). However, in practice, the funding was primarily transferred from the National Pension Fund and was used as a loan for individuals to establish their own private childcare facilities.

there was a tide of ideas to 'strengthen the state's responsibility for childcare', 'strengthen the public nature of childcare', or more explicitly 'strengthen childcare 'publicness' ('공공성' or '公共性' in Korean or *Hanja*; read '*kong-kong-sŏng*')'. Since then, childcare policy has been placed at the centre of social policy reform, although the country was seen as a least likely case to observe the expansion of policy support for families with children due to its deep-rooted developmentalism and Confucianism. The rapidity and scale of South Korea's childcare policy development is illustrated by the fact that it took only a decade from the first expansion of subsidised childcare services (alongside complete revision of the Childcare Act in 2004) to universalise free childcare services for all children in 2013.[5]

1.1.4. The rationale for studying South Korea as a single case

The rapidity and scale of South Korea's childcare policy expansion was not only unprecedented but also unexpected given the fact that the country was considered an archetype of the developmental and Confucian welfare regime. In light of this, it is not surprising that the country has increasingly been chosen as a critical case by researchers who intend to compare child/elderly care policy constellations and outcomes in different countries (*e.g.* An, 2013; An and Peng, 2016; Chau and Yu, 2012; Chau *et al.*, 2017; Saraceno, 2016) or explain the driving force(s) behind the rapid expansion of its public childcare support (*e.g.* Estévez-Abe and Kim, 2014; Estévez-Abe and Naldini, 2016; Fleckenstein and Lee, 2014, 2017b, 2017c; Lee, 2017; Peng, 2015). Against this backdrop, this section briefly revisits empirical findings suggested by existing studies on South

[5] 'Free childcare' ('*mu-sang-po-yuk*' in Korean) does not mean that the services are completely free of charge. Parents are still charged necessary expenses (for extra-curricular activities, learning and play materials and others) within the price ceiling prescribed by the Mayor/Provincial Governor.

Korea, problematises them, and provides a rationale for studying the country as a single case.

Some existing studies understand South Korea's rapid expansion in policy support for families and children through the lens of the familialism-defamilisation continuum. This is not surprising given the fact that these concepts have been widely employed in the family policy literature, especially in comparative studies that describe variations in policy constellations across different countries or analyse the results of policies for work-family life balance (Zagel and Lohmann, 2021). Before I explore how these concepts have been applied to explain South Korea's childcare development and what has been found, it is important to briefly revisit their conceptual originations and meanings.

The twin concepts of familialism and defamilisation (or defamilialisation) stem from feminist scholars who criticised Esping-Andersen's (1990) tripartite regime approach and its central concept of decommodification, suggesting gender-specific dimensions to analyse the foundations of European welfare states (Saraceno, 2016). One of the earliest works that explicitly coined the concept of defamilisation was from Lister (1994). In her analysis, defamilisation was conceptualised as "the degree to which individual adults can uphold a socially acceptable standard of living, independently of family relationships, either through paid work or through the social security system" (p. 37). A similar early work on this concept was undertaken by McLaughlin and Glendinning (1994: 65), who defined it as "the extent to which [people] can uphold an acceptable standard of living independently of the (patriarchal) family". Both studies underlined that *before* women could participate in employment on equal terms with men, they needed to first be freed from household duties and caring responsibilities, although McLaughlin and Glendinning did not put a clear emphasis on economic independence.

In response to feminist critiques, Esping-Andersen (1999: 51) suggested that "the concept of defamilisation parallels the concept of decommodification" although his usage of this concept with feminist origin was not explicitly acknowledged. Putting the family front stage, Esping-Andersen used the presence and absence of familial obligations as the reference point to distinguish between 'familialistic' and 'defamilising' welfare regimes. In his work, a familialistic system referred to "one that assigns a maximum of welfare obligation to the household", whereas defamilising policies were those that "lessen individuals' reliance on the family [and] maximise individuals' command of economic resources independently of familial or conjugal reciprocities" (1999: 45). Although "the radical edge [of defamilisation as a concept, which was initially linked to relations of dominance and dependence in families] was blunted with his usage" (Orloff, 2009: 320), Esping-Andersen's conceptualisation gained popularity.

Existing studies on South Korea's childcare policy expansion also rest on Esping-Andersen's conceptualisation of familisation/defamilisation. In order to pick up on real policy trends, some of them distinguished different pathways (*i.e.* state-led or market-led) of defamilisation (Saraceno, 2016; see also Ochiai, 2009) or analysed the familisation/ defamilisation policies in regard to service, time and money dimensions (An and Peng, 2016). Nevertheless, the existing studies used the framework to explain the extent to which the care responsibility of the family for young children has been reduced by public policies. From this perspective, South Korea's childcare policy development was described as 'quick, bold and dramatic' (Estévez-Abe and Kim, 2014: 669; Estévez-Abe and Naldini, 2016: 328), 'moving towards greater defamili[sation]' (Saraceno, 2016: 324), or even '[a] bolder policy shift turning [childcare] into [a] new social right' (Estévez-Abe

et al., 2016: 306) and 'the transformation of the East Asian developmental welfare state' (Fleckenstein and Lee, 2017b: 266; see also Fleckenstein and Lee, 2017c).

One issue with using the familisation/defamilisation lens is that it leads researchers to focus on state-family relations. However, as Daly and Lewis (2000: 282) emphasised, 'care going public' is not straightforward: this process is located at the intersection of public and private (in regard to not only state/family but also state/market); formal and informal; paid and unpaid provision; and provision in the form of cash and services. This means that there are many complexities involved in the care of children: to what extent can state intervention into the functioning of the family as a whole (as well as the behaviours of individual members of the family) be justified? To what extent should the state delimit or extend families' childcare obligations? If childcare services are expanded in order to delimit familial care obligations, should the state provide them directly or fund non-state providers (for-profit or not-for-profit), or simply regulate their market delivery? If familial responsibility for childcare is extended, who should be provided financial compensation and what is the optimal level of it?

A closer look at how childcare responsibilities have been shared with the society in South Korea reveals a complicated picture of the interactions among the three pillars of the 'welfare triangle': the family, the state and the market. Whilst increasing public spending on subsidising childcare services and the resulting increases in families using them is often understood as defamilisation, this process has been accompanied by two forms of privatisation in South Korea. One is 'marketisation': private, for-profit childcare providers (mostly individuals rather than corporations) are responsible for the delivery of publicly subsidised childcare services. This is because regular infusion of public funding into childcare made it a lucrative business, thereby encouraging further market growth.

The other is what I may call ‘domiciliary defamilisation’: publicly funded childcare services are provided in home-based settings by mushrooming numbers of childminders or family daycare providers who are likely to provide low-quality and informal services (for a similar discussion on defamilisation in home settings, see Vandenbroeck *et al.*, 2016). For example, in the early and mid-2010s, more than a half of childcare facilities in the country were home-based.

Additionally, in more recent years, cash transfers for at-home childcare have been on the rise. South Korea’s first child-related cash benefits date back to 2009 when monthly homecare allowances were introduced for parents not using publicly funded childcare services. Initially, ₩100,000–200,000 (€75-150) of homecare allowances were provided only for low-income households with young children. However, in 2013, the allowances became available for all pre-school children regardless of household income levels. Since then, some feminist scholars and activists have critically argued that gender discriminative homecare allowances should be replaced with universal child benefits. Although child benefits were introduced in 2018, homecare allowances survived. From January 2022, families with young children aged up to 2 became entitled to receive ₩300,000 (€226) of new monthly infant benefits if they took care of their children at home instead of using publicly funded childcare services. Additionally, for all new-born babies, ₩2,000,000 (€1,505) of childbirth grants also became available as a lump sum in the form of vouchers.

These development pathways imply that South Korea’s reform to strengthen the state’s responsibility for childcare has taken place in tandem with reinforcing the private nature of childcare: marketisation and domiciliary defamilisation of childcare services as well as (re)familisation of childcare through increasing cash support in more recent years.

This is arguably due to the interplay and friction between different policy aims and interests, which are regulated by underpinning fundamental values of the welfare/societal regime and by the form and constellations of economic and political institutions. Although the country seems to have abandoned its non-interventionist stance, these patterns reflect some continuation of dominant policy legacies where the market and the family played key roles in the provision of childcare. Thus, this thesis selects South Korea as a critical case for investigating complexities in childcare going public in contemporary welfare states in the face of deepening socio-demographic crises.

1.1.5. Overarching research question

Overall, South Korea's childcare policy reform has resulted in expanding the state's role primarily as a financier of market delivery of childcare services and familial provision of childcare despite the idea of strengthening the state's responsibility for childcare. Thus, one overall question that this thesis addresses is:

> *Why have South Korea's childcare policy reforms to strengthen the state's responsibility for childcare taken the path of a limited role for the state and a high degree of private provision and responsibility?*

1.2. Approach to answering the research question

Policies for families and children have only recently enjoyed greater attention from welfare state theorists. This does not mean that studies on these policies were completely absent. Rather, there were several early attempts to understand the main contours of family policy and cross-national differences in the configurations of policies for families and children, such as the works of Kamerman and Kahn (1978, 1982, 1997), Gauthier

(1996) and Hantrais (1999). Whilst the nature and content of the policies was comprehensively compared, how they are made has not been placed at the centre of welfare state studies.

This relative lack of scholarly attention is related to the fact that the conventional empirical basis of explanations for welfare state development was often concentrated on social programmes such as employment protection and social security matters, before policies for families and children began to expand (Woods, 2012). To understand this, it is helpful to consider some dominant theorisations of the welfare state as a whole, and especially the structural-functionalist and power resources approaches.

The structural-functionalist approach understands the welfare state as the outcome of increasing societal demands at a certain stage of industrialisation or modernisation (Wilensky and Lebeaux, 1965; Kerr *et al*., 1973). Industrialisation in this account is seen to diminish the functional capacity of the traditional institutions—namely, the family and community (Daly, 2000). The industrial workers, who become unable to work due to their ill-health and old age (*i.e.* old social risks) without appropriate support, need a new form of security from the state; and the industrialisation-induced economic surplus allows the state to fulfil these new demands (*ibid.*). Recently, this thesis is also used to explain the restructuring of post-industrial welfare states in the face of so-called 'new social risks', such as changes in family life and work patterns (*e.g.* Taylor-Gooby, 2005). Whilst this theory allows researchers to explain why and how South Korea's deepening socio-demographic pressures have led to the emergence of a more childcare-oriented state than other parts of the world, this functionalist argument encounters difficulties in fully explaining the specific direction of how childcare policy reforms unfolded.

The power resources approach builds on the Marxist theories that understand the welfare state emergence through the lens of class conflicts between capitalists who have control over the means of production and wage-earners who have human capital as power resources (Korpi, 1980, 1998). Although the working class's power resources (*e.g*. labour power, occupational skills and education) are clearly important, they are not as powerful as money and physical capital because in addition to not being scarce they can neither be preserved well over time nor be concentrated to a very high degree (Korpi, 1998: 44). The main way to influence politics and the outcomes of redistributive policies is to collectivise their needs (*e.g*. through trade unions) and to vote for social democratic or pro-labour parties in order to increase their incumbency (Esping-Andersen, 1985). Thus, the emergence and expansion of the welfare state in this approach is the product of the 'democratic class struggle' (Korpi, 1983) or 'politics against markets' (Esping-Andersen, 1985). In pre-democratic South Korea, the authoritarian state thwarted the national- and industrial-level formation of collective actions of workers, which in turn kept their political leverage low (Yang, 2017). Under the authoritarian regime, political parties with a leftist orientation were obviously not permitted to run in elections (*ibid.*). Although trade union movements have become more active since the democratic shift in 1987, the unionisation rates are still very low, women remain substantially underrepresented in union leadership, and union activities have been focused more on the issues of precarious employment and wage gains than on family-related matters that are often seen as 'feminine' issues (Yoon *et al*., 2019).[6] Additionally, leftist parties have a continuously weak presence in the National Assembly, whilst the rapid expansion of childcare support between the late 2000s and the early 2010s was made under conservative administrations.

[6] South Korea's unionisation rates (*i.e.* the proportion of the number of net union members out of the total number of employees) were 14.6% in 1981 and 11.6% in 2018 (OECD, 2021d).

Hence, the power resources theory can hardly account for South Korea's recent childcare expansion, although the underdevelopment of social policies (including those for families and children) until the 2000s may be explained by the weak power resources that the country had.

Conventional welfare theories such as the above have been infrequently employed in studies that aim to elucidate the development of policies for families and children as they do not allow researchers to fully capture the complexities behind this process. Therefore, the existing family policy scholarship has adopted institutional, ideational or pluralist approaches more often—or blended them—to understand policy outcomes (*e.g.* Blum, 2010; Bonoli and Reber, 2010; Häusermann and Kübler, 2010; Kuebler, 2007; Mätzke and Ostner, 2010; Woods, 2012 to cite a few). Existing studies on South Korea's childcare policy reforms also generally place their analytical foci on the institutional structure (*e.g.* Estévez-Abe and Kim, 2014; Estévez-Abe and Naldini, 2016), political competition (*e.g.* Fleckenstein and Lee, 2017c; Lee, 2017) or ideational shifts towards a social investment state (*e.g.* Fleckenstein and Lee, 2017b; Peng, 2015).

In order to craft a sufficient explanation for childcare policy developments of interest, this thesis incorporates insights from the ideational scholarship and institutionalism and focuses on the interplays between ideas, policy actors (as their 'hosts' or 'carriers') and institutions. The following sections review, tailor and integrate these bodies of literature in order to build an overarching theoretical framework for this research project.

1.2.1. Ideas as a source of policy change

The fundamental starting point of this research's theoretical framework is that ideas do matter (Blyth, 2001, 2002; Béland, 2005, 2007; 2009; Lieberman, 2002). This is because

South Korea's rapid childcare policy expansion began with the emergence of the idea of strengthening the state's responsibility for childcare (or childcare publicness). Although the literature on ideational approaches to the making of policy can generally be considered nascent, ideas were initially a part of pluralist and institutional approaches. An assumption in those latter approaches was that the actors' aims and the institutionally structured strategies are embedded in ideas. However, this assumption was unspoken and taken for granted, and ideas were therefore not placed at the heart of explanations for policy change until very recently.

What, then, are ideas? Despite the increased attention to the subject, the concept still remains vague as there are too many ideas about ideas. For Goldstein and Keohane (1993), ideas are switches for interests, roadmaps or focal points. For Blyth (2002), ideas are something that provides agents with a both scientifically and normatively interpretive account of the existing economy and polity and a vision of how these elements should be constructed. For some other scholars, ideas are narratives that shape understandings of events (Roe, 1994), frames of reference (Jobert, 1989), and the substantive content of discourse (Schmidt, 2008). As such, ideas range from beliefs and norms to frames, narratives and discourses.

Whilst the concept remains contested, the most widely applied conceptualisation is probably that of understanding ideas as beliefs (Béland and Cox, 2011; Goldstein and Keohane, 1993; Sabatier, 1998; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993; Schmidt, 2008). This conceptualisation involves three main discrete dimensions. Firstly, ideas are products of cognition in the sense that they are produced only through our perception and subjective interpretations of surroundings. Secondly, ideas posit connections between particular sets of 'inputs' and 'outputs'; that is to say, ideas suggest that one particular event is respon-

sible for causing a series of successive events. Finally, ideas also guide agents' thinking processes about how to address perceived problems. Here, the devised solution can be based on causal beliefs (*i.e.* 'what works') or principled beliefs (*i.e.* 'what is right'). Taken together, ideas include both cognitive beliefs about 'what is the case' and perspective, normative beliefs about 'what should be done' (Rueschemeyer and Skocpol, 1996: 300).

This conceptualisation of ideas remains ambiguous and general, in addition to purporting some issues in capturing several important aspects and features that ideas possess. A potentially more accessible approach to defining ideas for policy is provided by Mehta (2011) who suggests three distinguishable levels of ideas in regard to the function that they perform by drawing on the existing ideational literature, including Kingdon (1984) and Hall (1993): ideas as public philosophy, ideas as problem definitions, and ideas as policy solutions.[7]

Ideas in the broadest conception are public philosophy, which is a fundamental view about the relationship between the state and society as well as between the government and the governed. *Zeitgeist*, which is defined as "a disparate set of cultural, social or economic assumptions that are overwhelmingly dominant in public discourse at a given moment in time", can also be seen as ideas at this level (p. 40).[8] Both public philosophy and *Zeitgeist* are meta-ideas, which are voiced by key policy actors but also the general public. They are generally not open to criticism at least in a particular historical moment.

At a narrower level, ideas become an important part of the policymaking process by virtue of the fact that they serve as problem definitions (*e.g.* Blumer, 1971; Hall, 1993;

[7] It should be noted that a similar understanding of ideas as consisting of three/four different levels has been suggested by many other scholars: Berman's (1998) specific policy, a programmatic belief and a general philosophy; Campbell's (1998, 2002) programmes, paradigms, frames, and public sentiments; and Sabatier and Weible's (2007) deep core beliefs, policy core beliefs, and secondary beliefs.

[8] Similar concepts were suggested in a number of existing studies, such as 'world views' (Goldstein and Keohane, 1993), 'wider societal concerns' (Rhinard, 2010), 'national mood' (Kingdon, 1984) and 'public sentiment' (Campbell, 1998).

Kingdon, 1984; Spector and Kitsuse, 1997; see also Béland, 2016). Indeed, a large part of political struggles over policy is an exchange over problem definition: once a particular problem definition becomes dominant in mainstream policy discourses, policy solutions that are not consistent with such a way of understanding the problem are excluded. In doing so, ideas help reduce the complexity of the reality. Mehta (2011: 34) referred to this process as 'naming, blaming and claiming' in which certain issues are focused and named, a causal agent is identified and blamed, and claims for corrective actions are called.

Finally, at both the narrowest and the most theoretically developed level, for Mehta (2011), ideas play an important role in the policymaking process as specific policy solutions. Some key questions for looking at ideas as policy solutions include why an idea becomes more influential at certain time periods, what determines the persuasiveness of ideas as policy solutions, and more importantly, why some ideas become policy whilst others remain in the periphery of policy discourses—namely, "what makes an idea's time come" to use Kingdon's (1984) expression (see also Berman, 2001).

What are the ideas in this research? At the most fundamental level, ideas refer to causal and normative beliefs about whether the state's responsibility for childcare should be strengthened or not. As discussed above, this idea is an outcome of an increasingly shared perception between state actors and the general public that the lack of state support for childcare is responsible for the low labour force participation rates of women (especially in their marriage and childbearing age), and more importantly, rapidly dropping TFRs. Applying Mehta's theoretical categorisation of ideas, the idea of strengthening the state's childcare responsibility could be seen as a new *Zeitgeist* given that it is widely shared in the South Korean society and rarely challenged. It has replaced the old *Zeitgeist*

that men and women are solely responsible for raising a child based on their secured positions in the society as breadwinners and caretakers, respectively.

However, within this new prevailing philosophy, there are various versions of specific policy solutions to the defined problems. These policy ideas vary with regard to the appropriate intersection of public and private as well as formal and informal provision of childcare. Whilst the idea of strengthening the state's childcare responsibility is socially and politically accepted, specific problem definitions and policy solutions are open to discussion. This is because they are not pre-established but actively constructed by policy actors in a particular setting. These levels of ideas are the arena where political struggles and cooperation among policy actors occur such that they can influence the specific direction of policymaking; and this is why ideas as problem definitions and policy solutions will be placed at the centre of the investigation in this thesis.

One important question arises here: what led to policy ideas (oriented towards strengthening the state's role in financing the market delivery of childcare services and the familial provision of childcare) becoming adopted? The following two sections will address this by elucidating how ideas interact with other factors in order to be translated into policy.

1.2.2. Policy actors

To the question of what makes particular ideas succeed, ideational scholars point out the characteristics intrinsic to the idea itself. For instance, Schmidt (2002: 219) claims that ideas should be relevant (*i.e.* accurately identifying the problems that need to be tackled), applicable (*i.e.* showing how exactly the identified problem will be solved) and coherent (*i.e.* making the concepts, norms, methods and instruments of the suggested solution

coherent) (see also Carstensen and Schmidt, 2016). In contrast, other scholars have argued that ideas with a high level of polysemy and multi-interpretability are more likely to become influential and a reality (Béland and Cox, 2016).

However, perhaps most importantly, the success of a particular policy idea is affected by who carries it, namely, the authority and credibility of the carriers (Béland, 2009; Hajer, 1995; Kingdon, 1984). This is because, as argued by Risse-Kappen (1994), "ideas do not float freely"; instead, policy problems and solutions are discursively constructed by policy actors and can 'link up with politics' through them. As many scholars noted, the greater political leverage the idea's carrier holds, the more likely it is that the idea is considered important and translated into policy outcome (Béland, 2009; Hansen and King, 2001; Sikkink, 1991).

One of the most influential actors in South Korea's childcare policymaking (and the making of other social policy areas) is the President, whose authority comes from his or her right to appoint and dismiss cabinet members and senior bureaucrats as well as to set major policy agenda in accordance with election pledges (Estévez-Abe and Kim, 2014). Such legal prerogatives are the legacy of an authoritarian political heritage (Yang, 2017).

Among other state actors, bureaucrats have typically benefitted from having greater authority (Choi and Choi, 2017). Although they should follow the policy direction set by the president and ruling party, individual civil servants are the ones who specify policy initiatives and coordinate different interests. Unlike the president and political parties, it has been said that bureaucrats often prioritise the feasibility of policy ideas over their desirability based on the source of their own expertise and knowledge provided by diverse government think tanks (Aberbach *et al*., 1981). However, bureaucracy is not a unitary,

cohesive entity with internally coherent ideas (Allison and Halperin, 1972). Rather, bureaucratic agencies substantially differ in regard to ideologies, policy preferences and interests and therefore may conflict with one other. In the South Korean context, economic bureaucrats (namely, those who are affiliated with the Ministry of Economy and Finance) enjoy particularly robust authority. The economic bureaucrats' power and authority derives from budgetary decision-making processes in which they set macro-level allocation of national budget for major policy areas—ranging from national defence and economic development to social welfare—according to the Mid-/Long-Term Plan on Fiscal Management (that they set up and promulgate every five fiscal years) (Yang, 2017). The control that the Ministry of Economy and Finance holds over the country's fiscal management goes almost unchallenged because even the National Assembly is not constitutionally allowed to adjust the budget without prior agreement with the ministry (*ibid.*). Social bureaucrats thus tend to have weak bargaining power to negotiate a programme budget with their economic counterparts.

Whilst the Office of the President and bureaucrats have been bestowed with the power to control policymaking processes in South Korea (particularly during the authoritarian era), political parties have played a minimal role in the country's welfare politics. This goes contrary to the experience of Western countries where political parties have played a prominent role in the development and transformation of welfare states (*e.g.* Castles, 1978; Esping-Andersen, 1985; Hibbs, 1977; Korpi, 1983). As social class voting has been weakened, the recent literature has increasingly focused on Western countries' experiences in regard to how political parties seek potentially popular issues, perceive the competitive presence of others, and adjust their traditional platform in order to maximise voter mobilisation (*e.g.* Green-Pedersen, 2007; Kayser and Wlezien, 2011).

In South Korea, after the transition to democracy in 1987, the party-voter linkage became important. However, it should be noted that, unlike in Western welfare states, South Korean parties relied heavily on their charismatic leaders who had an unshakable regional stronghold for mobilising financial and political support from voters rather than introducing distinctive policy ideas (Mo, 2001). For election victory, the leaders put an emphasis on their regional identity. According to Kim (2000), the strong presence of regionalism in party politics derived from Confucian familialism that made individuals consider their home region as one large family sharing the same identity.

However, since the beginning of the 21st century, South Korea has witnessed political parties emerging as key carriers of policy ideas and the National Assembly becoming an arena where ideas are shared, disseminated and coordinated. According to Lee (2017), this was made possible by the emergence of young generations in their 20s and 30s, who, unlike older generations, showed a greater concern for welfare issues, which in turn triggered parties to move policy issue to the heart of their election campaigns. In particular, Lee emphasised that the increased political importance of young female voters (who have strong voting preferences towards policies affecting their employment and work-family life balance), has placed ECEC-related issues at the centre of social policy reforms (see also Fleckenstein and Lee, 2017c).

Alongside the democratic breakthrough in the late 1980s and the improved presence of political parties in welfare politics, the authority of non-state actors—such as pro-welfare non-governmental organisations (NGOs), women's organisations, interest groups and trade unions, as well as expert communities—has also been empowered (Peng, 2012; Peng and Wong, 2008). The civil society organisations in particular, which were suppressed by the authoritarian governments for the sake of economic development, began

to exert more political leverage in childcare policymaking processes under the centre-left Roh Moo-hyun government (03/2003–02/2008) that emphasised participatory democracy. This was made possible because the Roh government appointed some pro-welfare and feminist activists to senior positions in the Office of the President, ministries and other administrative agencies (Estévez-Abe and Kim, 2014; Jung, 2014; Kim and Kim, 2014; Shin and Chang, 2011).

These diverse state and societal actors, with different childcare policy preferences, actively engage in the discursive construction of policy problems and solutions. As noted earlier, the idea is more likely to become politically influential when it interacts with politically powerful actors. However, the political leverage of the policy actors is not fixed. Whilst the power of policy ideas depends on their carriers' political or expert authority, ideas also enable actors to frame solutions to policy problems in a more broadly appealing manner, to mobilise supporters and build coalitions, thereby strengthening the political leverage of their carriers (Béland and Cox, 2016; Campbell, 1998; Hajer, 1995).

1.2.3. Institutional contexts of policymaking

Ideas do not enter a political 'vacuum', nor do they exist in an institutional 'void' (Béland, 2009; Campbell, 2002; Sikkink, 1991). The interactions between ideas and policy actors also take place within a particular institutional setting. Indeed, as a number of existing studies highlight, institutions undoubtedly matter in shaping the translation of ideas into policy outcome (*e.g.* Campbell, 2002; Béland, 2009; Berman, 2001).

What, then, are institutions? Although it is widely accepted in political and policy research that institutions matter, there is no consensus on what they actually are. The definitions of institutions are as diverse as those of ideas. According to North (1990: 3),

institutions are broadly defined as "the rules of the game in a society, or more formally, the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction".[9] Here, the constraints can be both formal (*e.g.* laws, rules and regulations that human beings devise and can gradually change) and informal and unwritten (*e.g.* societal norms and values, conventions and codes of behaviour that hardly change). In a similar vein, Hall and Taylor (1996: 6) also define institutions as "formal and informal procedures, routines, norms and conventions embedded in the organisational structure of the polity of political economy".

However, the conceptualisation above still lacks specificity and blurs the boundary between ideas and institutions. The confusion regarding what institutions are and what they are not stems from different varieties of institutionalism. In the school of rational choice institutionalism, institutions are seen as something that gives a specific incentive structure for actors (North, 1990; see also Olsson, 2016). For sociological institutionalists, institutions are viewed as including "symbol systems, cognitive scripts, and moral templates that provide the 'frames of meaning' guiding human action" (Hall and Taylor, 1996: 14). In contrast, historical institutionalists delimit the scope of institutions to more formal settings. For instance, Hall (1992: 96) conceptualised institutions as "the formal rules, compliance procedures, and customary practices that structure the relationship between individuals in the polity and economy". Compared to the other two schools of new institutionalism, the historical strand pays particular attention to how institutions can function as legacies or historically embedded paths, which create a path-dependent policy change by significantly narrowing the scope of possible options for the change (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010). This is mirrored well in Sewell's (1996: 262ff.) point that "what has hap-

[9] Similarly, March and Olsen (1984) also viewed institutions as inclusive of not only political structures but also informal arrangements, such accepted behavioural expectations and norms.

pened at an earlier point in time will affect the possible outcome of a sequence of events occurring at a later point in time".

In summary, an institution cannot be defined as a monolithic entity. As noted earlier, institutions range from the regularity of interactions among actors and particular norms to a constitutional or programmatic subsystem of society and some group or organisation (Farkas, 2019). Nonetheless, institutions commonly produce some level of a "stable, valued, recurring pattern of behaviour" and therefore offer predictability to human behaviours (Huntington, 1968: 12). Institutions are also commonly characterised by some stickiness and inertia which restrict the capability of actors to dismiss them.

In this thesis, the conceptualisation of institutions primarily rests on the historical school of institutionalism. More specifically, institutions and their interactions with ideas and policy actors are understood as follows. Firstly, institutions are the *formal structure* in the government and wider political system, such as the division of responsibility within the government and the electoral system. This form of institutions matters as they affect the level of authority that policy actors and their ideas hold, the amount of information and other types of resources that they enjoy, and the degree of accessibility that they have to key decision-making venues.

Secondly, institutions are treated as *reflections of power structure*. Due to the unequal distribution of power, the agreement or disagreement of some actors matters more than that of others. A relevant concept here is veto players, namely, "individual or collective actor(s) whose agreement is required for a policy decision" (Tsebelis, 1995: 293). In an institutional setting where veto players favouring the *status quo* are strong, a new idea is less likely to cause a dramatic policy change; rather, new policy elements are likely to be attached to existing institutions without wholly replacing them (*i.e.* layering) or exist-

ing institutions are likely to be neglected and lose their intended effects due to changes in external conditions (*i.e.* drift) (Béland, 2007; Hacker, 2004; Mahoney and Thelen, 2010; Thelen, 2003, 2004).

Lastly, institutions in this thesis also refer to *policy legacies*, namely, the patterns of prior government intervention. As briefly discussed earlier, institutions as policy legacies narrow the scope of possible options for policy change. To put it differently, institutions determine the 'fit' of a new idea and thereby affect its transformation into policy outcome. This can also be interpreted as ideas developing along the institutionally embedded path. On the one hand, this may have to do with the fact that policymakers customarily work within a taken-for-granted framework that prescribes the definition of a problem and the kind of policy instruments that need to be deployed to solve the identified issue (Hall, 1993). On the other hand, this may be related to the fact that creating new policies (which completely differ from the previous intervention) requires a lot of time and resources and therefore seems risky and inefficient (Pierson, 2000; Weir and Skocpol, 1985).

1.2.4. An integrated framework

The discussion above outlines the three important analytical elements in this thesis: ideas, actors as carriers of ideas, and institutions in politics and policymaking. This points to the need for me to fit the pieces of the puzzle together to clarify the articulation of the core elements of the integrated framework within the childcare policy context.

The theoretical reasoning in relation to ideas is as follows. Firstly, ideas contribute to the problem definition by, for example, bringing particular social and political construction of childcare-related issues to the policy agenda, such as declining fertility, low

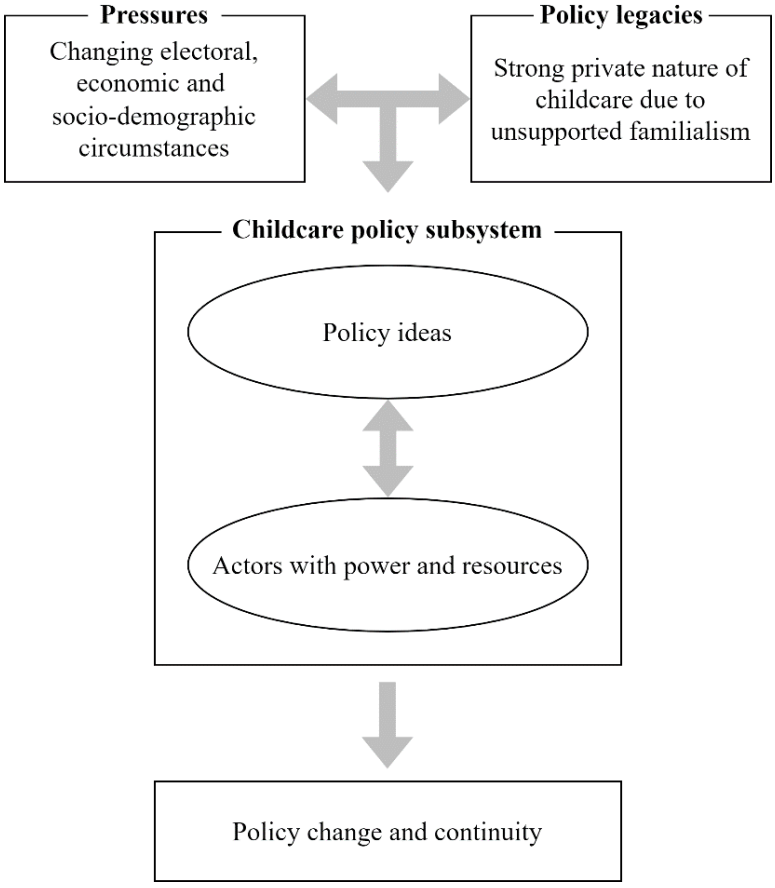
female employment and gender inequality (*i.e.* ideas as *problem definitions*). Secondly, ideas provide a set of assumptions about the functioning of economic, social and political institutions as well as the state-market-family interplay and gender relations, and thereby contribute to the formation of policy solutions (*i.e.* ideas as *roadmaps*). Thirdly, ideas are utilised to frame solutions to policy problems in normatively persuasive and acceptable terms (*i.e.* ideas as *frames*) and thus help the formation of a coalition sharing the same storyline of what the problem is and what should be done (*i.e.* ideas as *coalition magnets*).

Childcare policy ideas do not float by themselves and need to be carried by actors whose capabilities to facilitate or frustrate a policy change differ greatly due to the power structure. The key actors in South Korea's childcare policymaking include the President and his or her office, the administrative (*e.g.* the Ministry of Economy and Finance, Health and Welfare, and Gender Equality and Family), bureaucratic agencies (*e.g.* the Presidential Committee on Ageing Society and Population Policy), political parties, government sponsored think tanks (*e.g.* the Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs, the Korea Institute of Child Care and Education, and the Korea Women's Development Institute) and academic scholars, women's groups, social welfare advocacy organisations, trade unions, and the organised interest groups representing privately operated childcare facilities. Other than these key stakeholders, some individual or organisational actors in the field of pre-school education—such as those running kindergartens and teaching there—and many other social policy subsystems may also be influential in the childcare policymaking process. However, they are excluded from the analysis, as this thesis is focused on childcare policy and its key players.

Although the existing evidence suggests that these diverse key policy actors may share a common belief that the state's responsibility for childcare should be strengthened,

they are likely to promote different policy solutions. The politics surrounding the specific direction of childcare policy is influenced by changing electoral, economic and socio-demographic circumstances, and policy legacies where the market and the family played key roles in the provision of childcare. This is also simultaneously shaped by how well actors make sense of the circumstances and legacies to garner support for their policy preferences, and how well they play the game within the political and institutional opportunities and constraints—for example, by identifying the right point of entry into the policymaking process and organising political mobilisation that suits its particular institutional foundations (Baumgartner and Bryan, 1993; Wong, 2004). The interplay among actors, ideas and institutions in the politics of policymaking can be presented as in Figure 1.4.

Figure 1.4. Overarching theoretical framework of this thesis



1.3. Research design

This thesis takes the form of four papers. Taken as a whole, these papers can be considered as forming two parts. In the first part (consisting of the first two papers), it undertakes analyses of *how* childcare policy reforms have taken place in South Korea. The focus of this first part is on illustrating the changes and continuities in the three fundamental parameters of family-related and child-related policy configurations: the philosophy of the welfare state, the role of the family and the orientation of gender relations (Daly, 2010a). More specifically, the first paper investigates the development of the public-private mix of childcare as a result of policy reforms. The second paper 'works backwards' in the sense that it examines the discursive construction of policy problems behind the policy reforms.

The second part of this thesis consists of two papers that contain more explanatory analyses of *why* the reforms to strengthen the state's responsibility for childcare have taken the path of a limited role for the state and a high degree of private provision and responsibility. By focusing on the interactions among actors, ideas, and institutions in childcare policymaking, the third and fourth papers pay particular attention to two key policy episodes, respectively: the politics of childcare service provision and the politics surrounding the expansion of child-related cash benefits, especially those for children cared for at home.

1.3.1. Methodology

As four individual papers constitute the empirical analysis of this thesis, the precise methods of analysis utilised in each paper are guided by the specific research questions pursued and how they address the overarching question which, as stated above, asks why

South Korea's childcare policy reforms have taken the path of a limited role for the state and a high degree of private provision and responsibility. The overall project is methodologically unified in the sense that it employs a single-case study of South Korea's childcare policy reforms.

According to George and Bennet (2005: 5), the case study method is characterised by a "detailed examination of an aspect of a historical episode to develop or test historical explanation that may be generalisable to other events". Whilst a comparative small-*N* case study inevitably results in diluting the in-depth character of the inquiry, a single-case study has great potential to contribute to a causal analysis and offers a thick description of the case—if it is guided by well-developed theoretical expectations "with comparative awareness and [has] a longer time span of investigation" (Rueschemeyer *et al.*, 1992: 33; see also Gerring, 2004). In fact, a case is not restricted to a single observation upon which conclusions are drawn. Rather, as Mahoney wrote (2003: 360), a case study involves "examining multiple features of what was originally considered only a single case". To put it differently, a case study is a thorough, comprehensive and detailed investigation of a single entity, which *de facto* commonly consists of several cases or observation units. Hence, a single case study should not simply be considered $N = 1$.

As discussed earlier, South Korea was chosen as a critical case for understanding the interplay among actors, ideas and institutions in the politics of the public-private childcare mix in the 21st century. More specifically, such an interplay is empirically investigated through the analysis of two key policy episodes: the provision of childcare services, and the introduction, resilience and expansion of cash benefits for homecare. Although this single case study is not about providing a definitive generalisation and predicting the future, it can provide strong empirical evidence for how and the extent to

which ideas matter in policy change as well as help to anticipate how actors might behave under political and institutional opportunities and constraints.

1.3.2. Data collection and modes of analysis

This thesis collected and analysed a plethora of evidence. The first part of this thesis relies on documentary data from official government sources. More specifically, data sources for the first paper were primarily extracted from official government documents that included details of childcare policy spending and characteristics. The government data that was not available in the public domain was obtained through individual requests based on the Official Information Disclosure Act. For the second paper (that analysed the discursive construction of childcare policy reforms), both mid-/long-term childcare plans and official transcripts from governmental speeches were gathered.

The second part of this thesis also collected a broad set of documentary evidence, including not only governmental and parliamentary records but also party manifestos and official documents published by key non-state individual and organisational actors in the childcare sector. The collection of documentary data sources was organised around the four criteria of high-quality documents formulated by Scott (1990): (1) authenticity (*i.e.* whether it is genuine and authored by the alleged person or organisation, (2) credibility (*i.e.* whether it is free from distortion), (3) representativeness (*i.e.* whether it is typical of its kind), and (4) meaning (*i.e.* whether it is clear and comprehensible). The collected documentary data was utilised to identify critical issues in the country's childcare policy reforms and the positions of each actor on the issues, and more importantly, to select potential interviewees and create interview questions.

Original evidence was also gathered: one-to-one in-depth interviews with policy-makers who were considered to play important roles in the formation, deliberation and final decision-making of childcare policy. Elite interviews were necessary to provide new, unique evidence on what actually happened, as well as to confirm the impression from documentary analysis (Mosely, 2013). Documents that were available in the public domain lacked important information about actors' 'raw' ideas, informal processes and policy considerations that preceded final decision-making. In many instances, policy documents presented decisions in a way that implied consensus among participants, which did not always coincide with information obtained from elite interviews. It should also be noted that key childcare policymaking processes often lacked an accompanying body of documentation because they were too sensitive to be documented and made available to the general public.

Interviewees were primarily chosen based on information from prior documentary analyses. In particular, invitations were made to the former and current members of the Presidential Committee on Ageing Society and Population Policy.[10] This is because it has served as a 'control tower' for setting up and promoting fertility-related policy agenda (including childcare issues) on the basis of cross-sectoral meetings among ministerial members, academics and think tank researchers, women's organisations, social welfare-related NGOs, trade unions and employers' organisations, amongst others. After inviting interviewees based on the information obtained from the documentary analyses and conducting interviews with them, I asked them to recommend other key childcare policy stakeholders who were then also invited for interview. The latter strategy was effective

[10] The list of both state and non-state actors who were affiliated with the Presidential Committee on Ageing Society and Population Policy since its establishment was found on the websites of the committee and the Ministry of Health and Welfare.

in gaining access to the inner circle of childcare policymakers. In order to prevent biased data collection through this partial snowball sampling of interviewees, efforts were made to interview a wide range of both state and non-state actors. In total, 25 interviews were conducted with 22 policymakers between 2019 and 2021, with 18 interviews in person, three virtually and four *via* email.[11] Table 1.2 below presents brief information on the interviewees by their type of organisational affiliation. More specific information on their organisations and positions/roles can be found in the third and fourth papers where interview data sources were utilised.

Table 1.2. A summary of the interviewees by their type of organisational affiliation

Organisational affiliation	Number of interviewees
Government ministry	4
Presidential committee	4
Political party	1
Women's organisation	3
Social welfare advocacy NGO	2
Trade union	3
Employers' organisation	1
University or government-sponsored research institute	3
Total	22

Here, it should be noted that obtaining in-depth interview data was only possible by promising the interviewee's anonymity. Some government bureaucrats did not even want to reveal their ministerial affiliations and positions. This is because the circle of childcare policymakers is much smaller than that of other social policy areas, and occasionally has a closed structure to which only a small number of administrative and political elites have access. Hence, the content of the information that they provided had the potential to expose their identities if their specific organisational affiliations and positions were

[11] The 25 interviews with 22 policymakers include three follow-up interviews, which were conducted in order to cross-check for any disparities in the information provided by different interviewees and to obtain more detailed information after the first round of interviews.

revealed. This thesis therefore did not indicate the affiliation and position of some interviewees who did not provide consent to this.

Interview questions were semi-structured in order to provide a roadmap to guide the interviewees, whilst simultaneously guaranteeing some level of flexibility in exploring emerging topics and explicating the complexity, ambiguity and contradiction of information gathered during the interviews (Yates, 2004). All interview questions were asked and answered in Korean. In general, the questions were guided by prior documentary analysis and a similar wording was intentionally used during the interviews. However, in later interviews, some questions were asked based on the information obtained from earlier interviews in order to flesh out the gathered information or to minimise contradiction between different claims.

In terms of the length, in-person and virtual interviews lasted between 40 minutes to 1.5 hours, with an average of approximately one hour. Except for two interviews, all were voice recorded and then transcribed in Korean. For the two exceptions, notes were taken with the interviewees' agreement as they did not permit voice recording. The transcribed data and notes were read carefully, cross-checked (with one another and the information obtained through prior documentary analyses) and manually categorised into themes and sub-themes. Here, the data was analysed in the Korean language so that the original meanings and nuances could be kept. The parts that I have quoted in this thesis were translated into English by me.

1.3.3. Time period

The empirical analysis of this thesis spans four governments:

- the centre-left Roh Moo-hyun government (03/2003–02/2008);

- the conservative Lee Myung-bak government (03/2008–02/2013);
- the conservative Park Geun-hye government (03/2013–03/2017); and
- the current centre-left Moon Jae-in government (05/2017–present).

The rationale for confining the time period of empirical investigation to the 21st century is that, as discussed earlier, families and children came to be placed at the heart of social policy reforms from the early 2000s onwards. This should not be interpreted as that heretofore the country completely lacked public support for childcare. In fact, following the democratic breakthrough in 1987, the country witnessed rapid expansion of social policy including the legislation of the Childcare Act in 1991. However, despite the legislation of the act, the target of the state's childcare support was limited to children in special need; for instance, until the early 2000s, subsidies for using childcare services were provided only for households who fell in the lowest income bracket and were thus eligible for the Basic Livelihood Security Programme.

The four governments each represent important milestones in childcare policy development. The Roh government was the first government that placed a strong emphasis on the importance of the state's role in childcare provision. This is mirrored in the fact that the Childcare Act was completely revised in 2004 under the Roh government. As a direct consequence of this, firstly, the target of the state's support was finally changed from children in special need to all, and secondly, the central government became responsible for formulating and implementing a childcare plan every five years.[12] In 2006, the Roh government therefore promulgated the First Mid-/Long-Term Basic Plan on Child-

[12] The central government's responsibility for formulating and implementing a mid-/long-term childcare plan is stipulated by Article 19 of the Enforcement Decree of the Child Care Act. According to this, the plan should be formulated by the Minister of Health and Welfare every five years. However, in practice, a newly elected government re-formulates and publishes a revised version of the previous government's childcare plan in order to reflect its election pledges and new policy goals.

care (2006–2010) that outlined two key policy goals: 'strengthening childcare publicness' and 'providing high-quality childcare services'.[13] Following complete revision of the Childcare Act, the subsequent Lee, Park and Moon governments also introduced their own basic childcare plans. Although each plan differed in terms of its vision, goals and specific policy, it should be noted that all of them also proposed strengthening the state's childcare responsibility or childcare publicness as one of their core goals (see Table 1.3 below). As discussed earlier, a series of radical childcare policy reforms under these four governments led to unprecedented increases in public spending on families and children.

Table 1.3. The Mid-/Long Term Basic Plans on Childcare in 21st century South Korea

	Roh government (2003–2008)	Lee government (2008–2013)	Park government (2013–2017)	Moon government (2017–present)
Plan	First Mid-/Long Term Basic Plan on Childcare	Amendment of the First Mid-/Long Term Basic Plan on Childcare (2009–2012)	Second Mid-/Long Term Basic Plan on Childcare (2013–2018)	Third Mid-/Long Term Basic Plan on Childcare (2018–2022)
Vision	Healthy children raised by us together	A world where children and parents are happy	A world where children are happy and parents feel secure	The society that goes together for children's happy growth
Goals	▪ Strengthening childcare publicness ▪ Providing high-quality childcare services	▪ Promoting healthy development of children ▪ Strengthening the state's responsibility for childcare ▪ Promoting policies based on mutual trust	▪ Promoting healthy development of children ▪ Strengthening the state's responsibility for childcare ▪ Constructing a childcare mechanism based on participation and trust	▪ Strengthening childcare publicness ▪ Improving the quality of childcare services ▪ Reforming the childcare system ▪ Expanding support for parental care

Sources: Researcher's own summary based on Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (2006a), Ministry for Health, Welfare and Family Affairs (2009) and Ministry of Health and Welfare (2013, 2017)

[13] It should be noted that the Roh government's First Mid-/Long Term Basic Plan on Childcare (2006–2010) was not the country's first childcare plan. Indeed, the first national plan on childcare was announced in 2001 under the centre-left Kim Dae-jung government (03/1998–02/2003). Yet the Kim government's Plan on Childcare Business Activation promoted continuing the private provision of childcare *via* expanding private childcare facilities and increasing care by nannies and babysitters (Baek, 2008), rather than strengthening the state's childcare responsibility. For this reason, the Kim government was excluded from the analysis.

1.3.4. Policy domains

Childcare policy is broad. It includes all arrangements providing care and early education of children under compulsory school age "regardless of whether the support refers to public childcare schemes, services, or payment for care" (Eydal, 2005: 153). The breadth of childcare policy is also mirrored well in Kamerman's conceptualisation (2000):

> "ECEC policy includes the whole range of government activities designed to influence the supply of and/or demand for ECEC and the quality of services provided. These government activities include direct delivery of ECEC services, direct and indirect financial subsidies to private providers (such as grants, contracts and tax incentives), financial subsidies to parents both direct and indirect (such as cash benefits and allowances to pay for the services, tax benefits to offset the costs, or cash benefits that permit parents to stop working and remain at home without loss of income) and the establishment and enforcement of regulations."

As Kamerman implied, childcare support takes three main forms: services, money and time (for parenting) (Daly, 2015; Daly and Ferragina, 2018; Kamerman and Kahn, 1994). It is the first two that are of most interest in this thesis.

More specifically, the service support refers to services provided for pre-school children outside the parental home, or rarely, within the parental home setting but with childcare provided by employed nannies. In South Korea, public subsidies are offered to parents and childcare facilities (and nannies) for using and providing childcare services. When it comes to money, it refers to direct or indirect and conditional or unconditional financial transfers made to one of the parents (or the legal guardian) for each child on a regular basis or as a lump sum. Whilst financial transfers have a long history that dates back over a century in Europe and other high-income countries and therefore constitute one of the core elements of a policy package for families with children (Daly and Ferragina, 2018), this type of support is relatively new in South Korea. As Table 1.4 shows, South Korea has seven different types of financial transfers for families with

children. Among them, parenting and foster care subsidies and a child tax credit are selectively and limitedly provided for families that meet certain conditions on household income levels and/or family types.[14] The investigation in this thesis is therefore focused on universally available cash support, namely, a homecare allowance, child and infant benefits, and a childbirth grant.

Table 1.4. South Korea's child-related cash support (as of January 2022)

Type (introduction year)	Base legislation	Provision	
		Available for…	In the form of…
Parenting subsidy (1992)	Single-Parent Family Welfare Act	Low-income single parents not receiving the Basic Livelihood Security Programme benefits	Direct, monthly payment; until the child's 6th birthday
Foster care subsidy (2005)	Child Welfare Act	Non-familial guardians of children subject to protection for a specific period	Direct, monthly payment; until the child's 18th birthday
Homecare allowance (2009)	Childcare Act	All parents/guardians of infants and young children who do not use publicly subsidised childcare services	Direct, monthly payment; from the child's 2nd birthday until the child's 7th birthday (or until the child enters primary school)
Child tax credit (2015)	Restriction of Special Taxation Act	Low-income families with at least one dependent child and an annual total household income not succeeding a certain amount	Indirect, annual payment; until the youngest child's 18th birthday
Child benefit (2017)	Child Benefits Act	All parents/guardians regardless of income	Direct, monthly payment; until the child's 9th birthday
Infant benefit (2022)	Child Benefits Act	All parents/guardians regardless of income	Direct, monthly payment for families caring for the child at home or vouchers for families using childcare services; until the child's 2nd birthday
Childbirth grant (2022)	Framework Act on Low Birth Rate in an Aging Society	All parents/guardians regardless of income	Vouchers, one-off following the birth of the child

Note: This table includes national-level provision of cash benefits for families with children only.

[14] Although a child tax credit was introduced in 2015, income-related eligibility conditions have been very stringent, and both the number of recipients and the size of benefits have therefore been small. According to the Korean Statistical Information Service, the number of households that received these credits between 2015 and 2019 was 914,159 on average. The average amount paid to each household over the same period was approximately ₩666,000 (€497) per year, which is only ₩55,000 (€41) per month.

The rationale for excluding childcare support in the time dimension lies in the exclusive nature of South Korea's child-related leaves and flexible work arrangements. Since the early 2000s, the state's support for guaranteeing the right to care without a substantial loss in income has gradually expanded. For instance, in 2001, paid parental leaves were introduced at a flat-rate, and after a decade, the payment became earnings-related with a cap. In 2008, employees were granted the right to apply for a reduction in working hours to take care of their young children. In order to encourage fathers' engagement with childcare, three days of paid paternity leave was introduced in 2012, which was extended to ten days in 2019. Along these lines, financial incentives for men to take parental leaves have been introduced and increased since 2014.[15] Nevertheless, it should be noted that the leaves and the right to apply for reduced working have been exclusively available to people who have worked for at least six consecutive months under the same employer (as of the date preceding the start date of them) and have been insured with the Employment Insurance Fund.[16] The use of child-related leaves and reduced working hours is even uncommon among entitled employees: as of 2019, only 21.6% of those employed have used their parental leave entitlement (National Assembly Research Service, 2021), and only 5,660 were on the reduced working hours scheme (Ministry of Employment and Labour, 2020). Hence, this thesis focuses on childcare support in the cash and service dimensions, both of which are universally available, although time-related childcare policy reforms have important implications in regard to the philosophy of the welfare state, the role of the family and the orientation of gender relations.

[15] For instance, a 'Daddy's Month' scheme was introduced and the replacement level for the first month of leave taken by the second parent (usually fathers) increased to 100% with a ceiling of ₩1,500,000 (€1,129).

[16] Until 2018, parental leave was available only for employees who have worked under the same employer for at least one consecutive year, as of the date preceding the start date of the leave.

1.3.5. Thesis outline

To conclude this introduction, this section offers a brief overview of the four individual papers that coherently address the overarching research question of this thesis, as well as the Conclusions chapter.

As noted earlier, the first part of this thesis analyses the development of childcare policy in South Korea. The first paper begins by conceptualising 'publicness' and 'privateness' of childcare as multi-dimensional concepts and constructs ideal-typical childcare models that are located in the publicness-privateness continuum. By analysing the four governments' official documents on childcare policy spending and characteristics, this paper empirically demonstrates that despite the continuous focus on strengthening the state's responsibility for childcare, the country's childcare policy reforms have been geared towards increasing the state's role primarily as a financier of both out-of-home and at-home childcare.

The second paper 'works backwards' and delves into South Korea's childcare policy discourses in regard to what was problematised, how solutions were constructed and on which underlying assumptions they rested. To this end, this paper analyses top decision-makers' spoken and written discourses made during the periods in office of the four governments. The results show that the country's aim to strengthen the state's childcare responsibility was, until very recently, still motivated by its anticipated economic returns. While issues regarding gender equality and/or healthy development of children were under-problematised, this paper suggests that strengthening the state's responsibility for childcare was simply equated with increasing government funding for both institutional and in-home childcare.

In the second part of the thesis, the analytical focus is shifted towards the interplay among actors, ideas, and institutions in the politics of childcare policymaking. More specifically, the third paper investigates the politics of childcare publicness in regard to the provision of childcare services. This paper provides a focused comparative analysis of the centre-left Roh Moo-hyun (03/2003–02/2008) and Moon Jae-in (05/2017–present) governments, both of which actively promoted childcare publicness through increasing the public ownership of childcare facilities for the state's direct provision of childcare services. By analysing original interview and documentary sources, this paper suggests that although employing the polysemic concept of childcare publicness helped draw broad attention to policy reforms from diverse actors, a high level of conceptual malleability also served as a source of conflict at the stage of specific policy formulation. This paper also provides evidence that the policymaking process was more decisively affected by asymmetrical power relations and enduring institutional legacy.

The last paper examines the politics of rapidly expanding child-related cash benefits in recent years. This paper pays particular attention to the introduction, resilience and expansion of cash benefits for homecared children. By analysing original interview and documentary sources, this paper argues that the growing dominance of cash benefits for children in the country's policy portfolio has been intimately related to electoral competition between parties and has been strategically justified as a pronatalist measure by political actors. This paper also suggests that the resilience and further expansion of cash benefits for the provision of homecare occurred due to a lack of ideational consensus on gender justice and the resulting low level of political interest in abolishing them, as well as the predominant ideas shared among policy actors that these allowances are a necessary element to differentiate the deserving and the less deserving for institutional care.

Finally, the Conclusions chapter begins by summarising the findings of all four individual papers and brings their insights and implications together. The empirical findings uncover important continuities in South Korea's traditional welfare and care regime. Behind these continuities, the findings suggest that there were asymmetrical power relations between actors promoting a transformation of the country into a bigger welfare 'state' and those supporting the state's role as a financier and facilitator of market- and family-provided care; and the enduring institutional legacy favouring the latter. Based on the findings, the second part discusses and offers an improved understanding of what ideas are (and their roles in policymaking), under what conditions they can become a source of policy change, and how they can be studied. The chapter closes this thesis by outlining future studies that could be carried out on the basis of the findings from this thesis.

2. PAPER I

Childcare policy reforms in 21st century South Korea: moving towards more 'publicness'?

2.1. Introduction

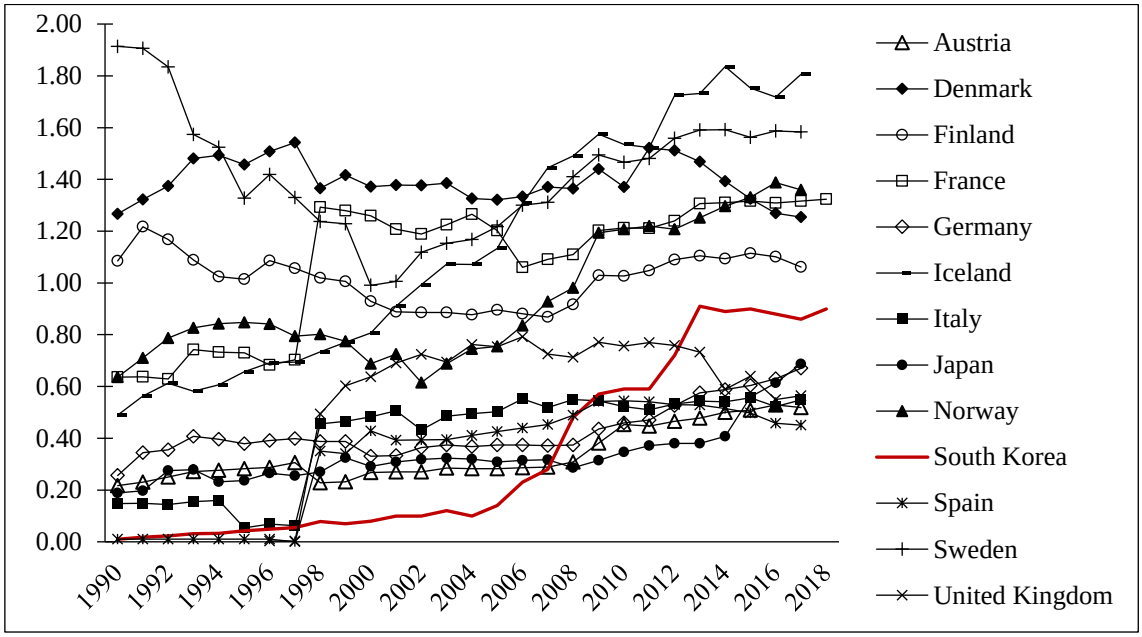
Until recently, South Korea kept a non-interventionist stance on families and children. Consequently, childcare was considered a private matter. However, in the face of increasing socio-demographic challenges, South Korea began to regularly emphasise 'strengthening the state's responsibility for childcare' or more explicitly 'strengthening childcare publicness' as core policy goals in their childcare plans from the mid-2000s (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2006a; Ministry for Health, Welfare and Family Affairs, 2009, Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2013, 2017).[17]

Alongside the growing political spotlight on the public nature of childcare, public expenditure on it began to show radical increases in South Korea (see Figure 2.1 below). In 2017 (the latest data available for cross-country comparisons), South Korea spent 0.86% of its GDP on ECEC, which placed the country seventh among OECD countries, after Iceland (1.81%), Sweden (1.58%), Norway (1.36%), France (1.32%), Denmark (1.25%), and Finland (1.06%) (OECD, 2021e). Given the rapid increases in its childcare

[17] The term 'childcare publicness' was explicitly used in the four governments' official childcare plans and/or speeches. As Table 1.3 (p. 42) in the Introduction shows, the two centre-left governments of Roh (03/2003–02/2008) and Moon (05/2017–present) adopted the concept as one of the core policy goals in their childcare plans (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2006a; Ministry for Health, Welfare and Family Affairs, 2009). The conservative Park government (03/2013–03/2017) included 'expanding publicness and strengthening service management' as one of its six policy initiatives rather than as a goal (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2013). The conservative Lee government (03/2008–02/2013) emphasised this concept as a way of increasing female labour force participation rates in its official speeches at multiple sessions of the United Nations Economic and Social Council and the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (Baek, 2010a, 2010b, 2011).

spending from traditionally minimal levels (*i.e.* less than 0.01% of its GDP), it appears as if South Korea's childcare system may, in due course, end up having more in common with the Nordic model.

Figure 2.1. OECD member states' public spending on ECEC as a percentage of GDP, 1990–2017/18



Source: OECD (2021e)

Despite the spotlight on childcare publicness in policy discourses, and the resulting unprecedented expansion of public investment in childcare in South Korea, we still know little about what publicness actually is and what, then, privateness might mean within the childcare context. Often, strengthening publicness of childcare is simply equated with increases in public childcare spending. However, childcare publicness as gauged by its overall social expenditure is too unidimensional to truly capture what is going on. This paper therefore problematises and explores not only publicness but also privateness as twin concepts by addressing the following question:

Q1. What elements constitute publicness vs privateness within the childcare context?

By identifying the constitutive elements of publicness and privateness within the context of childcare, it is possible to build four ideal-typical childcare models that are located on the publicness-privateness continuum. This leads me to conduct a systematic analysis of:

Q2. Which childcare model was adopted by South Korea to strengthen childcare publicness, and how did this model change over time?

This paper is organised as follows. As mentioned earlier, the first section problematises and defines the twin concepts of publicness and privateness by looking at the existing literature on public administration and the mixed economy of welfare. Based on the identified lineaments of these concepts, this section builds four ideal-typical childcare models, which will serve as a framework for analysing childcare policy reforms. The second section introduces indicators and describes the data that measure the dimensions of childcare publicness and privateness. In the third section, this paper investigates and pinpoints changes and continuities between 2003 and 2020 as to which childcare model was adopted under the four governments: the centre-left Roh Moo-hyun government (03/2003–02/2008), the conservative Lee Myung-bak (03/2008–02/2013) and Park Geun-hye (03/2013–03/2017) governments and the current centre-left Moon Jae-in government (05/2017–present). This section is followed by a discussion where I integrate the empirical findings of the four governments in a more comprehensive manner and thereby uncover an overall pattern: the country's policy reforms to strengthen the state's childcare responsibility have indeed reinforced the state's role in funding the functioning of the two other 'private' pillars of welfare: the market and the family. The last section completes this paper with a summary of the main findings and their implications.

2.2. Conceptual framework

2.2.1. Understanding childcare publicness and privateness as dimensional concepts

When it comes to childcare, successive South Korean governments' strong emphasis on the ambiguous concept of publicness in their policy discourses leads me to question the meaning of this concept. This section therefore explicates the multi-layered meanings of publicness and expands understanding of it by comparing it with the concept of privateness.

On the one hand, the public-private distinction in childcare can simply be associated with its location: whether it takes place in an out-of-home setting (*i.e.* public sphere), or in the private sphere of family homes with or without financial support for the familial provision of childcare. On the other hand, in the economics literature, the public or private nature of goods such as childcare is determined by the degree of excludability and rivalry in its consumption: a perfectly public good is both non-excludable and non-rivalrous, whilst a purely private good is both excludable and rivalrous (Unger *et al.*, 2017). Given this strict economic definition, childcare services as a pure public good are those that a family can consume without reducing the availability to others and of which no one is deprived. In contrast, childcare services as private goods are those that families can be denied access to if they do not pay, and one family's purchase of services diminishes availability for another family. In this context, childcare services with a high level of publicness can be attained by a high level of state control in ensuring equal access to high-quality services for all. Contrastingly, childcare services with a high level of privateness are priced for individual purchase and respond well to market signals.

However, such a dichotomous distinction (which puts forward a categorical binary definition of whether a country's childcare system is public or private) is rather simplistic and cannot satisfactorily account for the complexities of the real-world childcare system. This leads me to pay close attention to the scholarship on public administration, in which publicness and privateness have been common concerns in regard to what mix of institutional arrangements can realise and represent public interests most optimally (Haque, 2001). Regardless of the variations in terms of what publicness and privateness mean and what elements constitute them, the public administration literature commonly believes that the two concepts should not simply be considered polar opposites (Pesch, 2008).

Bozeman's (1987, 2007) conceptualisation of publicness and privateness is particularly compelling. According to Bozeman, publicness refers to "the degree to which organisations are affected by political authority" and privateness means "the degree of market authority constraints and endowments affecting the institution" (Bozeman and Moulton, 2011: i363, i365). In order to understand them as continuous concepts, Bozeman suggested three dimensions that constitute and influence the level of publicness and privateness of organisations and public administrations: (1) ownership (publicly owned *vs* privately owned); (2) source of financial resources (government grants *vs* consumer payments); and (3) control (by political forces *vs* market forces) (see also Anderson, 2012; Andrews *et al.*, 2011; Haque, 2001). Further, Bozeman (2007) also extends his understanding of publicness and privateness of institutions by articulating norms and values that the concepts intend to improve (or actually work towards), such as equality, transparency, accountability, efficiency, and freedom of choice amongst others.

Although the terms publicness and privateness are largely absent from social policy literature, scholars have implicitly articulated these concepts in regard to the mixed economy of welfare. Some contributors are Ascoli and Ranci (2002), Le Grand and Robinson (1984), and Powell (2007). Similar to Bozeman's account, these examples adopted a three-dimensional approach to understanding the public-private mix of welfare: provision, finance and regulation. Whilst this approach has often been adopted to understand the nature of neoliberal reforms in healthcare systems (*e.g.* Scott, 2001, Wendt, 2009; Powell and Miller, 2014) and social care for the elderly (*e.g.* Evers and Svetlik, 1993), similar analyses have become more common in the childcare literature in more recent years (*e.g.* McLean, 2014; Lloyd and Penn, 2013; Knijn and Lewis, 2017; White and Friendly, 2012; see also Cleveland and Krashinsky, 2004). However, the existing studies do not explicitly conceptualise the meaning of publicness and privateness within the childcare context and generally explore the public-private mix in the provision of institutional childcare through the lens of the state/market nexus. Hence, applying Bozeman's dimensional approach to publicness/privateness, the goal of the following paragraphs is to provide a more thorough conceptual discussion on them by identifying the meanings of the three dimensions—ownership, finance and regulation—within the context of the childcare system.

The first dimension that affects the level of publicness/privateness of a country's childcare system concerns the ownership of childcare facilities. This dimension refers to the extent to which childcare facilities are owned by public authorities that represent society as a whole or private individuals, groups, companies and/or organisations. Theoretically, this form of ownership matters because a public organisation is driven by public interest and political demand, whereas its private counterpart's operation is

driven primarily by competitive pressures and consumer demands (Pesch, 2008). This dimension has been considered particularly important in South Korea's childcare policy context because national/public childcare facilities are thought to provide more reliable and better-quality childcare services.

The second dimension centres on the funding of childcare, namely, the extent to which childcare costs are funded publicly by taxation, for example, or borne individually by families. This dimension indicates the level of shared responsibility for childcare between the state and the family. The state's resources can be placed on the supply-side and/or demand-side (Cleveland and Krashinsky, 2004). Supply-side funding includes operating grants for publicly run childcare facilities and for private childcare producers (mostly for those who meet certain quality standards), and subsidies for improving the quality of childcare services and enhancements to childcare workers' wages. Demand - side funding is more complicated, as it includes subsidies provided directly to parents for using public childcare services or for caring children at home, or even for employing in-home caregivers. Public funding of childcare may increase the degree of childcare publicness in the sense that it reduces families' childcare labour and time investment; however, providing parents with a high amount of cash-for-childcare may reinforce the childcare privateness of families, particularly those with a low-income. In a similar vein, the provision of subsidies towards employing a person coming to the child's home to provide care or to assist parental care can also be understood as reinforcing childcare privateness in terms of the location where it takes place.

The third dimension is associated with regulation of the childcare provision, namely, the extent to which affordability and quality of childcare services are subject to the state's use of formal regulations or are left to the hand of the self-regulating

market. Regulations may vary, but typical examples of the most fundamental regulatory regime are licensing providers and childcare teachers, establishing certain levels of educational requirements, providing them with a standard childcare guideline, as well as setting up requirements for health, safety, space, and maximum child-teaching staff ratios. More interventionist forms of regulations may include conducting external inspections on a regular basis, rewarding compliance and penalising violations according to inspection results, putting a price ceiling on private childcare services, and many others (Penn, 2013).

2.2.2. Constructing different childcare models

On the basis of these three analytical dimensions, it is possible to develop four different ideal-typical childcare models that are located on a publicness-privateness continuum.

The first ideal type is the '*highly interventionist (or state controlled) model*'. This childcare model is characterised by strong state intervention in all of the three dimensions of childcare: ownership, funding and regulation. More specifically, such a high level of state control in childcare means that central or local governments hold ownership of childcare facilities in order to provide publicly subsidised and strongly regulated services directly. Theoretically, strong state intervention is legitimised for the reason that it can improve equality in terms of both class (by guaranteeing equal access to standardised non-parental childcare services for all) and gender (by enabling women to participate in the labour market and guaranteeing appropriate working conditions for childcare workers, most of whom are women). This is because the costs of high-quality ECEC offered by highly skilled childcare workers are far beyond the level that can be afforded by families with low and middle household income. Since the value of equality

is pursued and prioritised in this model, commodification of childcare is not deemed normatively permissible. Whilst families in special circumstances (such as dual-earner employment and poverty) are given priority in childcare services, the expectation is that services will be available for all children at a low cost or free of charge. This model is exemplified by Sweden, where childcare centres are mostly run by municipalities, and publicly funded childcare services are provided without substantial financial burdens on families under the strict guideline of ECEC curricula by well-trained, well-remunerated staff (White and Friendly, 2012). Private provision is possible only in limited situations and is subject to a high level of regulation, such as introducing fee ceilings (Korpi, 2007).

In contrast, state intervention can be conducted in a more selective manner. This may be because a high degree of state monopoly in *both* finance *and* delivery of welfare services is likely to generate a high level of public spending, inefficiency and lack of responsiveness to parents' diverse needs. Thus, state involvement in the ownership of childcare facilities for the direct provision of childcare services is restricted and predominantly focused on funding childcare. The state adopting this model becomes primarily a purchaser of childcare services, with service delivery being conducted by for-profit or not-for-profit private sectors competing with one another. However, in this model, competition among providers is not completely free. Rather, it is constrained by governmental quality assurance tools which aim to increase the availability of parental choice over affordable and high-quality childcare services. The state supervisory tools include conducting a regular external inspection, introducing a cap on the price that private childcare service providers can charge, and attaching service quality-related requirements to supply-side grants. In this so-called '*state-supervising quasi-market*

model', the role of the state is oriented towards diversifying the choices available for parents (over different childcare facilities) and making sure that they have financial and informational resources sufficient to exercise their right to choose and deal with the concomitant responsibilities. The state as an enabler or investor, not a leveller, is likely to provide more support for the more needy. A good example of this model is England under New Labour (1997–2010), which provided additional funding for more services (especially for low-income and single parents), alongside an improved care workforce and more regulation (Faulkner and Coates, 2013; Moss, 2014).

Another model that is focused on the funding dimension of childcare publicness is what might be called the '*self-regulating market-driven model*'. This model emphasises the role of the state primarily as a financier. The main difference between the above state-supervising quasi-market model and this model is that the latter puts little effort into regulatory oversight for quality assurance. This is because this model sees the market as the arena where the price and quality of childcare services are automatically regulated by a 'choice and competition' mechanism, with which the government need not interfere. Since the market would be able to efficiently create cost-savings and offer diverse services in line with parents' demands, state intervention would need to be confined to licensing private childcare operators and setting up basic health and safety requirements. This approach casts childcare services as a private commodity, treats parents as consumers who are responsible for choosing adequate services by calculating the optimal quality-price ratio, and sees the state as a procurer of these services and a minimal regulator of the market. Although some high-quality childcare services can be generated by the choice and competition mechanism, these services are generally only used by high-income families who can afford them (OECD, 2004, cited in Mahon,

2006). When childcare services are predominantly provided by for-profit private entities, profits are often made by increasing the fees or the number of children each member of the childcare staff looks after, reducing staff salaries and/or overcharging parents for extra-curricular activities (*ibid.*). There is also "a tendency to employ untrained staff at the bottom end of the market, where modest and disadvantaged families are the clients" (*ibid.*: 190). While it is difficult to find a country-case that resembles this model in the real world, the post-2005 Netherlands may be a close fit. As a result of the Dutch Childcare Act in 2005, the supply-side financing system was replaced with the demand-side one, and the regulations on the childcare market were removed, except for a basic requirement on health and safety (Plantenga, 2013). In its place, the Dutch government introduced a self-regulating system comprising "an annually renewable national 'covenant' between provider and practitioner organisations and oversight of each group setting by a parent committee" (Naumann *et al.*, 2013: 137; see also Knijn and Lewis, 2017).

It is important to note that these institutional childcare models can be combined with what could be termed the '*state-funded homecare model*'. Although the state primarily functions as a financier in this model (as in the aforementioned self-regulating market-driven model), this model valorises childcare at home (rather than in institutional settings) by providing homecare allowances or funding households to employ in-home caregivers. Thus, from the perspective of parents' outcomes, these two models are different. Considering the state-funded homecare model is important, because in reality, countries do not necessarily solely fund institutional care. This is due to the increasing heterogeneity of the family's care needs, complexity of family lives, and fragility of family arrangements. Depending on the value priorities, the size and age-

related eligibility of homecare allowances may be different. In the model where the value of equality is prioritised, the cash benefits are likely to be modest and limited to very young children (up to 2 years of age), so that parents choose public childcare services more than monetary compensation. Contrastingly, if greater value is attached to parental choice and the efficiency of resource allocation is more important, cash benefits for childcare in home settings are likely to be generous and also provided for older children. Whilst the provision of homecare-related cash transfers is intended to guarantee freedom of parental choice and promote a fairer distribution of government funding between children using publicly funded childcare services and those who are not, a high level of compensation functions as an incentive for parents—especially low-income mothers—to care for their children at home (Korpi *et al.*, 2013; Sipilä *et al*., 2010). This implies that strengthening the state's responsibility for financing childcare may also encourage the privateness of childcare in the sense that it can take place informally in the private sphere of the family home.

Table 2.1 below summarises the key features of the four different ideal-typical childcare models that show differences in the role and responsibility of the state, market and family: the highly interventionist model, the state-supervising quasi-market model, the self-regulating market-driven model, and the state-funded homecare model.

Table 2.1. The key features of the four ideal childcare models

	Highly interventionist	State-supervising quasi-market	Self-regulating market-driven	State-funded homecare
Location of care	Public sphere	Public sphere	Public sphere	Private sphere
Value priorities	Equality	Choice availability, efficiency	Choice diversity, efficiency	Freedom of choice, fairness (in distributing public funding)
State's role	Leveller	Enabler, investor	Procurer, minimal regulator	Financier
Mode	Command and control	Choice and managed competition	Choice and competition	Choice
Accountability	State	Parents more than the state	Parents, market	Parents
Benefits	Universal	Usually targeted but can be universal	Residual	Conditional (on not using publicly funded childcare services)
Public spending	Very high	Medium-high	Medium	Low

2.3. Measuring childcare publicness and privateness

On the basis of the definitions of publicness and privateness described in the previous section, this section develops and outlines indicators that can measure each of the three constituent dimensions: ownership, funding and regulation. This is a necessary step for providing a systematic overview of childcare policy by each dimension so as to investigate the childcare model that was adopted by each of the four governments and how the models changed over time between 2003 and 2020.

For measurement of ownership, four indicators are taken into account. The first one is 'spending on expanding national/public childcare facilities', which is measured in two different ways: in real terms (by using the GDP deflator) and as a percentage of total spending on childcare. This indicator allows me to gauge the degree to which each of the four governments promoted strengthening the state's role in the direct provision of childcare services. The second indicator is 'public and private childcare ownership',

measured as the number of national/public and privately owned childcare facilities, respectively. However, given that the numbers themselves do not fully capture the actual capacity of these facilities, the third indicator centres on the maximum number of spaces available at national/public childcare facilities and private ones during a given year per 1,000 children using childcare services. Additionally, considering the fact that public ownership does not necessarily guarantee public operation and direct delivery of services due to increased contracting out arrangements (Powell, 2007), the analysis also considers 'public and private operation of publicly owned childcare facilities'. This indicator is measured as the number of national/public childcare facilities operated directly by the state or local authorities and by contracted non-stated actors.

With regard to the second dimension (*i.e.* funding), four indicators are adopted. The first two indicators measure public funding for institutional childcare: 'supply-side funding' (given to childcare service providers), and 'demand-side funding' (provided directly to parents for using childcare services). The other two indicators are funding for childcare at home: 'funding for employing nannies' in the family's home setting and 'funding for compensating the costs of familial childcare'. These four different types of indicators are measured separately in real terms (by using the GDP deflator) and as a percentage of total spending on childcare. These indicators allow me to investigate not only the quantitative expansion of childcare funding in the country but also more qualitative changes regarding each government's preference for, firstly, supply-side *vs* demand-side funding, and secondly, institutional *vs* at-home childcare funding.

Lastly, regulation is measured using indicators related to state control over the quality of childcare services rather than those related to basic space requirements and health and safety rules. This is because minimum space requirements and basic rules

regarding the health and safety of children have not undergone drastic changes since the introduction of the Childcare Act in 1991. However, the quality of childcare services has many facets and is difficult to measure. The existing literature also lacks consensus in regard to which indicators can adequately reflect it. In this paper, two main types of information are used to assess the level of service quality-related regulations. The first type of information is related to state control over the quality of childcare workforces. This is captured using two indicators: (1) 'minimum qualification required for staffs', measured as the education level according to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 2011 and the minimum duration of working experience/practice required for childcare staffs to get qualified; and (2) 'compulsory ongoing training for staffs', measured as the number of hours of mandatory training sessions. The other type of information is related to the state's regulation regarding the frequency of contact between children and childcare-teachers. This information is captured by the 'maximum child-staff ratio', measured as the maximum number of children that can be cared for by childcare teaching staff according to children's age. In addition to these three basic quantifiable indicators, the analysis also factors in qualitative changes in the country's regulatory regime—such as the presence of the nationwide standard ECEC curriculum, the operation of an external inspection system and a reward/penalty scheme—all of which relate to the state's control over the quality of childcare services. Table 2.2 below summarises these indicators, measures, and data sources.

Table 2.2. Indicators, measures, and data sources

Category	Indicators	Measured as…	Data sources
Ownership	Spending on expanding public ownership of childcare facilities	Spending on expanding national/public childcare facilities (1) in real terms by using the GDP deflator, and (2) as a percentage of total spending on childcare	Financial Report on the Revenue and Expenditure (MOHW, 2003–2004, 2008–2020; MOGEF, 2005–2006)
	Public and private childcare ownership	The number of national/public and privately owned childcare facilities	Childcare Database (MOHW, 2003–2004, 2008–2020; MOGEF, 2005–2006)
	Capacity of public and private childcare	The maximum number of spaces available at national/public and privately owned childcare facilities per 1,000 children using childcare services	Childcare Database (MOHW, 2003–2004, 2008–2020; MOGEF, 2005–2006)
	Public and private operation of publicly owned childcare facilities	The number of national/public childcare facilities operated directly by the state or local authorities and by contracted non-state actors	Statistics on Outsourced National/Public Childcare Facilities (MOHW, 2011–2020) obtained *via* a Freedom of Information request
Funding	Supply-side funding for providing childcare services	Spending on subsidies provided to childcare facilities (1) in real terms by using the GDP deflator, and (2) as a percentage of total spending on childcare	Financial Report on the Revenue and Expenditure (MOHW, 2003–2004, 2008–2020; MOGEF, 2005–2006, 2010–2020)
	Demand-side funding for using childcare services	Spending on ‘childcare subsidies’ (1) in real terms by using the GDP deflator, and (2) as a percentage of total spending on childcare	Financial Report on the Revenue and Expenditure (MOHW, 2003–2004, 2008–2019; MOGEF, 2005–2006, 2010–2020)
	Funding for employing nannies	Spending on subsidies for the use of ‘in-home caregiver services’ (1) in real terms by using the GDP deflator, and (2) as a percentage of total spending on childcare	Financial Report on the Revenue and Expenditure (MOHW, 2003–2004, 2008–2019; MOGEF, 2005–2006, 2010–2020)
	Funding for compensating for the costs of familial childcare	Spending on ‘homecare allowances’ as a percentage of total spending on childcare (1) in real terms by using the GDP deflator, and (2) as a percentage of total spending on childcare	Financial Report on the Revenue and Expenditure (MOHW, 2003–2004, 2008–2020; MOGEF, 2005–2006)
Regulation	Minimum qualification required for staffs	The level of education according to the ISCED 2011 and the duration of working experience or practice required to be qualified	Guide to Childcare Policy (MOHW, 2003–2004, 2008–2019; MOGEF, 2005–2006)
	Compulsory ongoing training for staffs	The number of hours of mandatory training sessions	Guide to Childcare Policy (MOHW, 2003–2004, 2008–2019; MOGEF, 2005–2006)
	Maximum child-staff ratio	The maximum number of children per childcare teacher for 0, 1, 2, 3, 4 year-olds and above	Guide to Childcare Policy (MOHW, 2003–2004, 2008–2019; MOGEF, 2005–2006)

Note: MOHW stands for the Ministry of Health and Welfare and MOGEF denotes the Ministry of Gender Equality and Welfare.

2.4. Results

On the basis of the conceptual framework developed above, this section integrates and analyses the findings on each dimension and the childcare model that was adopted by each of the four governments. The rationale for not adopting a dimension-by-dimension approach is that it would make the paper too thick in description, too thin in analytical nature, and render comparative analyses across the different governments difficult. The three tables in Appendix I (*i.e.* Tables A1.1-A1.3) present the complete measurements of each dimension.

2.4.1. The Roh Moo-hyun government (03/2003–02/2008)

The centre-left Roh government was the first to emphasise strengthening childcare publicness, explicitly adopting it as one of its goals in its First Mid-Long-Term Basic Plan on Childcare (2006–2010) (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2006a).

Regarding the ownership dimension, one noticeable feature of the Roh government lay in a rise in spending on the expansion of national/public childcare facilities over time, which translated into an absolute increase by more than 400 during its presidential term. This may not be surprising given the Roh government's discourse, which specifically highlighted the importance of strengthening childcare publicness in the ownership dimension by arguing that existing private sectors "have not satisfied parents' demand for high-quality childcare services" (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2006a: 7). However, a more noticeable feature of the Roh government's data on the ownership dimension was that despite a rise in the number of national/public childcare facilities, the degree to which private childcare facilities expanded was far more impressive: from 2003 to 2007, 8,291 private childcare facilities were established (as compared to approximately 400 new

national/public childcare facilities) and nearly 90% of them were for-profit. In particular, six of every ten newly established private childcare facilities were home-based, *i.e.* small childcare facilities that were established by individuals at their home or in similar settings in order to take care of 5-20 children.

The rapid expansion of for-profit private childcare facilities was closely related to the drastic increase and regular infusion of public funding into the childcare sector during the Roh government: real-term supply-side funding increased more than threefold from approximately ₩378 billion (€284 million) to ₩1.32 trillion (€990 million) between 2003 and 2007. This is because the Roh government promoted a shift in "a childcare policy paradigm from selective support targeting low-income households towards universal support [for all children]", following complete amendment of the Childcare Act in 2004 (Ministry of Gender Equality, 2006a: 5). In 2005, against this backdrop, the Roh government introduced and rapidly expanded the 'Graded Childcare Subsidy Scheme', through which different levels of subsidies for using childcare services were provided to their suppliers.[18] In 2006, the Roh government also instituted the 'Basic Subsidy Scheme' in order to offer government subsidies for private childcare suppliers providing services for 0 to 2 year-olds.[19] The rationale behind introducing this scheme was that the government's biased funding distribution in favour of national/public childcare facilities contributed to their private counterparts' chronic problem of low-quality childcare services (Presidential Commission on Policy Planning, 2008a: 73).

[18] In 2007, households with 120% or less of the minimum cost of living became eligible for free childcare, whilst those with 50%, 70% and 100% or less of the average income of urban working households received cash payments making up 80%, 50% and 20% of childcare fees, respectively (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2015).

[19] In order to provide basic subsidies, the Roh government introduced the concept of the 'standard childcare cost', which differed depending on the child's age. The subsidies were calculated as follows:
basic subsidies = standard childcare cost – user fees (subsidised differently according to income levels).

Whilst supply-side funding expanded profoundly, the Roh government's regulatory regime was not strong enough to control the rapid growth of low-quality private childcare facilities, although measures were enacted. Following complete revision of the Childcare Act in 2004, the Roh government established both basic and more interventionist regulations. As Table A1.3 in Appendix I indicates, this government was the one that made the most noticeable changes in the country's basic regulatory regime by setting up the national standard license system for childcare directors and teachers, adjusting the maximum number of children per teaching staff by children's age, and introducing the 'Standard Childcare Curriculum' for different ages. The Roh government also took a more interventionist regulatory stance by launching the 'Childcare Accreditation System' that evaluated and accredited childcare facilities in regard to their compliance with: (1) the requirements on health, safety, hygiene and minimum space; (2) the management of facilities, childcare workforces, and learning and play materials; (3) the implementation of the Standard Childcare Curriculum, and many others. Although this accreditation system was launched to provide parents with important information when choosing childcare facilities and to promote quality assurance for childcare services, participation in the required evaluation process was voluntary and this occurred once every three years.

To summarise, the Roh government's childcare policy reforms are characterised by its focus on expanding public funding on institutional childcare rather than on reinforcing the state's role as a direct provider. Although the expansion of funding was accompanied by its effort in laying regulatory groundwork for the provision of childcare services, state oversight of childcare facilities remained weak. From this perspective, one may argue that there was a trade-off between the rapid quantitative expansion of publicly funded child-

care services and state quality control. These characteristics lead me to conclude that this government adopted a scaled-back version of the 'state-supervising quasi-market model'.

2.4.2. The Lee Myung-bak government (03/2008–02/2013)

Following the presidential inauguration of conservative candidate Lee in 2008, a number of changes took place in the country's approach to childcare. One of the most noticeable changes lay in the funding dimension. More specifically, there was a shift in its funding mechanism: whilst funding was hitherto provided wholly on the supply-side, demand-side funding reached approximately 73% of total childcare spending in 2009 and increased further to approximately 79% in 2012 (see Table A1.2 in Appendix I for more details). This shift occurred because the Lee government believed that the current supply-side funding mechanism did not provide clear and transparent information to parents regarding the level of government subsidies available to their children (Ministry for Health, Welfare and Family Affairs, 2009). Promoting a 'consumer-centric childcare policy', the Lee government integrated different supply-side subsidies into one and provided these as electronic vouchers directly to parents. Moreover, the volume of real-term demand-side funding almost doubled, from approximately ₩1.50 trillion (€1.13 billion) to ₩2.92 trillion (€2.19 billion) between 2009 and 2012 as a result of the continuous relaxation of income and child age-related eligibility conditions for free childcare services.[20]

Alongside changes in the scale and mechanism of funding for childcare services, it should also be noted that two different types of childcare support were introduced and/or expanded. One was homecare allowances for families caring for young children at home

[20] In 2012, subsidies for using free whole day (12 hours) childcare services began to be provided for all families with 0 to 2 and 5 year-olds. In the case of families with children of 3 and 4 years of age, government subsidies for using free childcare services were provided for those in the lower 70% of the household income distribution.

rather than using publicly funded childcare services. Initially, in 2009, ₩100,000 (€75) per month began to be provided for the lowest and second lowest-income households caring for 0 and 1 year-olds at home.[21] However, the size and coverage of the allowances was continuously adjusted. Consequently, in 2012, low-income families with children aged up to 3 received ₩100,000-200,000 (€75-150).[22] The other type of childcare support was subsidies for employing nannies in the family's home setting. Although these subsidies were initially provided for families with children of 0-12 years of age for employing nannies in the event of a care deficit in some local authorities, in 2010, the Lee government started to provide them for families with a young child aged 2 or below using nannies for up to 200 hours per month. However, because both programmes supporting homecare had strict income-related requirements, total public spending on them remained below 5% of total childcare spending (see Table A1.2 in Appendix I for more details).

Whilst the Lee government's financial responsibility for childcare at both institutional and home settings was reinforced, its role in strengthening the ownership dimension of childcare publicness fell by the wayside. This is illustrated by the fact that public spending on expanding national/public childcare facilities in real terms almost halved to approximately ₩11.96 billion (€8.98 million) in the first year of the Lee government and then further to approximately ₩3.24 billion (€2.44 million) in 2012. In terms of spending on this policy programme as a percentage of total childcare spending, it fell rapidly from 0.83% in 2008 to only 0.09% in 2012. In contrast, due to increased government funding in the childcare sector, the number of private childcare facilities further increased to over

[21] The lowest income group included households eligible for the Basic Livelihood Security Programme. The second lowest income group included households earning 120% of the minimum cost of living or less.

[22] Homecared children aged up to 1, 2 and 3 were given ₩200,000 (€150), ₩150,000 (€113) and ₩100,000 (€75) per month, respectively.

40,000 in 2012, of which more than half were home-based. Indeed, the Lee government adopted a pessimistic attitude towards strengthening childcare publicness by increasing public ownership of childcare facilities. This is mirrored in the Lee government's revised childcare plan, which highlighted upgrading the quality of privately provided childcare services to the level of public ones—rather than increasing the number of national/public childcare facilities—as a policy priority (Ministry for Health, Welfare and Family Affairs, 2009: 6, 55).

Nevertheless, under the Lee government, its predecessor's basic regulatory regime was mostly maintained (see Table A1.3 in Appendix I), except for the fact that a new childcare-education integrated standard curriculum was introduced for children of 3 and 4 years of age. As under the previous Roh government, participation of childcare facilities in the accreditation system remained voluntary and therefore did not properly function as the state's oversight tool. In 2012, in order to bring private childcare facilities into the public sphere, the Lee government alternatively started to operate a new policy programme through which high-quality private childcare facilities (*i.e.* those that obtained a certain level of points in the Child Accreditation System and met other quality-related conditions) were selected, awarded the label of 'childcare facility of public standard', and provided subsidies towards their wage costs, overhead costs, and facility improvement costs.

Overall, the childcare policy changes that took place under the Lee government were characterised by two main attributes. One was a clear split between the state's role as a financier and the existing childcare market as a deliverer of childcare services. The frequent infusion of government funding into childcare sectors notwithstanding, the regulatory regime remained loose, and quality assurance was anticipated through rewarding

compliance financially rather than through the state's command and control. The other attribute was the spotlight on facilitating parental choice over not only institutional care but also homecare (although policies supporting homecare remained a relatively marginal area of its childcare policy). Taken as a whole, these two attributes demonstrate that the country's path towards the 'state-supervising quasi-market model' began to be mixed with the 'state-funded homecare model'.

2.4.3. The Park Geun-hye government (03/2013–03/2017)

Under the subsequent conservative Park government, the state's role as a direct provider of childcare services remained weak. However, this should not be interpreted as the Park government being against strengthening childcare publicness in regard to the ownership dimension like its predecessor. Indeed, the Park government emphasised the need to expand national/public childcare facilities in its childcare plan to some extent, having acknowledged that childcare services delivered by private sector providers did not fulfil parents' expectation of high-quality childcare services. In light of this, the level of public spending on expanding national/public childcare facilities in real terms returned to levels similar but slightly above the previous Roh government (see Table A1.2 in Appendix I for more details). Nevertheless, this was not enough to transform the country's extant strong privateness of childcare considering that approximately nine out of every ten child-care facilities were run by for-profit private sectors during the Park government.

Indeed, the state's role in strengthening financial responsibility for both out-of-home and at-home childcare was far more important for the Park government. This is illustrated by the fact that income and age-related requirements for receiving parental childcare subsidies were completely removed in 2013, which allowed all households with

children of 0-5 years of age to use free childcare services for up to 12 hours a day. The consequence of what the Park government called 'free childcare' was a 28% increase in the country's public spending on parental childcare subsidies within just one year (see Table A1.2 in Appendix I for more details).

One might argue that such a radical expansion in publicly funded childcare services signalled a shift towards universalism in the country's childcare policy. However, it is important to note that homecare allowances were simultaneously expanded. In 2013, children's age and household income-related eligibility conditions for receiving them were completely removed; and consequently, any families caring for children of 0-5 years of age at home became entitled to receive ₩100,000-200,000 (€75-150) per month.[23] This universalisation resulted in rapid increases in the number of families receiving home-care allowances, which consequently contributed to the extensive growth of the country's real-term spending on them: from a meagre approximately ₩124 billion (€93.12 million) in 2012 to ₩1.32 trillion (€991 million) in 2014 where it reached its peak.[24]

Whilst the simultaneous expansion of childcare subsidies and homecare allowances was strongly ensconced in the 'free choice' rhetoric, the genuine aim lay in improving fiscal efficiency by "inducing 0 to 2 year-olds to be taken care of by parents and 3 to 5 year-olds or dual-earner families to use childcare facilities" (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2013: 24). Furthermore, in 2016, the Park government introduced the 'Customised Childcare Scheme', which allowed single-earner families with children of 0-2 years of age to only use a half day (6 hours) of childcare services. This additional measure was

[23] Homecared children aged up to 1 and 2 received ₩200,000 (€150) and ₩150,000 (€113) per month, respectively. Those aged 2 and above received ₩100,000 (€75) per month until they entered primary school.

[24] In 2012, when homecare allowances were means-tested and available only for young children, the number of their recipients was 102,653. After their universalisation and expansion in 2013, the number of recipients increased to 1,060,484. In 2014, the number reached 1,012,336.

necessary because, according to the Park government, *unnecessary* demands from single-earner families' for using publicly funded childcare services had to be reduced for better fiscal efficiency (*ibid.*). This implied that despite the universalist cast of its childcare rhetoric, targeting of different sectors of the population was maintained in line with previous governments.

However, compared to its predecessor, the Park government seemed to realise the importance of putting more effort into its regulatory oversight for quality assurance in its childcare plan. Along these lines, the Park government slightly tightened work experience/practice-related requirements for childcare staffs to become qualified (see Table A1.3 in Appendix I for more details). Nevertheless, the level of overall state control over childcare facilities remained weak in the sense that, firstly, their participation in the national accreditation system stayed voluntary, and secondly, quality assurance was anticipated through further increasing the number of private childcare facilities with the so-called 'public standard'.

By integrating findings on the three dimensions of the Park government, it appears that the government maintained and bolstered its conservative predecessor's childcare policy approach that combined a weak state supervisory 'quasi-market model' and the 'state-funded homecare model' (although public funding for homecare remained at a modest level). In doing so, the state served primarily as a financier and facilitator of free choice for parents over different childcare types and providers.

2.4.4. The Moon Jae-in government (05/2017–present)

Whilst the two successive conservative governments led by Lee and Park adopted a model where the state primarily served as a financier of different childcare modalities and

facilitator of diverse choice, the current centre-left Moon government emphasises that public finance-focused publicness should be complemented by strengthening the state's responsibility for directly providing and regulating childcare services.

When the changes in the indicators of the ownership dimension are traced over the course of the four governments, the Moon government deviates from the general trends shown by its predecessors (see Table A1.1 in Appendix I). Firstly, the Moon government shows the highest and fastest growing level of public spending on the expansion of national/public childcare facilities. Whilst the previous three governments' real-term annual public spending was approximately ₩14.66 billion (€11.06 million) on average, that of the Moon government was approximately ₩62.30 billion (€46.86 million) between 2017 and 2020 on average (see Table A1.1 in Appendix I for more details). The increased public spending, in turn, has contributed to the rapid growth of those facilities. Between 2017 and 2020, 2,099 new national/public childcare facilities were established, which outran the total number of facilities that were established under the previous three governments. Consequently, the capacity of those facilities (which was calculated by the maximum number of spaces available per 1,000 children using childcare services) also increased from 145 to 243 over the same period.

However, a more detailed look at the operation of national/public childcare facilities shows that the improved publicness in the ownership dimension cannot simply be equated with the strengthening of direct state provision of childcare services. In fact, alongside the radical expansion of publicly owned childcare facilities in recent years, a continuous reduction of facilities directly operated by the state and local authorities was also observed: from 1,057 (out of 3,157) in 2017 to a meagre 379 (out of 4,958) in 2020. This empirical evidence brings me to conclude that the rapid expansion was made possi-

ble through increasing contracting out of national/public childcare facilities to private providers. This implies the state's role has been being strengthened as a contract administrator rather than as a provider.

It should also be noted that state intervention in administering the operation of private childcare facilities has been reinforced under the current Moon government. Although basic regulations regarding the qualifications of childcare directors/teachers and the maximum child to childcare teacher ratio remain unchanged (see Table A1.3 in Appendix I), an arguably more important change is the replacement of the existing accreditation system with the 'Childcare Evaluation System' in 2019. Under this new system, all childcare facilities (including approximately 20% of those that had not been accredited) are required to be evaluated and the results of this assessment are then made available to the public.

Another noticeable change in the Moon government's childcare publicness lies in the scale and direction of its funding. As discussed above, facilitating parental choice between using publicly funded childcare services and receiving pecuniary compensation for familial care was important under the two previous conservative governments. As a consequence of this, approximately a fifth of the country's total childcare spending was made on homecare allowances under the previous Park government. However, under the Moon government, the number of recipients of homecare allowances declined and the corresponding public spending therefore gradually declined in both real terms and as a percentage of total childcare spending (see Table A2 in Appendix). In 2019, the share of public funding on homecare allowances accounted for only 11% of total childcare spending. This is because of the ongoing freeze of homecare allowances at ₩100,000-

200,000 (€75-150) under the Moon government, which presumably makes the homecare option less attractive.

However, the state's responsibility for funding institutional childcare services was further reinforced under the Moon government. This growth was particularly substantial in 2018, when supply and demand side funding for the provision of childcare services increased by 17% when compared to the previous year—reaching over ₩6 trillion (€4.51 billion) (see Table A1.3 in Appendix I for more details). This was a consequence of the Moon government's decision to fully fund the childcare-education integrated curriculum for children of 3 and 4 years of age, which had hitherto been primarily funded by municipal educational offices due to the lack of central government funding.

Taken as a whole, the Moon government appears to have consolidated its path towards the 'state-supervising quasi-market model'. However, in the face of the corona-virus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, all childcare and educational settings were ordered to close down between February and May 2020 and local-level re-closures were repeated throughout the whole year, although emergency childcare services were made available to parents who needed them. In this scenario, the Moon government therefore expanded cash support for homecare by providing two rounds of 'childcare coupons' (National Assembly Budget Office, 2020).[25] During the first round in April 2020, a one-off payment of ₩400,000 (€301) was offered for all households with children aged up to 7. The coverage of the coupon expanded during the second round in September 2020: all households with young children and primary school children were given ₩200,000

[25] Additionally, the 'emergency family care leave subsidy' was provided for all working households taking care of a child (aged up to and including 8) due to the closure of the child's childcare or educational settings or the child's self-isolation. People working 20 hours or more per week were given ₩50,000 (€38) per day for up to 10 days, whilst those working less than 20 hours per week received ₩25,000 (€19) per day for up to 10 days.

(€150). Additionally, from January 2022, ₩300,000 (€226) per month of infant benefits have been provided for all newly born children up to their second birthday if they do not use publicly funded childcare services (Government of the Republic of Korea, 2020). This implies that the Moon government's orientation towards public childcare has become somewhat diluted in more recent years.

2.5. Discussion: overall patterning in the development of childcare publicness and privateness

How is one to make sense of these findings? One major noticeable trend observed across the four governments over time is that in spite of their focus on strengthening the state's role in the country's childcare policy contexts, their policy reforms were geared towards increasing the state's role primarily as a financier of childcare. However, beyond the quantitative financial expansion under the four governments, there were some important cross-governmental changes in regard to funding arrangements (supply-side *vs* demand-side) and funding orientation (out-of-home *vs* at-home childcare).

With regard to funding arrangements, a noticeable shift from supply-side funding to demand-side funding was observed. When the country's expansion of publicly funded childcare services was initiated and accelerated under the centre-left Roh government, funding was provided wholly on the supply-side. However, under the conservative Lee government, parents began to be seen as consumers in its so-called 'consumer-centric childcare policy' whereupon their choice as consumers became crucial. Against this back-drop, subsidies for the use of childcare services began to be directly provided to parents in the form of electronic vouchers.

Alongside the growing importance of parental choice in the country's childcare policy, the need to increase government funding for childcare in both institutional settings and the private sphere of home gained traction. Under the conservative Lee government, the consequence of this was the introduction of government subsidies for parents to employ in-home caregivers and homecare allowances for young children. During the subsequent conservative government led by Park, homecare allowances were made available for all children under the rhetoric of free choice. Whilst the nominal aim was to reinforce free choice, the policies were designed to induce private care of families with children under the age of 3 and/or single earners in the home setting, so that families with older children and working families would be able to benefit from public childcare. Although the state's role as a financier of childcare in institutional settings has been bolstered more than ever before under the current centre-left Moon government, this orientation has been somewhat diluted in the face of the COVID-19-induced closure of childcare settings and bold financial support for homecare in more recent years.

Another striking trend was that in spite of the rapidly increased and regular infusion of government funding into childcare sectors, it was not accompanied by the introduction of stringent regulatory oversight until very recently (*i.e.* 2019). This made childcare a lucrative business, which consequently further increased the number of private, for-profit childcare facilities in the country. In particular, small-sized home-based childcare facilities expanded most rapidly, implying that the location of childcare moved from parents' private homes to caregivers' private homes.

Overall, these findings indicate that the country's childcare reforms succeeded in reinforcing childcare publicness in the sense that the primary location of daycare was moved into the public sphere, thereby dramatically alleviating the familial burden of

childcare. However, they also demonstrate that the privateness of childcare was bolstered during this process in regard to service delivery as well as childcare responsibility for the less deserving (*i.e.* families with young children and/or single earners).

2.6. Concluding remarks

In the 20th century, South Korea never had a 'big state' in its childcare policy (and in many other policy areas), and childcare was of a very private nature. However, in the mid-2000s onwards, the importance of strengthening childcare publicness appeared on the scene in South Korea and public support for childcare has been rapidly increasing since then. Thus, this paper problematised the simple equation of strengthening publicness of childcare with increasing public spending and provided an improved understanding of publicness by looking at it with its twin concept—privateness—in the childcare context. Based on this advanced conceptualisation, this paper suggests four ideal-typical childcare models, which served as a reference point to describe and pinpoint overarching patterns of the interactions among the three pillars of the care triangle: the family, the state and the market.

One of the key lessons drawn from the empirical analysis is that increases in public spending on childcare and the generosity of publicly funded childcare services are not necessarily an appropriate yardstick for measuring publicness. In fact, the analysis suggests that publicness and privateness of childcare (and other social care) depend on multiple factors, including: (1) who owns and operates care facilities; (2) how funding is assigned (*i.e.* supply-side *vs* demand-side) and the assumptions on which the funding mechanism is based; (3) whether funding is conditioned by compliance with certain regulatory standards and monitoring, and how stringent the regulatory regime is; (4) whether

providers are allowed to make profits when the services are publicly funded; and (5) who is supposed to benefit from care services in an institutional or home setting, or from pecuniary compensation for familial care. Furthermore, although the 'public' and 'private' in social services is often understood as a binary opposition, publicness and privateness are not always in a zero sum relationship.

Finally, it is important to turn to the question of the extent to which the publicness/privateness conceptual framework is useful for understanding the nature of childcare policy reforms in South Korea and elsewhere. In the scholarship on social care, the defamilisation lens is widely used to delve into care going public. However, it often leads researchers to focus on the extent to which state funds alleviate the cost of childcare and opportunity costs rather than the different pathways of achieving this defamilisation and the kinds of outcomes that can be brought by these different pathways. In contrast, this paper's publicness/privateness framework helps us comprehend how increases in the generosity of publicly funded non-parental care (which can simply be understood as defamilisation of childcare) can be accompanied by commodification of care work by promoting its marketisation in the absence of the state's role as a provider and regulator as well as its informalisation and defamilisation *within* private home settings. Put differently, the publicness/privateness framework can be utilised to capture the complexity and multidirectionality in the socialisation of care: from unpaid to paid labour, from autistic behaviour to a private commodity, from an in-home to an out-of-home care setting, and from the familial to non-familial sphere.

3. PAPER II

Uncovering problem representations in South Korea's childcare expansion: an interrogation of government discourses by semantic network analysis

3.1. Introduction

In the past, South Korea's welfare regime was characterised by its non-interventionist stance on families and children. However, since its transition to democracy in 1987, the country's feminist and civil society movements have gathered momentum, demanding alleviation of familial childcare responsibilities (Jung, 2014; Kim and Kim, 2014). Within these movements, growing attention to childcare was often in the name of the freedom associated with women's economic independence, as well as in relation to the healthy development of children—especially those from low-income families.

It was only at the turn of the 21st century that their increasing demands for childcare expansion attracted political interests alongside growing concerns around a rapid decline in fertility, a soaring dependence ratio, and economic slowdown. More specifically, it was during a governmental public hearing held in 2001 when the absence of a system supporting reconciliation between work and childrearing was first voiced as one of the major factors contributing to the postponement of childbirth. During the Roh Moo-hyun government (03/2003–02/2008), the pronatalist rhetoric of strengthening the state's responsibility for childcare gained more public attention *via* the enactment of the First Basic Plan on Low Fertility and Ageing Society (2006–2010). In this plan, strengthening public responsibility for childcare was depicted as a pronatalist policy tool that would

reduce economic and social burdens on families with children (Government of the Republic of Korea, 2006: 38).

When conservative President Lee Myung-bak (03/2008–02/2013) took office in 2008, people initially feared that his government would cut social spending on childcare. This is because he described the two previous centre-left governments' tenure as the 'lost decade' (Peng, 2014). Nevertheless, under Lee's presidential leadership, the expansion of state childcare support continued and became even more dramatic (as shown in Paper I). The subsequent conservative Park Geun-hye government (03/2013–03/2017) also continued this tendency, bringing forth an era of free childcare for all by the year 2013.

It is not surprising that such a rapid expansion of free, universal childcare services in South Korea has attracted scholarly attention. Whilst the analytic foci vary across existing studies, researchers tend to understand the country's childcare expansion as a path departure from its deep-rooted developmentalism or non-interventionism in the family's life (*e.g.* Estévez-Abe and Kim, 2014; Estévez-Abe and Naldini, 2016; Estévez-Abe *et al.*, 2016: Fleckenstein and Lee, 2017b; Fleckenstein and Lee, 2017c). However, can the recent rapid expansion of public childcare support be really interpreted as a transformative change in the country's welfare regime, as the existing literature has emphasised?

This problematisation is valid because, as mentioned above, increasing desires for better gender equality and social rights during the 1980s and 1990s were not sufficient reasons for the state to strengthen its responsibility for childcare. It was only in the early 2000s when the need for reshaping care responsibilities between the family and the state (as well as within the family) began to be highlighted alongside rapidly dropping fertility rates and increasing threats to sustainable economic development. Surely, the expansion of childcare support sends a signal for improving gender justice and social protection,

especially from the perspective of increasing enrolment rates in ECEC settings. However, in this paper, progress in such 'outputs' is not the explicit focus. Rather, this paper aims to understand the 'inputs' in the sense of policy goals and presuppositions embedded in policy measures.

To this end, this paper unpacks the discursive construction of policy problems and solutions in South Korea's childcare policy by investigating them from the centre-left Roh government (03/2003–02/2008) (when childcare policy began to be associated with pronatalism) up to the current centre-left Moon government (05/2017–present). This is because, as argued by the nascent post-structural feminist scholarship—which will be discussed more in detail in the following section—problematisation of certain issues is "never simply a matter of defining goals and measuring [the] distance from achieving them" (Stone, 1988: 106). A problem representation—here, the issue of low fertility—is rather the strategic representation of certain assumptions of society and individuals.

More specifically, this paper seeks to address the following questions:

Q1. Has South Korea's childcare policy discourses ever been constructed around the issue of gender equality and/or children's social right to development?

Q2. If such an aspect was absent in the core of the discourses:

   a. What was the main problem represented to be?

   b. How has such a problematisation defined the recipients of childcare support (i.e. women and children), and what kinds of assumptions were attached to them?

Addressing these questions will allow me to capture whether there have been fundamental changes in the philosophy of the welfare state, the role of the family and the orientation towards gender relations.

This paper consists of five sections. The first section introduces the critical and post-structural feminist perspective as a theoretical basis of this study. Here, with special reference to Carol Bacchi's 'what's the problem represented to be' (WPR), this section also suggests three different types of problem representations in childcare policy discourses, which will serve as an analytical framework to investigate the South Korean case. In the second section, the paper outlines the data used for the empirical analysis and introduces semantic network analysis (SNA) as a research method. This is followed by the third section consisting of an analysis of the results in order to examine changes and continuities in childcare discourses of the Roh, Lee, Park and Moon governments. The fourth section involves a discussion of the results in a comprehensive manner, which suggests that South Korea's childcare policy expansion was, until very recently, motivated by its anticipated economic returns rather than its potential contributions to other social values. The last section concludes this paper with a summary of the findings and their implications as well as this study's contributions to the literature.

3.2. Conceptual framework

3.2.1. Policy as a discourse

The 'policy as a discourse' approach refers to understanding policy as political practices that construct policy problems and impose certain assumptions about power and social relations (Bacchi, 1999, 2000; Hastings, 1998). This approach emerged as a response to increasing criticism of the conventional approaches of policy analysis—such as the 'rational approach to policy' and 'political rationalist model'—which tend to view problems as readily given rather than constructed, and "see policy as about decision-making

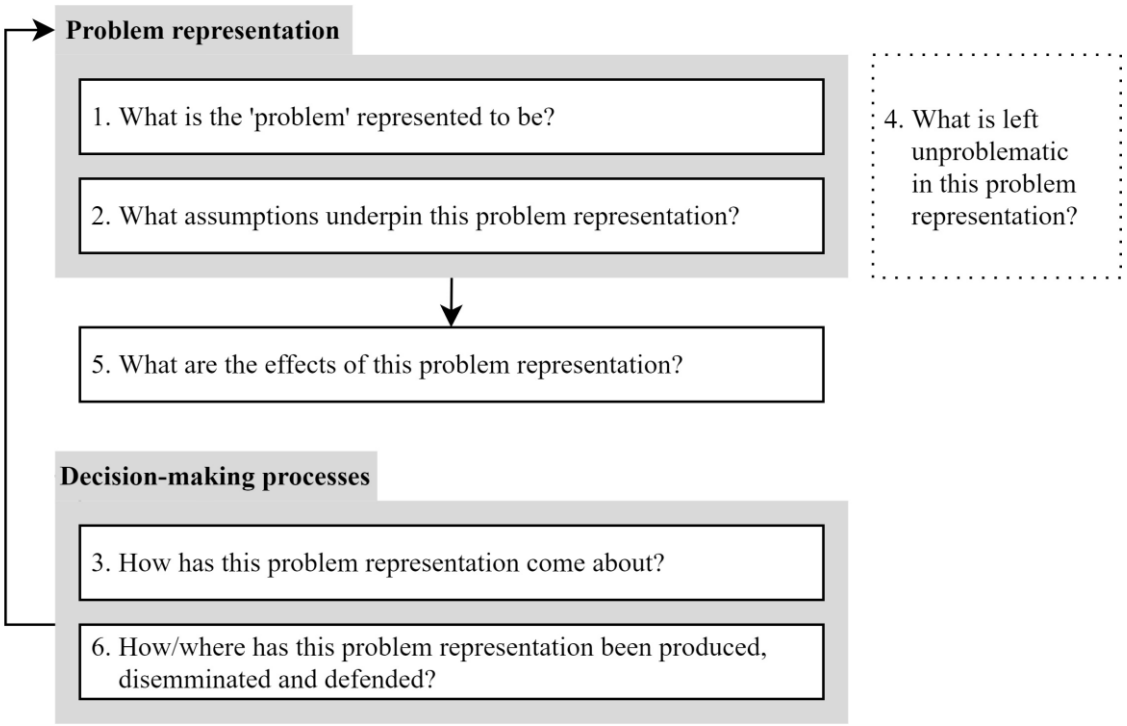
[and] finding solutions to problems" (Bacchi, 1999: 19; Cochran and Malone, 1995; Stone, 1998).

Against this backdrop, feminist policy analysts have stressed the importance of recognising 'non-innocence' in the construction of policy problems (*e.g.* Bacchi, 1999, 2000; Fraser, 1989, 1995; Stone, 1998, 2002). This is because, as Stone (1988: 106) writes, "a problem definition is never simply a matter of defining goals and measuring [the] distance from them; [i]t is rather the strategic representation of situations". The constructivist and critical feminist scholarship has therefore paid increasing attention to hidden power relations and unspoken assumptions by unpacking the discursive construction of policy problems (*e.g.* Bacchi, 1999; Blackmore, 1995, 1999; De Castell and Bryson, 1997; Lazar, 2005, Stone, 2002).

Whilst there is no unitary framework for analysing discursive aspects of policy, Carol Bacchi's (1999, 2009) WPR approach serves as a very useful framework. The WPR approach highlights two key points: firstly, we are ruled through problem representations rather than through policies; and secondly, 'working backwards' is important in seeing how the 'problem' is represented (Bacchi, 2009: 25). Hence, Bacchi suggests that the discursive analysis needs to address six questions, which can be classified into three groups according to their analytic focus (see Figure 3.1 below).

The first group include the first, second and fourth questions. These questions imply that it is important to identify not only what is represented as the main problem in the discourses, but also what assumptions and presuppositions the represented problem rests on, and where the silences are. These questions are followed by the fifth question, which forms a separate group. This question focuses on the effects of the problem representation. By asking this question, the WPR approach leads researchers to identify

Figure 3.1. The six questions of the 'what's the problem represented to be' approach



Source: Researcher's own illustration based on Bacchi (2009)

how a particular problem representation delimits what can and cannot be suggested as policy solutions, how a particular group of people is more targeted, and how they are portrayed in the discourses. In contrast, the final group of questions, *i.e.* the third and the sixth, encourages analysis of non-discursive practices in the sense that both of them reflect on the specific developments and decision-making processes that contribute to the formation of problem representations (Bacchi, 2009). As this paper aims to examine the changes and continuities in the nature and features of problem representations in South Korea's childcare policy over time (rather than the means through which a particular type of problematisation is granted legitimacy), the focus needs to be on the first two sets of questions, namely, questions 1, 2, 4, and 5.

3.2.2. Childcare policy as a discourse: constructing a conceptual reference point

From the WPR perspective, childcare policy is not about finding a solution to readily identified problems. Rather, the policy is an outcome of a particular problem representation, which inevitably rests on certain normative assumptions of the role of the state and the family as well as gender relations. There is, then, the question of what types of discourses are found in childcare policy. Applying the WPR approach means that the different types of childcare policy discourses reflect differences in terms of: (1) the problem representation; (2) the policy solutions for the defined problem; (3) the underpinning assumptions; (4) the target populations; and (5) the definition of recipients of childcare support. Based on the insights gained from the existing literature on childcare, it is possible to identify at least three different types of childcare policy discourses (Bacchi, 1999, 2009; Borchorst, 2008; Daly, 2010b, 2011; Esping-Andersen, 2002a, 2002b; Fraser, 1994; Heitlinger, 1991, 1993; Henninger *et al*., 2008; Leira, 2002; Lister, 2003; Mahon, 1997, 2002; and Mätzke and Ostner, 2010; Plomien, 2019; Seeleib-Kaiser and Toivonen, 2011).

The first type of childcare policy discourse problematises women's lack of access to the labour market (Bacchi, 1999). In this discourse, the provision of childcare services is interpreted as a prerequisite for liberating women from unpaid care labour and facilitating their engagement in paid labour so that they can achieve economic independence (*ibid.*). Childcare is therefore depicted as something that needs to be defamilised *via* the provision of publicly subsidised, high-quality childcare services rather than as something that needs to be rewarded through the introduction of cash benefits (Mahon, 2002). There is an unspoken assumption here that women's equal citizenship rights can be acquired *via* their incorporation into the public sphere (Fraser, 1994; Plomien, 2019). Because women are entitled to publicly funded childcare services as worker-citizens, working mothers are

given priority to access the service and use it for longer than stay-at-home mothers (Bacchi, 1999, 2009).

The second type of childcare policy discourse represents the lack of intervention in early childhood as a major problem. A social investment discourse is a typical example. Here, the provision of high-quality publicly funded childcare services is depicted as a way of reducing the disadvantages arising from underprivileged backgrounds (Bacchi, 1999; Esping-Andersen, 2002a). The assumption is that high-quality ECEC enhances individuals' cognitive development. Good cognitive abilities yield individual returns later on, which in turn increase the individuals' self-sufficiency and decrease their welfare dependency. From this perspective, children are defined as 'citizen-workers' of the future rather than as 'citizen-children' of the present, with public spending on childcare services seen as an 'investment' rather than an 'expenditure' (Lister, 2003). Because this discourse is focused on creating more equivalent conditions for people *via* early intervention, vulnerable families with children—such as single adult households and low-income families—are prioritised for publicly funded childcare services and other child-related support.

The last type of childcare policy discourse problematises low birth rates. When declining fertility is the represented problem, the focus is on the cost of having children. Thus, the provision of child-related monetary support and childcare services is described as alleviating the direct and indirect costs of childrearing for families and thereby potentially reversing low fertility trends (Heitlinger, 1991). Such a contemporary pronatalist rhetoric in childcare policy discourse is different from the imperialist one, in which women were required to sacrifice their own desires so that they can serve the reproductive needs of families and meet their patriotic duty (see Henninger *et al.,* 2008). Nevertheless,

the assumption that women want children by nature remains unchanged in modern pro-natalism. And from this perspective, monetary and service support for childcare and other supportive policy measures are seen as important. This is likely to entail prioritising large families (who bear higher direct and indirect costs of rearing children) for child-related support.

In reality, these three different discourses—which I will call 'gender discourse', 'social investment discourse' and 'population discourse'—may not exist separately but are highly likely to be combined to shape childcare policy. These three will serve as the framework for analysing South Korea's childcare policy discourses in the empirical analysis section.

3.3. Data and methodology

3.3.1. Data collection

In terms of data, this paper uses both written and spoken discourses on childcare made during the four governments. For written discourses, this paper uses the central government-level white papers on childcare that were published during the period of the four governments, *i.e.* between March 2003 and December 2020. Since the Roh government (03/2003–02/2008), South Korean governments have formulated and published a childcare plan during every presidency term. During the period under examination, four childcare plans were published: the Roh government's First Mid-/Long-Term Basic Plan on Childcare (2006–2010), the Lee government's Amendment of the First Mid-/Long-Term Basic Plan on Childcare (2009–2012), the Park government's Second Mid-/Long-Term Basic Plan on Childcare (2013–2017), and the Moon government's Third Mid-/Long-Term Basic Plan on Childcare (2018–2022).

The basic plans include diverse information, which can be divided into four areas: (1) the current childcare-related social problems to be tackled; (2) the achievements and limitations of the previous government's childcare plan; (3) the main policy directions and key strategies; and (4) the details of each policy proposal in terms of target numbers, ministerial accountability, budget and timeline. Since this paper focuses on the discursive construction of policy problems, only the sections that fell into the first and third areas were extracted for the analysis. Table A2.1 in Appendix II summarises information on the relevant sections of each white paper included in the analysis.

One might argue that a single policy paper for each government is unlikely to sufficiently reflect the range of official policy statements made on a specific issue. Therefore, another main source of data for this paper is formal speeches made by top-level decision-makers about childcare policy between March 2003 to December 2020. These include the President, Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, and Ministers and Vice Ministers of childcare-related departments, namely, those of Gender Equality and Family, Health and Welfare, and Employment and Labour. The official transcripts of the formal speeches were downloaded from online national archives (https://www.korea.kr/archive/speechList.do), by searching 'childcare' ('*po-yuk*' in Korean) as the key word. This yielded a total of 103 formal speeches for the analysis. The details of these speeches can be found in Table A2.2 of Appendix II.

3.3.2. Research method

There is no agreement as to which research method is the best for analysing discursive aspects of policy. In studies that attempt to unravel power structures, the most widely used method is critical discourse analysis (CDA). However, as described by many

scholars, one of the pitfalls of CDA is that "it accords a pivotal role to the researcher and his [or] her interpretive and explanatory skills" (Breeze, 2011: 507). The main issues with this research method are that meanings do not emerge organically from textual data but rather researchers give them based on their subjective standpoint (*ibid.*). Stated differently, the researcher uses "impressionistic methodology for analysing text", meaning that they are not systemically providing reasons for why some parts of the text appear to have a specific meaning whilst others do not (Verschueren, 2001, cited in Breeze, 2011: 507). The absence of explicit, formal analytic procedures also hinders systematic tracking of changes and continuities in the discourses over time (Leifeld and Haunss, 2012).

Therefore, it has increasingly been argued that a more systematic and well-defined approach should be adopted for qualitative analysis of textual data. For that reason, diverse computer-assisted textual analysis methods have been developed recently, such as content analysis (CA) (*e.g.* Hsieh and Shannon, 2005), frame-mapping analysis (FMA) (*e.g.* Miller, 1997; Miller and Riechert, 2001), discourse network analysis (DNA) (*e.g.* Leifeld, 2016), and SNA (*e.g.* Park *et al.*, 2019; Yang and González-Bailón, 2017).

This study employs SNA for the following reasons (see Table 3.1 below for a comparison with other methods). First of all, SNA refers to an analysis of two main components of textual data: 'nodes' and their 'ties'. Nodes are concepts which are frequently used in a body of text: the more frequently the concept is used, the more salient the information it delivers. Ties indicate associations between different concepts in terms of their co-occurrence within specified boundaries. The most fundamental theoretical foundation of this method is that concepts have meaning only in relation to other concepts (Carley, 1994; Drieger, 2013; Woelfel and Fink, 1980). Analysing links between concepts allows researchers to extract fundamental meanings and assumptions that may not be explicitly

stated in texts (Doerfel, 1998; Doerfel and Connaughton, 2009). Such a recognition of relations between concepts in SNA is distinct from CA, which primarily relies on measuring the frequency of concepts to gauge the level of their prominence.

Table 3.1. Comparison of different discourse analysis methods

	Critical discourse analysis (CDA)	Content analysis (CA)	Frame mapping analysis (FMA)	Discourse network analysis (DNA)	Semantic network analysis (SNA)
Can be inductive	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Can be deductive	×	✓	×	✓	✓
Actor-centred	×	×	×	✓	×
Content-oriented	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Degree of formalisation	*	**	***	***	***
Degree of reliability	*	**	***	**	***
Degree of researcher's interpretation	***	***	*	***	*
Availability of software implementations	×	✓	✓	✓	✓

Note: ✓ (yes), × (no), * (low), ** (medium), *** (high)

Source: Adapted from Leifeld (2016: 49)

Secondly, as will be discussed in more detail below, in contrast to FMA, SNA provides more detailed information on individual concepts in terms of 'centrality' and 'coreness', for example. By comparing how the quantitative values of these parameters change over time, it is also possible to provide more solid evidence on which policy issues come to or remain at the fore, thereby making cross-governmental discourse analysis more comparable.

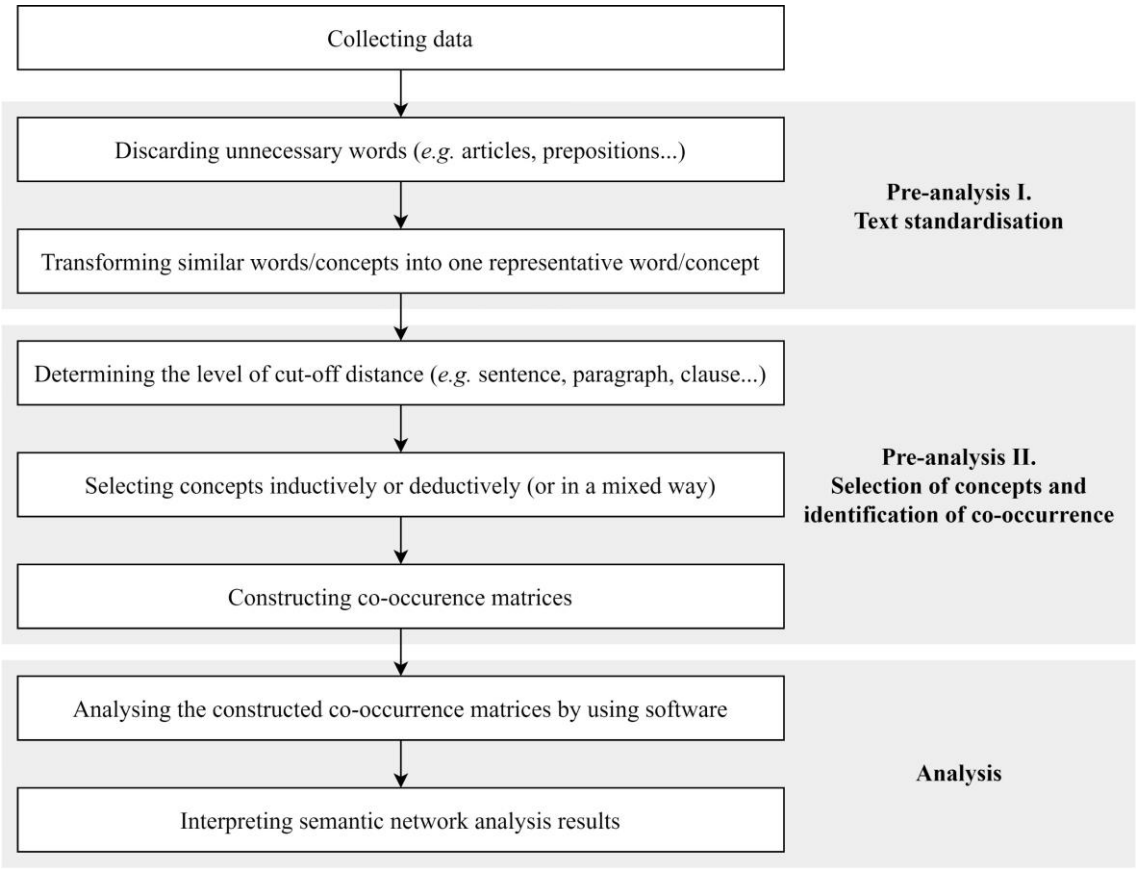
Lastly, whilst DNA provides overly detailed analysis on not only the content of text data but also who made the statement and which organisation that person is affiliated with, SNA is more focused on understanding the content. Because this paper analyses textual data collected from the central government's childcare white papers and statements rather than interactive policy debates among diverse state and non-state actors, SNA is deemed more appropriate for the purposes of this paper.

Whilst definitions vary, SNA in this study is defined as a method for identifying salient concepts and extracting underlying meanings and assumptions from the structure of concept networks (see Shim *et al*., 2015: 58). The term 'concept' is used here instead of 'word' as concepts can be compound words or whole phrases that have a unique meaning. For instance, the concept 'work-family life balance' comprises four words: 'work', 'family', 'life', and 'balance'. The four words themselves, if separated, have distinct meanings. However, once they are combined, a new concept emerges.

The steps of SNA are summarised in Figure 3.2 below. Firstly, the researcher discards words that are not central to the analysis, such as articles, conjunctions, auxiliary verbs, and some frequently used words which do not directly affect the context. The next step is to transform semantically connected terms into one representative concept. For example, similar word strings, such as 'low fertility', 'birth rate decline', 'low-fertility-ageing-population', and 'declining productive population' are replaced with 'low fertility and ageing'.

Once the texts have been standardised, researchers should determine the level of the cut-off distance (Choi and Lecy, 2012). Researchers can choose a cut-off distance of *N* words apart, a sentence apart, a paragraph apart or even the whole text. If two concepts arise within the designated cut-off distance, they are presumed to have a meaningful relationship. Conversely, if the concepts are further apart than the cut-off distance, it means that they are not related in a meaningful way. With regard to childcare white papers, the cut-off range was restricted to a clause. When it comes to formal speeches, this study limited the range of co-occurrences to a sentence, which is the minimal unit that consists of words made to deliver meaning. However, if two or more sentences in a row within the same paragraph reveal a close semantic relationship—such as causality,

Figure 3.2. Process of semantic network analysis



Source: Researcher's own illustration based on Yang and González-Bailón (2017) and Park *et al.* (2019)

consequence, explanation or clarification—they were considered as one semantic unit. Based on this cut-off criteria, 210 semantic units were collected from the four white papers and 103 formal speeches: 54, 54, 82, and 20 from the Roh, Lee, Park and Moon governments, respectively.

The last pre-analysis step is to construct a matrix on the co-occurrence of concepts (or nodes). For this, the researcher needs to carefully select concepts from textual data in order to empirically analyse them. At this step, the researcher also needs to determine whether to use a deductive (confirmatory) or an inductive (exploratory) approach (or a mix of the two). In the former, researchers identify and extract concepts from textual data according to a certain conceptual framework. By contrast, researchers adopting the latter

carefully read through the entire text without any preconceived conceptual guidelines and decide what to include and what to exclude. This study used an inductive strategy: the concepts that appeared at least twice in the standardised text were all included.[26] This is because employing a deductive strategy may result in a biased analysis by allowing researchers to cherry pick some elements that support what they already know or think important, whilst ignoring others that do not fit within their conceptual framework. It should also be noted that South Korea's childcare discourses may show very different forms of problem representations from those outlined in the conceptual framework.

During the pre-analysis phase of 'text standardisation' and 'concept selection', SNA researchers can use software in order to reduce workload. The main limitation of relying on software-led text mining is that it may lead researchers to overlook gradual differences, the construction of negations or double negations and relations in the syntax of sentences. Contrastingly, reading and encoding textual data manually has the advantage of researchers being better able to capture these different nuances. In doing so, the validity of research can be considerably enhanced. Hence, I read and manually encoded textual data from the four white papers and 103 formal speeches, despite it being a very labour intensive process.

For the actual analysis of each government's discourse, this study uses UCINET 6 software. More specifically, this paper identifies semantic relations in the collected textual data by focusing on two major parameters. First is categorical 'coreness', which mathematically measures and identifies whether concepts belong to the core (=1) or the periphery (=0) of the discourse (for more details on this parameter, see Everett and

[26] The only exception were key words such as 'gender equality' and 'economic/national development' which were included as they represented a key shift in policy discourse, regardless of the fact that they were only mentioned once under certain governments.

Borgatti, 2005). By calculating this, it is possible to examine what the main problem is represented to be, while other issues remain under-problematised (or not problematised at all), that is to say, are located at the periphery of the discourse. Additionally, it also allows researchers to track changes and continuities of problematisations across different governments.

Second is 'centrality', which calculates the degree to which a concept occupies a central position in the network (Bernard, 2013). Among the many different ways it can be measured, this study primarily focuses on two measurements: 'degree centrality' and 'eigenvector centrality'. Degree centrality of a concept is calculated based on the number of direct ties that the concept has with other concepts. It is therefore assumed that the more ties a concept has, the more influential the concept is. In contrast, 'eigenvector centrality' calculates a concept's centrality by weighing the centrality of other concepts to which this particular concept is connected (Borgatti *et al*., 2013).[27] In other words, the former is a local-level centrality measure that calculates a concept's centrality without looking at the entire network, whilst the latter is a more global centrality measure that takes the entire network into account when computing each concept's centrality (Ziegler, 2012).

3.4. Results

Based on the conceptual framework developed above, this section analyses the results of the SNA of the four governments' childcare discourses. As noted earlier, the analytical

[27] Let's assume that the concept X is connected to other concepts A, B and C, whilst the concept Y has ties with D, E and F. The degree centrality of X and Y is the same as they have an equal number of connections with other concepts. However, their eigenvector centrality values may differ because X's eigenvector centrality is calculated by weighing the centrality of A, B and C, whilst that of Y is computed by taking into account the centrality of D, E, and F.

focus is placed on identifying where the main problematisation lies and finding unspoken assumptions regarding the family's role and gender relations. For more systematic analysis of the discourses, the semantic network is visualised and presented in this section. However, although numerical calculations and visualisation of the discourse's semantic network provide concrete information on concepts that are more (or less) important and how strongly (or weakly) each concept is connected to one another, they do not provide a rich interpretation of the meanings constructed in the discourse. This means that the quantitative information from SNA should be complemented by researchers' qualitative interpretation. Hence, for richer interpretations of the results, the following analysis also includes some key citations from political speeches and policy documents that reveal representative relationships between concepts.

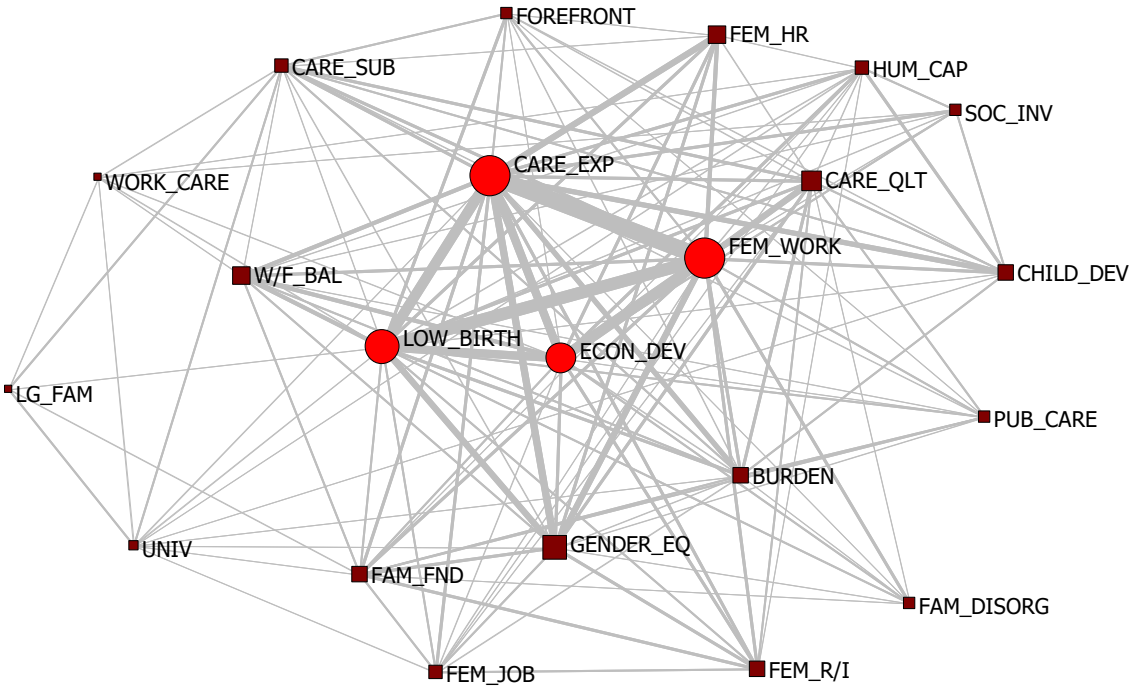
3.4.1. The Roh Moo-hyun government (03/2003–02/2008)

In the centre-left Roh government's childcare policy discourses, 22 concepts (or nodes) were observed (see Table A2.3 in Appendix II for the full SNA result). Among them, 'the need to free women for labour market participation', 'expansion of public support for childcare', 'low fertility/population ageing', and 'economic/national development' were positioned in the core.

Figure 3.3 below presents how centrally (or peripherally) each of the 22 concepts was positioned and how they were linked (or unconnected) to each other. The most prominent problem representation in the Roh government's childcare policy discourses was 'the need to free women for workforce participation' (FEM_WORK). However, although women's lack of access to the labour market was represented as one of the most important problems in the discourses, this did not mean that the Roh government's childcare policy

was discursively constructed from a gender perspective. As Figure 3.3 shows, the concept 'the need to free women for workforce participation' was strongly connected with 'economic/national development' (ECON_DEV), while it had relatively weak ties with 'gender equality' (GENDER_EQ) and 'women's rights and interests' (FEM_R/I). This is because women's participation in the labour market was very frequently identified as 'a national task', 'the prerequisite', or 'key engine' for economic development in the Roh government's discourses (*e.g.* Goh, 2003; Chi, 2004, 2005a, 2005b; Roh, 2003; Kim, 2006).

Figure 3.3. A semantic network of the Roh Moo-hyun government (03/2003–02/2008)



Note: Round-shaped and square-shaped nodes indicate core and peripheral concepts, respectively. The size of the nodes indicates their eigenvector centrality. These apply to Figure 3.4, 3.5, and 3.6 as well.

In fact, the importance of utilising female human resources was deeply related to the country's accelerated demographic transition and the resulting decline in productive populations. As Figure 3.3 shows above, 'low fertility/population ageing' (LOW_BIRTH) was another key issue that was problematised from the perspective of economic devel-

opment during the Roh government. Here, it should be noted that the issue of rapidly declining fertility rates and the resulting negative impacts on economic growth faced the Roh government from the outset. When Roh was inaugurated as President in 2003, the National Statistics Office announced that the TFR had declined to South Korea's all-time low, 1.17 per woman, which placed the country the lowest among OECD countries. In 2005, the TFR hit an all-time low once again at 1.05 per woman, placing South Korea dead last among OECD countries. This led President Roh to declare 'every child will be taken care of by the society' as his slogan during his presidency and to promulgate the First Basic Plan on Low Fertility and Ageing Society (2006–2010).

Against this backdrop, childrearing was regarded as 'social/financial burdens' (BURDEN) of women that would hinder their employment and fertility. From this perspective, the 'expansion of public support for childcare' (CARE_EXP) was primarily portrayed as "the best strategy for allowing women to have children and work", which would ultimately contribute to "economic and national development" (*e.g*. Chi, 2004; Han, 2007; Jang, 2007a). In light of this, the Roh government emphasised the importance of reducing families' spending on childcare services by introducing diverse measures, which ranged from the 'provision of childcare service subsidies for parents' (CARE_SUB) particularly for 'large families' (LG_FAM) and the 'universalisation of publicly funded childcare services' (UNIV) to the expansion of 'national/public childcare facilities' (PUB_CARE) and 'workplace childcare facilities' (WORK_CARE).

Whilst 'the need to free women for their workforce participation' and 'low fertility/population ageing' were the two main problems represented in the discourses, the need to improve 'child development' (CHILD_DEV) and 'human capital development' (HUM_CAP) was problematised less, and the concerns of child poverty were even silenced.

Another interesting point in regard to the strong problematisation of the need to increase female employment and fertility for economic development as an ultimate policy aim is that 'gender equality' (GENDER_EQ) was discussed and highlighted from this productivist and pronatalist perspective. The following statement reveals more specifically how the meaning of gender equality was 'bent' and 'co-opted' for demographic and economic objectives during the Roh government (Kim, 2006; for more details on the 'bending' of gender equality see Lombardo *et al.*, 2009; for more details on its 'co-option' see Stratigaki, 2004):

> "In the era of low fertility and population ageing, women's role as a key engine for national development has become increasingly important, and for this a more gender egalitarian view has been required when implementing policies. Hence, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family is promoting mid-/long-term plans, such as the Comprehensive Plan on Childcare…"
>
> – Kim Chang-soon, Vice Minister of Gender Equality and Family (26 April 2006)

Moreover, the visualised network also shows that the concept of gender equality was discussed in connection with 'family-friendliness' (FAM_FND), although the connection between them was not strong. The following statement indicates that the Roh government simply equated gender equality with facilitating women to juggle work and childcare responsibilities (Jang, 2007b):

> "The concerns about low fertility and population ageing are growing in our society. The issue of low fertility and population ageing is closely related to women's issues. The issue of low fertility, along with the issue of increasing female participation in society, will be the most difficult task, which will need to be solved by improving women's social status. Hence, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family is endeavouring to build a society where women can have children without burdens, especially by empowering the public childcare system. In addition, we are endeavouring to disseminate gender equality in people's daily lives by promoting family-friendly policies and socialising care labour."
>
> – Jang Ha-jin, Minister of Gender Equality and Family

(27 April 2007)

To summarise, the Roh government's childcare policy discourses were not constructed primarily around the issue of gender equality and social rights, despite the country's feminist and social movements wanting those issues to be addressed. Instead, deepening concerns about socio-demographic changes and their potential threat to the country's national and economic competitiveness led the government to justify placing an emphasis on increasing public responsibility for childcare.

3.4.2. The Lee Myung-bak government (03/2008–02/2013)

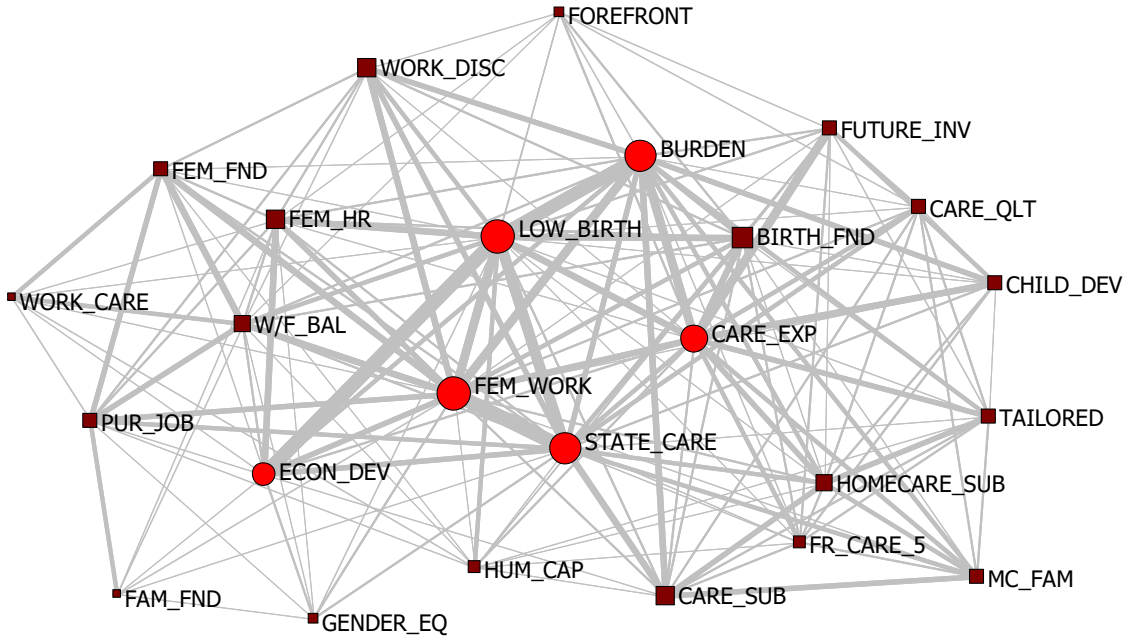
As discussed earlier, the election and inauguration of conservative Lee Myung-bak as President in 2008 elicited concern from those involved in progressive feminist and social movements. This is because he officially characterised the past ten years under the two centre-left governments as a 'lost decade', simultaneously emphasising his will to prioritise the country's economic growth over social welfare expansion.

In the Lee government's childcare policy discourses, 25 concepts were observed (see Table A2.4 of Appendix II for the full SNA result). Among them, six concepts were positioned at the heart of the Lee government's semantic network: 'low fertility/population ageing', 'female workforce participation', 'strengthening the state's responsibility for childcare', 'social/financial burdens of childrearing', 'expansion of publicly funded childcare', and 'economic/national development'.

Figure 3.4 below visualises the ties among the 25 concepts. The most noticeable change observed in the Lee government's semantic network when compared to that of the previous Roh government was that 'low fertility/population ageing' (LOW_BIRTH) became the most influential concept of all. This was because, despite the Lee government

and its predecessor Roh government's efforts to reverse the declining fertility trend, the TFR was maintained below the lowest-low fertility level of 1.3. The fact that the Lee government even established the 'Headquarters of the Childbirth-Friendly Society Movement' in 2009 shows how deep its concern over low fertility was. During the launching ceremony, President Lee highlighted that "pronatalist policy is the most important element among all policy exigencies" and "the fundamental future and prospects of our nation-state depends on fertility rates" (M.-B. Lee, 2009a).

Figure 3.4. A semantic network of the Lee Myung-bak government (03/2008–02/2013)



Another interesting change observed in the Lee government's network was that as 'low fertility/population ageing' became a centrepiece, women's 'social/financial burdens of child rearing' (BURDEN) was emphasised as a major factor contributing to low fertility (*e.g.* M.-B. Lee, 2009b; Ministry for Health, Welfare and Family Affairs, 2009: 21; Kim, 2012). In this context, 'strengthening the state's responsibility for childcare' (STATE_CARE) and the 'expansion of public support for childcare' (CARE_EXP) were more emphatically stressed as key strategies for alleviating child-related burdens and for

establishing a ‘childbirth-friendly environment’ (BIRTH_FND), rather than for enhancing ‘gender equality’ (GENDER_EQ) and/or ‘child development’ (CHILD_DEV) (*e.g.* Chun, 2008; Lee, 2011a, 2011b).

It should also be noted that as reinforcing the state’s responsibility for childcare was primarily pursued to reduce the ‘costs’ of raising children, policy proposals became increasingly focused on funding the costs of childcare. One such proposal involved increasing ‘subsidies for using childcare services’ (CARE_SUB). Another proposal advocated ‘homecare allowances’ (HOMECARE_SUB), notwithstanding their potential negative impacts on women’s attachment to unpaid care labour and the healthy development of children, especially those with disadvantaged backgrounds.

More importantly, alongside the increased fertility-centredness, ‘female workforce participation’ (FEM_WORK) was discussed far less in relation to ‘gender equality’ which became heavily marginalised in the network. Losing its connection to enhancing women’s economic independence, women’s employment began to be linked with the new concept of ‘purple jobs’ (PUR_JOB) (*e.g.* Y.-H. Lee, 2009; Baek, 2010a, 2010b, 2011). A purple job was a new term coined by the Lee government to refer to flexible working arrangements exclusively for women who tended to drop their careers due to having a child. Such a meaning was indicated by the term itself: red and blue symbolised household chores and careers, respectively, and purple signified a mix of the two. What was worse, as Figure 3.4 above shows, expanding purple jobs (*i.e.* encouraging flexible forms of women’s employment) was characterised as enhancing ‘women-friendliness’ (FEM_FND), ‘work-family life balance’ (W/F_BAL), and ‘family-friendliness’ (FAM_FND) (*e.g.* Baek, 2010a; 2010c). This can be interpreted as follows: during the Lee government, women’s career sacrifice became a necessary element for the family’s welfare.

An implicit normative assumption here is that women's identity as family members should take precedence over their identity as individuals. In this context, women were defined as those who were responsible for raising a child—with increased public support for childrearing—even if they were in paid employment.

To summarise, the Lee government's SNA result showed that its childcare policy discourses were primarily constructed around the issue of declining fertility and the resulting potential economic downturn. Alongside the over-emphasis on this demographic deficit, strengthening the state's childcare responsibility was presented as a pro-natalist strategy, being simply equated with increasing funding to reduce the costs of childrearing.

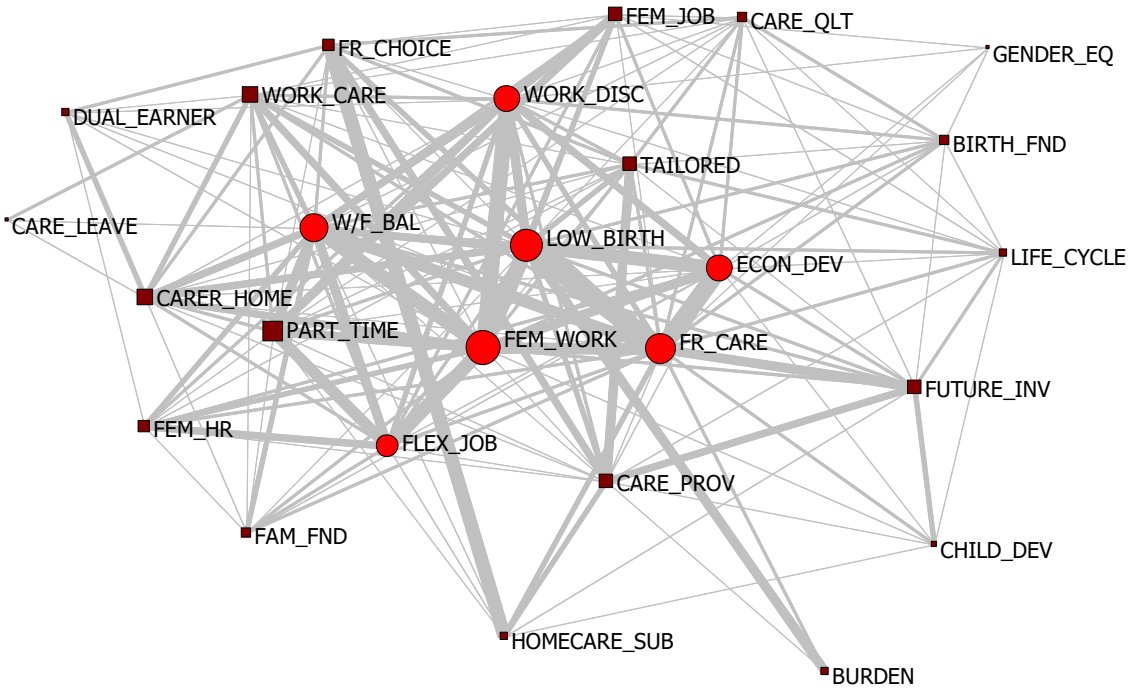
3.4.3. The Park Geun-hye government (03/2013–03/2017)

The election of another conservative government of Park Geun-hye in 2013 did not seem to bring substantial changes to childcare discourses. In the Park government's discourses, 26 concepts were observed and the following seven concepts were located in the core of its semantic network: 'female workforce participation', 'low fertility/population ageing', 'free childcare', 'work-family life balance', 'career interruption', 'economic/national development', and 'flexible working' (see Table A2.5 of Appendix II for the full SNA result).

Figure 3.5 below presents the semantic relations between the 26 concepts. First of all, while the problematisations of both 'gender equality' (GENDER_EQ) and 'child development' (CHILD_DEV) were further marginalised in the semantic network (with 2.000 and 4.000 of degree centrality and 3.826 and 6.787 of eigenvector centrality, respectively), both 'low birth/population ageing' (LOW_BIRTH) and female workforce participation (FEM_WORK) still lay at the heart of childcare discourses. The prominence

of these two problems was also mirrored in the Park government's Five-Year Policy Roadmap, in which 'recovering low fertility and increasing female labour force participation' was one of the twenty-one core policy goals to accomplish during the presidency (Government of the Republic of Korea, 2013).

Figure 3.5. A semantic network of the Park Geun-hye government (03/2013–03/2017)



However, what was unique about the Park government's semantic network was that both 'low fertility/population ageing' (LOW_BIRTH) and 'female workforce participation' (FEM_WORK) began to be linked intimately with 'career interruption' (WORK_DISC). This is because "difficulties in returning to work after childbirth" or "women's fear of child-related career interruption" had increasingly been identified as an important factor negatively affecting fertility rates and women's workforce participation rates in many discourses (*e.g.* Hwang, 2015; Park, 2013a, 2013b; Kim, 2014). Thus, President Park proposed to "make South Korea a country where women would not experience career interruptions due to childbirth and childrearing", thereby emphasising her identity

as the first female president of the country (Ministry of the Interior and Safety, 2021). With this aim, the Park government stressed the importance of increasing funding for 'free childcare' (FR_CARE) for all pre-school children and set it up as a core national initiative.

As women's career interruption began to be represented as a prominent problem underlying the two intertwined issues (*i.e.* female employment and fertility), the Park government targeted working mothers more seriously in its policy proposals. This is shown in the SNA result: the degree and eigenvector centrality of the 'expansion of work-place childcare facilities' (WORK_CARE) increased to 11.600 and 23.544, respectively—from 5.000 and 7.310 during the Lee government and 1.905 and 3.038 during the Roh government. Moreover, in the Park government's childcare discourses, the provision of 'in-home caregiver services' (CARER_HOME) for 'dual-earner households' (DUAL_EARNER) and the reform of 'parental leave' (CARE_LEAVE) were also proposed.

For non-working mothers, the Park government advocated its predecessor Lee's proposal of providing 'homecare allowances' (HOMECARE_SUB). However, one notable change that took place in the Park government's discourses was that the expansion of both publicly funded childcare services and monetary compensation for parental care began to be framed by the ethos of 'free choice' (FR_CHOICE) and 'customised/tailored welfare provision' (TAILORED) for different care needs. For instance, in the Second Mid-/Long-Term Basic Plan on Childcare (2013–2017), the Park government stated that the plan would aim "to promote tailored provision of childcare [according to different families' diverse circumstances] in order to improve parents' free choice" (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2013: 1; see also p. 31, 34).

Nevertheless, it is questionable whether the Park government genuinely intended to encourage freedom of choice. In fact, the plan also stressed the importance of "restraining unnecessary demands for free childcare services by providing homecare allowances" (p. 28) as well as "prioritising urgent childcare demanders—such as working mothers who actually need childcare services" (p. 5)—because "free childcare services for all would lead to a *moral hazard*, including weakening of parental responsibilities for care" (p. 31) (emphasis added). These statements imply that the government did not aim to improve parental choice by equally valorising breadwinning and caregiving, but to make sure that employed mothers would benefit from free childcare more than non-working women.

One might argue that the Park government was one that problematised the need to increase female labour force participation more than ever before and thus tied the need for childcare to it most strongly. However, as noted above, the problematisation of women's career interruption and the need to facilitate their (re)participation in the labour market were hardly discussed in the context of gender equality. In fact, as shown in Figure 3.5 above, these concepts were rather intimately linked to 'flexible working' (FLEX_JOB) and 'part-time employment' (PART_TIME), both of which were described as facilitating 'work-family life balance' (W/F_BAL). This was because the Park government (like its conservative predecessor) emphasised "supporting women's participation in the labour market" by "creating diverse forms of employment such as flexible and part-time work", "spreading flexible forms of employment" or "activating women-friendly part-time work" for their "work-family life balance" in a number of discourses (*e.g.* Cho, 2013a, 2013b; Park, 2013a, 2013b, 2014). This implies that the Park government intended to perpetuate women's responsibility to reproduce and take care of children *via* the feminisation of flexible working as well as expanding the state's childcare support.

In summary, like the previous two governments, the Park government's childcare policy discourses were not constructed around the issues of what the country's feminist and social movements had desired: enhancing gender equality and the healthy development of children. Although the need to free women to participate in the labour market was more strongly problematised in the discourses than ever before, its combination with the problematisation of low fertility led to a discussion on how to facilitate women's double workload as both mothers and workers, for example, by increasing public funding for institutional and in-home childcare as well as facilitating their flexible employment.

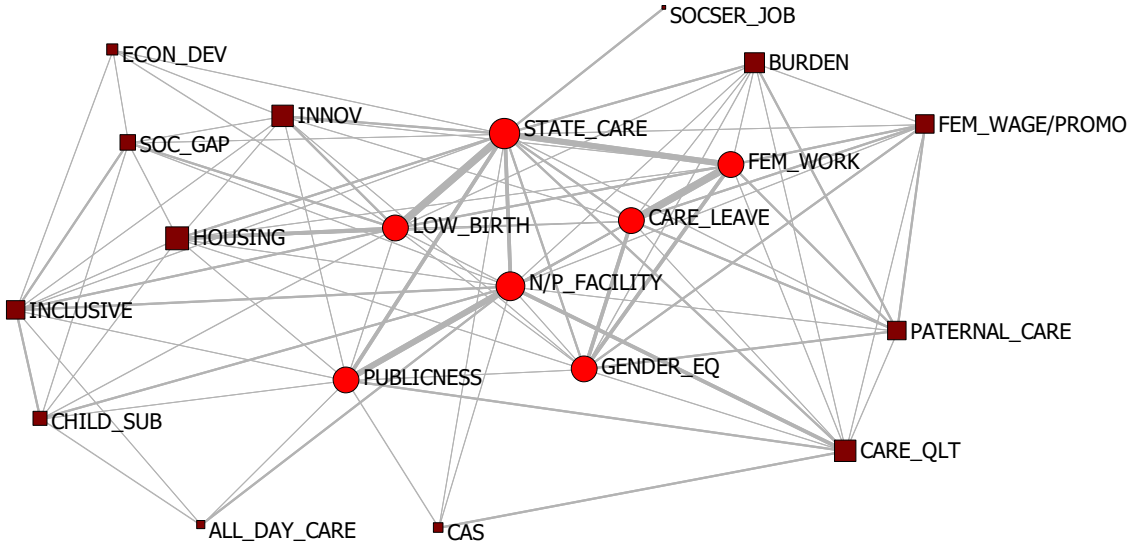
3.4.4. The Moon Jae-in government (05/2017–present)

In the current centre-left Moon government's childcare discourses, 20 concepts can be observed (see Table A2.6 of Appendix II for the full SNA result). Among them, the following seven concepts were in the core of its discourses: 'strengthening the state's responsibility for childcare', 'female workforce participation', 'parental leave', 'low fertility/population ageing', 'expanding national/public childcare facilities', 'gender equality' and 'publicness'.

Figure 3.6 below visualises the semantic network of the 20 concepts. When comparing the Moon government's semantic network with those of the previous three governments, the discourses were focused on pinpointing the key aspects of childcare policy that the government intended to strengthen to differentiate itself from its predecessors. These included 'childcare publicness' (PUBLICNESS), 'childcare quality' (CARE_QLT), 'inclusiveness' (INCLUSIVENESS) and 'innovation' (INNOV). In this regard, the network also revealed some specific policy instruments that needed to be employed for improving these aspects, such as 'expanding national/public childcare facilities' (N/P

_FACILITY), 'Childcare Accreditation System' (CAS), and 'child benefits' (CHILD_SUB).

Figure 3.6. A semantic network of the Moon Jae-in government (05/2017–present)



A more important change was where the main focus lay. During the previous three governments, regardless of their left-right political orientation, childcare discourses were primarily focused on problematising the need to facilitate women's labour market participation and low fertility levels. In this light, the need to increase public childcare support was tied to fertility encouragement and women's employment, both of which were ultimately necessary for the country's economic and national growth. Contrastingly, although 'the need to facilitate women's workforce participation' (FEM_WORK) and 'low fertility/population ageing' (LOW_BIRTH) were still represented as major problems under the Moon government, its semantic network showed that the discursive orientation towards the country's 'economic/national development' (ECON_DEV) was considerably weakened. Instead, 'gender equality' (GENDER_EQ) appeared at the centre of the Moon government's discourses, with an eigenvector centrality of 38.778 (*cf.* to 3.826 and 9.039 during the two conservative governments of Lee and Park, respectively).

As gender equality became important in childcare discourses, another key change that took place was the extension of this concept beyond simply facilitating women's labour market participation to not only 'women's wages and promotions' (FEM_WAGE/ PROMO) but also 'men's participation in childrearing' (PATERNAL_CARE). In this context, as Figure 3.6 illustrates above, both 'strengthening the state's responsibility for childcare' (STATE_CARE) and 'parental leaves' (CARE_LEAVE) were almost equally emphasised. The following statement shows how these concepts were discussed in the original speech (Lee, 2017a; see also Lee, 2017b):

> "The government will be committed to realising gender equality. We will reduce discrimination in women's participation, wages and promotions in the labour market. We will significantly redistribute childcare duties to men and further strengthen the state's responsibility for childcare."
>
> – Lee Nak-yeon, Prime Minister
> (2 November 2017)

Although these concepts were discussed in the periphery, their emergence in the discourses can be interpreted as a weakening of the conventional vision that had hitherto 'shrunk' the meaning of gender equality to allowing women to participate in the labour market by increasing public childcare support. It also meant growing attention to men's role in childcare (see Lombardo *et al*., 2009 for 'shrinking' of gender equality).

To summarise, it appears that the productivist orientation of childcare policy has been diminished under the current Moon government. However, the country's pronatalist orientation of childcare policy appears substantial given the continuous problematisation of low fertility in spite of the Moon government's emphasis that it would place gender equality and children's right to development at the heart of childcare policy. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the SNA covered the Moon government's discourses made during the first 3.5 years of a 5-year presidency term. Hence, it is difficult to draw firm

conclusions about whether this genuinely signals a fundamental change in South Korea's childcare policy orientation.

3.5. Discussion

The SNA results of the four governments' childcare discourses show that until very recently, strengthening public responsibility for childcare in South Korea was long motivated by its anticipated economic returns, rather than gender justice and children's healthy development.

Under the centre-left Roh Moo-hyun government (03/2003–02/2008), the need to free women for labour market participation and to reverse rapidly declining fertility rates was represented as the main problem. In this context, the expansion of public childcare services was interpreted as the best strategy to 'kill two birds with one stone'. Although childcare policy pursued higher female employment levels and emphasised the concept of gender equality, it did not have gender equality as its primary objective. The Roh government's attempt to interlock these demographic and economic concerns with the need to restructure the childcare system resulted in depicting women as those who should be responsible for participating in the labour market and simultaneously reproducing the future workforce.

The discussion on gender justice and relations was more muted in childcare discourses during the two successive conservative governments of Lee Myung-bak (03/2008–02/2013) and Park Geun-hye (03/2013–03/2017). Whilst there were slight differences between the two governments in terms of the discursive construction of childcare policy, both governments rather excessively represented 'low fertility/population ageing' as a prominent problem in their discourses. This tendency was particularly strong in the

Lee government's childcare discourses where women's reproductive capacity became a more important problem than their underutilised productive potential in the labour market. Alongside deepening concerns about the country's continuous fertility declines, both governments' childcare discourses were oriented towards finding the factors that made women unwilling to have children and how to build a 'childbirth-friendly environment'. In this context, the rapid expansion of publicly funded childcare services was conceptualised more as an important condition to establish a childbirth-friendly environment.

Within both conservative governments' vision of building a childbirth-friendly environment, the interests and rights of women as individuals were ignored. Instead of encouraging women's access to full-time employment, both governments strongly promoted flexible forms of women's employment so that women would be able to juggle their double workload as carers and workers with the increased childcare support. Furthermore, flexible working arrangements were depicted as enhancing work-family life balance and family-friendliness, notwithstanding the fact that the expansion of flexible working for family purposes would hinder gender equality (see Chung and van der Horst, 2018; Williams, 1999; Williams *et al*., 2013). This implies that the value of the family's welfare was placed over that of women's identity as individuals.

Simultaneously, the concept of 'homecare allowances' also emerged and gained traction under the two conservative governments. The Lee government highlighted this monetary compensation for parental care as strengthening the state's responsibility for childcare, whereas the Park government framed the provision and expansion of it as enhancing free choice. This meant that the introduction and expansion of homecare allowances (as well as flexible working arrangements) were presented in the discourses as if they would facilitate the potential of combining financially supported care work with

part-time employment, thereby easing the transition between different life states. Yet as the SNA results showed, the state's increased childcare support for women's flexible transition between breadwinning and childcaring was essentially intended to boost the country's economic and national competitiveness.

In a nutshell, South Korea's childcare policy under the Roh, Lee and Park governments was shaped by two different types of discourses (see Table 3.2 below). One was what might be called 'labour market discourse', in which the need to utilise female human resources in the labour market was represented as a major problem, and the other was 'population discourse', in which the need to reverse low fertility trends was problematised. These problem representations were often combined and shaped the country's childcare policy discourses together, rather than existing separately and independently.

Table 3.2. Two different problem representations of South Korea's childcare discourses

	Childcare policy as a labour market discourse (*i.e.* productivist discourse)	Childcare policy as a population discourse (*i.e.* reproductive discourse)
Problem representation	Insufficient utilisation of female human resources in the labour market	Low fertility and population ageing, and the resulting economic slowdown
Policy solutions	Provision of publicly funded childcare services to enable women to participate in the labour market	Provision of subsidies for using institutional care and taking care of children at home; expansion of flexible working arrangements for women
Underlying assumptions	Women are 'allowed' to participate in the labour market as the economy calls for their presence	Women's identity as mothers takes precedence over their identity as individuals
Target population	Employed mothers rather than non-working mothers	Both working and non-working mothers (with priority given to those with higher parity)
Definition of recipients	Women as underutilised workforce and children as future workforce	Women as reproducers of the country's future workforce (*i.e.* children)

Although these two discourses were different in many aspects, some affinities can be observed. Firstly, in both discourses, the need to strengthen childcare 'publicness' was motivated by economic objectives: maintaining the volume of taxpayers and thus ensuring the country's national competitiveness and economic sustainability. For this purpose,

South Korean women tended to be instrumentalised in two ways. One was the utilisation of women's productive potential in the sense that women were required to participate in the labour market with the aim of economic development. The other was the instrumentalisation of women's bodies for the purpose of reproducing children as a future workforce. Additionally, both discourses were focused on the need to restructure women's role in the face of economic and demographic changes, while making a very weak reference to men's role.

In contrast, the SNA result of the current centre-left Moon government showed that South Korea's childcare policy discourses finally began to be shaped less around the issue of national and economic competitiveness. Instead, gender equality was discussed in relation to women's labour market participation and the issues of their wages and promotion opportunities, as well as the need to redistribute childcare responsibilities to men. Nevertheless, given that SNA of the Moon government covered discourses made during first 3.5 years of a 5-year presidency term and concerns about low fertility still remained at the core of its discourses, it is difficult to conclude that such changes signalled a fundamental shift in the philosophy of the welfare state, the role of the family and the orientation of gender relations.

3.6. Concluding remarks

The discursive construction of South Korea's childcare policy has been unpacked in this paper. More specifically, this paper was focused on interrogating the changes and continuities in what the problem was represented as, how it shaped policy solutions, what assumptions were embedded in such a problematisation, which group was targeted and how they were defined.

This paper's contribution to the existing literature on family and childcare policy reforms is that it worked backwards to delve into what was problematised behind the policy outcomes, as opposed to simply looking at these outcomes in isolation. This is important because the emergence of free childcare in South Korea has often been referred to as a profound change in the sense that women and children (who have hitherto been excluded from welfare benefits) were now at the centre of welfare expansion. By contrast, this paper uses empirical findings to show that until recently the positioning of women and children at the heart of welfare expansion in South Korea was deeply related to their growing importance as a potentially productive population in maintaining economic growth. Stated differently, the analysis shows that the country's aim to strengthen the state's responsibility for childcare was motivated by its anticipated economic returns rather than its potential contributions to gender equality and children's healthy development—although this productivist orientation has been weakened in more recent years. In view of this, it is possible to conclude that the quantitative expansion of the state's childcare support should not simply be interpreted as signalling a fundamental change in the philosophy and functioning of the welfare state, the role of the family, and its orientation to gender relations.

Another important contribution of this paper lies in its methodology. For policy discourse analysis, researchers have relied heavily on CDA. Surely, CDA enables a deep understanding of power structures and how policies are discursively constructed, maintained and legitimised. However, it also allows researchers an excessively high level of freedom in uncovering findings that favour what they expect or want to find due to the absence of clear methodological rigor. As pointed out earlier, this is especially the case for researchers wanting to track changes and continuities in discourses over a lengthy

period of time. Hence, this paper employed the relatively new tool of SNA for a more systematic and well-defined approach to discourse analysis. By calculating the coreness and centrality of key concepts and visualising their network, it was possible to develop a more structured, cross-governmental analysis on the changes and continuities of the problematisation and silence on certain issues, as well as the underlying assumptions.

Of course, SNA has some methodological limitations. The main limitation of SNA is that it can be easily performed mechanically, thereby neglecting nuances and the complexity of meanings in discourses. This paper therefore extracted concepts *via* manual coding and supplemented the SNA results with some key speeches for a more qualitative interpretation. However, the manual coding process is highly labour-intensive and time-consuming. Additionally, the accuracy of data analysis through manual coding may be more limited than that of software-led, automated text mining. From this perspective, SNA through manual coding cannot be successfully applied to bigger data sets. Furthermore, employing SNA as an analytical tool may not necessarily guarantee a high level of objectivity when conducting discourse analysis. This is because, as discussed earlier, the quantitative parameters of key concepts—such as degree/eigenvector centrality and coreness—and their visualised networks do not provide a complete picture of what the discourse conveys. Indeed, they are more a reference point that researchers can use to interpret the discourse, and the researchers' hermeneutic skills are still important in complementing the information from the SNA result. Nevertheless, a carefully conducted SNA helps researchers make policy and political discourses more systematically analysable and comparable, particularly over extended periods of time.

4. PAPER III

The politics of childcare 'publicness' in South Korea

4.1. Introduction

The 'publicness' concept is a great example of a polysemic idea. Publicness in South Korean policy debates has no established meaning beyond the assumption that the state's role in social services and governance should expand. It began to be widely used in the context of pension and healthcare by academic researchers and social welfare advocacy NGOs in the late 1990s when the Asian financial crisis brought neoliberal policy reforms. Since the early 2000s, it has emerged as a broad approach in childcare policy reforms in the face of the country's rapidly declining fertility rates.

While the publicness concept remains ambiguous, a major line of political conflict has developed around the issue of expanding public ownership of childcare facilities (Presidential Commission on Policy Planning, 2008b). As shown in Paper I, the expansion of childcare services in South Korea has been predominantly led by individual for-profit providers, and such private-led childcare provision has been institutionally encouraged by the state. As a result, there has been a severe lack of national/public childcare facilities, although they are thought to provide more reliable and better-quality childcare services alongside better working conditions for childcare teachers when compared to their private counterparts (Korea Institute of Child Care and Education, 2018a, 2018b).[28]

[28] A 2018 nationwide survey revealed a severe gap between national/public and private childcare facilities in regard to service quality-related indicators (Korea Institute for Child Care and Education, 2018a). For instance, the proportion of childcare teachers with tertiary-level degrees was higher in national/public facilities (96.1%) than in centre-based private facilities (81.4%) and home-based private facilities

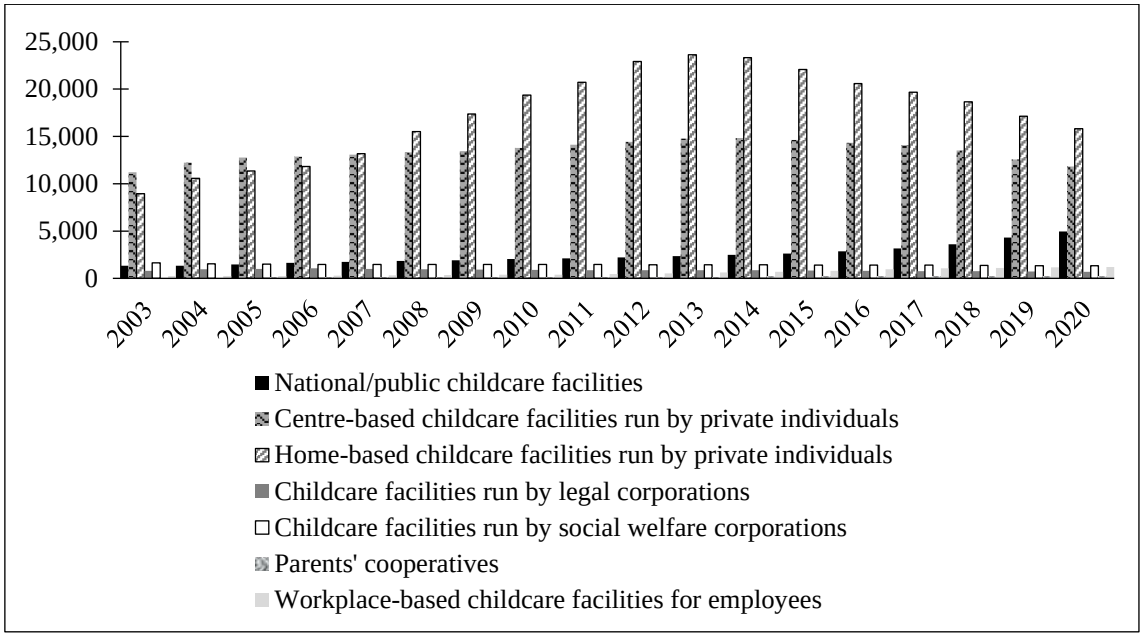
Against this backdrop, women's groups, social welfare advocacy NGOs and trade unions have argued that expanding national/public childcare facilities is a necessary condition for strengthening publicness.

As civil society's demands for better childcare publicness increased, the centre-left Roh Moo-hyun government (03/2003–02/2008) put it at the forefront of its childcare plan. In this plan, expanding public ownership of childcare facilities was outlined as a key initiative to strengthen childcare publicness (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2006a). Nevertheless, despite the plan to expand national/public childcare facilities by 400 per year from 2005 (Presidential Commission on Policy Planning, 2008a), their number increased by a meagre 400 during the entire period of the Roh government. Instead, the idea of strengthening childcare publicness by increasing funding for parents and existing private childcare facilities was favoured and translated into policy.

Consequently, the regular infusion of demand- and supply-side funding to childcare made it a very lucrative business, which in turn led to further growth of home-based and centre-based private childcare facilities by 5,245 and 2,610, respectively, during the Roh government's period (see Figure 4.1 below). This implies that, despite the government's explicit aim to reinforce childcare publicness, the privateness of it was further reinforced in regard to the public-private ownership of childcare facilities.

(72.9%). Childcare teachers at national/public facilities also had more extensive working experience (45 months) than at centre-based and home-based private facilities (35 and 34 months, respectively). The survey also suggested that, on average, childcare teachers working at national/public centres earned 22% and 27% more than those working at centre-based and home-based private facilities, respectively. In regard to the use of holidays, childcare teachers working at national/public facilities took 2-3 more holidays on average than those working at centre-based and home-based private facilities. The differences between national/public and private childcare facilities were reported in previous nationwide surveys conducted in 2012 and 2015. Due to the gap between national/public and private facilities in regard to the quality of services, parents usually need to wait until they enter national/public ones. In 2018, approximately 95% of national/public facilities had waiting lists (Korea Institute of Child Care and Education, 2018b). For one vacancy, the average number of children on the waiting list was 107 and the average waiting time was 176 days.

Figure 4.1. Changes in the number of childcare facilities by type, 2003–2020



Source: Statistics Korea (2021b)

The idea of strengthening ownership publicness in the childcare sector was side-lined during the period of the successive conservative governments of Lee Myung-bak (03/2008–02/2013) and Park Geun-hye (03/2013–03/2017), both of which emphasised the role of private sectors and families in providing childcare. It was in the current centre-left Moon Jae-in government (05/2017–present) where the idea of strengthening public ownership of childcare facilities was once again emphasised in social policy discourses (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2017). The Moon government therefore pledged to expand national/public childcare facilities by 450 per year. As Figure 4.1 shows above, their number has been rapidly rising by approximately 600 per year, thereby outrunning the initial plan.

To summarise, although the idea of childcare publicness through expanding public ownership of childcare facilities was granted legitimacy as an administrative idea in the policy debates during the two centre-left governments of Roh and Moon, the degree to

which the idea was translated into policy varied considerably. Hence, this paper aims to address one overarching research question:

> *Q. Why has more rapid expansion of national/public childcare facilities been possible under the current Moon government (05/2017–present) as against the previous Roh Moo-hyun government (03/2003–02/2008)?*

By comparing these two centre-left governments, this paper intends to offer an explanatory analysis as to what factors finally made the idea of expanding ownership publicness be incorporated into policy. Here, a particular focus is placed on explaining the role of the polysemic idea of publicness in this policymaking process. The reason for placing the initial analytic focus on the idea's polysemy has to do with the fact that this nature has been increasingly argued in the ideational scholarship as the main source of mobilising support from stakeholders and building coalitions, thereby opening windows of opportunity for policy change (*e.g.* Béland and Cox, 2016). This paper also concentrates on the real politicking among actors who pushed through their specific policy preferences as well as the institutional context that shaped their power dynamics and affected the interpretation of the meaning of publicness. This is because, as will be discussed in the following sections, polysemy is actually of limited value in aiding policymaking processes; and a sole focus on this characteristic intrinsic to the publicness idea cannot adequately explain what facilitates policy change.

This paper is organised into six sections. The first section develops a framework for analysing the politics of childcare publicness by revisiting ideational and institutional perspectives on policy change. In the second section, the paper provides a methodological rationale for conducting the comparative analysis of the two centre-left governments along with information on the data that was collected for the analysis. This is followed

by the third and fourth sections, which present the empirical findings of the Roh and Moon governments, respectively, based on original interview data and documentary sources. The last two sections discuss and summarise the findings of the two governments in a more comprehensive manner.

4.2. Analytical framework

4.2.1. Ideas and political actors

There can be no doubt that ideas matter. While the focus in existing ideational literature varies, it is commonly pointed out that ideas help actors construct issues socially and politically, instruct them to develop a range of policy goals and policy instruments, and enable them to frame solutions to policy problems in more acceptable terms (see section 1.2.1 in the Introduction for a more detailed discussion).

However, for ideas to become a source of policy change, they must link up with politics and their interaction with a political reality can occur only through policy actors. The authority of the actor carrying the idea is therefore important: the more politically powerful authority the carrier holds, the more likely it is that the idea links up with politics (Hansen and King, 2001).

However, ideas can also empower actors. In particular, when ideas are shared *via* discourses, they can shape political power relations among actors through their role as a 'coalition magnet'. Béland and Cox (2016: 429) defined this role as "the capacity of an idea to appeal to a diversity of individuals and groups, and to be used [by them] strategically… [and to] mobilise supporters" (see also Schmidt, 2010).

Here, one important question to ask is when the idea acts as a coalition magnet. A number of ideational scholars suggest that the idea helps coalition building when it is

ambiguous, multi-interpretable, mutable and polysemic rather than narrow and well-defined (Béland and Cox, 2016; Hajer, 1995; see also Jenson, 2010; Palier, 2005; Schmidt, 2006; Skogstad and Wilder, 2019).[29] The positive role of ambiguity or multi-interpretability is related to the fact that broader ideas provide individuals with an opportunity to interpret them in their own context and therefore have great potential to appeal to a larger number of constituencies with disparate preferences (Béland and Cox, 2016).

Regarding the power of polysemy, some doubts also exist. Firstly, although a polysemic idea is shared by diverse actors (and thus contributes to coalition building between different powerful interests), Hannah and Baekkeskov (2020: 440) wrote that such a 'big tent' coalition may be no more than a 'talk shop'. And in this talk shop, agenda-setting may be achievable, whereas the formulation of specific policy plans and decision-making may not be successful (see also Howlett *et al*., 2015). Furthermore, holding irreconcilable interests within a coalition may lead opponents to seize the opportunity to veto a specific course of action and thereby impede effective coalition movements (Hannah and Baekkeskov, 2020). This means that mobilising diverse supporters should not rely on too narrow an idea, while at the same time it should avoid over-extensive ideas that add too many different meanings and hinder the maintenance of the coalition (Leifeld and Haunss, 2012). Put differently, once the coalition is formed, its members should have a certain level of internal ideational congruence when articulating specific ideas regarding the problem definition and policy solutions.

As mentioned above, publicness is an idea *par excellence* that shows a great level of polysemy: publicness is not all about ownership, although this dimension is considered

[29] As an example of a polysemic idea, Béland and Cox (2016) offered 'sustainability', 'solidarity', and 'social inclusion'. In Jenson's (2010) work, 'social investment' was given as an example. In a similar vein, Schmidt and Thatcher (2013) suggested 'neoliberalism' as an illustrative case showing the high degree of the idea's generality, adaptability and mutability.

core and conventional (Anderson, 2012). We already know from Paper I that it is also associated with financing and regulation (Bozeman, 1987; Powell, 2007). Moreover, as lines of ownership are often blurred due to increasing contracting out in recent decades, the dimension of operation (or production of services) appears highly relevant (Powell and Miller, 2014). Further to this, publicness can be concerned with public norms and values, such as public accountability, transparency or openness, public trust, impartiality and equity, amongst others. The core of this kind of publicness—so-called normative publicness—lies in the extent to which services, organisations or institutions potentially or actually work towards public interest ideals (Bozeman, 2007: 10). This value debate about publicness makes the concept less intuitive and more malleable.

In fact, the concept of childcare publicness in South Korea has displayed a high level of conceptual ambiguity since its outset. It was in March 2002 when the concept appeared in childcare discourses of women's groups and pro-welfare/labour NGOs (People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy *et al*., 2002). Adopting it as an important childcare agenda in their press conference, their representatives outlined a number of different ways to strengthen childcare publicness:

(1) Childcare services shall be provided for all children, who should not be discriminated based on their gender, age, religion and socio-economic status;

(2) The State and local authorities shall fully or partially finance the costs of childcare;

(3) The State and local authorities shall expand national/public childcare facilities, which should be established in low-income and rural areas first;

(4) Low-income families with children shall be provided homecare allowances in case they live in areas where childcare facilities are insufficient;

(5) The government shall carry out inspections of childcare facilities and provide good-quality private childcare facilities with financial support to cover child-care staff costs and operation fees;

(6) The diverse types of childcare facilities, including those operated by co-parents, should be included and managed by the Childcare Act;

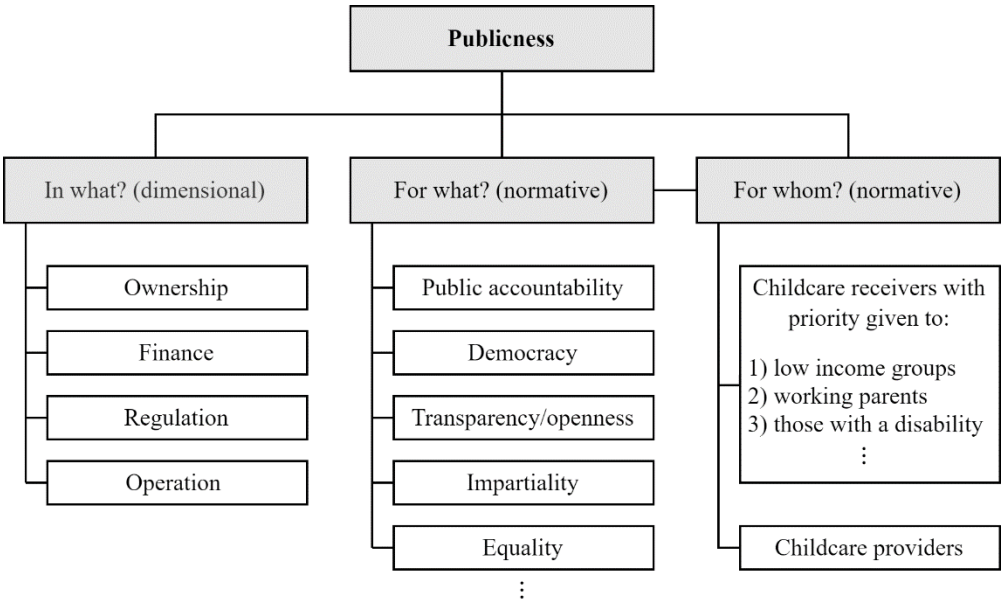
(7) Free childcare services shall be provided for disabled children; and

(8) Working conditions for childcare teachers should be improved for better overall childcare services.

This suggests that publicness in South Korea's childcare context had no established meaning beyond the assumption that the state's role in childcare should be strengthened. This also implies that child policy debates on publicness can be constructed around not only the question of 'in what?' dimensions (*e.g.* nos. 2, 3, 4, 5) but also 'for what?' values (*e.g.* no.1), as well as 'for whom?' (*e.g.* nos. 3, 7, 8).

Figure 4.2 below presents the polysemic and multi-layered character of publicness in the South Korean childcare context. Given the existing literature on the potential power and pitfalls of polysemic ideas, this high level of polysemy suggests two opposing potentials. On the one hand, it may help actors with heterogeneous policy interests gather and build a coalition that calls for action from the government. On the other hand, polysemy may generate conflicts among coalition members with fundamentally different perceptions of the concept, especially when they formulate specific policy solutions. This means that although the agreement is made on strengthening publicness, the decision on which policy options to pursue may still depend on power relations among actors within the coalition and the institutional context that favours certain options more than others.

Figure 4.2. Polysemy and the multi-layer of 'publicness' in the South Korean childcare context



4.2.2. Institutional legacy

As discussed in the Introduction, institutions affect idea-policy translation as they affect policy actors' authority, resources, and accessibility to key decision-making venues, and therefore ultimately the power of the ideas that the actors promote (see section 1.2.3 in the Introduction for a more detailed discussion). More fundamentally, institutions as enduring historical legacies can also narrow the scope of possible options for policy change by making the cost of reversing the existing policy path high. In this light, institutions are like dried concrete: as concrete cannot be easily uprooted when it has dried, so the existing path is not readily reversible.

We know from earlier discussion that before the idea of strengthening childcare publicness appeared on the scene in the early 2000s, the expansion of childcare services was led by private providers. The predominance of private childcare facilities was not simply an outcome of automatic market growth in the sector where state-provided services were limited and could not meet increasing demands. Rather, as discussed in detail

in the Introduction, this market-led expansion was actively promoted by the state. In the 1960s, the state provided institutional footholds for individuals to establish childcare facilities through simple registration with a local authority (instead of requiring formal authorisation). In the 1990s, individuals were also allowed to get a public loan for their establishing childcare facilities (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2015). Overall, it is clear that South Korea's childcare system has been dominated by the institutionalised idea that childcare services should be offered by private providers and the state should remain a facilitator of private provision.

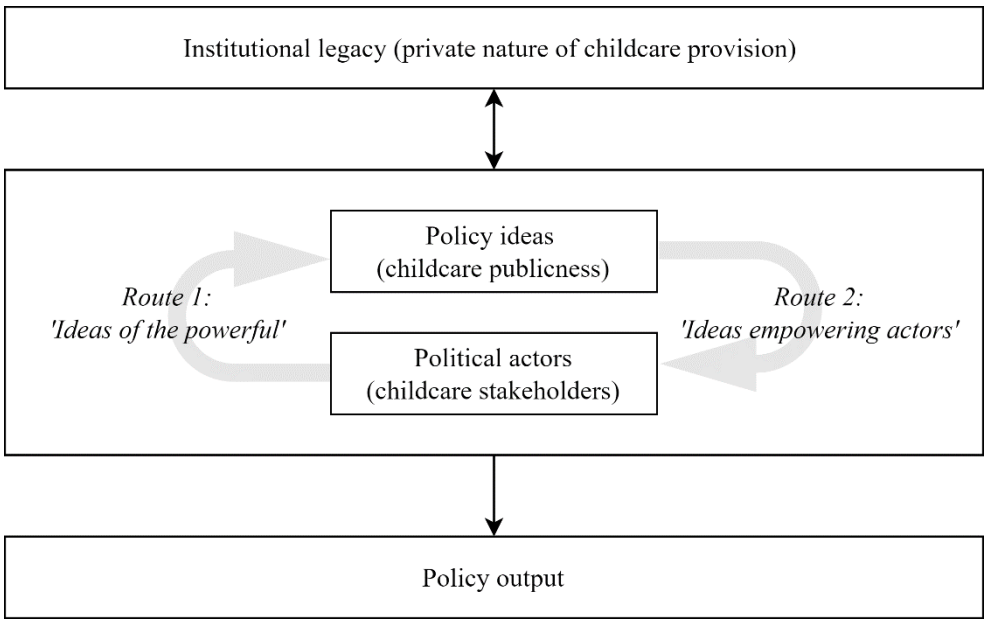
Then, how may this institutionalised path affect policymaking processes? Firstly, this path has reproduced the asymmetrical power structure where private childcare providers (as an overwhelmingly dominant entity in the sector) have strong political leverage. This suggests that their policy preferences are likely to be more politically influential than those of other actors and that their agreement is essential for expanding public ownership of childcare facilities. Secondly, this may also serve as a taken-for-granted framework, based on which policymakers evaluate the validity and feasibility of each policy option and develop specific policy measures.

4.2.3. Integrating ideational and institutional theories

Simply put, ideas and the power of actors have interactive effects on policymaking. To borrow Parsons's (2015: 6-10) expression, one route can be called 'ideas of the powerful' in which ideas gain influence because their 'hosts' gain policymaking authority, and the other is 'ideas empowering actors' in which ideas enable actors to affect power relations through coalition building and framing (see also Goldstein and Keohane, 1993: 20ff.). These interactions are shaped by an enduring policy legacy that childcare services were

predominately provided by private sectors and the government was a facilitator of this private provision. These ideational and institutional arguments can be integrated and illustrated as in Figure 4.3 below, which will serve as an analytical framework for empirical investigation of the two centre-left governments.

Figure 4.3. Analytical framework



4.3. Methodological approach and data

Methodologically, this paper employs a comparative analysis of the previous Roh government (03/2003–02/2008) and the current Moon government (05/2017–present): whilst the former was not able to successfully translate the plan to expand national/public childcare facilities into actual policy outcome, the latter has been able to do so. The selection of these two governments is based on the 'most similar systems design', in which similar cases are examined comparatively in order to uncover possible explanations of different outcomes (Lijphart, 1975). This research design allows researchers to control for alternative explanatory variables and better isolate causal connections.

As mentioned earlier, these two centre-left governments actively deployed the idea of childcare publicness in their childcare policy plans. In particular, they both promoted strengthening childcare publicness through the expansion of public ownership of childcare facilities. The level of expansion that they put forth was similar: the Roh government pledged to establish national/public childcare facilities by 400 per year and the current Moon government has targeted their annual expansion by 450.

This does not mean that childcare publicness was a unique policy concept solely promoted during the two centre-left governments. In fact, the conservative Lee and Park governments' approach to childcare policy did not significantly differ from that of their centre-left counterparts in the sense that they also highlighted the need to strengthen the state's responsibility for childcare in their national childcare plans. Nevertheless, they neither actively deployed the publicness concept nor prioritised the expansion of public ownership of childcare facilities as much as their centre-left counterparts did (see Table A3.1 in Appendix III).

In addition, the Roh and Moon governments both allowed a variety of non-state stakeholders—especially women's groups, social welfare advocacy organisations and trade unionists—to have access to key childcare policymaking venues and participate in discussions organised by governmental and ministerial policy committees. This went contrary to other governments during which childcare policymaking processes were bureaucratic and top-down. Guaranteeing a high level of accessibility to policymaking venues where cross-sectoral discursive interaction can occur is essential because ideas can become a coalition magnet or a source of conflicts only if they are conveyed and exchanged by their carriers with others.

By comparing these two similar governments, I can effectively concentrate on the three factors that are assumed to affect the translation of the idea of strengthening ownership publicness to policy outcome: firstly, how the meaning of childcare publicness was interpreted by diverse stakeholders, which policy options were suggested and how the option of expanding national/public childcare facilities was viewed against alternatives; secondly, how power relations were shaped among different coalitions of stakeholders promoting different forms of childcare publicness; and thirdly, the strategic political behaviours of competing coalitions to push forward their policy preferences within institutional opportunities and constraints.

The comparative analysis is conducted using two main data sources. Firstly, documentary data is collected across the government, government-affiliated research institutes, political parties and societal actors (notably, those representing women's organisations, pro-welfare/labour NGOs, trade unions and private childcare providers' associations). The scope of collection is confined to official documents published by these actors so as to guarantee a high level of data reliability. More specifically, the collected documentary data include the government's childcare-related plans and documents that were obtained through individual requests based on the Official Information Disclosure Act, parliamentary records, party manifestos, official statements from the societal actors, and reports of childcare-related public hearings.[30]

Secondly, this paper also brings new evidence that was collected from 15 one-to-one semi-structured interviews (in 2019) and one structured email interview (in 2020). The interviewees were chosen based on the information obtained from the documentary analysis and sometimes from previous interviews. In order to prevent bias, efforts were

[30] Where minutes from the public hearings were not available, video recordings were collected and analysed.

made to interview a wide range of state and non-state actors: three from the government and the Presidential Committee on Ageing Society and Population Policy, three from women's organisations, two from pro-welfare/labour NGOs, three from trade unions, one from an employer's organisation, one from an association of private childcare providers, and three academic consultants (see Table A3.2 in Appendix III).

4.4. Roh Moo-hyun government (03/2003–02/2008)

4.4.1. The polysemy of publicness as a source of coalition building and conflicts among actors

As noted above, the concept of childcare publicness was initially promoted at the civil society level. The promotion of this idea was spearheaded by two politically powerful NGOs. One was the Korean Women's Associations United (an umbrella organisation of 28 progressive women's organisations with approximately 30,000 members at that time), which has led diverse women-related policy reforms.[31] The other was the People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy, one of the largest and most influential social welfare advocacy NGOs in the country.[32]

The political power of these key actors and their idea of childcare publicness was reinforced alongside Roh's inauguration as President in 2003. This is because his election led to the establishment of various presidential/ministerial advisory boards and their nomination as private policy advisors in the key loci of policy deliberations (interview nos. 14, 16). One of the largest new committees was the Advisory Committee on Ageing

[31] As the biggest umbrella organisation leading feminist policy agenda, the association played a leading role in instrumentalising the Act on the Punishment of Sexual Violence Crimes and Protection of Victims in 1994 and reforming maternity and parental leave between 2000 and 2001, for example.

[32] Founded in 1994 by scholars, lawyers and pro-welfare political activists, the organisation has led legal and political reforms based on financial support from over 10,000 dues-paying members on broader issues related to justice and human rights.

Population and Future Society. Established in 2004 as the 'control tower' of fertility-related policy issues and reorganised in 2005 into the Presidential Committee on Ageing Society and Population Policy, the committee encouraged cross-sectoral meetings among ministerial members, academics, women's organisations, welfare-related NGOs, trade unions, employers' organisations, and religious groups. As the key carriers of childcare publicness acquired close and direct access to state policy makers, it began to be discussed as an authoritative idea.

It is important to note that childcare publicness also attracted attention from the country's two national-level trade unions: the Federation of the Korean Trade Unions (founded in 1960) and the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (established in 1995), both of which have been interested in increasing childcare support as the 'ramp' that provides equal access to the workforce for mothers (interview nos. 7, 8). In fact, they co-organised the 'Joint Press Conference for Urging Childcare Publicness' in May 2005 with nine other pro-welfare/labour NGOs, including the Korean Women's Association United and its member organisations, as well as the People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy *et al*., 2005). The support mobilised from the two trade union federations was important as it helped the childcare publicness idea be discussed more broadly, not only in the Presidential Committee on Ageing Society and Population Policy but also in the Economic and Social Development Commission (a labour market-related presidential policy advisory board comprised of members representing workers, employers and the government) (interview nos. 4, 5, 7, 8).

The cross-sectoral coalition's mass-directed and elite-directed collective actions were effective in granting the publicness idea legitimacy as an administrative idea in key

policy debates. For example, in March 2006, the Economic and Social Development Commission announced the 'Workers-Employers-Government Tripartite Agreement on Childcare Services Activation for Low-Income Employees', which highlighted the need "to strengthen childcare publicness for women's labour market participation in the face of low fertility and population ageing" (Economic and Social Development Commission, 2016: 150). In June 2006, the 'Social Pact for Resolving Low Fertility and Ageing Society Problems' between the government and civil society groups was also promulgated, and included strengthening childcare publicness as an important policy task (Presidential Commission on Policy Planning, 2008a).

This reveals that the polysemic idea of childcare publicness contributed to cross-sectoral coalition building with agenda-setting success. However, at the stage of specific policy formulation, the stakeholders in the 'big tent' (who were gathered to participate in consultations on childcare publicness) showed disagreement on what publicness was, and which measure(s) was to be prioritised.

The early proponents of the publicness idea—namely, women's organisations and other pro-welfare NGOs—claimed that expanding national/public childcare facilities was a prerequisite for achieving childcare publicness (People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy *et al.*, 2005). The following interview comment from a Co-representative of the Korean Women Workers' Association indicated that these organisations put an emphasis on the normative values that publicness should adhere to and believed that they could not be fully achieved in privately owned institutions (interview no. 6):

> "Genuine publicness is about being charged with public responsibility, serving public interests, and improving transparency of operation and administration. The fundamental principle of private childcare facilities is maximising their profits. For-profit institutions by nature serve their own interests first and this can lead to a lack of transparency."

Such an ownership-centred approach to childcare publicness was backed strongly by employers' associations who were under increasing pressure from trade unions for expanding workplace childcare facilities and were therefore looking for an alternative option. During an interview with a Senior Specialist from the Korean Employers Federation (a nationwide umbrella organisation of employers established in 1970), the interviewee remarked (interview no. 10):

> "We fully supported childcare publicness. From our perspective, it was particularly important for increasing female labour market participation because low fertility would reduce the pool of workers… In regard to specific policy initiatives, we argued that publicness should be achieved by strengthening the role of the state in financing and directly delivering the services, rather than compelling enterprises to build more daycare centres at workplaces."

The two trade union federations also agreed to the importance of expanding public ownership of childcare facilities and promoted it together with progressive women's and citizens' organisations through mass-directed and elite-directed collective actions. However, an interview with a former Director of the Federation of the Korean Trade Unions showed that the trade unions had slightly different views on 'whom should be prioritised' when enhancing childcare publicness (Interview no. 7):

> "We usually have extreme disagreements with the Korean Employers Federation regarding expanding support for employees. The only thing that we reached agreement on was strengthening childcare publicness through the expansion of national/public childcare services… However, there was an internal agreement [within the trade unions] that childcare publicness should be promoted for the employed. We therefore prioritised increasing funding for the expansion of workplace childcare facilities and improving working conditions for childcare workers as a key part of policy proposals… We later found out that there was a hierarchy among children in workplace childcare facilities according to their parents' positions in companies. That's why we began to promote the expansion of national/public childcare facilities more actively."

The childcare-related academic consultants affiliated with universities or think tanks under government sponsorship also had different views on childcare publicness.

While a few of them argued that consolidating the state's role as a direct provider of childcare services is a genuine way of strengthening childcare publicness, there was an agreement among them that this publicness could also be pursued through the state financing and regulating the market delivery of childcare services (interview no. 3; Presidential Commission on Policy Planning, 2008a). A researcher who participated in the Presidential Committee on Ageing Society and Population Policy meetings during the Roh government mentioned (interview no. 3):

> "The fundamental problem that was identified during the meetings was that the state has hitherto provided different levels of financial support for public childcare facilities and private ones, which generates an unfair gap among children depending on the types of childcare facilities that they attend… During the meetings, many senior policy advisors argued that childcare publicness can also be achieved if the government provides 'basic subsidies' per child for all childcare facilities, including private ones, to upgrade the quality of their services, as well as expands publicly funded childcare services… I was one of a few researchers who argued for childcare publicness through the expansion of national/ public childcare facilities. Many people there said: 'if the existing private childcare facilities can provide a high-quality of publicly funded childcare services, what's the real difference between national/public childcare facilities and private childcare facilities from the parents' perspective? If so, why do we need a new public childcare facility—which costs a lot, takes many years [to build], and leads to resistance from private childcare providers?"

As the interviewee noted, the idea of expanding national/public childcare facilities was faced with substantial opposition from the majority of members from the Korea Edu-Care Association, a nationwide umbrella organisation of private childcare service providers (Presidential Commission on Policy Planning, 2008a, 2008b).[33] Alongside the government's institutional encouragement of private-led provision of childcare services in the 1990s, the number of association members grew rapidly. While members operating national/public childcare facilities supported their expansion, centre-based and home-

[33] Established in 1992, the Korea Edu-Care Association has represented the interests of private childcare providers as well as those operating national/public childcare facilities through contracting out.

based private childcare providers—who accounted for the majority of the association's membership—complained that public childcare spending was severely biased towards a small number of national/public childcare facilities, which goes against the principle of fairness (Women's Affairs Committee, 2004). In this respect, the association argued that strengthening publicness is the right direction towards which the country's childcare policy should head, but it cannot be achieved if the government does not increase funding for private childcare facilities attended by the majority of children (Women's Affairs Committee, 2004; Presidential Commission on Policy Planning, 2008a).

Among the government actors, conflicting views on policy initiatives for childcare publicness were also severe. The Ministry of Gender Equality (and Family)—which was in charge of childcare and family-related affairs during the Roh government—promoted childcare publicness through the expansion of national/public childcare facilities. This was particularly manifest under the leadership of Chi Eun-hee (02/2003–12/2004), who previously served the Korean Women's Association United as a Co-representative and maintained a close relationship with the association. Although the ministry began to back childcare publicness through increasing support for private childcare facilities under the new leadership of Jang Ha-jin (01/2005–02/2008), the expansion of national/public child-care facilities remained an important policy objective (interview no. 4).

By contrast, it was severely opposed by the Ministry of Economy and Finance, which takes *de facto* control over many other ministries through top-down budgetary decision-making. During an interview with a former civil servant from the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, the interviewee remarked that the ministry was faced with opposition from economic bureaucrats (interview no. 2):

> "It seemed to me that the Ministry [of Economy and Finance] somewhat understood that public spending on childcare should be increased. It

> was not from a social right or feminist perspective; but they acknowledged the relationship between the high financial burdens of raising a child and low fertility, which would reduce the number of tax payers. From this perspective, the ministry could not understand why the expansion of national/public childcare facilities mattered because there were already enough private childcare facilities."

Indeed, the Ministry of Economy and Finance agreed to what I may call 'childcare publicness for the needy' by providing publicly subsidised childcare services for low-income households and removing the price ceiling that private childcare facilities could charge up to, in order to guarantee a choice for those who could afford more expensive childcare services (Special Committee on Budget and Accounts, 2007; Special Committee on Low Fertility and Ageing Society, 2005).

As summarised in Table 4.1 below, there were four major different childcare publicness policies promoted during the Roh government. Such a variety of childcare publicness showed that key stakeholders of childcare policy had a high level of consensus only in regard to the assumption that public spending on childcare should be increased. Rather, the ambiguity of the concept generated disagreement among the key stakeholders regarding childcare publicness 'in what?', 'for what?' and 'for whom?' This implies that the polysemic nature of the publicness concept functioned more as an attention magnet rather than as a vehicle for mobilising collective action to compile a coherent set of policy plans.

Table 4.1. Varieties of childcare publicness ideas and positions of the key stakeholders under the Roh government (03/2003–02/2008)

	Publicness by expanding public ownership of childcare facilities	Publicness by increasing public support for the employed	Publicness by funding private sectors to benefit the majority	Publicness by increasing support for the needy
Major policy proposals	▪ Increasing publicly funded childcare services ▪ Expanding national/public childcare facilities	▪ Increasing publicly funded childcare services ▪ Expanding national/public childcare facilities in areas where low-income workers live ▪ Increasing government support for establishing daycare centres at workplaces ▪ Improving the working conditions of childcare workers	▪ Increasing publicly funded childcare services ▪ Improving the quality of private childcare facilities by introducing a 'Basic Subsidy' so that many children as possible can benefit from the improved quality of childcare services	▪ Providing different levels of subsidies towards parents according to their income level ▪ Removing a price ceiling from private childcare facilities to guarantee the right to choose
Key proponents	State actor: Ministry of Gender Equality (and Family) under Chi Eun-hee's leadership Non-state actors: Korean Women's Association United and its member organisations, People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy, Korea Employers Federation	Non-state actors: Federation of the Korean Trade Unions, Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, Korea Childcare Teachers' Association	State actor: Ministry of Gender Equality and Family under Jang Ha-jin's leadership Non-state actors: Korea Edu-Care Association, the majority of academic policy advisors participating in the meetings of the Presidential Committee on Ageing Society and Population Policy	State actor: Ministry of Economy and Finance
Key opponents	State actor: Ministry of Economy and Finance Non-state actor: Korea Edu-Care Association (particularly the Department of Centre-Based Childcare Facilities and the Department of Home-Based Childcare Facilities)	Non-state actor: Korea Employers Federation		Non-state actors: Korean Women's Association United and its member organisations, People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy, Federation of the Korean Trade Unions, Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, Korea Childcare Teachers' Association

4.4.2. Power relations between proponents and opponents and their politicking

Among the different publicness ideas, the idea to expand public ownership of childcare facilities was the most divisive: simultaneously mobilising support and generating opposition. Given that the split in the role between the market as a provider and the state as a facilitator of private childcare provision has long been institutionally embedded, the substantial opposition to such a radical publicness idea was not surprising. In order to understand why such an administrative idea was not successfully translated into policy, it is important to examine the asymmetrical power relations among the proponents and opponents of this idea and their politicking, *i.e.* political activities that the actors undertook to change the existing power dynamics in their struggle for power.

As discussed before, the key proponents of this idea were the progressive women's organisations and pro-welfare/labour civil groups. While their coalition occasionally held press conferences in order to mobilise public support, most of the politicking was carried out by making use of strong ties between progressive women's organisations and the Ministry of Gender Equality (and Family). In fact, the ministry was only established in 2001. Although its establishment provided the leaders and activists of the progressive women's organisations an opportunity for entry into an administrative body, it existed as the smallest ministry in the country and was not initially in charge of childcare policy. In this context, the ministry and the feminist organisations campaigned together for transferring childcare affairs from the Ministry of Health and Welfare to the Ministry of Gender Equality. The following comment made by a former Co-representative of the Korean Women's Associations United indicated that such a campaign was strategic political behaviour aimed to improve their bargaining power over childcare policies (interview no. 4):

> "When we had a meeting with the Ministry of Health and Welfare, they said: "we cannot increase the proportion of national/public childcare facilities to 30-50% because it will cost a lot and the Ministry of Economy and Finance will not like it"…We thought the transfer of childcare to the Ministry of Gender Equality will empower the ministry, as well as promote our policy proposals more effectively."

Consequently, in 2004, childcare and family-related affairs were transferred to the Ministry of Gender Equality, which was consequently reorganised into the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. Along with the transfer, the plan to expand national/public childcare facilities became one of the key plans that the ministry promoted. This is shown by the fact that the 'Task Force for Expanding National/Public Childcare Facilities' was established within the ministry in 2005 (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2005). Indeed, the improved legitimacy of the idea led the Ministry of Economy and Finance (one of the key opponents of the idea) to somewhat step back from opposing it: in 2005, the ministry allocated approximately ₩38 billion (€28.59 million) for establishing 400 new national/public childcare facilities (National Assembly Budget Office, 2006).

However, it is important to note that initially, such a plan was not feasible without the support of local governments. This is because funding was provided in the form of 'matching grants', in which local authorities were set to fund 50% of the total expenses for building national/public childcare facilities, while the other half was to be matched by the central government's funding. Additionally, local authorities were also fully responsible for purchasing land to construct them. Although the need for increasing the national subsidy rates was discussed, such a proposal was not accepted by the Ministry of Economy and Finance (Special Committee on Budget and Accounts, 2005). This implies that the 'real' politics surrounding the expansion of national/public childcare facilities took place in each local authority.

While the coalition supporting publicness through expanding public ownership of childcare facilities held somewhat of a lead in the central-level political arena, private childcare providers (who opposed this idea considerably) had more powerful political influence in their local authorities. One interviewee, who attended childcare policy discussions during the Roh government as a policy advisor, commented (interview no. 15):

> "The size of the association [of private childcare providers] is very large, and they have been influential in local elections due to their lobbying activities. That's why the heads of local governments could not easily neglect their likes and dislikes… How can they be free from the pressure that can influence their election results? What really matters for the local politicians is not what the general public wants but what people in their constituencies want."

Indeed, a number of collected National Assembly minutes and public hearing reports revealed that severe opposition from existing private childcare providers was the biggest obstacle that policy implementation was faced with (*e.g.* Gender Equality and Family Committee, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2007; National Assembly Plenary Meeting, 2005; National Policy Committee, 2006). It is substantiated by the following statement from a Gender Equality and Family minister (Gender Equality and Family Committee, 2005: 34ff.):

> "The reality of expanding national/public childcare facilities is completely different from what I thought it would be. Indeed, the conflict between private childcare facilities and local councillors [who attempt to expand national/public childcare facilities] is very severe. I can say that I have spent 80% of my energy on implementing the plan to national/public childcare facilities… I have travelled around the whole country [to meet and persuade the local councillors]. However, the reality is full of conflicts with private childcare facilities, which really concerns us."

Consequently, despite the increased budget allocated by the Ministry of Economy and Finance for building new national/public childcare facilities, the actual execution rate of the budget was as low as 36.5% in 2005 (National Assembly Budget Office, 2006). As

the plan came to a standstill, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family alternately promoted building national/public childcare facilities in newly built multi-family housing units and converting existing private childcare facilities in those units into national/public ones (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2006b). These plans were anticipated to weaken the veto power of local authorities as their financial burdens were alleviated (Seo *et al*., 2007). They were also expected to generate less opposition from private childcare providers who were worried about the over-supply of childcare services due to the establishment of new national/public childcare facilities (*ibid.*).

However, this plan was once again faced with severe opposition from private childcare sectors.[34] The members of the Korean Edu-Care Association quickly organised the Emergency Committee on Childcare Facilities in Multi-Family Housing (Seo *et al*., 2007). In January 2007, the committee held the 'Discussion on the Nationalisation of Childcare Facilities in Multi-Family Housing', where the discussion's keynote was addressed by a Co-chairperson representing the ruling *Uri* Party, and a General Secretary of the opposition Grand National Party, as well as a Chair of the National Assembly Committee on Gender Equality and Family (National Assembly, 2007). Those key party members made it very clear in their addresses that childcare publicness should not be promoted in a way that reduces the private sector's role and responsibility (*ibid.*). This implied that private childcare providers had power, enough to mobilise political support from these key decision-makers.

[34] For example, according to a 2007 survey conducted by the Korea Institute of Child Care and Education, 95.2% of 357 respondents operating private childcare facilities answered that they were against the plan to convert their facilities to national/public ones.

Consequently, unlike the Roh government's initial plan to expand national/public childcare facilities by 400 per year from 2005 onwards, they increased by only 124 in 2005, 170 in 2006, and finally 105 in 2007.

4.5. Moon Jae-in government (05/2017–present)

4.5.1. The two competing coalitions of childcare publicness

Since the appearance of the publicness concept, strengthening publicness in childcare has always been an important agenda point among key stakeholders. This was particularly the case during presidential election periods. In early 2017, following the impeachment and dismissal of President Park Geun-hye, publicness once again began to garner interest from diverse actors as presidential election day approached. As was the case during the Roh government period, the concept of childcare publicness was still ambiguous. However, it is important to note that there were some important changes in publicness ideas that the key stakeholders subscribed to.

The first change was that the early proponents of the idea—namely, progressive women's organisations, pro-welfare/labour NGOs and the two national-level trade unions—started to believe that genuine childcare publicness could not be satisfactorily accomplished only through the expansion of national/public childcare facilities. This was related to the fact that the lines between publicness and privateness with regard to ownership of childcare facilities became increasingly blurred due to the expansion of long-term contracting out of national/public childcare facilities (interview nos. 9, 11). For example, in 2017, approximately two thirds of national/public childcare facilities were operated by private sectors and approximately 60% of private contractors were private persons (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2021a). The average duration of contracting out

to the same contractors was as long as 9.5 years and 8% of private contractors were found to have operated them for more than 20 years (Yang *et al.*, 2018). During an interview with a Vice-chairperson of the Korean Public Service and Transport Workers' Union (which the union of childcare teachers is affiliated with), the interviewee pointed out the problems of increased contracting out (interview no. 9):

> "The longer a national/public childcare facility is contracted out to and operated by a private person, the more likely it is that the facility is privatised. This kind of national/public childcare facility is national and public in name only. We have seen increases in issues of such *de facto* privatised national/public childcare facilities, such as contract-related bribery, embezzlement of public subsidies, and corrupt connections between local bureaucrats and private childcare contractors… If childcare teachers publicise the issues that they experienced in their workplaces, they can neither work there nor can they find a job in other childcare facilities because childcare facilitators share a blacklist of these so-called 'whistle-blowers'."

Criticising the issues arising from the privatisation of publicly owned childcare (and social care) facilities, the coalition of progressive civil society organisations backed childcare publicness by not only expanding national/public childcare facilities but also consolidating the state's role in employing care workers and operating those facilities directly (interview nos. 3, 7, 11). The coalition members—particularly trade unions—therefore demanded political parties include the establishment of public corporations for the direct delivery of social services as one of their key election pledges (People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy, 2017). The members believed that direct state provision would secure employment stability and better working conditions for childcare workers (who are mostly women), and thereby improve the stability of high-quality childcare services for children.

A key ideational adjustment was also observed in the publicness idea that the Korea Edu-Care Association members subscribed to. We know from the discussion above that

the association advocated childcare publicness *via* increasing financial support for existing private facilities and spearheaded opposition movements against increasing the number of national/public ones during the previous Roh government. While the members still prioritised increasing public financial support for private childcare facilities, they have become increasingly receptive to the idea of expanding public ownership of childcare facilities in recent years (J. Kim, 2017). However, this does not mean that they endorsed the progressive civil society NGOs' publicness idea. Indeed, the members described such an approach as rigid and monopolistic publicness, arguing that the corruption issues of outsourced national/public childcare facilities are not common and can be adequately resolved, if necessary, by amending the outsourcing system (Y. Kim, 2017).

According to an email interview with a Secretary General of the association, the childcare publicness that they envisioned was "something that can and should be promoted in a direction allowing public-private partnership and symbiosis" (interview no. 13). They were therefore promoting childcare publicness *via* conversion of existing centre-based and home-based private childcare facilities into national/public ones, while maintaining their private operation. In fact, it was found during the interview that some member organisations of the association had already been lobbying the Ministry of Health and Welfare (which has taken over childcare affairs since 2008) and the National Assembly, as well as the Seoul Metropolitan Government by submitting a statement on utilising existing private childcare facilities for expanding national/public childcare facilities. The interviewee explained that such an ideational adjustment resulted from a deepening financial crisis that private childcare providers had been faced with due to: (1) parents' strong preference towards national/public ones; (2) the government's discriminatory financial support depending on the types of childcare facilities; and (3) declining TFRs

and the resulting decreases in the number of young children using childcare services. They also appeared to be less reluctant to embrace the idea of expanding national/public childcare facilities, arguably because of increases in *de facto* privatisation of those facilities. These two competing ideas on childcare publicness can be summarised as in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2. Two competing childcare publicness ideas under the Moon government (05/2017–present)

	Publicness by expanding direct state provision of childcare services	Publicness through public-private symbiosis
Major policy proposals	▪ Expanding national/public childcare facilities (preferably by expanding direct state operation of them) ▪ Establishing public organisations where childcare services (and other social services) are provided by the publicly employed	▪ Increasing public support for existing private childcare facilities ▪ Transforming private childcare facilities into national/public ones whilst maintaining the private childcare facilitators' right to operate ▪ Expanding national/public childcare facilities through outsourcing
Key proponents	Korean Women's Association United and its member organisations, People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy, Federation of the Korean Trade Unions, Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, Korean Public Service and Transport Workers' Union	Korea Edu-Care Association
Key opponents	Korea Edu-Care Association	Korean Public Service and Transport Workers' Union, Federation of the Korean Trade Unions, Korean Confederation of Trade Unions

4.5.2. Politicking surrounding the two competing childcare publicness ideas

During the period of the presidential election campaign, key childcare stakeholders co-organised presidential debates and meetings with party members in order to link up their ideas with politics.[35] The increased pressure from those actors, in turn, led to all five pres-

[35] For example, the Korea Edu-Care Association and other child-related organisations co-organised a series of 'Debates for Reforming Early Childhood Education and Care: Policy Proposals for the 19th Presidential Election Pledges' between February and March 2017. Meanwhile, the 'Presidential Debate on Strengthening Welfare, Labour and Publicness' was also co-organised by 15 pro-welfare/labour NGOs, women's organisations and trade unions in March 2017 (People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy, 2017).

idential candidates from different parties endorsing the plan to expand national/public childcare facilities in their election pledges (Bareun Party, 2017a; Democratic Party, 2017; Justice Party, 2017, Liberty Korea Party, 2017, People's Party, 2017). The major difference was that centre-left parties endorsed the progressive civil society idea of promoting both expansion and direct state operation of national/public childcare facilities, whereas conservative parties did not (see Table A3.3 in Appendix III). This implied that the major area of conflict no longer lay in the question of whether public ownership of childcare facilities should be expanded but rather the extent to which the state should strengthen its role in operating them for direct provision of childcare services.

Moon Jae-in of the centre-left Democratic Party was the one who strategically embraced the two different approaches to childcare publicness in his election pledges (Democratic Party, 2017). On the one hand, Moon went beyond the idea of expanding public ownership of childcare facilities by pledging to establish 'public corporations of social services' for direct state provision of childcare services. On the other hand, he also pledged to convert existing private childcare facilities under increasing financial pressure into national/public childcare facilities in order to guarantee public-private symbiosis. Following Moon's election as President in May 2017, such multi-interpretability of the publicness concept once again became a source of political conflict between the two competing coalitions.

The conflict over specific policy formulation came to the surface when the Presidential Commission on Policy Planning undertook agenda-setting for the new government in mid-2017. The Moon government's initial plan was to let public corporations operate newly established national/public childcare facilities as well as those that were currently outsourced (once the contract with non-state actors ended). In response, the

Korea Edu-Care Association started to put pressure on the new government. For example, in late June, the association's representatives had meetings with the ruling Democratic Party members who were affiliated with key policymaking venues, such as the advisory committee and National Assembly's Welfare and Health Committee (Seoul Private Child Care Association, 2017). In July, the association became more active and requested the exclusion of the childcare sector from public corporations of social services by creating an online petition (with many other child-related pressure groups), submitting a mutual statement to the advisory committee based on the petition result, and co-organising policy debates (Coalition for Reforming Early Education and Childcare, 2017). Whilst the pressure groups' lobbying activities became more intensive, the conservative opposition parties also announced that they would not allow the government's attempt to undermine the role and order of the existing private social service market (Bareun Party, 2017b; People Power Party, 2017).

Consequently, the advisory committee announced a modified plan that newly built national/public childcare facilities would only be subject to direct operation by public corporations (Presidential Commission on Policy Planning, 2017). However, the Korea Edu-Care Association continued the confrontation by establishing the Special Committee on Public Corporations of Social Services in August 2017. Since its establishment, the committee has organised a series of policy discussions with National Assembly members to deter such a plan and also submitted written arguments to the Ministry of Health and Welfare. As the plan faced such severe resistance, the Ministry of Health and Welfare consequently came to promote the establishment of 'social services institutes' in late 2017 and then 'social services agencies' in early 2018 (Government of the Republic of Korea, 2018). Regarding this downsizing, a Senior Deputy Director of the Ministry of Health

and Welfare opined that the ministry was under direct pressure from the association (interview no. 1):

> "The Korea Edu-Care Association is very influential—one of their members has been affiliated with the National Assembly's Health and Welfare Committee and can thus put pressure directly on the ministry officials… Even if a policy that we promote is the president's policy agenda, practically speaking, we really cannot ignore opponents with strong political power…"

In fact, the modified plan indicated that for the next five years the number of national/ public childcare facilities would increase by 450 per year, with approximately 100 being newly established and the rest being established through contracting out to private sectors and converting existing private facilities (Government of the Republic of Korea, 2018).

In response to such capitulation, the coalition supporting childcare publicness in the dimensions of not only ownership but also operation and employment undertook diverse collective actions. For example, in November 2017, the coalition members, together with a National Assemblyman of the centre-left Justice Party, co-organised a press conference where they urged the Moon government to establish public corporations of social services according to their election pledge (Yoon *et al*., 2017). In October 2018, the coalition, together with the National Assemblyman, also submitted a legislative bill (no. 15984) on establishing public corporations, although it did not pass in the end (Yoon and the Coalition for Strengthening Publicness of Long-Term Care, 2017). Simultaneously, trade unions and the Political Mamas (a nascent NGO established by mothers with young children) launched a series of public protests for passing legislative bills on establishing public corporations/agencies of social services and improving transparency in the operation of childcare facilities and kindergartens (interview nos. 9, 12). In order to sway public opinion more effectively, they surveyed childcare teachers, collected data on accounting

frauds and other relevant corruption in private and outsourced national/public childcare facilities, and publicised them (interview nos. 9).[36]

The severe conflicts surrounding childcare publicness between the two competing coalitions placed the Moon government and his centre-left Democratic Party in a difficult situation. On the one hand, they could not expand public ownership and direct operation of childcare facilities through establishing public corporations/agencies of social services in the face of severe opposition from private childcare providers and conservative parties. On the other hand, they could not evade their election pledge about childcare publicness due to the backlash that would come from progressive civil society organisations and the general public. Along with the corruption scandals associated with privately run childcare facilities, in particular, the pressure on the government for expanding reliable national/ public childcare facilities was further heightened (interview no. 1).

Against this backdrop, the government eventually came up with a compromise. Firstly, the idea of publicness through the public-private symbiosis was embraced and put into an action. In 2018, the Ministry of Health and Welfare doubled the ceiling on funding that local authorities could use to purchase the ownership of existing private childcare facilities and then convert them into national/public ones. The ministry also introduced a new scheme that allowed a temporary conversion (for five or ten years or longer) of high-quality private childcare facilities to national/public childcare facilities, whilst retaining the original private facilitators' right to operate them. Through these two changes, 359 private childcare facilities were temporarily or permanently converted into national/ public ones between 2017 and 2020 (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2021b). Secondly, by amending the Childcare Act in 2019, the government mandated the establishment of

[36] The collected data included using government-funded tuition fees and subsidies (towards children's meals) for private purposes and making and sharing a blacklist of childcare teachers.

national/public childcare facilities in newly established multi-family housings with 500 households, whilst allowing local authorities to determine whether they would operate them directly or outsource them. Lastly, in 2020, in order to guarantee better transparency in privately run childcare facilities, the government established new clauses in the Child-care Act regarding punishment for the misuse of subsidised childcare fees and the protection of childcare workers reporting corruption issues. In doing so, the government was able to somewhat politically circumvent criticism regarding a failure to expand direct state provision of childcare services from the coalition of progressive civil society groups.

Consequently, under the current Moon government, the number of national/public childcare facilities has shown record levels of increases. However, two facts are important here: firstly, the number of outsourced national/public childcare facilities more than doubled between 2017 and 2020 (from 2,110 in 2017 to 4,579); and secondly, during the same period, the proportion of outsourcing to individuals particularly showed a radical increase from 39.9% to 65.4% (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2021b) (see Table A3.4 in Appendix III). This shows that the rapid expansion of public ownership of childcare facilities has been made possible by simultaneous expansion of their operation by private individuals.

4.6. Discussion

What do the empirical findings tell us regarding the question of what made the idea of expanding ownership publicness become a political reality under the current Moon government? As the ideational scholarship has increasingly emphasised, did a high level of polysemy or malleability intrinsic to the concept of publicness really help actors facilitate policy change?

The analysis of the Roh and Moon governments suggest that employing an attractive polysemic concept like childcare publicness helps policy actors draw broad attention to policy reforms from diverse actors, build a large coalition, and swiftly mobilise support from state actors, including the Ministry of Economy and Finance. On the contrary, the analysis also shows that the polysemy simultaneously allows other actors to shape its meaning in favour of their interests and policy preferences as well as push through their policy alternatives. Hence, at the stage of formulating specific policy plans and implementing them, polysemy is of limited value. Rather, it becomes a source of conflict among actors. The conflict was particularly strong under the Roh government during which the interpretation of childcare publicness was considerably heterogenous across diverse actors in regard to its subjects as well as its ends and means. The presence of severely diverse interpretations of childcare publicness consequently stagnated the process of formulating specific plans.

The agreement made by diverse key stakeholders on the need to reinforce childcare publicness was only the beginning of the real politics of different policy initiatives. And the policymaking process was still shaped by asymmetrical power relations among actors and the existing policy legacy, as well as the strategic collective actions by actors attempting to overcome political and institutional constraints.

During the Roh government, the idea of expanding public ownership of childcare facilities was faced with severe opposition from two strong veto players: the Ministry of Economy and Finance and the association of private childcare providers. The coalition members promoting this idea enhanced its viability through public and political campaigning, which somewhat contributed to weakening opposition from the Ministry of Economy and Finance. Nevertheless, the plan was still unactionable due to private child-

care providers, whose voting power was sufficient to mobilise political support from politicians of both local and central governments. Additionally, many other policy actors took the existing market-led development path of childcare services as a reference point when they evaluated the feasibility of this policy idea and other alternatives. From this perspective, the idea of expanding national/public childcare facilities seemed risky and inefficient. This was especially so since strengthening childcare publicness was needed to tackle the deepening low fertility crisis where rapid policy results were required.

Under the current Moon government, political receptivity to the idea of expanding ownership publicness increased considerably. This had to do with the fact that private childcare providers partially embraced this idea. This does not mean that the policymaking process was conflict-free. Indeed, conflicts escalated among key stakeholders regarding how this expansion should be promoted. This was because the issue of publicness in social services in general became politicised before and after Moon's election. On the one hand, the coalition of existing private childcare providers promoted it through nationalisation of existing private childcare facilities whilst maintaining their private operation in order to achieve what they called the 'public-private symbiosis'. On the other hand, their civil society counterparts were against the ownership/operation split and called for the state's intervention as a direct provider of social services.

The coalition of existing private childcare providers pressured the Moon government primarily through elite-directed collective actions, such as having in-person meetings with state actors and submitting written statements to the ministry in charge of childcare policy. These actions eventually led the administrative and the ruling party to step back from promoting both the expansion of national/public childcare facilities and their direct operation, as well as accept the coalition's idea of childcare publicness through

public-private symbiosis. However, unlike during the Roh government, the coalition of women's groups, pro-welfare/labour NGOs, and trade unions was more united, and responded to such political capitulation by organising a series of public demonstrations where they publicised the corruption scandals of privately operated childcare facilities. Although their strong opposition did not break the deadlock on expanding direct state provision of childcare services, their mass-directed collective actions provided a sufficient rationale for the government to build more national/public childcare facilities and introduce a new punishment scheme for financially corrupt childcare facilities.

4.7. Concluding remarks

The nascent ideational scholarship has increasingly written about how ideas can facilitate policy change and the intrinsic features of ideas that become politically influential. In recent years, it has been argued that ideas are more likely to become a source of policy change when they are polysemic rather than well-articulated. This paper's investigation of the policymaking process surrounding the issue of childcare publicness based on original interview data and official documents provides important empirical evidence that polysemy may function as an attention magnet more than a coalition magnet. This paper also suggests that although polysemy can help actors mediate conflicts to some extent, actual policymaking is more decisively affected by structural power relations and enduring institutional legacy.

5. PAPER IV

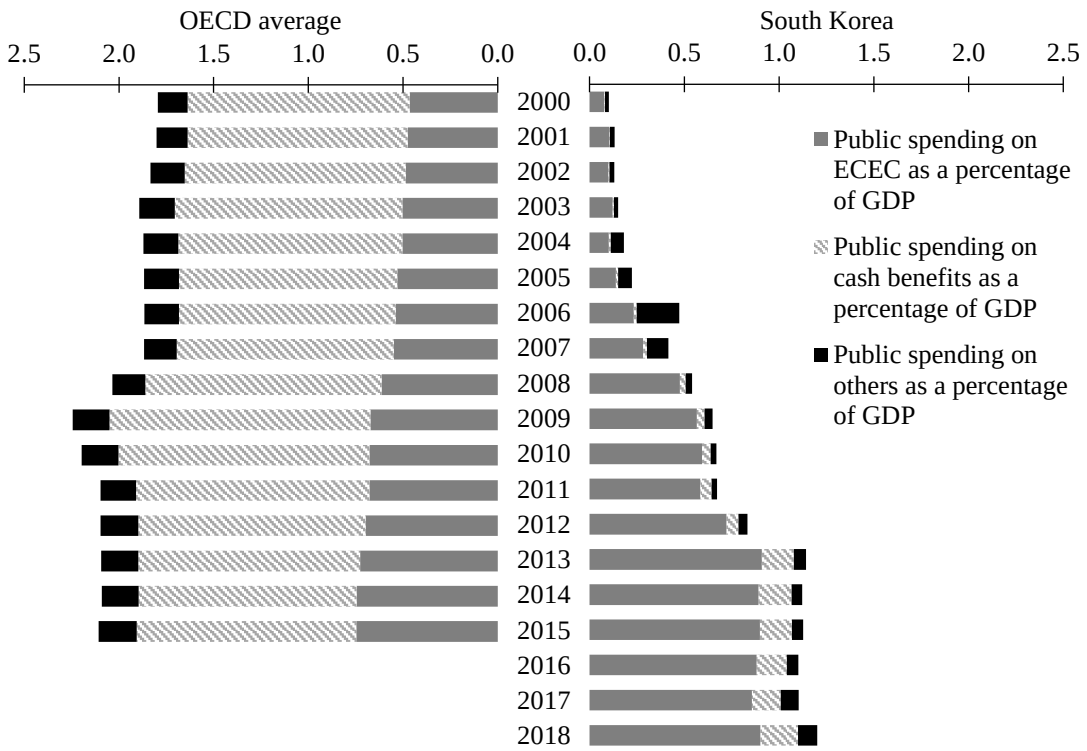
The politics of cash benefits for children in South Korea

5.1. Introduction

According to existing studies on the emergence and development of family policy, cash support for families and children (especially for those in need) dates as far back as the early 20th century in Europe (Gauthier, 1996). Shortly after the end of the Second World War, publicly funded cash allowances for children became a widespread feature across most modern advanced economies (Montanari, 2000), although they differed substantially across different countries in regard to their degree of generosity, conditionality (*e.g.* age-, parity-, and income-related) and modality (*e.g.* tax credits and direct cash transfers) (Daly and Ferragina, 2018). The fact that child-related economic support in the form of cash transfers was the core and oldest element of family policy, betokens a widespread consensus that the cost of producing the next generation of citizens should be redistributed horizontally between citizens who raise children and those who do not.

In South Korea, child-related financial support was almost non-existent until the emergence of a new *Zeitgeist* in the mid-2000s, which proposed a strengthening of the state's childcare responsibility. However, as this new idea gained traction, one key issue lay in the type of state-financed financial assistance that was to be provided (Presidential Commission on Policy Planning, 2008a). On the one hand, some actors insisted that cash benefits should be paid to families in order to alleviate the financial burdens of caring for a child. On the other hand, it was argued that increasing subsidies for ECEC services should be prioritised in order that women be 'free' to participate in the labour market.

Figure 5.1. South Korea's public spending on family benefits as a percentage of GDP, 2000–2018



Note: The OECD average of public spending on ECEC was calculated excluding Canada, Greece and Switzerland due to a lack of data. The average from the year 2015 also excluded Poland due to a lack of data.

Source: OECD (2021e, 2021f)

During the first decade of expanding public spending on families in South Korea, the idea of expanding subsidised childcare services predominated (and was translated into policy, as demonstrated earlier in this thesis). This is illustrated by the fact that South Korea's public spending on ECEC as a percentage of GDP increased rapidly from 0.11% in 2004 to 0.91% in 2013 (OECD, 2021e). By contrast, the idea of introducing child-related cash benefits was marginalised. For example, although the Roh government (03/2003–02/2008) and societal actors reached an agreement on introducing child benefits, the subsequent conservative Lee Myung-bak government (03/2008–02/2013) alternatively provided ₩100,000-200,000 (€75-150) per month for families caring for young children (aged up to 3) at home. However, because such homecare allowances were avail-

able only for low-income households, public spending on family benefits as a percentage of GDP remained a meagre 0.04-0.06%. This reveals that South Korea's policy to support children was cash transfer-lean and childcare service-heavy. As Figure 5.1 shows above, this characteristic particularly stood out when compared to other OECD countries where public spending on cash transfers continued to be high.

It was 2013 when an increase in South Korea's public spending on child-related cash benefits became visible. This is because under the conservative Park Geun-hye government (02/2013–03/2017), homecare allowances expanded and became available for all pre-school children who were cared for at home. Under the current centre-left Moon Jae-in government (05/2017–present), the idea of expanding cash transfers for families with children has gained more traction than ever before. In September 2018, ₩100,000 (€75) of child benefits per month were introduced on top of existing homecare allowances. In January 2022, two new forms of financial benefits were introduced for young children. One was a childbirth grant scheme, through which all families with a new-born baby received a lump sum provision of ₩2,000,000 (€1,505) in the form of vouchers. The other was an infant benefit, which was provided for all children aged up to 2. This benefit replaced existing parental childcare subsidies and homecare allowances for this age group: families using childcare services are given approximately ₩500,000 (€376) of infant benefits in the form of vouchers (for using the services), whilst those caring for their children at home receive ₩300,000 (€226) in cash. Families with older children continuously receive either parental childcare subsidies or homecare allowances. Hence, the introduction of infant benefits on top of existing homecare allowances can be interpreted as a *de facto* increase in cash transfers for homecare.

This paper is comprised of two parts. The first one addresses a descriptive research question:

Q1. How specifically has South Korea's financial support for children developed over time and which policy direction is the country heading towards?

This question is approached by tracking the changes in the amount of different types of child-related financial support between 2003 and 2022 and briefly revisiting political conflicts regarding the policy direction. Through this descriptive analysis, the first part aims to show that the country's policy direction has been adjusted from a 'service only' orientation supporting working families to that of 'service-*and*-cash' for both dual-earner and male breadwinner families. In the second part, a more explanatory question is explored:

Q2. Why has the policy direction been adjusted? In other words, why has the idea of increasing direct child-related cash transfers—especially for children who are cared for at home—been translated into actual policy outcome?

To delve into this question, the second part begins by outlining an analytical framework that focuses on ideas and the political/institutional contexts of policymaking and introduces the methodological approach and collected data. Subsequently, the main milestones of child-related cash support—namely, the introduction of homecare allowances, their rapid expansion, and their resilience and *de facto* further expansion—are investigated in a chronological manner. The following section integrates and discusses these findings to address the research questions more directly. In the final section, overall conclusions are drawn and implications are suggested regarding the interplay between ideas and political and institutional factors.

5.2. The development of financial assistance for childrearing in South Korea

In South Korea, there are five main different types of governmental financial assistance that are universally available for families with young children: (1) parental childcare subsidies; (2) homecare allowances; (3) child benefits; (4) infant benefits; and (5) childbirth grants. Although their eligibility and level of generosity are different, they all aim to reduce families' financial burden of raising children and thereby to reverse the declining TFR. Table 5.1 below summarises the development and changes in these different forms of governmental financial assistance throughout the last two decades.

The most noticeable trend shown in the table is that the expansion of government support was highly concentrated on increasing parental childcare subsidies (which are offered in the form of electronic vouchers for parents to use childcare services) during the centre-left Roh government (03/2003–02/2008) and the conservative Lee government (03/2008–02/2013). In doing so, the coverage of free whole day (*i.e.* 12 hours) publicly funded childcare services was extended from the lowest income bracket households in 2003 to all households with 0 to 2 and 5 year-olds in 2012.

The country's childcare service-oriented policy direction began to be diluted under the following conservative Park government (03/2013–03/2017). In 2013, both parental childcare subsidies and homecare allowances were universalised for all families with pre-school children. This unusual expansion of homecare allowances elicited criticism from some progressive societal actors who argued that it would reinforce a gendered division of labour.[37] They also claimed that the allowances would aggravate social inequality in the sense that low-income children tend to be taken care of at home whilst high-income

[37] I described the expansion as 'unusual' because homecare allowances are generally available for young children (up to their third birthday) in European countries that have introduced them. They are often seen as an extension of maternity and parental leaves.

Table 5.1. Expansion of financial assistance provided directly to families with pre-school children (unit: ₩1,000; per child per month)

Year	Parental childcare subsidy [1], [2] / Infant benefits						Homecare allowances [3] / Infant benefits						Child benefits [4]					
	0 y < 12 m	1 y < 24 m	2 y < 36 m	3 y < 48 m	4 y < 60 m	5 y < 72 m	0 y < 12 m	1 y < 24 m	2 y < 36 m	3 y < 48 m	4 y < 60 m	5 y < 72 m	0 y < 12 m	1 y < 24 m	2 y < 36 m	3 y < 48 m	4 y < 60 m	5 y < 72 m
2003	243	243	201	125	125	125												
2004	257	257	212	131	131	131												
2005	299	299	247	153	153	153												
2006	350	308	254	158	158	158												
2007	361	317	262	180	162	162												
2008	372	327	270	185	167	167												
2009	383	337	278	191	172	167	100	100										
2010	383	337	278	191	172	172	100	100										
2011	394	347	286	197	177	177	200	150	100									
2012	394	347	286	197	177	200	200	150	100									
2013	394	347	286	220	220	220	200	150	100	100	100	100						
2014	394	347	286	220	220	220	200	150	100	100	100	100						
2015	406	357	295	220	220	220	200	150	100	100	100	100						
2016	344	302	250	220	220	220	200	150	100	100	100	100						
2017	344	302	250	220	220	220	200	150	100	100	100	100						
2018	344	302	250	220	220	220	200	150	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
2019	354	311	258	220	220	220	200	150	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
2020	470	414	343	240	240	240	200	150	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
2021	484	426	353	260	260	260	200	150	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
2022	499	439	364	260	260	260	300	300	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note: ₩1,000 is approximately €0.75. This table does not include the childbirth grant (₩2,000,000; €1,505), which is provided once upon birth of the baby. The six different colours used in the table indicate different levels of eligibility:

- Number — Households in the lowest income bracket and eligible for the Basic Livelihood Security Programme
- Number — Households earning 120% of the minimum cost of living or less
- Number — Households earning 100% of the average urban working household income
- Number — Households in the lower 50% income bracket
- Number — Households in the lower 70% income bracket
- Number — All households (for child benefits provided in 2018, households in the lower 90% income bracket)

[1] The size of subsidies is the sum of subsidies for parents (provided in the form of vouchers) regardless of their employment status and their child's disability status. Since 2016, only dual-earner families have been able to use a whole day (*i.e.* 12 hours) of childcare services and have therefore been provided with more parental childcare subsidies. More subsidies are provided for children with disabilities.

[2] In addition to childcare subsidies provided for parents, 'basic subsidies' per child are paid to private providers caring for children aged 0-2 and those with a disability. Private providers in this context refer to those operating home-based or centre-based private childcare facilities who are not provided with government subsidies towards operational costs.

[3] In 2018, homecare allowances became available for children aged up to 86 months if the child had not entered primary school. More allowances were provided for children living in rural areas or with a disability.

[4] In 2019, child benefits also became available for children aged 6 and 7. In 2022, child benefits also became available for 8 year-olds.

households use them to send their children to private education centres.[38] Yet in 2016, the policy direction encouraging homecare was further reinforced as 0 to 2 year-olds with non-working mothers became entitled to use only half day (*i.e.* 6 hours) childcare services. Consequently, the overall amount of parental childcare subsidies for them decreased.

Against this backdrop, some actors promoted the introduction of universal child benefits to replace homecare allowances. By having universal cash transfers for children, together with publicly funded childcare services, the actors believed that the contour of the South Korean childcare system would resemble more that of European welfare states with advanced economies. In September 2018, ₩100,000 (€75) of child benefits per month finally became available for children aged up to 6 under the current centre-left Moon government (05/2017–present). However, the provision of homecare allowances was maintained. Child benefits soon became universalised for all those aged up to 7 in January 2019 and were extended to 8 year-olds in January 2022.

Since the beginning of 2022, young children have benefited from two new forms of cash transfer according to the 'Plan on the Intensive Investment in Children's Infancy' (Government of the Republic of Korea: 2020: 79ff.). One is a one-off childbirth grant that is provided in the form of vouchers worth ₩2,000,000 (€1,505). The other are infant benefits for children aged up to 2 to replace the parental childcare subsidies or homecare allowances that they previously received. Under this new benefit scheme, families with children aged up to 2 using childcare services receive ₩439,000-499,000 (€330-375) in the form of vouchers. As Table 5.1 above shows, the amount of these vouchers is similar to that of previous parental childcare subsidies. If families care for children at home,

[38] Special private education centres are not registered as childcare facilities or kindergartens that receive government funding. Children using these centres are not seen as using publicly funded ECEC services and are thus eligible for homecare allowances.

₩300,000 (€226) is offered monthly. According to the Moon government's plan, the disparity in infant benefits for childcare service users and homecare providers will be completely removed by increasing the benefits for homecare to ₩500,000 (€376) by 2025. Given the fact that families caring for children aged up to 2 at home previously received ₩150,000-200,000 (€75-150) per month, this new benefit scheme incentivises homecare for young children more than ever before.

The Moon government has conceptualised infant benefits as additional child benefits for young children, rather than the expansion of homecare allowances, in the sense that similar levels of cash benefits are provided for young children regardless of whether they receive childcare in the institutional or home setting (Government of the Republic of Korea, 2020: 79ff.). However, it is important to underline that homecare allowances are still available for older children, although the provision of infant benefits was initially proposed as a policy alternative to abolish homecare allowances (*e.g.* Kim *et al.*, 2019). Hence, from the perspective of parents, the provision of infant benefits can be viewed as a *de facto* increase in homecare allowances.

Table 5.2 below summarises the different levels of available financial assistance depending on the child's age and care that they receive. To summarise, the development of South Korea's child-related cash benefits show three milestones: (1) the introduction of homecare allowances; (2) their unusual expansion for all pre-school children; and (3) their resilience during the introduction of other universal cash benefits and the *de facto* further expansion of cash for homecare. In the existing literature, financial support for childcare services are depicted as the 'ramp' that provides equal access to the workforce for women, thereby promoting a dual-earner family model (Ellingsæter, 2003). In contrast, cash allowances presume (or are neutral to) a traditional gendered division of labour in

society and within the family, thereby supporting a male breadwinner family model (Korpi, 2000). Tracing the pattern of financial assistance during the first decade of the 21st century, it appears that South Korea was oriented towards supporting a dual-earner family model. However, the expansion of homecare allowances for all pre-school children in 2013, as well as the introduction of child and infant benefits and childbirth grants on top of the allowances in more recent years, can be interpreted as the country moving towards a 'double track' that supports both traditional and dual-earner families.

Table 5.2. Financial assistance for children by age and care arrangement (as of January 2022)

	Using childcare services	Being homecared
Young children aged up to 2	Childbirth grant (voucher) (₩2,000,000 lump sum; €1,505) + Infant benefit (childcare service voucher) (₩439,000 or ₩499,000 per month; €330 or €375) + Child benefit (cash) (₩100,000 per month; €75)	Childbirth grant (voucher) (₩2,000,000 lump sum; €1,505) + Infant benefit (cash) (₩300,000 per month; €226) + Child benefit (cash) (₩100,000 per month; €75)
Pre-school children aged 2 and above	Parental childcare subsidy (voucher) (₩260,000-364,000 per month; €196-274) + Child benefit (cash) (₩100,000 per month; €75)	Homecare allowance (cash) (₩100,000 per month; €75) + Child benefit (cash) (₩100,000 per month; €75)

5.3. Analytical framework

The above analysis shows that the idea of increasing child-related direct cash transfers has become more dominant than ever before and has been translated into actual policy outcome in South Korea. We also know that the expansion of child-related cash transfers was closely related to the issue of abolishing homecare allowances. Yet the allowances survived during the introduction of both child and infant benefits, as well as childbirth

grants. Consequently, the recent cash expansion *de facto* increased financial incentives for caring for children at home. This section therefore sketches a framework to analyse this particular form of cash expansion.

5.3.1. Ideas and windows of opportunity for policy change

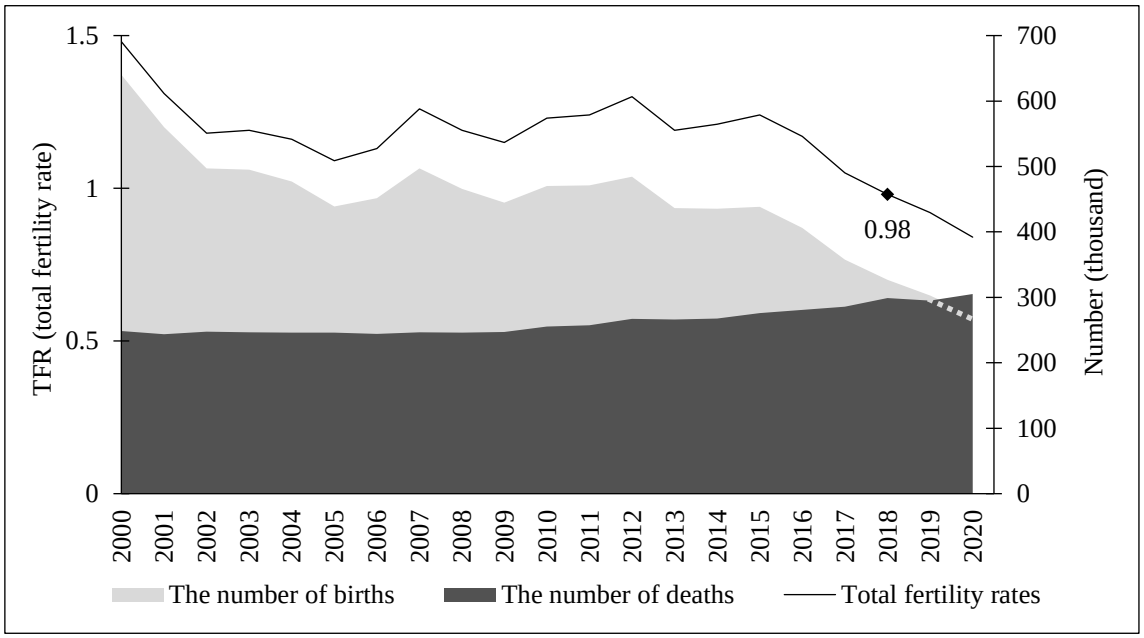
In this framework, I turn again to ideas. According to the existing literature, ideas affect policymaking by serving as problem definitions, roadmaps, frames and coalition magnets (see section 1.2.1 in the Introduction for a more detailed discussion).

However, although the black box of how a new idea can affect policy change has been opened, the box's inside is still murky and needs to be further illuminated. Indeed, ideas do not always initiate policy change. Rather, according to Kingdon (1984), ideas become a source of policy change when a fortuitous 'window of opportunity' opens. Once this window has opened, advocates of a particular policy idea can promote their set of policy problems and solutions by framing them in more cognitively convincing and normatively appealing terms. Kingdon (1984: 176) explains that this window opening takes place through two main pathways.

Firstly, policymakers' attention should be directed to a problem due to changes in the indicators of underlying problems, an occurrence of a focusing event and/or negative feedback from existing programmes prompting a corrective action. In South Korea, the low fertility crisis has been perceived as one of the policy exigencies. In particular, the TFR has served as an important indicator demonstrating that the problem is getting worse (see Figure 5.2 below). In 2018, the country's TFR dropped to 0.98, breaking the '1.0 threshold' for the first time. In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the TFR further dropped to 0.84 and deaths (305,100) outnumbered births (272,337) for the first

time since records began, raising alarm over the so-called 'demographic cliff'.[39] Given the accumulated crises of low fertility, policymakers presumably acknowledged that the existing service-heavy-transfer-lean childcare policy approach does not square with the intended goal (*i.e.* reversing low fertility trends) and to advocate for child-related cash expansion.

Figure 5.2. Statistics on births and deaths in South Korea, 2000–2020



Sources: OECD (2021g), Statistics Korea (2021c)

The other pathway of policy window opening is more closely related to politics. On the one hand, this opening may take place through an executive or legislative turnover and the resulting sudden re-establishment of power dynamics among actors (Kingdon, 1984). On the other hand, a window of opportunity may also open when policymakers perceive a negative national mood and/or pressure-groups campaigning against certain issues as a potential threat to their authority and therefore look for a policy solution

[39] The term 'demographic cliff' was coined by Harry Dent Jr. (2014) who used this concept to explain the population structure's effect on economic growth and crisis in the world. In the South Korean context, this concept has been symbolically used to indicate a decline in the number of working population in the midst of accelerating retirement of the post-war baby boomer generation.

(Zohlnhöfer and Huß, 2016). Stated differently, policymakers are likely to go ahead with a new policy idea when they feel that it would bring political gains. Similarly, when they perceive that their position in the upcoming election is in danger because of a particular issue, their search for new policy solutions may also be stimulated (Herweg *et al.*, 2015).

5.3.2. The political and institutional context of policymaking

We now know from the existing literature at what point a window for new policy ideas opens. Whilst these theoretical accounts explain why the idea of increasing cash benefits gained traction in South Korea, very little is known about why the idea was translated in such a way as to increasingly incentivise homecare.

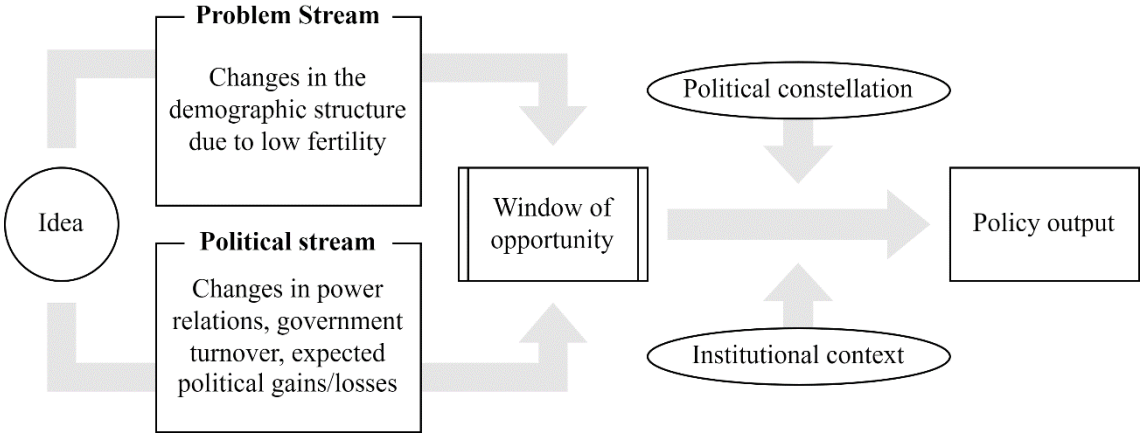
This particular form of cash expansion in South Korea leads me to pay attention to the fact that the translation of idea into actual policy is affected by the degree of political receptivity to the idea (*e.g.* Béland, 2009; Berman, 1998; Hall, 1989) (see section 1.2.2 in the Introduction chapter for a more detailed discussion). Hence, even if a window of opportunity opens for a particular idea and proponents push for it, the idea should be able to mobilise support from veto players whose agreement is required for the idea to become reality. As King (1992: 242) noted, even if a new policy idea is adopted, the translation process of an idea into policy often results in metamorphosis of the original notion; and politically influential actors—such as the President, political parties and ministries—play a crucial role in this translation. This means that it is important to understand the power relations among actors supporting or opposing the provision of cash for homecare.

It is also important to note that the interplay between ideas and actors takes place within a particular institutional setting (see section 1.2.3 in the Introduction for a more detailed discussion). Traditionally, South Korea's childcare policy was characterised by

a clear divide between the deserving (*i.e.* children without familial protection due to parents' employment, ill-health, disappearance or death) and the undeserving (*i.e.* children who could be cared for by a family member) (see section 1.1.3 in the Introduction for a more detailed discussion). Indeed, although the idea of strengthening the state's childcare responsibility for all families has recently been highlighted in policy discourses, homecare allowances have been provided to "induce 0 to 2 year-olds to be taken care of by parents and 3 to 5 year-olds or dual-earner families to use childcare facilities" and thereby improve fiscal efficiency (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2013: 24). This new schism between the deserving and the less deserving regarding institutional childcare shows that policy legacies remain powerful, implying that they would serve as barriers obstructing the abolition of homecare allowances and affect the direction of cash-related policy reforms occurring at a later point.

To summarise, an idea's time comes when a window of opportunity opens due to changes in the problem and/or political stream. Yet the idea-policy translation process is mediated by power constellations and the institutional context. Figure 5.3 illustrates this analytical framework for the empirical investigation of child-related cash expansion in South Korea in the following sections.

Figure 5.3. Analytical framework



5.4. Methodological approach and data

In light of these integrated theoretical considerations, I can explicate how and the extent to which an idea facilitates policy change and how this process is mediated by political and institutional contexts. Guided by these different theoretical accounts, the aim is now to investigate the policymaking of South Korea's cash benefits for children from 2009 (when homecare allowances were introduced) onwards. It is important to note that this so-called 'theory-guided case study' is not intended to explicitly test hypotheses in order to generalise beyond this particular episode (Levy, 2008). Instead, by focusing on the particular analytical aspects that are defined above, this paper is intended to craft minimally sufficient explanations to illuminate the three milestones of cash expansion in South Korea: (1) the introduction of homecare allowances in 2009; (2) their expansion for all pre-school children in 2013; and (3) their resilience during the introduction of universal cash benefits between 2018 and 2022, which led to the further incentivisation of homecare. Hence, this research is case-centric rather than theory-centric.

For this investigation, documentary data are collected across the four governments, political parties, child-related think tanks and non-state actors (notably women's organisations and pro-welfare/labour NGOs). The scope of these data is confined to official ones published by the aforementioned actors, such as state basic plans on childcare, National Assembly minutes, policy research reports, party briefings and manifestos, press releases and official public statements. In regard to survey data on public opinions and spoken discourses of key actors, newspaper articles were collected and reviewed.

Whilst the collected documentary data assists in broadly identifying critical issues in cash benefits for children as well as understanding key policy actors' positions on them, it is of limited use in obtaining detailed information on policy design, deliberation and

final decisions. This is because cash support policy has been a more politically sensitive issue than other childcare policy elements in South Korea and granular details are therefore not available to the public. Seen in this light, secondary data is badly in need of being cross-checked and complemented with primary data. This paper therefore utilises data obtained from in-depth semi-structured interviews with 11 key policy actors between 2019 and 2021: eight face-to-face or virtual interviews and three email interviews. The interviewees were chosen based on the information acquired from the documentary analysis and sometimes from previous interviews. Consequently, a wide range of both state and non-state actors were interviewed: four ministerial or party members, four policy advisors affiliated with the Presidential Committee on Ageing Society and Population Policy, and three representing child-related NGOs (see Table A4.1 in Appendix IV).

5.5. Introduction of homecare allowances

As noted earlier, it was in the mid-2000s when the idea of introducing general child-related cash benefits was first discussed in the face of rapidly declining birth rates. The provision of economic support in the form of universal child benefits particularly gained support from several social welfare advocacy NGOs and was eventually included as one of the key plans in the '2006 Social Pact for Resolving Low Fertility and Ageing Society Problems' under the Roh government.[40] However, according to a policy adviser who was affiliated with the Presidential Committee on Ageing Society and Population Policy, introducing cash benefits for children was not prioritised as much as the expansion of publicly funded childcare services (interview no. 5):

[40] Among societal actors, the People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy spearheaded the introduction of universal cash benefits, submitting a relevant National Assembly petition (no. 160707) in October 2003.

> "Although introducing universal cash benefits [for children] was discussed within the committee, I cannot say that it was a priority policy task. Back then, childcare-related support was virtually non-existent in Korea. When we finally started talking about the expansion of childcare policy, one had to be chosen and focused: the expansion of childcare subsidies [for the use of childcare services] or the introduction of cash benefits… In this situation, expanding childcare subsidies was seen as most effective in reversing fertility trends and was therefore prioritised."

In fact, from a budgetary perspective, the idea of introducing universal child-related benefits was vetoed by the Ministry of Economy and Finance, which takes *de facto* control over many other ministries through top-down budgetary decision-making. The ministry argued that "child benefits being provided for all children regardless of their use of publicly funded childcare services necessitates massive budgets although the effectiveness [of introducing them] is unclear" (Presidential Commission on Policy Planning, 2008b: 70). The idea was also opposed by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, which was in charge of childcare and other family-related affairs back then, for the reason that child benefits would generate 'duplicate support' for children receiving childcare subsidies (*ibid.*: 70ff.). Hence, the ministry considered introducing allowances for families caring for children at home instead (*ibid.*). Overall, this reveals an institutional context that although childcare subsidies, child benefits and homecare allowances are all different in regard to the underpinning assumptions of the relationship between the state and the family—as well as within the family—they were initially treated as alternatives to each other to reduce the burden of having a child in South Korea.

Whilst the idea of expanding publicly funded childcare services remained dominant, the matter of the provision of cash transfers for children gained some political attention in the face of the upcoming presidential election in December 2007. During the election campaign, childcare-related pledges from centre-left and leftist presidential candidates were concentrated on the universalisation of free childcare services for all pre-school

children and the expansion of national/public childcare facilities (see Table A4.2 in Appendix IV). Contrastingly, Lee Myung-bak of the conservative Grand National Party proffered the 'Mom and Baby Plan' that outlined both the expansion of publicly funded childcare services and introduction of homecare allowances as policy solutions to tackle low fertility, despite conservative parties traditionally never putting forth pro-welfare policy ideas. It appears that Lee and his party promoted the so-called 'catch-all electoral strategy' by selectively adopting the left's dominant childcare idea (*i.e.* expanding publicly funded childcare services) and mixing it with the conservative familialist idea (*i.e.* incentivising homecare). Following Lee's inauguration as President, the idea of introducing homecare allowances gained administrative validity.

The idea of introducing homecare allowances attracted further political receptivity in April 2008 when the conservative Grand National Party also won the majority of seats (153 out of 299 seats) in the general election, giving the Lee government the greatest majority of seats since South Korea's democratic opening in 1987 (Yang, 2017). Against this backdrop, the Ministry of Health and Welfare undertook childcare policy reform to introduce homecare allowances for low-income families with children aged up to 2.

As discussed earlier, opponents to the introduction of homecare allowances were women's groups and pro-welfare/labour NGOs. Nevertheless, their opposition did not manifest itself in any tangible political action, such as the announcement of a joint statement and/or the organisation of public demonstrations. Instead, a Co-representative of the Korean Women's Associations United recalled during an interview (interview no. 10):

> "One major reason [why our opposition was not very fierce] was that homecare allowances were initially introduced only for low-income families with children 0 and 1 years of age. The amount was as low as ₩100,000 [€75] (per month). This did not seem to severely disrupt women's labour market participation…"

Additionally, the organisation's former Co-representative, pointed out that the view of their circle on homecare allowances was not sufficiently united within women's organisations to be able to mobilise organised opposition (interview no. 9):

> "Within women's circles, two conflicting views existed. The opponents of homecare allowances, like the Korean Women Workers' Association, argued that they would strengthen and legitimise women's role as carers. They also criticised that the allowances were a cheaper option for the government than expanding public care, which costs a lot—because it is 'private care'. The proponents were the organisations that had housewives as their members and considered housewives as the main actors of women's movements. Their arguments were that housewives exist in reality anyway. Korea's female working population is only approximately 50%. So, the other half are doing unpaid care labour, right? From this perspective, we had many unsolved questions, like "why shouldn't we value their labour by introducing homecare allowances?", "why should every single woman participate in paid labour?", and "are housewives second class citizens because they are doing labour within the private sphere of home?" These questions all came down to one fundamental question—"what is labour?" Anyways, we had a couple of internal meetings but did not reach a clear conclusion."

These interview data sources show that the small size and coverage of homecare allowances—and more fundamentally, different views on gender justice—disturbed the formation of a bloc opposing the Lee government's plan to introduce them. Under these circumstances, the allowances were introduced for children aged up to 2 from households earning 120% of the minimum cost of living or less in 2009.

5.6. Expansion of homecare allowances for all pre-school children

Under the governance of conservative authorities in the administration and the National Assembly, gradual increases in both subsidies towards childcare services and homecare allowances continued (see Table 5.1 above). From the perspective of their leftist political counterparts, this expansion meant a weakening of their political identity and a need for readjustment of their political platform. Within this context, the centre-left Democratic

Party took back the lead in the welfare agenda by adopting 'free universal school meals' and 'free childcare' as top pledges in the nationwide local election held in June 2010. The Democratic Party further developed its pro-welfare agenda by proposing 'triple free universal welfare' in January 2011: 'free school lunch', 'free childcare', 'free healthcare' (Democratic Party, 2011a). The emphasis on universalism was a strategic differentiation from the Lee government and the ruling conservative Grand National Party, which only advocated for a selective form of welfare expansion.

In regard to the agenda of free childcare, it should be noted that the Democratic Party pledged to universalise not only childcare subsidies but also homecare allowances for all families with 0 to 5 year-olds (Democratic Party, 2011b). In particular, the party emphasised that their universalist approach would tackle low fertility more effectively. Given the party's connection with progressive NGOs, embracing and further developing the conservative's idea of homecare allowances could have been a politically risky pledge. However, they could avoid the criticism by arguing that "homecare allowances would be re-considered once universal child benefits have been introduced" (Democratic Party, 2012: 134). From this perspective, the universalisation and expansion of homecare allowances was seen as a period of transition towards universal child benefits.

The Lee government and the conservative ruling Grand National Party condemned universal free welfare as populism (People Power Party, 2011). However, the outcome was their defeat: in the 2010 local election where 16 mayoral and gubernational seats were being contested, the Grand National Party lost half of the seats that they secured during the 2006 election and won only six seats, whilst the Democratic Party gained seven seats. What was worse, in August 2011, the mayor of Seoul from the Grand National Party also had to resign. This was because the mayor proposed the Seoul Free Lunch

Referendum to boycott the Democratic Party's plan to universalise free school meals. Although the mayor even risked his position based on the result of the referendum, the voter turnout was as low as 25.7% and the proposal was therefore rejected. In the Seoul mayoral by-election in October 2011, the Grand National Party eventually lost the seat to an independent candidate who advocated free school lunches and strengthening the public nature of childcare.

The Grand National Party's successive electoral defeats in 2010 and 2011 were a clear signal showing voters' preference for pro-welfare pledges. In fact, according to numerous public opinion surveys, the preference of the general public—especially those in their 20s, 30s and 40s—for welfare expansion and associated tax increases was growing (see Table A4.3 in Appendix IV). In 2011 and 2012, more than half of survey participants saw welfare expansion as necessary even if this came at the cost of increases in tax (Ahn, 2011; Park, 2012). The long-lasting economic recession and falling values of assets and real income—which followed the 2007/08 Global Financial Crisis—also marked the eclipse of the conservative party's identity as the party of economic development. A swift adjustment of the conservative party's platform was thus needed as both general and presidential elections were to be held only a few months apart in April and December 2012, respectively.

Consequently, the Emergency Response Commission was launched within the party, with Park Geun-hye as Chairperson, and the party was renamed the *Saenuri* (meaning 'new world' in Korean) Party. In the upcoming general election, the *Saenuri* Party under Park's leadership eventually included a plan to provide both childcare subsidies and homecare allowances for all children aged 0-5 from 2013 as the first electoral pledge in their manifesto. With regard to this adjustment, a former aide to a *Saenuri* Party

member, who was affiliated with the National Assembly's Health and Welfare Committee, recalled (interview no. 4):

> "…I think 'free school lunch' and 'free childcare' were seen as an irreversible flow in the polity. The Democratic Party's victories in both the 2010 and 2011 elections made the party led by Park Geun-hye realise that discourses surrounding welfare need to be strengthened in order to delineate themselves more clearly from the Lee Myung-bak government's neoliberal stance. This was particularly the case because we sought to expand our constituency towards people who were more politically central as the key election strategy back then."

While the embrace of the free childcare agenda was an effective strategy to mobilise support from swing voters, the level of political receptivity to it within the administration was low. For example, the Department for Women's Employment within the Ministry of Employment and Labour was concerned about the potential gendered impact of radically expanding homecare allowances (interview no. 2). Meanwhile, the Ministry of Health and Welfare (which took charge of childcare affairs in 2008) was faced with opposition from the Korea Edu-Care Association (a nationwide umbrella organisation of private childcare service providers) to the expansion of homecare allowances (interview no. 11). More importantly, the Ministry of Economy and Finance was opposed to free childcare in that it would threaten the financial sustainability of the country (Strategy and Finance Committee, 2012). This is not surprising given that the then-Finance Minister, in response to increasing competitive demands for welfare expansion from political parties during election periods, criticised (Choi, 2011):

> "The government will recover sustainability in public finance by fighting pork barrel… I believe that policy proposals encouraging excessive spending without considering the balance sheet of the national finances deserve the criticism that they are [the result of] seeking to please voters and thus an irresponsible discussion."

However, the former Aide continuously emphasised (interviewee no. 4):

> "Park Geun-hye, who was a front-runner in the presidential election back then, began to emphasise childcare expansion from the perspective of 'customised welfare', rather than 'selective welfare *vs* universal welfare'. I think this frame created an environment for the conservative camp to agree to free childcare and free school lunches. This situation made it difficult for the Lee Myung-bak administration [which stayed pessimistic about them] to go against the party's plan in the face of the upcoming presidential election."

As the interviewee mentioned, the *Saenuri* Party's 2012 election manifesto emphasised 'customised welfare according to life cycle' (Saenuri Party, 2012). Customised welfare in the childcare policy context refers to providing different types of support according to the child's age and the employment status of mothers. In other words, it aimed to provide childcare services for older children and those with working mothers, and homecare allowances for young children and those with stay-at-home mothers. In doing so, the party was able to mobilise support from pro-welfare swing voters and simultaneously partly satisfy the traditional and familialist values of conservative voters.

It should also be noted that the idea of customised welfare fit the deserving/ undeserving normative divide perfectly, something that has been deeply embedded in the country's childcare policy institutions and welfare philosophy since the outset of the country's post-war nation building. The following comment made by the then-Prime Minister indicates how this legacy effectively justified the expansion of homecare allowances (National Assembly Plenary Meeting, 2012):

> "Due to the substantial gap between [monetary] support for institutional childcare and homecare allowances offered for familial childcare, inevitably, people who are not in need of childcare services use institutional care—which we found undesirable. Hence, I believe that the government should reduce the gap [in the support] and thereby pave the way for parents to make a choice."

Although it is not clear how effective this strategy was in mobilising support from voters, the *Saenuri* Party maintained its majority by winning 152 out of 300 seats in the

general election and Park also won the presidential election. Alongside Park's inauguration as President in early 2013, both childcare subsidies and ₩100,000-200,000 (€75-150) of homecare allowances per month became available for all 0 to 5 year-olds.

5.7. Resilience of homecare allowances and their *de facto* further expansion

Since the universalisation of homecare allowances for all pre-school children, the debate on expanding child-related direct cash transfers continued. On the one hand, some state actors—especially those affiliated with the National Assembly's Health and Welfare Committee—emphasised that a severe difference in the amount of parental childcare subsidies and homecare allowances generated excessive demands for childcare services (National Policy Committee, 2015; Health and Welfare Committee, 2016a). From this perspective, they backed an increase in homecare allowances. On the other hand, the need to introduce universal child benefits was highlighted in the context of alleviating the financial burden of raising a child and therefore encouraging fertility (Health and Welfare Committee, 2015, 2016b).

Around the time of the presidential election (that was to be held in May 2017), the idea of expanding child-related cash benefits linked up with mainstream politics. As this election was the one that was brought forward after Park's political scandal and the resulting mass demonstration-led impeachment and dismissal of her, Moon Jae-in from the Democratic Party was expected to comfortably win the election. However, Moon further mobilised public support by proposing pro-welfare policy initiatives, including the introduction of universal child benefits for 0 to 5 year-olds as a pronatalist policy initiative (Democratic Party, 2017).

In response, the *Saenuri* Party renamed itself the Liberty Korea Party and announced a bolder expansion of child-related cash transfers: (1) the double-expansion of homecare allowances; (2) the introduction of child benefits (₩150,000 per month) (€113) for primary and middle school students from households in the lower 50% income bracket; and (3) the provision of childbirth grants (₩10,000,000; €6,273) as a lump sum for the second child onwards (Liberty Korea Party, 2017). The other three major political parties also jumped on the bandwagon of cash welfare, pledging to introduce child benefits and/or raise homecare allowances (Bareun Party, 2017a; Justice Party, 2017; People's Party, 2017) (see Table A4.4 in Appendix IV). This reveals that policies regarding child-related payments—particularly introducing child benefits—were seen as one of the trump cards in the election.

Alongside Moon's election as President, the discussion on introducing universal child benefits gained more attention than ever before. Nevertheless, for the idea to be successfully translated into a policy outcome, mobilising the Ministry of Economy and Finance's support for it was a prerequisite. As discussed above, the ministry had already strongly vetoed introducing child benefits multiple times. This was, firstly, due to the severe budgetary pressure that their introduction would cause, and secondly, the benefits not necessarily being used for children (interview no. 7). However, during an interview with a ministerial member who participated in the decision-making of child benefits, the ministry changed its pessimistic stance on child benefits because of the unresolved low fertility crisis and party pressures (interview no. 3):

> "Our country's social spending on cash benefits has hitherto been extremely limited, although international studies suggest that childrearing burdens can be effectively tackled only when cash transfers, services and tax benefits are provided in a balanced manner. Given that the low fertility crisis situation got more serious than ever before and cash support for alleviating financial burdens of families with children was not

> sufficient, child benefits were seen as necessary… Additionally, a societal consensus was formed on introducing child benefits; for example, during the 19th presidential election in 2017, all of the major parties—the Democratic Party, the Liberty Korea Party, the People's Party, the *Bareun* Party, and the Justice Party—pledged to introduce the benefits, although they all differed in regard to conditionalities and targeted children's ages. In this situation, the Ministry [of Economy and Finance] arguably found it difficult to keep its initial position."

As the ministerial member highlighted, an initial intragovernmental agreement on introducing child benefits was generated easily. One remaining issue among policymakers was whether homecare allowances should be maintained or not. This had to do with the fact that homecare allowances were initially introduced as an alternative to child benefits and their expansion was somewhat understood as an intermediate step towards universal child benefits.

On the one hand, during a policy discussion on child benefits, some feminist and progressive academic scholars claimed that homecare allowances should be completely abolished or at least scaled down to benefit only young children (interview no. 7). For them, the existence of homecare allowances, regardless of their size, was seen as reinforcing the 'women = homemakers' frame (interview no. 8). They therefore underlined that the co-existence of homecare allowances and publicly funded childcare services would send a mixed and inconsistent signal to women, which in turn, would have potentially negative impacts on both female employment and fertility (interview nos. 6 and 8). From this perspective, abolishing homecare allowances was an important step to make the country's childcare policy elements non-contradictory and to ultimately promote pronatalist policies with a gender equality orientation (interview nos. 6 and 7).

On the other hand, many other policy actors argued that homecare allowances should be kept in place regardless of the introduction of new child-related cash benefits. This is because the allowances were seen as an important element to restrain demands for

institutional childcare from the less deserving, namely, families with young children and single earners, and to somewhat compensate them for their homecare expenses. This position was indicated in the following comment by the ministerial member (interview no. 3):

> "Homecare allowances are cash benefits that are alternatively provided for children not receiving childcare subsidies to go to childcare centres. They are paid in order to secure fairness [between families using publicly funded childcare services and those caring for children at home] and preventing excessive demands for using childcare services… Childcare subsidies and homecare allowances are for unburdening care responsibilities. Child benefits are for reducing financial burdens [of families with children]. They are separate and complementary policy programmes."

Policy actors supporting this position therefore expressed deep concern that "merging homecare allowances into child benefits, while maintaining the current free childcare services, would actively induce *de facto* unnecessary use of the services" (Koh and Koh, 2017: 97). They also emphasised that due to low levels of homecare allowances (compared to childcare subsidies), the ECEC enrolment rates of 1 and 2 year-olds are already too high, although "young children's use of childcare services is likely to result in behavioural problems and negatively affect their cognitive development" (*ibid.*: 96).[41] Stated differently, they thought that the abolition of homecare allowances would further increase the number of 'not working and not caring' women.

Objections from feminist scholars continued. In regard to the relationship between young children's use of childcare services and their cognitive development, the scholars argued that relevant evidence from international and South Korean studies is contested (interview no. 8). More importantly, the scholars also highlighted that demands from stay-

[41] According to national statics on childcare, as of December 2020, 40.0%, 81.7% and 93.6% of 0, 1, and 2 year-olds were estimated to use publicly funded childcare services, respectively.

at-home mothers for free childcare services should not be seen as 'unnecessary' because their emancipation from care labour does not immediately lead to their participation in the labour market (*ibid.*).

The data above reveal the country's childcare policy development reached the point where three fundamental questions were being asked and required answers: who are more deserving and less deserving in regard to institutional childcare? Should childcare policy prioritise equality or fairness? Should it promote a single coherent aim or diverse aims? Notwithstanding the importance of these questions, they did not mobilise sufficient political interest. This is because the left-right political cleavage on whether ₩100,000 (€ 75) of child benefits should be universal or selective remained a key issue in the polity. Whilst the left-right political cleavage continued, the benefits were introduced for households in the bottom 90% of the income bracket in September 2018. However, agreement on the universal provision of child benefits was soon reached in November 2018, following the conservative Liberty Korea Party's withdrawal of its selectivism and announcement that "we will groundbreakingly reverse the country's low fertility… by extending child benefits to all children in primary schools regardless of their income status and increasing them to ₩300,000 (€226) per month within three years" (People Power Party, 2018).

It is also important to note that complete abolishment of homecare allowances in return for the introduction of child benefits was not a politically feasible option for final decision-makers in the government. The low level of political receptivity to this idea is illustrated in the following comment from another state actor who worked in the Ministry of Health and Welfare (interview no. 1):

> "It is easier to introduce a policy than abolish it. This is particularly the case for cash benefits… There was no doubt that abolishing homecare

> allowances would generate backlash from the general public. The government cannot be free from voters' opinion. Additionally, the government thought that the expansion of cash benefits is necessary to tackle low fertility. Reducing the existing cash support did not fit this approach."

After child benefits were introduced on top of homecare allowances in late 2018, the level of political receptivity to the idea of completely abolishing them was surely further in decline as parents already perceived them as two separate cash payments.

Against this backdrop, adjusting the coverage of homecare allowances was seen as a more politically astute option that would minimise backlash from the public (interview no. 7). Some policy actors—who initially supported the abolition of homecare allowances—therefore proposed a plan outlining their removal for older children (aged 2 and above) in return for increasing the level of cash payments for young children. More specifically, their proposal outlined merging existing parental childcare subsidies and homecare allowances into a new, single form of cash benefits (interview nos. 6, 7 and 8). In fact, during the design and deliberation process of child benefits, some policy advisors already proposed the so-called 'multi-layered design' in which the level of the benefits would be differentiated according to children's age, disability, family size and others (interview nos. 3 and 7). This discussion naturally led to the idea of infant benefits.

However, it appears that not all the actors, particularly those in feminist circles, were positive about merging childcare subsidies and homecare allowances into infant benefits. One member of the Presidential Committee on Ageing Society and Population Policy recalled (interview no. 7):

> "Feminist academic circles were divided into two. On the one side, some argued that cash benefits would reinforce the gendered division of labour and prevent our path towards a dual breadwinner model. They therefore resisted introducing infant benefits. On the other side, some argued that we should not take women's unpaid (care) labour for granted. In this light, they agreed with introducing infant benefits for

> parents, primarily mothers, who care for their very young children. I really think that this conundrum [within feminist academic circles] is deeply linked to the status of female labour market participation in the Korean society, which has been at a standstill. I mean, if women's labour market participation reached above 70%, our policy discourse and policy orientation can be turned towards supporting dual earners and a work-family life balance. However, Korea is a strange country where women's employment rates increased only by 5-6% for the last many decades [despite the rapid expansion of free childcare services for all]. In other words, the poor quality of female jobs […] and women's commitment to their children's educational competition were intertwined, and lowered women's attachment to the labour market. Consequently, the ratio of employed women and unemployed women is 50/50. We are not moving along the path that Western countries have been on. I argued that we may need to take a risk coming from introducing infant benefits—if the benefits are not too high [to discourage women to participate in the labour market] and if we can finally abolish the absurd policy—homecare allowances."

The interviewee's comment shows the dilemma of South Korea's childcare policy: although the government radically expanded support for childcare services to facilitate reconciliation between having a child and employment based on the empirical evidence from Western European countries, increases in women's employment are sluggish and fertility rates are further declining (see Figure 1.1 and 1.2 in the Introduction). This surely increased policy-makers' doubts over the existing service-focused childcare policy.

A comment made by another member of the Presidential Committee on Ageing Society and Population Policy reveals that the idea of increasing cash benefits for young children gained dominance alongside the government's growing anxiety over its political footing in the face of the accelerated fertility decline (interview no. 6):

> "The government was extremely worried about the current super, super, super low fertility rates. In 2018, the fertility rate dropped below 1.0. During the last year [2020] and this year [2021], because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the [fertility] situation got worse. The media constantly criticised that "the government poured several trillions [of tax] into fertility policies for the last 10 years but the fertility rate is the lowest in the world…" In my opinion, the government saw the current super low fertility as one of the most serious policy failures, which would

> affect the next presidential election. [To solve this problem,] the government had to do literally anything."

Consequently, without any severe opposition, infant benefits and childbirth grants were introduced with the aim of increasing financial investment in children's infancy.

However, although infant benefits were initially proposed and promoted by some feminist scholars as a 'detour' to abolish homecare allowances for older children (aged 2 and above), their abolition was eventually vetoed by some state actors, including the President (interview no. 7). Consequently, ₩100,000 (€75) of monthly homecare allowances are still provided for families with older children on the condition of not using publicly funded childcare services. This shows that this idea was modified during its translation into policy practice, thus losing its original intent.

This result is not surprising given the ministerial member's comment above with regard to the government's concerns about public backlash against abolishing homecare allowances. It is also important to note that the opposition conservative party has hitherto pledged introducing, universalising and further expanding homecare allowances during the last three consecutive presidential elections. Seen in this light, the abolition of the allowances was surely not a politically feasible option for the current Moon government in the face of the upcoming presidential election in March 2022.

5.8. Discussion

What do these empirical findings tell us with regard to answering the question of why the idea of expanding direct child-related cash transfers has increasingly become a political reality in South Korea? Overall, the analyses of the three milestones of the country's child-related cash development collectively suggest that this idea's time has come due to election-related changes in the political stream. Interestingly, there was no clear left-right

political cleavage on the introduction and expansion of child-related cash benefits, although political parties had different views on the support's universality. For instance, whilst the centre-left Democratic Party promoted the idea of free childcare, the conservative Grand National Party (renamed the *Saenuri Party* in 2012, the Liberty Korea Party in 2017, and then the People Power Party in 2020) endorsed and further developed it by pledging to introduce homecare allowances in its 2007 presidential election manifesto. In the face of the 2012 general election, this policy idea was then accepted and fleshed out by the Democratic Party, which proposed universal provision of homecare allowances for all 0 to 5 year-olds. During the presidential election in 2017, the central and centre-left political parties' proposal of introducing child benefits was also embraced by their conservative counterparts. In January 2022, a few months before the presidential election, infant benefits and childbirth grants were introduced. Shortly after the introduction of these new cash benefits, presidential candidates from both the Democratic Party and the People Power Party have pledged to further expand child-related cash benefits.

Taken as a whole, the politics of cash benefits for children in South Korea shows a repetitive pattern: one party endorses another party's idea on the provision of child-related cash benefits to win elections, which in turn leads that party to propose more generous cash payments. This political pressure has been powerful enough to overwhelm the Ministry of Economy and Finance's veto power against expansive welfare. This pattern is different from many other countries, especially Nordic welfare states, where the politics of family policy reveal ideological differences with left-wing parties advocating publicly funded childcare services and right-wing parties accentuating traditional familialist val-

ues (Ellingsæter, 2003; Hiilamo and Kangas, 2009; Morgan and Zippel, 2003; Nyby *et al*., 2017; Chronholm, 2009).

However, this does not mean that the idea automatically served as a source of policy change because the right political moment—such as a presidential or general election—arrived. As Kingdon (1984) wrote, an opening of the window of opportunity means nothing unless policy actors seize upon it. In South Korea, political actors actively made reference to the country's survival being threatened by an extremely low fertility crisis, framing the expansion of child-related universal cash support as a pronatalist instrument to solve this issue. From this perspective, increases in cash benefits for children was not perceived as spending but an investment necessary for sustainable economic growth. The framing of 'childcare support = pronatalism = productivism' particularly helped conservative parties justify their unusual embrace of the pro-welfare agenda.

Then, more importantly, why has the expansion of direct cash support been oriented towards supporting homecare? On the one hand, the idea of rewarding familial childcare provision through homecare allowances fit well into the country's childcare policy system, within which the deserving-undeserving divide was traditionally embedded. As discussed earlier, although strengthening the state's childcare responsibility emerged as a new *Zeitgeist*, policymakers still worked and made a decision within the normative framework in which not every child is thought to deserve publicly funded institutional care. Here, homecare allowances have been a key element serving two functions: firstly, restraining the use of childcare services by the less deserving (*i.e.* families with young children and single earners) so that the care labour of the deserving (*i.e.* dual earners) can be reduced; and secondly, alleviating the financial burdens of raising children at home.

On the other hand, the idea of introducing and expanding homecare allowances also had great political receptivity in the sense that the idea was actively promoted by conservative President Lee and Park and their party (which held majority seats in the National Assembly). On the contrary, the opposition from feminist circles was weak, although they are usually very vocal about childcare and gender issues, such as the expansion and quality of childcare services as well as reform on maternity and parental leaves. As one of the interviewees stressed, their relative silence was related to the lack of consensus on what gender justice is. Consequently, their lack of organised opposition did not induce other political parties to be openly against them.

In recent years, some actors, especially feminist scholars, have stood up for the abolition of homecare allowances when the idea of introducing child and infant benefits was gaining traction. In particular, infant benefits were initially promoted as additional child benefits to replace the entirety of homecare allowances so that backlash from their recipients could be minimised. Nevertheless, the allowances for older children survived within the political and institutional context that justified their necessity. Eventually, the overall amount of direct cash benefits for homecared children increased.

5.9. Concluding remarks

South Korea's childcare policy has rapidly expanded in order to strengthen the state's responsibility for childcare in the face of the existential low fertility crisis. Although the expansion was heavily focused on improving access to publicly funded childcare services during the first decade of the expansion, the country has recently witnessed the growing dominance of the idea that child-related cash benefits should increase.

This paper therefore analysed why this idea's time has come, and more importantly, how ideational, political and institutional factors interacted in policymaking processes. This paper offered empirical evidence that increasing electoral politics and demographic threats (as focusing events) contributed to the opening of windows for actors to promote cash-related ideas. When the windows opened, actors pushed policy ideas by strategically stressing how relevant and applicable their ideas are to the identified problem. Although these ideational processes were important for policy actors to mobilise support for their particular programmatic policy idea from others, the analyses showed that the idea-policy translation was more decisively affected by the idea's political receptivity and its fit within the existing institutional logic.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The traditionally unsupportive familialist regime of East Asian countries has been increasingly challenged by rapid socio-demographic shifts. Among them, South Korea has shown the most unprecedented fertility decreases and the most sluggish labour market participation rates for women of childbearing age. Whilst socio-demographic challenges have continuously threatened the country's survival and prosperity, the idea of reinforcing the state's responsibility for childcare—or more explicitly, childcare publicness—was widely adopted as a new *Zeitgeist* in the mid-2000s. Associated with this, South Korea has not only shown the most rapid expansion of child-related support in the region but also across the globe. Therefore, in the preceding papers, this thesis focused on investigating the scale, nature and politics of childcare policy reform in 21st century South Korea. There are three important tasks that need to be carried out in this chapter: (1) revisiting what the empirical findings of the four papers tell us about the research puzzle and the overarching research question of this thesis; (2) providing an overview of the role played by ideas in policy change; and (3) suggesting future work that can conducted on the basis of these findings.

6.1. Revisiting the research puzzle and overarching research question

This thesis began by examining the existing literature, which tends to see the rapid expansion of policies for families with young children in South Korea as the main feature of its departure from the developmental welfare state trajectory. This argument rests on three main processes. Firstly, women and children—who were considered less productive sectors of the population and were therefore excluded from state-provided social protec-

tion in the developmental welfare state model—have been placed at the heart of social policy reforms. Secondly, universal, free childcare services became available to all regardless of household income status, meaning that the government no longer existed simply as a regulator of social welfare programmes. Thirdly, the universal provision of free childcare services substantially defamilised childcare responsibilities.

The main puzzle of this thesis was that despite the emphasis on strengthening the public nature of childcare and the resulting rapid policy expansion, the reforms took the path of a limited role for the state as a financier of market delivery of childcare services and familial provision of childcare. In order to explain the country's reinforced childcare privateness during the course of strengthening its publicness—this thesis comprised two main parts: the factual analysis of the development of childcare policy and an explanatory investigation of the politics involved.

The first paper analysed how specifically the country's public-private mix of provision (understood in terms of not only state/market provision but also state/family engagement) in childcare changed over time. To that end, the paper began by problematising and revisiting the concepts of childcare publicness and privateness. This conceptualisation was critical in moving beyond the level of public/private spending on childcare as the yardstick for gauging the publicness/privateness of childcare in the country. Moreover, the concepts have been mistakenly designated as being in a zero sum relationship, leading to the assumption that an increase in publicness automatically implies a decrease in privateness. In contrast, the first paper understood publicness/privateness as having three constituent dimensions (*i.e.* ownership, funding and regulation) and constructed four ideal-typical childcare models. By analysing the patterns of childcare policy spending and characteristics over time, the paper empirically demonstrated that the country had

adopted a mix of two models: the 'quasi-market model' with weak state surveillance over the market delivery of childcare services and the 'state-funded homecare model'.

In the second paper, the thesis analysed the discursive construction of the country's childcare policy reforms by focusing on problem representations. The SNA results of both written and spoken government discourses on childcare revealed that low fertility and the consequential threat to national economic prosperity was the only problem that was represented. More specifically, the SNA results revealed the preponderance of what can be called 'productivist' and 'reproductive' childcare policy discourses until very recently. In both discourses, the need to strengthen the state's responsibility for childcare was driven by the purpose of reversing extremely low fertility trends, maintaining the number of taxpaying, productive populations and thus retaining economic competitiveness. Women in those two discourses tended to be instrumentalised as a new engine for the economy as well as reproducers of future labour forces.

Taken together, the first two papers uncovered some important continuities of the South Korean welfare state's developmental trajectory. Firstly, although South Korea has more women and children in its policy portfolio than ever before, such a change should not be interpreted as the country finally supporting parts of the population which are seen as less productive. Rather, they received more attention from the state because they have increasingly been framed and regarded as *potentially* productive parts of the population in the face of rapid demographic shifts. Seen in this light, what remains consistent is state support being geared towards productive populations.

Secondly, in terms of childcare programmes, there is no doubt that the government has evolved from a regulator into a financier. However, until very recently, the expansion of the state's financial obligation for childcare was not adequately accompanied by tight-

ening of state oversight over private childcare service providers. Consequently, there was a surge in low-quality for-profit private childcare facilities—especially those operated in home-based settings. Homecare allowances were also introduced and became available for all pre-school children to enhance the fiscal efficiency of the country's childcare policy. This implies that the growth of the state's financial role in childcare policy proceeded with partial retrenchment in public commitments to it.

Lastly, the provision of free childcare services for all led to defamilisation of childcare responsibilities to a greater extent than before. This is reflected in the fact that as of 2020, 55.4% of 0 to 2 year-olds are enrolled in childcare centres and 88.7% of 3 to 5 year-olds are using childcare centres or kindergartens (Korea Institute of Child Care and Education, 2021). However, it should be noted that family/child-related policy reform does not unequivocally take place in one direction and different reform elements are often contradictory in regard to their normative underpinnings on family and gender relations (Daly, 2011). Indeed, there have recently been a series of expansions of child-related cash benefits. In particular, the provision of direct cash allowances for women caring for their children at home presumes and potentially reinforces traditional gender roles. Given the increasing complexity in national family policy packages in recent years, it cannot be said that South Korea fully departed from the male breadwinner model, upon which its developmental welfare regime was founded.

The third and fourth papers probed the changes and continuities in the public-private mix of South Korea's childcare. Both of these explanatory papers utilised original data obtained through in-depth interviews with 22 key policymakers and analysed the evidence by focusing on the interplay among policy actors, ideas, and institutions as

significant explanations of the politics of childcare policymaking and its associated outcomes.

In the third paper, the analytical focus was placed on the political struggles surrounding the issue of who (the state or the market) should provide childcare services to strengthen childcare publicness. Here the concept of publicness was further elaborated and understood as a multifaceted and polysemic concept that not only has functional dimensions (*i.e.* ownership, operation, finance and regulation) but also has to do with less measurable, normative questions of 'for what?' and 'for whom?' The two centre-left governments of Roh (03/2003–02/2008) and Moon (05/2017–present) were chosen for a direct comparative analysis because they both strongly endorsed the idea of strengthening childcare publicness *via* the expansion of public ownership of childcare facilities; but this was only recently made into meaningful policy outcome under the current Moon government.

The analysis of the Roh government (03/2003–02/2008) revealed that the idea of expanding national/public childcare facilities did not comply with the logic of a historically embedded path where childcare services were provided by private providers. This path dates back to the 1960s when the country began to undertake a market-led expansion of childcare services, whilst limiting its role as a facilitator. This historical path played two important roles in impeding the Roh government's plan to better balance public and private ownership of childcare facilities. Firstly, it enabled private childcare sectors to flourish and gave them greater political power over childcare policy decisions than others, an action influential enough to veto the plan to establish national/public childcare facilities. Secondly, it also led policymakers to believe that such an idea would require a lot of

time and resources and therefore would be too risky and inefficient to promote and implement.

In comparison, the third empirical paper showed that under the current Moon government (05/2017–present), the level of political receptivity to the idea of strengthening childcare publicness in the ownership dimension increased. On the one side, there was more united and stronger political support from the civil society's coalition for the expansion of national/public childcare facilities. On the other side, and more importantly, private childcare providers began to espouse this idea. However, they did so with two caveats: firstly, the expansion of public ownership of childcare facilities would be promoted through the nationalisation of existing private entities; and secondly, the original private childcare facilitators' right to operate them would be guaranteed. Under these circumstances, the expansion of national/public childcare facilities took place but coincided with an upsurge in their contracting out to private entities. To borrow Osborne and Gaebler's expression (1992), the recent childcare policy changes show that the government's capacity to 'steer' (*i.e.* monitoring private providers' performance) the boat, rather than to 'row' (*i.e.* engaging in direct service provision itself), was enhanced.

While the third paper investigated the childcare politics of the public-private mix in regard to state/market intersection, the fourth paper explored the politics surrounding the state/family mix of childcare responsibilities through the lens of recent child-related cash expansion. The main question guiding this paper was why the idea of increasing direct cash transfers (especially for children cared for at home) has recently dominated and been translated into actual policy. The chronological analysis of homecare allowances revealed two major factors explaining their introduction and rapid expansion. Firstly, the allowances fit perfectly with existing institutionalised ideology, especially differentiating the

deserving (*i.e.* children in need of non-familial protection due to parents' employment, ill-health and disappearance) and undeserving recipients (*i.e.* children under a family's protection). The clear deserving/undeserving demarcation has long underpinned South Korea's childcare policy institutions (such as the Child Welfare Act and the Childcare Act), and the overall philosophy and functioning of the welfare regime. Despite the emergence of the idea that the state's childcare responsibility should be strengthened, this institutional legacy was prominent and homecare allowances were seen as a necessary element to maintain the schism between deserving and less deserving families for using publicly funded childcare services. In this context, the introduction and expansion of homecare allowances can be seen as a path-dependent policy development. Secondly, the proponents of homecare allowances were politically powerful, which enhanced political receptivity to their provision. More specifically, the idea of introducing them was pursued as part of the President's electoral pledges and supported by a ruling party that held an absolute majority of seats in the legislature, and the idea of expanding them was promoted by both ruling and opposition parties.

The analysis of the recent introduction of universal child-related cash benefits on top of homecare allowances presented similar results: the policymaking process was largely affected by the existing institutional legacy and power relations among actors. Although discussion of the withdrawal of homecare allowances was a part of the one on the introduction of child and infant benefits, the aforementioned institutional legacy served as a taken-for-granted framework, based on which policymakers saw homecare allowances as a necessary tool to keep the less deserving away from using publicly funded childcare services. Additionally, there were powerful state actors, including the President,

who favoured continuous cash expansion and therefore thwarted some feminist scholars' efforts to abolish homecare allowances.

Collectively, these two explanatory papers suggested the following answers to the overarching research question of why South Korea's policy reforms to strengthen the state's childcare responsibility resulted in the state functioning as a financier of market and familial provision of childcare rather than a provider. Firstly, despite the emergence of a new *Zeitgeist* promoting the strengthening of state's childcare responsibility, this was not a single policy prescription. Rather, in the South Korean policy context, a variety of programmatic ideas existed to realise it. These ideas were carried by diverse policy actors whose core beliefs and policy preferences often collided with one another. One major strand of ideas was that the state should reinforce itself as a direct provider of childcare services to emancipate women from unpaid care labour and to improve the working conditions of care workers. The other core ideational stream viewed a 'big state' as less cost-effective and undermining the functioning of the two other pillars of welfare (*i.e.* the market and the family), and was therefore focused on increasing public spending on the market and familial provision of childcare.

Secondly, two main factors contributed to the ultimate success of the latter idea that dismisses a big state. One was the asymmetrical political power held by its proponents, including organised private childcare providers and key state actors. Although women's organisations, social welfare advocacy groups and trade unionists formed a coalition to push forward the idea of strengthening the publicness of childcare and labour publicness and building a bigger welfare 'state', their political leverage was not strong enough. The other factor was policy legacies of unsupported familialism or state non-interventionism,

which helped actors decide between different policy choices and make sense of their preference within their institutional and political environment.

6.2. Revisiting ideas as a source of policy change

The empirical findings outlined in the previous section lead us to revisit the fundamental starting point of this thesis that ideas matter, and address how these findings may contribute to the literature regarding the role of ideas in policy change. This re-examination is important because the ideational scholarship remains somewhat inchoate. Despite an increasing 'ideational turn' in policy studies and political science in recent years, the empirical analysis of the effects of ideas on policymaking is hampered by issues that derive from inexact specification of fundamental questions, including what ideas really are and what kind of role(s) they play according to their type, what the preconditions are for ideas to become a source of policy change, and how we as researchers can study policy ideas (see Swinkels, 2020).

6.2.1. What are ideas really and what kind of role(s) do they play?

In this thesis, I have found that ideas exist at multiple levels. To reiterate, the most fundamental level of the relevant core idea—namely, a *Zeitgeist* or public philosophy—was that the state's responsibility for childcare should be strengthened in the face of a rapidly shifting socio-demographic structure. This meta-idea affected the policy process by functioning as a sort of cultural reference points or touchstone to which actors, in particular politicians, could turn to in their attempts to advance a specific policy. This was possible because this meta-idea worked unconsciously in people's minds.

At a narrower level, there were ideas as problem definitions. In South Korea, low fertility was primarily attributed to a lack of support with childcare. This problematisation prevailed over other types of problem definitions in the childcare policy dispute, such as child poverty and/or gender inequality problems. This problem definition influenced the policy process in two main ways. Firstly, it restricted over-complexity of the problematic situation (*i.e.* low fertility) that required a corrective action, which helped actors (in terms of their rhetorical weapons) attract political and public interest for childcare matters more quickly. Among many complicated factors, the lack of public childcare support was especially framed as the key contributor to the low fertility crisis, and childcare policy consequently expanded more rapidly than any other social policy area. This state-led problematisation of low fertility and pronatalist framing of childcare policy was arguably possible in South Korea as the country did not have a politically sensitive memory of the fascist pronatalism of the past, which has set certain limits to family support in Japan and some Western European countries (see Seeleib-Kaiser and Toivonen, 2011). Secondly, ideas as problem definitions affected policymakers' perceptions regarding which types of policy programmes should be promoted and prioritised. More specifically, the fertility-focused problem representation in childcare policy debates led policymakers to focus on reducing the costs of having a child. This problematisation, in turn, enabled the simultaneous expansion of publicly funded childcare services and homecare allowances for all pre-school children, although these two types of policy are contradictory in regard to the gender assumptions upon which they rest.

Lastly, at the narrowest level, ideas existed as policy solutions. Although problem definitions confine the scope of potentially possible policy options, policy actors still have multiple choices within a given problem definition. For example, the provision of publicly

funded childcare services and direct or indirect cash benefits, the extension of parental leaves, the extension of parental choice over diverse childcare arrangements, and the improvement of the quality of childcare services through increasing competition among private childcare providers—or tightening the state's surveillance—all fit within a problem definition that emphasises the role of childcare policy as a tool to tackle dwindling fertility rates. This narrowest level of ideas functioned as a catalyst for the division of the big coalition (formed by individual/organisational actors who shared the idea of strengthening the state's childcare responsibility) into a number of what I may call 'sub-coalitions' or 'blocs'. Compared to the big coalition, sub-coalitions showed stronger coherence in terms of members' specific policy preferences and actively organised elite-directed and/or mass-directed politicking to affect the policymaking process. This means that ideas as policy solutions helped actors improve political leverage through the formation of alliances and improve political receptivity to their policy proposals.

The significance of these empirical findings is that we now have a better understanding of how different levels of ideas can play diverse roles in the policymaking process. This is important because the existing ideational literature tends to provide a very broad, monolithic and somewhat ambiguous picture of the many different roles of ideas, rather than specifying how these roles differ depending on the level that the idea belongs to.

6.2.2. What are the preconditions for ideas to become a source of policy change?

The existing ideational scholarship is scattered across subdisciplines and lacks a consensus on how and the extent to which ideas function as a source of policy change. Some ideational (or discursive) scholars, especially Danial Béland and Vivien Schmidt, tend to

promote the intrinsic worth of ideas and discourses in policy change. This does not mean that they see ideas as the sole locus of policy change. Indeed, Béland (2009: 707) acknowledges that "ideas become politically influential in part because they interact with powerful institutional forces and political actors". However, these scholars also claim that ideas can overcome political and institutional constraints to some extent by "empowering traditionally weak actors" (*ibid*.: 708) or enabling "actors to persuade other actors to accept and adopt their views of what to think and do through the use of ideational elements" (Carstensen and Schmidt, 2016: 323). While scholars have differing views on what makes up these ideational elements, the critical ideational scholarship has recently drawn attention to vagueness, generality, mutability, malleability, adaptability, and polysemy as key features of politically successful policy ideas (Béland and Cox, 2016; Schmidt, 2006; Schmidt and Thatcher, 2013).

In contrast, other scholars—especially those with a historical institutionalist orientation—have accorded a key role to meta-level ideas in determining policy outcomes but tend to discredit the view that the adoption of plausible ideas can be a sufficient condition for a policy to be implemented. For instance, Hall (1989), in his work on Keynesian policies, made an argument that an idea should possess, at minimum, viability in all of the three following dimensions to be incorporated into policy: (1) economic viability (*i.e.* the level of the idea's "capacity to resolve a relevant set of economic problems") (p. 371); (2) administrative viability (*i.e.* the extent to which the idea was "accorded with the long-standing administrative biases of the officials responsible for approving it and seemed feasible in light of the existing implementation capacities of the state") (p. 373); and (3) political viability (*i.e.* the degree to which the idea was "[appealing] in the broader political arena, to which the politicians who ultimately made policy were oriented) (p. 374).

Similarly, many other political scientists claim in their cross-national studies that the idea-policy translation processes are affected by political and institutional conditions. The conditions that receive most attention include: state structure and policy legacies (Weir and Skocpol, 1985); the characteristics of the idea's carriers (*e.g.* their resources, power and political longevity); the idea's compatibility with existing institutional structures (that are already occupied by historically formed ideologies) (Berman, 2001; see also Keck and Sikkink, 1998); the level of convergence between ideas and actors' strategic interests, the institutional positions of the ideas' carriers, and the timing of ideational change (Hansen and King, 2001; King, 1999).

What I have found in the explanatory analyses of this thesis aligns more with the latter approach to ideas and policy change, which challenges the view that ideational elements are sufficient to be a source of policy change. The investigation of the promises and pitfalls of employing the polysemic idea of 'childcare publicness' in the third paper particularly undermines the ideational literature's argument that polysemy enhances the feasibility of ideas. To reiterate, as ideational scholars argue, this research confirms that an idea's polysemy can be potent in drawing public and political attention and enabling the construction of a coalition across broad arrays of stakeholders with different core beliefs and policy preferences. In the case of the concept of childcare publicness, its supporters were as diverse as social welfare advocacy NGOs, trade unionists, employers' organisations, political parties, and social and economic ministries.

However, the findings also suggest that the more the idea became specific and programmatic, the less cohesive the broad cross-sectoral coalition became. This is related to the fact that the stakeholders who were affiliated with the 'big tent' coalition had different—and often contradictory—policy priorities and preferences. Their policy preferences

were heterogenous especially since they held fundamentally different views on the extent to which state intervention into the market and the family should take place, which role the state and the market should play in the provision of childcare services, which values should be pursued through strengthening childcare publicness, and who should benefit from it. Consequently, at the stage of specific policy formulation, actors formed sub-coalitions that showed coherence in terms of policy objectives and preferences. Such sub-coalitions were in continuous conflict and were involved in political struggles. This indicates that polysemy is of limited use. Rather, the big coalition functioned as a venue where key stakeholders gathered and came together to gauge ideological proximity/distance from each other.

What then are the conditions that policy ideas need to meet in order to become an engine of policy change? The third and fourth papers suggest at least two necessary conditions. Firstly, ideas should have a high level of 'policy validity'. Here, policy validity does not simply refer to the extent to which policy ideas are able to demonstrate their relevance and applicability to the identified problem, as defined by ideational scholars. Rather, it also has to do with the extent to which suggested policy solutions fit with existing ideas and ideologies that are already embodied in state institutions. For instance, the third paper's interview evidence showed that policymakers validated policy options for childcare publicness by considering how well they fit into the pre-existing setting where private childcare providers played a key role in the provision of childcare services. This means that policy legacies feed into the evaluation of later policy ideas and decisions.

Secondly, ideas should be buttressed by 'power'. One of the important sources of power derives from positions held by the ideas' carriers in a particular institutional setting. For instance, as illustrated in the fourth paper, support from major political parties was

critical to overcome economic bureaucrats' veto against the continuous expansion of child-related cash benefits. Power also depends on the extent to which the ideas' carriers are able or willing to procure time and financial resources for public demonstrations, meeting with top decision-makers or lobbying them in order to carry through their ideational convictions. These material power resources were one of the key driving forces for private childcare providers to curtail their competitive coalition's (*i.e.* pro-welfare/labour NGOs and trade unionists) attempt to expand the state's direct provision of childcare services. However, power is not necessarily limited to the material level; ideas possessing what I shall call 'moral power' can also be politically influential and affect policy change. For example, as we learned from the third paper, the idea of strengthening childcare publicness through expanding national/public childcare facilities and tightening state regulation over childcare providers was realised as a policy outcome under the current Moon government. This was arguably possible because this idea was actively promoted by both childcare providers (*i.e.* childcare teachers) and receivers (*i.e.* parents of children). As the parties concerned were those who were most severely impacted by the corruption of privately run childcare facilities, they had the moral standing to disclose these issues and put forward their demands.

6.2.3. How can researchers study ideas?

Beland (2005: 14) emphasised in his early work that "future empirical research on the role of ideas in social policy should formulate a consistent methodological approach to evaluate the concrete influence of ideas on welfare state politics". Along these lines, Beland suggested the following as a way of studying ideas (*ibid.*: 14ff.):

> "A careful and selective use of textual documents, public opinion surveys, and interviews with experts and policymakers helps to provide

> evidence about the causal role of frames and policy ideas in legislative and policy processes. Considering significant ideational and institutional variations from one country to another, comparative analysis is especially useful to showing how and when ideas matter in politics."

However, this guidance is too generic. In fact, the ideational scholarship still lacks specific guidance on how ideas can be researched in order to examine their role in policy change. According to Swinkels's (2020) comprehensive review of existing empirical studies regarding the role of ideas in policymaking processes, over 40% of them did not explicate the methodology that they used. Arguably, the ideational scholarship's methodological underdevelopment has to do with its imprecise theoretical specification of what ideas really are. Against this backdrop, some methodological insights can be drawn from this thesis.

For the explanatory analyses of how ideas interact with actors and institutions in order to be incorporated into policy, this thesis utilised both documentary and original interview data sources but relied more on the latter. In fact, the in-depth analyses of their interactions would not be possible without obtaining interview data. This is because ideas that were contained in official documents (especially in government policy documents), were often not *actual* normative and cognitive ideas that policy actors initially had but, rather, those that were *filtered* as a result of policy deliberation and coordination. To put it differently, policy documents are likely to present the outcome of the interactions of ideas with their carriers and institutions, instead of being pure ideas devoid of interactions with other entities. Hence, scholars who aim to measure ideas' concrete effects on policy change should corroborate policy document data with more discursive data obtained from interviews with key policymakers and recordings/minutes of policy-related meetings and National Assembly sessions.

Another lesson that can be drawn from this thesis lies in its research design. Scholars studying the role of ideas (together with other political and institutional factors) in policymaking processes often employ a cross-national comparative research design (*e.g.* Béland and Waddan, 2012, 2015; Hansen and King, 2001; Hall, 1989 to cite a few). This is because, as Beland stressed above, comparing a small number of countries helps researchers show how and when ideas matter in politics. Contrastingly, this thesis tracked the policymaking processes in a single country over a relatively long time span. This allowed me to pay attention to and offer a thick description of the nature of ideas, actors' perceptions of and politicking surrounding them within a particular institutional terrain, whilst effectively controlling for other important factors that affect the impact of ideas on policy change, such as the state regime, electoral systems and political opportunity structures. A single case research design has great potential to investigate how and under which conditions ideas can be incorporated into policy without diluting the in-depth character of the inquiry—if the investigation is performed on the basis of well-designed theoretical grounds and over a lengthy period of time.

6.3. Avenues for further research

This thesis offers a better understanding of the modernisation of the South Korean welfare state through the lens of its childcare policy development. There are three major lines of inquiry springing from the analysis of this thesis.

One potential area of future research is the politics of South Korea's child-related public support for families in the time dimension, especially child-related parental leaves. This form of childcare support was excluded from the analyses due to its extensively exclusive nature (*i.e.* policy development biased in favour of regular full-time employees

in major corporations). Seen in this light, one key question will be: why, despite the idea of strengthening the state's childcare responsibility for all, South Korea's parental leave policy has been underdeveloped with regard to its coverage when compared to public support in service and money dimensions? A cross-sectoral comparative investigation of policy actors, their power relations and institutional factors will provide a more complete picture of the politics surrounding the changes and continuities in South Korean childcare policy.

To be sure, a more comprehensive analysis on public support for families can also be pursued. Two things are known from this research: childcare policy expanded more rapidly than any other areas of policy, and its development was geared towards ensuring that the family upholds its productive and reproductive responsibilities. However, public support for the family and its members less deemed able to meet these responsibilities—that is, the elderly (especially elderly females who never participated in the labour market or did so for a limited period of time due to care burdens), families with a disabled member, and families at risk—has been largely underdeveloped. Hence, some key inquiries in future studies could include: what kind of family policy does South Korea have today in a broader context? Where should family policy be placed in the broad constellation of the country's welfare system? Who is the 'family' and what kind of rights and duties do they have in the South Korean context? What does citizenship of the country therefore mean? A comprehensive analysis of these questions would allow researchers to have an in-depth understanding of the philosophy and functioning of the South Korean welfare regime and the role and nature of the family.

The final line of future research relates to the growing importance of publicness in the provision of social services in the midst of a slowdown in economic productivity. This

thesis—especially the first and third papers—problematised the concept of publicness, understood it as being constructed around the questions of 'in what?' dimensions, 'for what?' values, and 'for whom?' and adopted it as one of the major concepts for carrying out the empirical investigation. The empirical analyses found that reinforcing publicness in the provision of social services in South Korea has been associated with movement towards a better and more moral world. Whilst the concept of publicness was first discussed within the healthcare sector and then disseminated to child and elderly care areas in the face of rapid demographic ageing, it has recently been discussed in regard to a much broader level of governance and management of universities, transportation, water supplies, housing and many others.

Interestingly enough, the growing importance of strengthening publicness in the domain of social services is not limited to South Korea. Indeed, its regional neighbour Taiwan has also witnessed rapid socio-demographic transitions and increasing demands for so-called 'public-isation' (公共化 in Chinese; read '*gōnggòng huà*') in both child and elderly care from women's groups and social welfare advocacy organisations (Lin and Liu, 2019; Liu, 2020). Just as in South Korea, this idea with a civil society origination entered the mainstream political arena and appeared as key policy objectives in the Taiwanese government's national care plans, including the Plan for the Expansion of Publicness in Early Childhood Education (擴大幼兒教保公共化計畫) (2017–2020) and the Second Ten-Year Plan for Long-Term Care (長期照顧十年計畫 2.0) (2017–2026).

The growing ideational influence of publicness in these two East Asian countries is intriguing, as discourses on publicness and the idea of social welfare were extensively demonised and even portrayed as communist in earlier times (see Wong, 2004). Due to the predominant anti-communist sentiment (against North Korea and China) and devel-

opmental ideology under the authoritarian rule, both countries initially had very little interest in empowering the state's role in social welfare. Nevertheless, in South Korea, the demand for radical publicness through the establishment of more national/public childcare and elderly care centres and the state's direct operation of social services has been on the rise. As briefly discussed above, national/public entities are believed to provide reliable and high-quality services, whilst their private counterparts are often linked to negative images, such as fraud, corruption, a lack of professionalism, and institutions of last resort. This runs contrary to many other welfare states, where the term 'public' is often pejorative in many areas of social services and seen as inferior to its private, commodified counterparts (Fraser and Gordon, 1999).[42]

In light of this, future research can employ a cross-national comparative research design and address some questions, including: how and why did the similar policy idea of 'strengthening publicness' or 'public-isation' come about in mainstream discourses and become highly politicised in South Korea and Taiwan? What were the roles of this idea in social service reforms in the two countries? Were there any cross-sectoral (*i.e.* childcare *vs* elderly care) and cross-national differences in the scale and nature of policy expansion, and if so, how did political and institutional factors mediate the idea's effect on policy outcome? What makes East Asia move towards a bigger state, whilst Western welfare states are continuing their movement towards welfare pluralism involving private, voluntary and informal sectors? By addressing these research questions, future research would be able to offer a more advanced understanding of the concept of publicness/ public-isation in social policy (which is conceptually underdeveloped compared to the

[42] In regard to how the term 'public' is pejorative, Fraser and Gordon (1999: 91) noted: "Public hospitals are institutions of last resort, sites not of solidarity but of stigma. Public schools, once considered 'cradles of citizenship', are often so inferior to their 'private' (commodified) counterparts as to fit the larger pattern of 'private wealth, public squalor'. And public parks are often too dangerous to enter".

concept of privatisation and marketisation), elucidate the novel divergence of welfare state trajectories, and expand overall understanding of the welfare state in South Korea and East Asia.

REFERENCES

Aberbach, J., Putnam, R. and Rockman, B. (1981) *Bureaucrats and politicians in western democracies*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Ahn, C. (2011) "Welfare should expand even if tax increases are required": 53% of the public agreed to it ["*se-kŭm tŏ nae-tŏ-la-to pok-chi nŭl-lyŏ-ya" 53%*]. *The Hankyoreh* [Online]. 24 January. Available from: https://www.hani.co.kr/arti/politics/assembly/460366.html [Accessed 14 December 2021] (in Korean).

Allison, G. and Halperin, M. (1972) 'Bureaucratic politics: a paradigm and some policy implications', *World Politics*, 24 (Supplement), pp. 40–79.

An, M. Y. (2013) 'Childcare expansion in East Asia: changing shape of the institutional configurations in Japan and South Korea', *Asian Social Work and Policy Review*, 7(1), pp. 28–43.

An, M. Y. and Peng, I. (2016) 'Diverging paths? A comparative look at childcare policies in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan', *Social Policy & Administration*, 50(5), pp. 540–558.

Anderson, S. (2012) 'Public, private, neither, both? Publicness theory and the analysis of healthcare organisations', *Social science & Medicine*, 74(3), pp. 313–322.

Andrews, R., Boyne, G. A. and Walker, R. M. (2011) 'Dimensions of publicness and organisational performance: a review of the evidence', *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 21, pp. 301–319.

Anttonen, A. and Sipilä, J. (2005) "Comparative approaches to social care: diversity in care production modes", in Pfau-Effinger, B. and Geissler, B. (eds.) *Care and social integration in European societies*. Bristol: Policy Press, pp. 115–134.

Ascoli, U. and Ranci, C. (eds.) (2002) *Dilemmas of the welfare mix: the new structure of welfare in an era of privatisation.* New York: Kluwer.

Bacchi, C. L. (1999) *Women, policy and politics: the construction of policy problems.* London: SAGE.

Bacchi, C. L. (2000) 'Policy as discourse: what does it mean? Where does it get us?', *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 21(1), pp. 45–57.

Bacchi, C. L. (2009) *Analysing policy: what's the problem represented to be?* Frenchs Forest: Australian Pearson.

Bae, E. (2012) *Reproduction of the modern Korean society: women, maternity and family planning programmes* [*hyŏn-tae han-kuk ŭi in-kan chae-saeng-san: yŏ-sŏng, mo-sŏng, ka-chok kye-hoek sa-ŏp*]. Seoul: Time Travel.

Baek, H.-Y. (2010a) *Keynote for the 54th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women* [*che-5-4-ch'a yu-en yŏ-sŏng-chi-wi-wi-wŏn-hoe ki-cho-yŏn-sŏl*] [Online transcript]. 2 March. Available from: https://www.korea.kr/archive/speechView.do?newsId=132020532 [Accessed 20 December 2021] (in Korean).

Baek, H.-Y. (2010b) *Keynote for the United Nations Economic and Social Council* [*yu-en-kyŏng-che-sa-hoe-i-sa-hoe (ECOSOC) hoe-ŭi pal-p'yo*] [Online transcript]. 6 July. Available from: https://www.korea.kr/archive/speechView.do?newsId=132021130 [Accessed 20 December 2021] (in Korean).

Baek, H.-Y. (2010c) *Convention with the NHN Corporation for disseminating women-friendly working culture* [*NHNkwa yŏ-sŏng-ch'in-hwa ki-ŏp-mun-hwa hwak-san hyŏp-yak-sik*] [Online transcript]. 26 January. Available from: https://www.korea.kr/archive/speechView.do?newsId=132020342 [Accessed 20 December 2021] (in Korean).

Baek, H.-Y. (2011) *Keynote for the 55th United Nations Commission on the Status of Women* [*che-5-5-ch'a yu-en yŏ-sŏng-chi-wi-wi-wŏn-hoe ki-cho-yŏn-sŏl*] [Online transcript]. 22 February. Available from: https://www.korea.kr/archive/speechView.do?newsId=132022074 [Accessed 20 December 2021] (in Korean).

Baek, S. H. (2008) 'Evaluation on childcare policy during 10 years of Kim, Dae-jung & Roh, Moo-hyun's administration; focus on national plans [kim-tae-chung no-mu-hyŏn chŏng-pu 10nyŏn-ŭi po-yuk-chŏng-ch'aek p'yŏng-ka: kuk-ka-kye-hoek-ŭl chung-sim-ŭ-lo]', *Journal of Critical Social Welfare*, 28(1), pp. 95–141 (in Korean).

Bareun Party (2017a) *Building a country with righteous thinking: the 19th presidential election manifesto* [*pa-lŭn saeng-kak-ŭ-lo man-tŭ-nŭn mo-tu-ŭi tae-han-min-kuk: che 19tae tae-t'ong-lyŏng-sŏn-kŏ pa-lŭn-chŏng-tang chŏng-ch'aek-kong-yak-chip*]. Seoul: Recommunication (in Korean).

Bareun Party (2017b) *General review on the Moon Jae-in government's 100 policy agenda* [*mun-chae-in-chŏng-pu 100tae kwa-che ch'ong-p'yŏng*] [Press release]. 21 July. Available from: https://news.naver.com/main/read.naver?mode=LSD&mid=sec&sid1=123&oid=552&aid=0000000788 [Accessed 15 December 2021] (in Korean).

Baumgartner, F. and Bryan, D. J. (1993) *Agendas and instability in American Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Béland, D. (2005) 'Ideas and social policy: an institutionalist perspective', *Social Policy & Administration*', 39(1), pp. 1–18.

Béland, D. (2007) 'Ideas and institutional change in social security: conversion, layering and policy drift', *Social Science Quarterly,* 88(1), pp. 20–38.

Béland, D. (2009) 'Ideas, institutions, and policy change', *Journal of European Public Policy,* 16(5), pp. 701–718.

Béland, D. (2016) 'Kingdon reconsidered: ideas, interests and institutions in comparative policy analysis', *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice,* 18(3), pp. 228–242.

Béland, D. and Cox, R. H. (2011) "Introduction: ideas and politics", in Béland, D. and Cox, R. H. (eds.) *Ideas and politics in social science research.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 3–20.

Béland, D. and Cox, R. H. (2016) 'Ideas as coalition magnets: coalition building, policy entrepreneurs, and power relations', *Journal of European Public Policy,* 23(3), pp. 428–445.

Béland, D. and Waddan, A. (2012) *The politics of policy change: welfare, medicare, and social security reform in the United States.* Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

Béland, D. and Waddan, A. (2015) 'Breaking down ideas and institutions: the politics of tax policy in the USA and the UK', *Policy Studies*, 36(2), pp. 176–195.

Berman, S. (1998) *The social democratic moment: ideas and politics in the making of interwar Europe.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Berman, S. (2001) 'Ideas, norms and culture in political analysis', *Comparative Politics*, 33(2), pp. 231–250.

Bernard, H. R. (2013) *Social research methods: qualitative and quantitative approaches.* London: SAGE.

Blackmore, J. (1995) 'Policy as dialogue: feminist administrators working for educational change', *Gender and Education*, 7(3), pp. 293–313.

Blackmore, J. (1999) *Troubling women: feminism, leadership and educational change*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Blum, S. (2010) ‘Between instrument tinkering and policy renewal: reforms of parental leave in Germany and Austria’, *German Policy Studies*, 6(3), pp. 83–118.

Blumer, H. (1971) ‘Social problems as collective behaviour’, *Social Problems*, 18(3), pp. 298–306.

Blyth, M. (2001) ‘The transformation of the Swedish model: economic ideas, distributional conflict and institutional change’, *World Politics*, 54(1), pp. 1–26.

Blyth, M. (2002) *Great transformations: economic ideas and institutional change in the twentieth century*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Bonoli, G. and Reber, F. (2010) ‘The political economy of childcare in OECD countries: explaining cross-national variation in spending and coverage rates’, *European Journal of Political Research*, 49(1), pp. 97–118.

Borchorst, A. (2008) “Women-friendly policy paradoxes? Childcare policies and gender equality visions in Scandinavia”, in Melby, K., Ravn, A.-B. and Wetterberg, C.C. (eds.) *Gender equality and welfare politics in Scandinavia: the limits of political ambition?* Bristol: The Policy Press, pp. 27–42.

Borgatti, S. P., Martin, G. E. and Johnson, J. C. (2013) *Analysing social networks.* London: SAGE.

Bozeman, B. (1987) *All organisations are public: bridging public and private organisation theory.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bozeman, B. (2007) *Values and public interest: counterbalancing economic individualism.* Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

Bozeman, B. and Moulton, S. (2011) ‘Integrative publicness: a framework for public management strategy and performance’, *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory: J-Part.* 21(Supplement 3), pp. i363–i380.

Breeze, R. (2011) ‘Critical discourse analysis and its critics’, *Pragmatics*, 21(4), pp. 493–525.

Brinton, M. C., Lee, Y-J. and Parish, W. L. (2001) “Married women’s employment in rapidly industrialising societies: South Korea and Taiwan”, in Brinton, M. C. (ed.) *Women’s working lives in East Asia.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, pp. 38–69.

Campbell, J. L. (1998) ‘Institutional analysis and the role of ideas in political economy’. *Theory and Society*, 27(3), pp. 377–409.

Campbell, J. L. (2002) ‘Ideas, politics, and public policy’, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 28(August), pp. 21–38.

Carley, K. M. (1994) ‘Extracting culture through textual analysis’, *Poetics*, 22(4), pp. 291–312.

Carstensen, M. B. and Schmidt, V. A. (2016) ‘Power through, over and in ideas: conceptualising ideational power in discursive institutionalism’, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 23(3), pp. 318–337.

Castles, F. G. (1978) *The social democratic image of society: a study of the achievements and origins of Scandinavian Social Democracy in comparative perspective.* London: Routledge.

Census and Statistics Department (2021) *Working population by age and gender (excluding foreign domestic helpers)* [*àn nián líng jí xìng bié huá fēn de láo dòng rén kǒu (bù bāo kuò wài jí jiā tíng yōng)*] [Online] Available from: https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/tc/EIndexbySubject.html?scode=200&pcode=D5250024 [Accessed 21 December 2021] (in Chinese).

Chau, R. C. M. and Yu, S. W. K. (2012) ‘Defamilialisation of twenty-two countries: its implications for the study of East Asian welfare regime’, *Social Policy and Society*, 12(3), pp. 355–367.

Chau, R. C. M. Foster, L. and Yu, S. W. K (2017) ‘Defamilisation and leave policies – a comparative study of 14 East Asian and non-East Asian countries’, *Journal of Asian Public Policy*, 10(3), pp. 318–333.

Chi, E.-H. (2004) *Commemorative speech for the 9th Korean Women’s Week* [*che-9-hoe yŏ-sŏng-chu-kan tae-hoe-sa*] [Online transcript]. 1 July. Available from: https://www.korea.kr/archive/speechView.do?newsId=132011349 [Accessed 20 December 2021] (in Korean).

Chi, E.-H. (2005a) *Commemorative speech for the establishment of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family* [*yŏ-sŏng-ka-chok-pu ch'ul-pŏm-sik ki-nyŏm-sa(yŏ-sŏng-pu chang-kwan)*] [Online transcript]. 23 June. Available from: https://www.korea.kr/archive/speechView.do?newsId=132011710 [Accessed 20 December 2021] (in Korean).

Chi, E.-H. (2005b) *Commemorative speech for the 10th Korean Women’s Week* [*che-1-0-hoe yŏ-sŏng-chu-kan-ki-nyŏm-sik ki-nyŏm-sa (yŏ-sŏng-ka-chok-pu-chang-kwan)*] [Online transcript]. 7 July. Available from: https://www.korea.kr/archive/speechView.do?newsId=132011713 [Accessed 20 December 2021] (in Korean).

Cho, Y.-S. (2013a) *Public speech on the elimination of gender inequality in employment* [*ko-yong-e kwan-han sŏng ch'a-pyŏl ch'ŏl-p'ye yŏn-sŏl-mun*] [Online transcript]. 15 May. Available from:

https://www.korea.kr/archive/speechView.do?newsId=132026812 [Accessed 20 December 2021] (in Korean).

Cho, Y.-S. (2013b) *Commemorative speech for administrative training of female CEOs* [*yŏ-sŏngCEO kyŏng-yŏng-yŏn-su ch'uk-sa*] [Online transcript]. 25 October. Available from: https://www.korea.kr/archive/speechView.do?newsId=132027432 [Accessed 20 December 2021] (in Korean).

Choi, C. and Lecy, J. D. (2012) 'A semantic network analysis of changes in North Korea's economic policy', *Governance*, 25(4), pp. 259–616.

Choi, H. (2011) "Fighting pork barrel": Park Jae-wan's criticism of free welfare ["p'o-k'ŭ-pae-lŏl-e mach-sŏ-kess-ta": pak-chae-wan mu-sang-pok-chi pi-p'an]. *JoongAng Ilbo* [Online]. 7 July. Available from: https://www.joongang.co.kr/article/5749177#home [Accessed 14 December 2021] (in Korean).

Choi, J. and Choi, T. (2017) "Changes in the political, social and economic environment of public policy in South Korea after the 1980s", in Choi. J., Kwon, H.-J. and Koo, M. G. (eds.) *The Korean government and public policies in a development nexus: sustaining development and tackling policy changes – volume 2.* New York: Springer, pp. 9–30.

Chronholm, A. (2009) "Sweden: individualisation or free choice in parental leave?", in Kamerman, S. and Moss, P. (eds.) *The politics of parental leave policies: children, parenting, gender and the labour market.* Bristol: Policy Press, pp. 227–242.

Chun, J.-H. (2008) Inauguration address of the Minister for Health, Welfare and Family [po-kŏn-pok-chi-ka-chok-pu chang-kwan ch'wi-im-sa] [Online transcript]. 6 August. Available from: https://www.korea.kr/archive/speechView.do?newsId=132013833 [Accessed 20 December 2021] (in Korean).

Chung, H. and van der Horst, M. (2018) 'Flexible working and unpaid overtime in the UK: the role of gender, parental and occupational status', *Social Indicators Research* [Online], Available from: https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-018-2028-7 [Accessed 28 December 2020].

Cleveland, G. and Krashinsky, M. (2004) *Financing ECEC services in OECD countries*. Paris: OECD.

Coalition for Reforming Early Education and Childcare (2017) *We absolutely oppose the inclusion of childcare teachers in public corporations of social services, which*

would prevent the integration of early education and childcare [*yu-po-t'ong-hap ka-lo-mak-nŭn sa-hoe-sŏ-pi-sŭ-kong-tan po-yuk-kyo-sa so-sok, chŏl-tae pan-tae-han-ta-t'*] [Unpublished document] (in Korean).

Cochran, C. and Malone, E. (1995) *Public Policy: perspectives and choices*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Daly, M (2000) *The gender division of welfare.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Daly, M. (2010a) 'Shifts in family policy in the UK under New Labour', *Journal of European Social Policy,* 20(5), pp. 433–443.

Daly, M. (2010b) "Families versus state and market", in Castles, F., Leibfried, S., Lewis, J., Obinger, H. and Pierson, S. (eds.) *The Oxford handbook of the welfare state.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 139–151.

Daly, M. (2011) 'What adult worker model? A critical look at recent social policy reform in Europe from a gender and family perspective', *Social Politics,* 18(1), pp. 1–23.

Daly, M. (2015) *Child-related financial transfers and early childhood education and care*, Discussion Paper for the Progress of the World's Women 2015–2016 [Online]. Available from: https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2015/Daly-esFin.pdf [Accessed 22 December 2021].

Daly, M. and Ferragina, E. (2018) 'Family policy in high-income countries: five decades of development', *Journal of European Social Policy,* 28(3), pp. 255–270.

Daly, M. and Lewis, J. (2000) 'The concept of social care and the analysis of contemporary welfare states', *British Journal of Sociology,* 51(2), pp. 281–298.

De Castell, S. and Bryson, M. (1997) "En/gendering equity: paradoxical consequences of institutionalised equity policies", in deCastell, S. and Bryson (eds.) *Radical in(ter)ventions: identity politics and difference/s in educational praxis*. Albany: State University of New York Press, pp. 85–103.

Democratic Party (2011a) *The Democratic Party's vision on and philosophy of universal welfare (3+1 welfare)* [*(3+1 pok-chi) min-chu-tang-i ch'u-ku-ha-nŭn po-p'yŏn-chŏk pok-chi-ŭi pi-chyŏn-kwa ch'ŏl-hak*] [Briefing]. 31 January. Available from: https://theminjoo.kr/board/view/briefing/132944 [Accessed 13 January 2022] (in Korean).

Democratic Party (2011b) *We welcome the government's decision to accept the Democratic Party's plan of free childcare for 5 year-olds* [*min-chu-tang-ŭi mu-*

sang-po-yuk su-yong-han chŏng-pu-ŭi man-5-se mu-sang-po-yuk chŏk-kŭk hwan-yŏng] [Briefing]. 3 May. Available from: https://theminjoo.kr/board/view/briefing/133902 [Accessed 13 January 2022] (in Korean).

Democratic Party (2012) *The Democratic Party's policy vision to change people's lives as well as the Republic of Korea* [*nae salm-kwa tae-han-min-kuk-ŭl pa-kku-nŭn min-chu-t'ong-hap-tang-ŭi chŏng-ch'aek pi-chŏn*]. Seoul: Democratic Party Policy Committee (in Korean).

Democratic Party (2017) *Building a country worthy of being called a country: the 19th presidential election manifesto* [*na-la-lŭl na-la-tap-ke: che 19tae tae-t'ong-lyŏng-sŏn-kŏ chŏng-ch'aek-kong-yak-chip*]. Seoul: KP Books (in Korean).

Dent, H. S., Jr. (2014) *The demographic cliff: how to survive and prosper during the great deflation of 2014–2019.* New York: Penguin Group.

Doerfel, M. L. and Connaughton, S. L (2009) 'Semantic networks and competition: early year winners and losers in the U.S. televised presidential debates, 1960-2004', *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 60(1), pp. 201–218.

Doerfel, M.L. (1998) 'What constitutes semantic network analysis? A comparison of research and methodologies', *Connections,* 21(2), pp. 16–26.

Drieger, P. (2013) 'Semantic network analysis as a method for visual text analytics', *Social and Behavioural Sciences,* 79, pp. 4–17.

Economic and Social Development Commission (2016) *The social pacts in South Korea: 1993–2015* [*han-kuk-ŭi sa-hoe-chŏk hap-ŭi: 1993–2015*]. Seoul: Economic and Social Development Commission (in Korean).

Ellingsæter, A. L. (2003) 'The complexity of family policy reform: the case of Norway', *European Societies,* 5(4), pp. 419–443.

Esping-Andersen, G. (1985) *Politics against markets*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Esping-Andersen, G. (1999) *Social foundations of postindustrial economies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Esping-Andersen, G. (2002a) "Child centred social investment", in Esping-Andersen, G., Gallie, D., Hemerijck, A. and Miles, J. (eds.) *Why we need a new welfare state.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 26–67.

Esping-Andersen, G. (2002b) "A new gender contract", in Esping-Andersen, G., Gallie, D., Hemerijck, A. and Miles, J. (eds.) *Why we need a new welfare state.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 68–95.

Estévez-Abe, M. and Kim, Y.-S. (2013) *Beyond the familialist state? Outsourcing Care in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan* [Online]. Carlo Alberto Working Papers Series No. 343. Available from: https://www.carloalberto.org/assets/working-papers/no.343.pdf [Accessed 27 September 2021].

Estévez-Abe, M. and Kim, Y.-S. (2014) 'Presidents, prime ministers and politics of care', *Social Policy and Administration*, 48(6), pp. 666–685.

Estévez-Abe, M. and Naldini, M. (2016) 'Politics of defamilialisation: a comparison of Italy, Japan, Korea and Spain', *Journal of European Social Policy*, 26(4), pp. 327–343.

Estévez-Abe, M., Yang, J.-J. and Choi, Y. J. (2016) 'Beyond familialism: recalibrating family, state and market in Southern Europe and East Asia', *Journal of European Social Policy*, 26(4), pp. 301–313.

Everett, M. G. and Borgatti, S. P. (2005) "Extending centrality", in Carrington, P. J., Scott, J. and Wasserman, S. (eds.) *Models and methods in social network analysis.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 57–76.

Evers, A. and Svetlik, I. (eds.) (1993) *Balancing pluralism: new welfare mixes in care for the elderly.* Aldershot: Avebury.

Eydal, G. B. (2005) "Childcare policies of the Nordic welfare states: different paths to enable parents to earn and care?", in Pfau-Effinger, B. and Geissler B. (eds.) *Care and social integration in European societies.* Bristol: Policy Press, pp. 153–172.

Farkas, Z. (2019) 'The concept and coverage of institution', *Rationality and Society*, 31(1) pp. 70–79.

Faulkner, D. and Coates, E. A. (2013) 'Early childhood policy and practice in England: twenty years of change', *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 21(2–3), 244–263.

Fleckenstein, T. and Lee, S. C. (2014) 'The politics of postindustrial social policy: family policy reforms in Britain, Germany, South Korea, and Sweden', *Comparative Political Studies*, 47(4), pp. 601–630.

Fleckenstein, T. and Lee, S. C. (2017a) 'Democratisation, post-industrialisation, and East Asian welfare capitalism: the politics of welfare state reform in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan', *Journal of International and Comparative Social Policy*, 33(1), pp. 36–54.

Fleckenstein, T. and Lee, S. C. (2017b) “A social investment turn in East Asia? South Korea in comparative perspective”, in Hemerijck, A. (ed.) *The uses of social investment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 266–277.

Fleckenstein, T. and Lee, S. C. (2017c) ‘The politics of investing in families: comparing family policy expansion in Japan and South Korea’, *Social Politics*, 24(1), pp. 1–28.

Fraser, N. (1989) *Unruly practices: power, discourse and gender in contemporary social theory.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Fraser, N. (1994) ‘After the family wage: gender equity and the welfare state’, *Political Theory*, 22(4), pp. 591–618.

Fraser, N. (1995) “Politics, culture, and the public sphere: toward a postmodern conception’ in Nicholson, L. and Seidman, S. (eds.) *Social postmodernism: beyond identity politics.* Cambridge University Press, pp. 287–312.

Fraser, N. and Gordon, L. (1999) “Civil citizenship against social citizenship?”, in van Steenbergen, B. (ed.) *The condition of citizenship*. London: SAGE, pp. 141–152.

Gauthier, A. H. (1996) *The state and the family: a comparative analysis of family policies in industrialised countries.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Gender Equality and Family Committee (2005) The 256th session (no. 2). 9 November.

Gender Equality and Family Committee (2006a) The 260th session (no. 1). 27 June.

Gender Equality and Family Committee (2006b) The 261st session (no. 1). 23 August.

Gender Equality and Family Committee (2006c) The 262nd session (no. 5). 22 November.

Gender Equality and Family Committee (2007) The 269th session (no. 4). 9 October.

George, A. L. and Bennett, A. (2005) *Case studies and theory development in the social sciences.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Gerring, J. (2004) ‘What is a case study and what is it good for?’, *American Political Science Review*, 98(2), pp. 314–354.

Goh, K. (2003) *Commemorative speech for the opening of the Ewha Women’s Leadership Development Institute* [*i-hwa-li-tŏ-sip-kae-pal-wŏn kae-wŏn-sik ch'uk-sa*] [Online transcript]. 18 September. Available from: https://www.korea.kr/archive/speechView.do?newsId=132012982 [Accessed 20 December 2021] (in Korean).

Goldstein, J. and Keohane, R. O. (1993) “Ideas and foreign policy: an analytical framework’, in Goldstein, J. and Keohane, R. O. (eds.) *Ideas and Foreign Policy. Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, pp. 3–30.

Gough, I. (2004) “East Asia: the limits of productivist regimes”, in Gough, I. and Wood, G. D. (eds.) *Insecurity and welfare regimes in Asia, Africa and Latin America: Social policy in development contexts.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 169–201.

Government of the Republic of Korea (2006) *The First Basic Plan on Low Fertility and Ageing Society (2006–2010)* [*che-1-ch'a chŏ-ch'ul-san ko-lyŏng-sa-hoe-ki-pon-kye-hoek(2006–2010)*]. Seoul: Government of the Republic of Korea (in Korean).

Government of the Republic of Korea (2013) *National policy agenda of the Park Geun-hye government* [*Pak-kŭn-hye-chŏng-pu kuk-chŏng-kwa-che*] [Online]. Available from: http://www.korea.kr/archive/expDocView.do?docId=34014 [Accessed 21 December 2021] (in Korean).

Government of the Republic of Korea (2018) *The plan on the establishment and operation of social service agencies* [*sa-hoe-sŏ-pi-sŭ-wŏn sŏl-lip un-yŏng pang-an*] [Online]. Available from: https://www.jobs.go.kr/ajax/CM_BB01_SVC/CM_BB01_R97.do?BBS_SN=1131&ATCH_SN=7 [Accessed 15 December 2021] (in Korean).

Government of the Republic of Korea (2020) *The Fourth Basic Plan on Low Fertility and Ageing Society (2021–2025)* [*che-4-ch'a chŏ-ch'ul-san ko-lyŏng-sa-hoe-ki-pon-kye-hoek (2021–2025)*] [Online]. Available from: https://www.mohw.go.kr/react/gm/sgm0704vw.jsp?PAR_MENU_ID=13&MENU_ID=13040801&page=1&CONT_SEQ=358262&PAR_CONT_SEQ=356080 [Accessed 21 December 2021] (in Korean).

Green-Pedersen, C. (2007) ‘The growing importance of issue competition’, *Political Studies*, 55(3), pp. 607–628.

Hacker, J. S. (2004) ‘Privatising risk without privatising the welfare state: the hidden politics of social policy retrenchment in the United States’, *The American Political Science Review*, 98(2), pp. 243–260.

Hajer, M. A. (1995) *The politics of environmental discourse: ecological modernisation and the policy process.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hall, P. A. (1989) “Conclusion: the politics of Keynesian ideas”, in Hall, P. A (ed.) *The political power of economic ideas: Keynesianism across nations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 361–392.

Hall, P. A. (1992) “The movement from Keynesianism to monetarism: institutional analysis and British economic policy in the 1970s”, in Steinmo, S., Thelen, K. and Longstreth, F. (eds.) *Structuring politics: historical institutionalism in comparative analysis.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 90–113.

Hall, P. A. (1993) ‘Policy paradigms, social learning, and the state: the case of economic policymaking in Britain’, *Comparative politics*, 25(3), pp. 275–296.

Hall, P. A. and Taylor, R. C. R. (1996) ‘Political science and the three new institutionalism’, *Political Studies*, 44(5), pp. 936–957.

Han, M.-S. (2007) *New year’s address for the government opening ceremony in 2007* [*2007nyŏn-to chŏng-pu si-mu-sik sin-nyŏn-in-sa-mal-ssŭm*] [Online transcript]. 2 January. Available from: https://www.korea.kr/archive/speechView.do?newsId=132013317 [Accessed 20 December 2021] (in Korean).

Hannah, A. and Baekkeskov, E. (2020) ‘The promises and pitfalls of polysemic ideas: ‘One Health’ and antimicrobial resistance policy in Australia and the UK’, *Policy Sciences*, 53(1), pp. 437–452.

Hansen, R. and King, D. (2001) ‘Eugenic ideas, political interests, and policy variance: immigration and sterilisation policy in Britain and the U.S.’, *World Politics*, 53(2), pp. 237–263.

Hantrais, L. (1999) “Comparing family policies in Europe”, in Clasen, J. (ed.) *Comparative social policy: concepts, theories and methods.* Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 95–113.

Haque, M. S. (2001) ‘The diminishing publicness of public service under the current mode of governance’, *Public Administration Review*, 61(1), pp. 65–82.

Hastings, A. (1998) ‘Connecting linguistic structures and social practices: a discursive approach to policy analysis’, *Journal of Social Policy*, 27(2), pp. 191–211.

Häusermann. S. and Kübler, D. (2010) ‘Policy frames and coalition dynamics in the recent reforms of Swiss family policy’, *German Policy Studies*, 6(3), pp. 163–194.

Health and Welfare Committee (2015) The 331st session (no. 1). 9 February.

Health and Welfare Committee (2016a) The 346th session (no. 5). 24 October.

Health and Welfare Committee (2016b) The 343rd session (no. 4). 28 June.

Heitlinger, A. (1991) ‘Pronatalism and women’s equality policies’, *European Journal of Population*, 7(4), pp. 343–75.

Heitlinger, A. (1993) *Women's equality, demography and public policies: a comparative perspective*. London: Macmillan Press.

Henninger, A., Wimbauer, C. and Dombrowski, R. (2008) 'Demography as a push toward gender equality? Current reforms of German family policy', *Social Politics*, 15(3), pp. 287–314.

Herweg, N., Huß, C. and Zohlnhöfer, R. (2015) 'Straightening the three streams: theorising extensions of the multiple streams framework', *European Journal of Political Research*, 54(3), pp. 435–449.

Hibbs, D. A. (1977) 'Political parties and macroeconomic policy', *American Political Science Review*, 71(4), pp. 1467–1487.

Hiilamo, H. and Kangas, O. (2009) 'Trap for women or freedom to choose? The struggle over cash for child care schemes in Finland and Sweden', *Journal of Social Policy*, 38(3), pp. 457–475.

Holliday, I. (2000) 'Productivist welfare capitalism', *Political Studies*, 48(4), pp. 706–723.

Hong, S.-A., Choi, I., Kim, N. and Kim, J. (2018) A *study of strategies for responding to low fertility from the perspective of gender equality: comparative analysis of Korea and Japan* [*sŏng-p'yŏng-tŭng kwan-chŏm-e-sŏ pon chŏ-ch'ul-san tae-ŭng-chŏn-lyak yŏn-ku: han-kuk-kwa il-pon-ŭi pi-kyo-yŏn-ku*]. Seoul: Korea Women's Development Institute (in Korean).

Howlett, M., Mcconnell, A. and Perl, A. (2015) 'Streams and stages: reconciling Kingdon and policy process theory', *European Journal of Political Research*, 54(3), 419–434.

Hsieh, H.-F. and Shannon, S. H. (2005) 'The three approaches to qualitative content analysis', *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), pp. 1277–1288.

Huntington, S. P. (1968) *Political order in changing societies*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Hwang, K.-A. (2015) *Commemorative speech at the Asian Female Leaders' Forum* [*2015 a-si-a yŏ-sŏng li-tŏ-sŭ p'o-lŏm ch'uk-sa*] [Online transcript]. 5 November. Available from: https://www.korea.kr/archive/speechView.do?newsId=132029155 [Accessed 20 December 2021] (in Korean).

Jang, H.-J. (2007a) *Commemorative speech for the 12th Korean Women's Week* [*che12hoe yŏsŏngjugan kinyŏmshik ch'uksa*] [Online transcript]. 4 July. Available

from: https://www.korea.kr/archive/speechView.do?newsId=132013375 [Accessed 20 December 2021] (in Korean).

Jang, H.-J. (2007b) *Commemorative speech for the donation campaign of 100 people from the Korea Foundation for Women* [*che12hoe yŏsŏngjugan kinyŏmshik ch'uksa*] [Online transcript]. 27 April. Available from: https://www.korea.kr/archive/speechView.do?newsId=132012079 [Accessed 20 December 2021] (in Korean).

Jenson, J. (2010) 'Diffusing ideas for after neoliberalism: the social investment perspective in Europe and Latin America', *Global Social Policy*, 10(1), pp. 59–84.

Jobert, B. (1989) 'The normative frameworks of public policy', *Political Studies*, 37(3), pp. 376–386.

Jones, Catherine (1990) 'Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan: oikonomic welfare states', *Government and Opposition*, 25(4), pp. 447–462.

Jones, Catherine (1993) "The Pacific challenge: Confucian welfare states", in Jones, C. (ed.) *New Perspectives on the Welfare State in Europe*. London: Routledge, pp. 198–217.

Jones, G., Straughan, P. T and Chan, A. (eds.) (2008) Ultra-low fertility in Pacific Asia: trends, causes and policy issues. Abingdon: Routledge.

Jung, K. (2014) *Practicing feminism in South Korea: The women's movement against sexual violence.* Abingdon: Routledge.

Justice Party (2017) *A country with a respect for labour: the 19th presidential election manifesto* [*no-tong-i tang-tang-han na-la: che 19tae tae-t'ong-lyŏng-sŏn-kŏ chŏng-ŭi-tang chŏng-ch'aek-kong-yak-chip*]. Seoul: People Communication (in Korean).

Kamerman, S. B. (2000) 'Early childhood education and care: an overview of developments in the OECD countries', *International Journal of Educational Research*, 33(1), pp. 7–29.

Kamerman, S. B. and Kahn, A. J. (1982) 'Income transfers, work and the economic well-being of families with children: a comparative study', *International Social Security Review*, pp. 345–382.

Kamerman, S. B. and Kahn, A. J. (1994) 'Family policy and the under-3s: money, services and time in a policy package', *International Social Security Review*, 47(3–4), pp. 31–43.

Kamerman, S. B. and Kahn, A. J. (1997) *Family change and family policies in Great Britain, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Kamerman, S. B. and Kahn, A. J. (eds.) (1978) *Family policy: government and families in fourteen countries.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Kayser, M. A. and Wlezien, C. (2011) 'Performance pressure: patterns of partisanship and the economic vote', *European Journal of Political Research*, 50 (3), pp. 365–394.

Keck, M. E. and Sikkink, K. (1998) *Activists beyond borders: advocacy network in international politics.* New York: Cornell University Press.

Kerr, C. Dunlop, J. T. Harbison, F. H. and Myers, C. (1973) *Industrialism and industrial man*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Kim, B.-K. (2000), "Party politics in South Korea's democracy", in Diamond, L. and Kim, B.-K. (eds.) *Consolidating democracy in South Korea.* London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, pp. 53–86.

Kim, C.-S. (2006) *Commemorative speech for a female leadership workshop* [*yŏ-sŏng-li-tŏ-wŏ-k'ŭ-syop ch'uk-sa*] [Online transcript]. 26 April. Available from: https://www.korea.kr/archive/speechView.do?newsId=132011841 [Accessed 20 December 2021] (in Korean).

Kim, H.-J. (2002) 'A modernisation project of the Korean society and family politics: a study on family planning programmes [*han-kuk sa-hoe-ŭi kŭn-tae-hwa ki-hoek-kwa ka-chok-chŏng-ch'i: ka-chok-kye-hoek-sa-ŏp-ŭl chung-sim-ŭ-lo*]', *Korea Journal of Population Studies*, 25(1), pp. 51–82 (in Korean).

Kim, H.-J. (2014) *Greetings for a 2014 event organised for people who contribute to women's empowerment* [*2014nyŏn yŏ-sŏng-chi-wi-hyang-sang yu-kong-cha p'o-sang-sik in-sa-mal-ssŭm*] [Online transcript]. 24 July. Available from: https://www.korea.kr/archive/speechView.do?newsId=132027644 [Accessed 20 December 2021] (in Korean).

Kim, H.-S. (2012) *Commemorative speech for the 17th Korean Women's Week* [*che-1-7-hoe-yŏ-sŏng-chu-kan-ki-nyŏm-sik ch'i-sa*] [Online transcript]. 3 July. Available from: https://www.korea.kr/archive/speechView.do?newsId=132024844 [Accessed 20 December 2021] (in Korean).

Kim, J. (2017) "Childcare providers' opinion on the establishment of public corporations of social services [sa-hoe-sŏ-pi-sŭ-kong-tan-sŏl-lip-e tae-han po-yuk-hyŏn-chang-ŭi ip-chang]". *The grand discussion for deterring the inclusion of the childcare sector in public corporations of social services and for promoting the integration of childcare services and early education* [*sa-hoe-sŏ-pi-sŭ-kong-tan*

nae po-yuk-sa-ŏp p'o-ham kye-hoek-an pan-tae-wa yu-po-t'ong-hap ch'ok-ku tae-t'o-lon-hoe] [Online]. pp. 37–50. Available from: http://www.kce.or.kr/admin/admin_board_01/data/70382045.pdf [Accessed 16 December 2020] (in Korean).

Kim, N., Hwang, S. and Eom, J. (2019) *The analysis of demand for infant-care support and the establishment of comprehensive policy plans* [*yŏng-a yang-yuk-chi-wŏn su-yo pun-sŏk mich' chong-hap-chŏk tae-ŭng-pang-an*]. Seoul: Korea Institute of Child Care and Education (in Korean).

Kim, S. K. and Kim, K. (2014) *The Korean women's movement and the state: Bargaining for change.* Oxford: Routledge.

Kim, Y. (2017) *The direction of childcare policy to strengthen childcare publicness* [*kong-kong-sŏng kang-hwa-lŭl wi-han po-yuk-chŏng-ch'aek-ŭi pang-hyang*] [Unpublished document] (in Korean).

King, D. (1999) *In the name of liberalism: illiberal social policy in the United States and Britain.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kingdon, J. W. (1984) *Agendas, alternatives and public policies*. New York: Longman.

Knijn, T. and Lewis, J. (2017) "ECEC: childcare markets in the Netherlands and England", in Unger, B., van der Linde, D. and Getzner, M. (eds.) *Public or private goods? Redefining res publica.* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, pp. 150–172.

Koh, J. and Koh. K. (2017) *Research on the introduction of child benefits in order to respond to low fertility and an ageing society* [*chŏ-ch'ul-san ko-lyŏng-sa-hoe tae-ŭng-ŭl wi-han a-tong-su-tang-che-to to-ip-e kwan-han yŏn-ku*]. Sejong: Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs (in Korean).

Kohler, H.-P., Billari, F.C. and Ortega, J.A. (2002) 'The emergence of lowest-low fertility in Europe during the 1990s', *Population and Development Review*, 28(4), pp. 641–680.

Korea Institute of Child Care and Education (2018a) *The nationwide survey on childcare: childcare facilities* [*2018nyŏn chŏn-kuk-po-yuk-sil-t'ae-cho-sa: ka-ku-cho-sa po-ko*] [Online]. Available from: https://repo.kicce.re.kr/handle/2019.oak/1590 [Accessed 15 December 2021] (in Korean).

Korea Institute of Child Care and Education (2018b) *The nationwide survey on childcare: households* [*2018nyŏn chŏn-kuk-po-yuk-sil-t'ae-cho-sa: ŏ-lin-i-chip-cho-sa po-ko*] [Online]. Available from: https://repo.kicce.re.kr/handle/2019.oak/1591 [Accessed 15 December 2021] (in Korean).

Korea Institute of Child Care and Education (2021) *The key statistics regarding young children in 2020* [*2020 yŏng-yu-a chu-yo-t'ong-kye*] [Online]. Available from: https://kicce.re.kr/main/board/view.do?menu_idx=35&manage_idx=43&board_idx=43878 (in Korean).

Korpi, M. (2007) *The politics of pre-school: intentions and decisions underlying the emergence and growth of the Swedish pre-school.* Stockholm: The Ministry of Education and Research.

Korpi, W. (1980) 'Social policy and distributional conflict in the capitalist democracies: a preliminary comparative framework', *West European Politics*, 3(3), pp. 296–316.

Korpi, W. (1983) *The democratic class struggle.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Korpi, W. (1998) "Power resources approach *vs* action and conflict: on causal and intentional explanations in the study of power", in O'Connor, J. S. and Olsen, G. M. (eds.) *Power resources theory and the welfare state: a critical approach*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp. 37–69.

Korpi, W. (2000) 'Faces of inequality: gender, class and patterns of inequalities in different types of welfare states', *Social Politics*, 7(2), pp. 127–191.

Korpi, W., Ferrarini, T. and Englund, S. (2013) 'Women's opportunities under different family policy constellations: gender, class and inequality tradeoffs in western countries re-examined', *Social Politics*, 20(1), pp. 1–40.

Kuebler, D. (2007) 'Understanding the recent expansion of Swiss family policy: an idea-centred approach', *Journal of Social Policy*, 36(2), pp. 217–237.

Kwon, H.-J. (2005) *Transforming the developmental welfare state in East Asia.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lazar, M. M. (ed.) (2005) *Feminist critical discourse analysis: gender, power and ideology in discourse.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Le Grand, J. and Robinson, R. (eds.) (1984) *Privatisation and the welfare state*. London: Allen & Unwin.

Lee, M.-B. (2009a) *Commemorative speech for the establishment of the Headquarters of the Childbirth-Friendly Society Movement* [*a-i nah-ki choh-ŭn se-sang un-tong pon-pu ch'ul-pŏm-sik kyŏk-lyŏ-sa*] [Online transcript]. 9 June. Available from: https://www.korea.kr/archive/speechView.do?newsId=132018258 [Accessed 20 December 2021] (in Korean).

Lee, M.-B. (2009b) *Commemorative speech for the 50th anniversary of the Korean National Council of Women and the 45th National Convention of Women* [*yŏ-hyŏp ch'ang-lip 50chu-nyŏn ki-nyŏm-sik mich' che-4-5-hoe chŏn-kuk-yŏ-sŏng-tae-hoe ch'uk-sa*] [Online transcript]. 3 November. Available from: https://www.korea.kr/archive/speechView.do?newsId=132019113 [Accessed 20 December 2021] (in Korean).

Lee, M.-B. (2011a) *Commemorative speech for the 12th Social Welfare Day* [*che-1-2-hoe sa-hoe-pok-chi-ŭi nal ki-nyŏm-sik ch'uk-ha-me-si-chi*] [Online transcript]. 7 September. Available from: https://www.korea.kr/archive/speechView.do?newsId=132023340 [Accessed 20 December 2021] (in Korean).

Lee, M.-B. (2011b) *Commemorative speech for the 47th National Convention of Women* [che-*4-7-hoe chŏn-kuk-yŏ-sŏng-tae-hoe ch'uk-ha-me-si-chi*] [Online transcript]. 5 November. Available from: https://www.korea.kr/archive/speechView.do?newsId=132023333 [Accessed 20 December 2021] (in Korean).

Lee, N.-Y. (2017a) *Commemorative speech for the 52nd National Convention of Women* [*che-5-2-hoe chŏn-kuk-yŏ-sŏng-tae-hoe kae-hoe-sik ch'uk-sa*] [Online transcript]. 2 November. Available from: https://www.korea.kr/archive/speechView.do?newsId=132030273 [Accessed 20 December 2021] (in Korean).

Lee, N.-Y. (2017b) *Commemorative speech from the Prime Minister for Gender Equality Week* [*2017nyŏn yang-sŏng-p'yŏng-tŭng-chu-kan ki-nyŏm-haeng-sa ch'uk-sa*] [Online transcript]. 7 July. Available from: https://www.korea.kr/archive/speechView.do?newsId=132030059 [Accessed 20 December 2021] (in Korean).

Lee, S. C. (2017) 'Democratisation, political parties and Korean welfare politics: Korean family policy reforms in comparative perspective', *Government and Opposition*, 53(3), pp. 518–541.

Lee, S. S-Y. (2011) "Labour market risks in de-industrializing East Asian economies: the cases of Korea, Japan and Taiwan", in Hwang, G-J. (ed.) *New welfare states in East Asia: global challenges and restructuring.* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, pp. 61–89.

Lee, Y.-H. (2009) *Commemorative speech for the Gender Equal Employment Week* [*nam-nyŏ-ko-yong-p'yŏng-tŭng-kang-cho-chu-kan ki-nyŏm-sik ki-nyŏm-sa*] [Online transcript]. 5 November. Available from: https://www.korea.kr/archive/speechView.do?newsId=132018931 [Accessed 20 December 2021] (in Korean).

Lee, Y.-J. and Hirata, S. (2001) “Women, work, and marriage in three East Asian labor markets: the cases of Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea”, in Brinton, M. C. (ed.) *Women’s working lives in East Asia.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, pp. 96–124.

Leifeld, P. (2016) *Policy debates as dynamic networks: German pension politics and privatisation discourse.* Frankfurt am Main: Campus.

Leifeld, P. and Haunss, S. (2010) *A comparison between political claims analysis and discourse network analysis: the case of software patents in the European Union*. Bonn: Max Planck Institute for Research on Collective Goods.

Leifeld, P. and Haunss, S. (2012) ‘Political discourse networks and the conflict over software patents in Europe’, *European Journal of Political Research,* 51(3), pp. 382–409.

Leira, A. (2002) *Working parents and the welfare state: family change and policy reform in Scandinavia.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lenoir, R. (1991) “Family policy in France since 1938”, in Ambler, J. (ed.) *The French welfare state: surviving social and ideological change*. New York: New York University Press, pp. 144–186.

Levy, J. S. (2008) ‘Case studies: types, designs and logics of inference’, *Conflict Management and Peace Studies*, 25(1), pp. 1-18.

Lewis, J. (2009) *Work-family balance, gender and policy.* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Lewis, J. (ed.) (1998) *Gender, social care and welfare restructuring in Europe.* Abingdon: Routledge.

Liberty Korea Party (2017) *The power to revive the country: 19th presidential election manifesto* [*tae-han-min-kuk-ŭl ta-si il-ŭ-k'i-nŭn him: che-1-9-tae tae-t'ong-lyŏng-sŏn-kŏ cha-yu-han-kuk-tang chŏng-ch'aek-kong-yak-chip*]. Seoul: Liberty Korea Party (in Korean).

Lieberman, R. C. (2002) ‘Ideas, institutions, and political order: explaining institutional change’, *American Political Science Review*, 96(4), pp. 697–712.

Lijphart, A. (1975) ‘The comparable cases strategy in comparative research’, *Comparative Political Sciences*, 8(2), pp. 158–177.

Lin, Y.-H. and Liu, Y. Y.-F. (2019) “Turning the tide: publicisation of early childhood education and care in Taiwan”, in Garvis, S. and Phillipson, S. (eds.) *Policification of early childhood education and care.* London: Routledge, pp. 231–242.

Lister, R. (1994) "'She has other duties': women, citizenship and social security", in Baldwin, S., Falkingham, J. (eds.) *Social security and social change: new challenges to the Beveridge model.* Hemel Hempstead, UK: Harvester Wheatsheaf, pp. 31–44.

Lister, R. (2003) 'Investing in the citizen-workers of the future: transformations in citizenship and the state under New Labour', *Social Policy & Administration*, 37(5), pp, 427-443.

Liu, C.-H. (2020) ''Care going public' in familialist welfare regime? Ideas and politics of Taiwan's elder-care reform', DPhil thesis, Oxford University, Oxford.

Lloyd, E. and Penn, H. (eds.) (2013) *Childcare markets: can they deliver an equitable service?* Bristol: Policy Press.

Lombardo, E., Petra, M. and Verloo, M. (2009) "Stretching and bending gender equality: a discursive politics approach", in Lombardo, E., Petra, M. and Verloo, M. (eds.) *The discursive politics of gender equality: stretching, bending and policy making.* Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 1–18.

Mahon, R. (1997) 'Child care in Canada and Sweden: policy and politics', *Social Politics*, 4(3), pp. 382–418.

Mahon, R. (2002) 'Childcare: towards what kind of "social Europe"?', *Social Politics*, 9(3), pp. 343–379.

Mahon, R. (2006) "The OECD and the work/family reconciliation agenda: competing frames", in Lewis, J. (ed.) *Children, changing families and welfare states.* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, pp. 173–197.

Mahoney, J. (2003) "Strategies of causal assessment in comparative historical analysis", in Mahoney, J. Rueschemeyer, D. (eds.) *Comparative historical analysis in the social sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 337–372.

Mahoney, J. and Thelen, K. (2010) *Explaining institutional change: ambiguity, agency and power*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

March, J. G. and Olsen. J. P. (1984) 'The new institutionalism: organization factors in political life', *American Political Science Review*, 78(3), pp. 734–749.

Mätzke, M. and Ostner, I. (2010) 'Introduction: change and continuity in recent family policies', *Journal of European Social Policy,* 20(5), pp. 387–398.

McLaughlin, E. and Glendinning, C. (1994) "Paying for care in Europe: is there a feminist approach?", in Hantrais, L. and Mangan, S. (eds.) *Family policy and the*

welfare of women (cross-national research papers). Loughborough: Cross-National Research Group, European Research Centre, pp. 52–69.

McLean, C. (2014) 'Market managers and market moderators: early childhood education and care provision, finance and regulation in the United Kingdom and United States', *Journal of European Social Policy,* 24(2), pp. 122–134.

Mehta, J. (2011) "The varied roles of ideas in politics: from "whether" to "how", in Béland, D. and Cox, R. H. (eds.) *Ideas and politics in social science research.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 23–46.

Miller, M. M. (1997) 'Frame mapping and analysis of news coverage of contentious issues', *Social Science Computer Review*, 15(4), pp. 367–378.

Miller, M. M. and Riechert, B. P. (2001) "The spiral of opportunity and frame resonance: mapping the issue cycle in news and public discourse", in Reese, S. D., Gandy, O. H. and Grant, A. E. (eds.) *Framing public life: Perspectives on media and our understanding of the social life.* Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, pp. 107–121.

Ministry for Health, Welfare and Family Affairs (2009) *The Amendment of the First Mid-/Long-Term Basic Plan on Childcare (2009–2012)* [*a-i-sa-lang-p'ŭl-laen (2009–2012)*]. Seoul: Government of the Republic of Korea (in Korean).

Ministry of Employment and Labour (2020) *The number of fathers taking parental leaves exceeded 20,000 for the first time in 2019* [*2019nyŏn a-ppa yuk-a-hyu-chik-cha, ch'oe-ch'o-lo 2man-myŏng tol-p'a*] [Press release]. 22 January. Available from: http://www.moel.go.kr/news/enews/report/enewsView.do?news_seq=10686 [Accessed 15 December 2021] (in Korean).

Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (2005) *A local-level meeting held to explain the expansion of national/public childcare facilities* [*kuk-kong-lip po-yuk-si-sŏl hwak-ch'ung-kwan-lyŏn chi-pang-sŏl-myŏng-hoe kae-ch'oe*] [Press release]. Available from: http://www.mohw.go.kr/react/al/sal0301vw.jsp?PAR_MENU_ID=04&MENU_ID=0403&CONT_SEQ=43594 [Accessed 15 December 2021] (in Korean).

Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (2006a) *The Sprout Plan: the First Mid-/Long-Term Childcare Plan (2006–2010)* [*sae-ssak-p'ŭl-laen: che 1ch'a chung-chang-ki po-yuk-kye-hoek (2006–2010)*] [Online]. Available from: http://archives.knowhow.or.kr/policy/all/view/20666?page=8 [Accessed 15 December 2021] (in Korean).

Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (2006b) *Gradual nationalisation/public-isation of childcare facilities at multi-family housing units* [*kong-tong-chu-t'aek-nae ŏ-*

lin-i-chip tan-kye-chŏk-ŭ-lo kuk-kong-lip-hwa] [Press release]. Available from: http://www.mohw.go.kr/react/al/sal0301vw.jsp?PAR_MENU_ID=04&MENU_ID=0403&CONT_SEQ=43736 [Accessed 15 December 2021] (in Korean).

Ministry of Health and Welfare (2013) *The Second Mid-/Long-Term Basic Plan on Childcare (2013–2017)* [*che-2-ch'a chung-chang-ki-po-yuk ki-pon-kye-hoek (2013–2017)*]. Seoul: Government of the Republic of Korea (in Korean).

Ministry of Health and Welfare (2015) *70 years of health and welfare: social welfare* [*po-kŏn-pok-chi 70nyŏn-sa: sa-hoe-pok-chi-p'yŏn*]. Seoul: Ministry of Health and Welfare (in Korean).

Ministry of Health and Welfare (2017) *The Third Mid-/Long-Term Childcare Plan (2018– 2022)* [*che-3-ch'a chung-chang-ki-po-yuk ki-pon-kye-hoek (2018–2022)*] [Online]. Available from: https://www.korea.kr/archive/expDocView.do?docId=36928 [Accessed 15 December 2021] (in Korean).

Ministry of Health and Welfare (2021a) *The number of national/public childcare facilities by type of operation* [*un-yŏng chu-ch'e-e tta-lŭn kuk-kong-lip po-yuk-si-sŏl-ŭi su*] [Unpublished document] (in Korean).

Ministry of Health and Welfare (2021b) *The number of private childcare facilities that were converted into national/public childcare facilities* [kuk-kong-lip-ŭ-lo chŏn-hwan-toen ŏ-lin-i-chip-ŭi su] [Unpublished document] (in Korean).

Ministry of the Interior and Safety (2021) *Minutes of 2014 cabinet meetings (1st–56th sessions*) [*2014nyŏn-to kuk-mu-hoe-ŭi hoe-ŭi-lok(che-1~56hoe)*] [Online]. Available from: https://www.mois.go.kr/frt/bbs/type001/commonSelectBoardArticle.do?bbsId=BBSMSTR_000000000430&nttId=85806 [Accessed 20 December 2021] (in Korean).

Mo, J. (2001) 'Political Culture and Legislative Gridlock', *Comparative Political Studies,* 34(5), pp. 467–492.

Montanari, I. (2000) 'From family wage to marriage subsidy and child benefits: controversy and consensus in the development of family support', *Journal of European Social Policy,* 10(4), pp. 307–333.

Morgan, K. J. and Zippel, K. (2003) 'Paid to care: the origins and effects of care leave policies in Europe', *Social Politics,* 10(1), pp. 49–85.

Mosely, L. (2013) *Interview research in political science.* New York: Cornell University Press.

Moss, P. (2014) ‘Early childhood policy in England 1997–2013: anatomy of a missed opportunity’, *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 22(4), pp. 346–358.

National Assembly (2007) *Discussion on the Nationalisation of Childcare Facilities in Multi-Family Housing Units* [*kong-tong-chu-t'aek po-yuk-si-sŏl kuk-kong-lip-hwa-e tae-han tae-t'o-lon-hoe*] [Online video]. 13 January. Available from: https://www.natv.go.kr/natv/program/programVodDetail.do?programId=86&infoId=2875 [Accessed 15 December 2020] (in Korean).

National Assembly Budget Office (2006) *Analysis of tax revenues/outlays in 2005* [*2005nyŏn-to se-ip-se-ch'ul kyŏl-san pun-sŏk*]. Seoul: National Assembly Budget Office (in Korean).

National Assembly Budget Office (2020) *Analysis of the fourth supplementary budget of 2020* [*2020nyŏn-to che-4-hoe ch'u-ka-kyŏng-chŏng-ye-san-an pun-sŏk*]. Seoul: National Assembly Budget Office (in Korean).

National Assembly Plenary Meeting (2005) The 254th session (no. 4). 9 June.

National Assembly Plenary Meeting (2012) The 309th session (no. 8). 23 July.

National Assembly Research Service (2021) *The reality of the parenthood penalty: policy proposals for guaranteeing the right to use parental leaves* [*yuk-a p'ae-nŏl-t'i-ŭi hyŏn-sil, yuk-a-hyu-chik sa-yong-kwŏn po-chang-ŭl wi-han kae-sŏn kwa-che*] [Online]. Available from: https://www.nars.go.kr/report/view.do?cmsCode=CM0155&brdSeq=36592 [Accessed 21 December 2021] (in Korean).

National Policy Committee (2006) The 260th session (no. 1). 26 June.

National Policy Committee (2015) The 332nd session (no. 2). 10 April.

Naumann, I., McLean, C., Koslowski, A., Tisdall, K. and Lloyd, E. (2013) *Early childhood education and care provision: international review of policy, delivery and funding.* Edinburgh: The Scottish Government, Research Report Series.

North, D. C. (1990) *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nyby, J., Nygård, M., Autto, J and Kuisma, M. (2017) ‘Freedom of choice, gender equality, or employment promotion? Finnish party positions on childcare in the light of election manifestos 2015’, *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law*, 39(3), pp. 279–297.

Ochiai, E. (2009) ‘Care diamonds and welfare regimes in East and South-East Asian societies: bridging family and welfare sociology’, *International Journal of Japanese Sociology*, 18(1), pp. 60–78.

Ochiai, E. (2011) ‘Unsustainable societies: the failure of familialism in East Asia’s compressed modernity’, *Historical Social Research*, 36(2), pp. 219–245.

OECD (2004) *Country note for Ireland.* Paris: OECD.

OECD (2021a) *Social spending (indicator).* [Online]. Available from: https://data.oecd.org/socialexp/social-spending.htm [Accessed 21 December 2021].

OECD (2021b) *Population with tertiary education (indicator)* [Online]. Available from: https://data.oecd.org/eduatt/population-with-tertiary-education.htm [Accessed 4 December 2021].

OECD (2021c) *LFS by sex and age (indicators)* [Online]. Available from: https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=LFS_SEXAGE_I_R [Accessed 21 December 2021].

OECD (2021d) *Trade union dataset.* [Online]. Available from: https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=TUD [Accessed 21 December 2021].

OECD (2021e) *Public spending on childcare and early education* [Online]. Available from: https://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm [Accessed 27 December 2021].

OECD (2021f) *Family benefits public spending (indicator)* [Online]. Available from: https://data.oecd.org/socialexp/family-benefits-public-spending.htm [Accessed on 27 December 2021].

OECD (2021g) *Fertility rates (indicator)* [Online]. Available from: https://data.oecd.org/pop/fertility-rates.htm [Accessed on 27 December 2021].

Olsson, J. (2016) *Subversion in institutional change and stability: a neglected mechanism*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Orloff, A. S. (2009) ‘Gendering the comparative analysis of welfare states: an unfinished agenda’, *Sociological Theory*, 27(3), pp. 317–343.

Osborne, D. and Gaebler, T. (1992) *Reinventing government: how the entrepreneurial spirit is transforming the public sector.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Palier, B. (2005) “Ambiguous agreements, cumulative change: French social policy in the 1990s”, in Streek, W. and Thelen, K. (eds.) *Beyond continuity: international*

change in advanced political economies. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 127–144.

Park, C., Lee, J. and Paik, D. (2019) *Sage research methods cases: identifying policy frames using semantic network analysis* [Online]. Available from: https://dx.doi.org/ 10.4135/9781526479907 [Accessed 10 September 2020].

Park, G.-H. (2013a) *Keynote speech for the 18th Korean Women's Week* [*che-1-8-hoe yŏ-sŏng-chu-kan ki-nyŏm-sik kae-hoe-sa*] [Online transcript]. 2 July. Available from: https://www.korea.kr/archive/speechView.do?newsId=132026318 [Accessed 20 December 2021] (in Korean).

Park, G.-H. (2013b) *Commemorative speech from the President for the 48th National Convention of Women* [*che-4-8-hoe chŏn-kuk-yŏ-sŏng-tae-hoe tae-t'ong-lyŏng ch'uk-sa*] [Online transcript]. 30 October. Available from: https://www.korea.kr/archive/speechView.do?newsId=132026557 [Accessed 20 December 2021] (in Korean).

Park, G.-H. (2014) *Discourse regarding the three-year plan of economic innovation* [*kyŏng-che-hyŏk-sin 3kae-nyŏn-kye-hoek tam-hwa-mun*] [Online transcript]. 25 February. Available from: https://www.korea.kr/archive/speechView.do?newsId=132027073 [Accessed 20 December 2021] (in Korean).

Park, Y. (2012) Politicians remain reluctant to a tax increase but 55% of the public agreed to it: the agreement was high among metropolitan residents, the educated, and younger generations [*chŏng-ch'i-kwŏn kkŏ-li-nŭn chŭng-se-lon 55%ka tong-ŭi: su-to-kwŏn-t'ps-ko-hak-lyŏk-t'ps-chŏlm-ŭn-ch'ŭng-il-su-lok manh-a*]. *Kyunghyang Shinmun* [Online]. 5 October. Available from https://www.khan.co.kr/politics/election/article/201210052141425 [Accessed 14 December 2021] (in Korean).

Parson, C. (2015) 'Ideas and power: four intersections and how to show them', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 23(3), pp. 446–463.

Peng, I. (2004) 'Postindustrial pressures, political regime shifts, and social policy reform in Japan and South Korea', *Journal of East Asian Studies*, 4(3), pp. 389–425.

Peng, I. (2012) "The boss, the worker, his wife and no babies: South Korean political and social economy of care in a context of institutional rigidities", in Razavi, S. and Staab, S. (eds.) *Global variations in the political and social economy of care: worlds apart.* Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 80–100.

Peng, I. (2014) “Social investment policy in South Korea”, in Ochiai, E. and Hosoya, L. A. (eds.) *Transformation of the intimate and the public in Asian modernity.* Leiden: Brill, pp. 234–253.

Peng, I. (2015) “The “new” social investment policies in Japan and South Korea”, in Hasmath, R. (ed.) *Inclusive growth, development and welfare policy.* Oxford: Routledge, pp. 142–160.

Peng, I. and Wong, J. (2008) ‘Institutions and institutional purpose: continuity and change in East Asian social policy’, *Politics & Society,* 36(1), pp. 61–88.

Peng, I. and Wong, J. (2010) “East Asia”, in Castles, G., Leibfried, S., Lewis, J., Obinger, H. and Pierson, C. (eds.) *The Oxford handbook of the welfare state.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 656–670.

Penn, H. (2013) “Childcare markets: do they work?”, in Lloyd, E. and Penn, H. (eds.) *Childcare markets: can they deliver an equitable service?* Bristol: Policy Press, pp. 19–42.

People Power Party (2011) *The Democratic Party’s indiscriminative free welfare would only cause pain to the general public* [*min-chu-tang-ŭi mu-ch'a-pyŏl-chŏk mu-sang-pok-chi-nŭn sŏ-min-e-ke ko-t'ong-ŭl chul ppun-i-ta*] [Press release]. 20 January. Available from: http://www.peoplepowerparty.kr/renewal/news/briefing_delegate_view.do?bbsId=SPB_000000000011720 [Accessed 1 February 2022] (in Korean).

People Power Party (2017) *The Moon Jae-in government should not use the National Pension Fund to establish public corporations of social services* [*mun-chae-in chŏng-pu-nŭn kuk-min-yŏn-kŭm-ŭl sa-hoe-sŏ-pi-sŭ-kong-tan sŏl-lip-e sa-yong-ch'i mal-la*] [Press release]. 21 July. Available from: http://www.peoplepowerparty.kr/cmm/fms/FileDown.do?atchFileId=FILE_000000000099016&fileSn=0 [Accessed 15 December 2021] (in Korean).

People Power Party (2018) *Key points of Floor Leader Kim Sung-tae’s press conference for 2019 budgets* [*Kim-sŏng-t'ae wŏn-nae-tae-p'yo, 2019nyŏn ye-san-an kwan-lyŏn ki-cha-kan-tam-hoe chu-yo-nae-yong*] [Press Release]. 2 November. Available from: http://www.peoplepowerparty.kr/renewal/news/briefing_delegate_view.do?bbsId=SPB_000000001389733 [Accessed 13 January 2022] (in Korean).

People’s Party (2017) People will win: *the 19th presidential election manifesto* [*kuk-min-i i-kin-ta: che 19tae tae-t'ong-lyŏng-sŏn-kŏ chŏng-ch'aek-kong-yak-chip*]. Seoul: Paper and Tree (in Korean).

People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (2017) *Towards a caring, pro-labour and egalitarian society beyond the developmental state and chaebol's monopoly* [*kae-pal-kuk-ka, chae-pŏl-tok-sik-ŭl nŏm-ŏ tol-pom-sa-hoe, no-tong-chon-chung p'yŏng-tŭng-sa-hoe-lo*] [Online]. Available from: https://www.peoplepower21.org/index.php?mid=Welfare&page=80&listStyle=list&document_srl=1488926 [Accessed 15 December 2020] (in Korean).

People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy, Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, Federation of Korean Trade Unions, Korean Women's Associations United, Korean WomenLink, Korean Women Workers' Association, Korea Women's Hot Line, Korean Childcare Teachers' Association, Trade Union of Childcare Workers, GongDong Childcare Research Institute (2002) *Press conference on supporting the expansion of childcare publicness and to opposing the privatisation of childcare fees* [*po-yuk-ŭi kong-kong-sŏng hwak-tae-wa po-yuk-lyo cha-yul-hwa chŏ-chi-lŭl wi-han ip-chang pal-p'yo ki-cha-hoe-kyŏn*] [Press release]. 14 March. Available from: https://www.peoplepower21.org/index.php?mid=Welfare&page=368&document_srl=649146&listStyle=list [Accessed 15 December 2021] (in Korean).

People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy, Korean Women's Associations United, Korean WomenLink, Korean Women Workers' Association, Korean Childcare Teachers' Association, YMCA Korea, GongDong Childcare Research Institute (2005) *Press Conference on urging the expansion of childcare publicness by organisations representing women, labour and civil society* [*po-yuk-ŭi kong-kong-sŏng hwak-tae-lŭl ch'ok-ku-ha-nŭn yŏ-sŏng-no-tong-si-min-sa-hoe-tan-ch'e ki-cha-hoe-kyŏn kae-ch'oe*] [Press release]. 10 May. Available from: https://www.peoplepower21.org/index.php?mid=Welfare&page=298&listStyle=list&document_srl=657088 [Accessed 15 December 2021] (in Korean).

Pesch, U. (2008) 'The publicness of public administration', *Administration & Society,* 40(2), pp. 170–193.

Pierson, P. (2000) 'Increasing returns, path dependence, and the study of politics', *The American Political Science Review*, 94(2), pp. 251–267.

Plantenga, J. (2013) "Local providers and loyal parents: competition and consumer choice in the Dutch childcare market", in Lloyd, E. and Penn, H. (eds.) *Childcare markets: can they deliver an equitable service?* Bristol: Policy Press, pp. 63–78.

Plomien, A. (2019) 'Gender inequality by design: does successful implementation of childcare policy deliver gender-just outcomes?', *Policy and Society*, 38 (4), pp. 643–662.

Powell, M. (2007) *Understanding the mixed economy of welfare*. Bristol: The Policy Press.

Powell, M. and Miller, R. (2014) ‘Framing privatisation in the England National Health Service’, *Journal of Social Policy,* 43(3), pp. 575–594.

Presidential Commission on Policy Planning (2008a) *Constructing a well-built system for supporting child rearing: efforts to strengthen childcare publicness* [*an-chŏng-chŏk cha-nyŏ-yang-yuk chi-wŏn-ch'e-kye ku-ch'uk - po-yuk-ŭi kong-kong-sŏng kang-hwa-lŭl wi-han no-lyŏk*] [Online]. Available from: http://archives.knowhow.or.kr/policy/report/view/16968?cId=770 [Accessed 15 December 2020] (in Korean).

Presidential Commission on Policy Planning (2008b) *Responses to low fertility and ageing society* [*chŏ-ch'ul-san ko-lyŏng-sa-hoe tae-ŭng*] [Online]. Available from: http://archives.knowhow.or.kr/policy/report/view/17075?cId=770 [Accessed 15 December 2020] (in Korean).

Presidential Commission on Policy Planning (2017) *The establishment of public corporations of social services: creating 340,000 jobs* [*sa-hoe-sŏ-pi-sŭ kong-tan sŏl-lip: 34man-kae il-cha-li ch'ang-ch'ul*] [Press release]. 12 July. Available from: https://www.korea.kr/news/policyNewsView.do?newsId=148839479 [Accessed 15 December 2021] (in Korean).

Rauhala, P.-L. (2009) “Child care as an issue of equality and equity”, in Scheiwe, K. and Willekens, H. (eds.) *Child care and preschool development in Europe: institutional perspective.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 142–156.

Rhinard, M. (2010) *Framing Europe: the policy shaping strategies of the European Commission.* Boston, MA: Martinus Nijhoff.

Ringen, S., Kwon, H.-J., Yi, I., Kim, T. and Lee, J. (2011) *The Korean state and social policy: how South Korea lifted itself from poverty and dictatorship to affluence and democracy.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Risse-Kappen, T. (1994) ‘Ideas do not float freely: transnational coalitions, domestic structures, and the end of the cold war’, *International Orgnaization,* 48(2), pp. 185–214.

Roe, E. (1994) *Narrative policy analysis: theory and practice.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Roh, M.-H. (2003) *Commemorative speech for Korean Women’s Week* [*yŏ-sŏng-chu-kan ki-nyŏm-sik ch'uk-sa*] [Online transcript]. 4 July. Available from: https://www.korea.kr/archive/speechView.do?newsId=132012324 (in Korean).

Rueschemeyer, D. and Skocpol, T. (1996) “Conclusion”, in Rueschemeyer, D. and Skocpol, T. (eds.) *States, social knowledge, and the origins of modern social policies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 296–312.

Rueschemeyer, D. Huber, E. and Stephens, J. D. (1992) *Capitalist development and democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sabatier, P. A. (1998) 'Knowledge, policy oriented learning, and policy change: an advocacy coalition framework', *Knowledge: Creation, Diffusion Utilisation*, 8(4), pp. 649–692.

Sabatier, P. A. and Jenkins-Smith, H. (1993) "The advocacy coalition framework: assessment, revisions and implications for scholars and practitioners", in Sabatier, P. A. and Jenkins-Smith, H. (eds) *Policy change and learning: an advocacy coalition approach*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, pp, 211–235.

Sabatier, P. A. and Weible, C. M. (2007) "The advocacy coalition framework: innovations and clarifications", in Sabatier, P. A. (ed.) *Theories of the policy process*. Colorado: West Press, pp. 189–220.

Saenuri Pary (2012) *The Saenuri Party's pledges for the 2012 general election: change, customisation and practice* [*2012 ch'ong-sŏn sae-nu-li-tang-ŭi chin-sim-ŭl p'um-ŭn yak-sok: pyŏn-hwa, mach-ch'um, sil-ch'ŏn*]. Seoul: Saenuri Party Policy Committee (in Korean).

Saraceno, C. (2016) 'Varieties of familialism: comparing four southern European and East Asian welfare regimes', *Journal of European Social Policy,* 26(4), pp. 314–326.

Schmidt, V. A. (2002) *The features of European capitalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Schmidt, V. A. (2006) *Democracy in Europe: the EU and national polities.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Schmidt, V. A. (2008) 'Discursive institutionalism: the explanatory power of ideas and discourse', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 11, pp. 303–326.

Schmidt, V. A. (2010) 'Taking ideas and discourse seriously: explaining change through discursive institutionalism as the fourth 'new institutionalism'', *European Political Science Review*, 2(1), pp. 1–25.

Schmidt, V. A. and Thatcher, M. (2013) *Resilient liberalism in Europe's political economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Scott, C. (2001) *Public and private roles in health care systems.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Scott, J. (1990) *A matter of record: documentary sources in social research.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Seeleib-Kaiser, M. and Toivonen, T. (2011) ‘Between reforms and birth rates: Germany, Japan and family policy discourse’, *Social Politics*, 18(3), pp. 331–360.

Seo, M., Shin, N. and Yoo, E. (2007) *The plan on expanding national/public childcare facilities and strengthening their functioning* [*kuk-kong-lip-po-yuk-si-sŏl hwak-ch'ung mich' ki-nŭng kang-hwa pang-an*]. Seoul: Korea Institute of Child Care and Education (in Korean).

Seoul Private Child Care Association (2017) *The emergency meeting on childcare issues between the Korea Edu-Care Association and National Assemblymen* [*han-kuk-ŏ-lin-i-chip-ch'ong-yŏn-hap-hoe, po-yuk-hyŏn-an kwan-lyŏn kuk-hoe-ŭi-wŏn-kwa-ŭi kin-kŭp-kan-tam-hoe*] [Online]. Available from: http://www.citycare.or.kr/html/sub02_law.php?code=menu7_5&idx=1745&bbs_data=aWR4PTE3NDUmc3RhcnRQYWdlPSZsaXN0Tm89JnRhYmxlPSZjb2RlPW1lbnU3XzUmc2VhcmNoX2l0ZW09JnNlYXJjaF9vcmRlcj0=||&bgu=view [Accessed 16 December 2020] (in Korean).

Sewell, W. H., Jr. (1996) “Three temporalities: towards an eventful sociology”, in McDonald, T. J. (ed.) *The historic turn in human sciences.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, pp. 245–280.

Shim, J., Park, C. and Widing, M. (2015) ‘Identifying policy frames through semantic network analysis: an examination of nuclear energy policy across six countries’, *Policy Sciences*, 48(1), pp. 51–83.

Shin, G.-W. and Chang, P. Y. (2011) *South Korean social movements: from democracy to civil society*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Sikkink, K. (1991) *Ideas and institutions: developmentalism in Brazil and Argentina.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Singapore Department of Statistics (2021) *Resident labour force participation rate aged 15 years and over by age and sex* [Online]. Available from: https://tablebuilder.singstat.gov.sg/table/TS/M182201 [Accessed 21 December 2021].

Sipilä, J., Repo, K. and Raissanen, T. (eds.) (2010) *Cash-for-childcare: the consequences for caring mothers.* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Skogstad, G. and Wilder, M (2019) ‘Strangers at the gate: the role of multidimensional ideas, policy anomalies and institutional gatekeepers in biofuel policy developments in the USA and European Union’, *Policy Sciences*, 52(3), pp. 343–366.

Special Committee on Budget and Accounts (2005) The 255th session (no. 5). 26 August.

Special Committee on Budget and Accounts (2007) The 269th session (no. 3). 12 November.

Special Committee on Low Fertility and Ageing Society (2005) The 256th session (no. 3). 2 September.

Spector, M. and Kitsuse, J. I. (1977) *Constructing social problems*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

Statistics Korea (2021a) *Public spending on education as a percentage of GDP* [*GDP tae-pi kong-kyo-yuk-pi pi-yul*] Available from: https://www.index.go.kr/potal/main/EachDtlPageDetail.do?idx_cd=1525 [Accessed 27 December 2021] (in Korean).

Statistics Korea (2021b) *Statistics on the number of childcare facilities and children using childcare services.* [*ŏ-lin-i-chip si-sŏl-su mich' a-tong-su hyŏn-hwang*]. Available from: https://www.index.go.kr/potal/stts/idxMain/selectPoSttsIdxSearch.do?idx_cd=1583 [Accessed 27 December 2021] (in Korean).

Statistics Korea (2021c) *Population status monthly, termly and annually (births, deaths, marriages and divorces)* [*wŏl, pun-ki, yŏn-kan in-ku-tong-hyang (ch'ul-saeng,sa-mang,hon-in,i-hon)*]. Available from: https://kosis.kr/statHtml/statHtml.do?orgId=101&tblId=DT_1B8000G&conn_path=I2 [Accessed 27 December 2021] (in Korean).

Stone, D. (1988) *Policy paradox: the art of political decision making*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Stone, D. (2002) 'Using knowledge: the dilemmas of "bridging research and policy"', *Compare*, 32(3), pp. 285–96.

Strategy and Finance Committee (2012) The inspection of state administration of the year 2012. 8 October.

Stratigaki, M. (2004) 'The cooptation of gender concepts in EU policies: the case of "reconciliation of work and family"', *Social Politics*, 11(1), pp. 30–56.

Sung, S. (2018) 'Gender, work and care in policy and practice: working mothers' experience of intergenerational exchange of care in South Korea', *Critical Social Policy*, 38(3), pp. 589–608.

Swinkles, M. (2020) 'How ideas matter in public policy: a review of concepts, mechanisms and methods', *International Review of Public Policy*, 2(3), pp. 281–316.

Taiwanese National Statistics (2021a) *labour force participation rate by sex and educational attainment* [Online]. Available from: https://eng.stat.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=42761&ctNode=1609&mp=5 [Accessed 21 December 2021].

Taiwanese National Statistics (2021b) *Population and housing* [Online]. Available from: https://eng.stat.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=41871&ctNode=6339&mp=5 [Accessed 21 December 2021].

Tang, K.-L. (2000) *Social welfare development in East Asia*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Mcmillan.

Taylor-Gooby (ed.) (2005) *Ideas and Welfare State Reform in Western Europe*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Thelen, K. (2003) "How institutions evolve: insights from comparative historical analysis", in Mahoney, J. and Rueschemeyer, D. (eds.) *Comparative historical analysis in the Social Sciences.* Cambridge: University of Cambridge, pp 208–240.

Thelen, K. (2004) *How institutions evolve: the political economy of skills in Germany, Britain, the United States, and Japan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tsebelis, G. (1995) 'Decision making in political systems: veto players in presidentialism, parliamentarism, multicameralism and multipartyism', *British Journal of Political Science*, 25(3), pp. 289–325.

Unger, B., Groot, L. and van der Linde, D. (2017) "Introduction", in Unger, B., van der Linde, D. and Getzner, M. (eds.) *Public or private goods? Redefining res publica.* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, pp. 1–17.

Vandenbroeck, M., Peeters, J., Uban, M. and Lazzari, A. (2016) "Introduction", in Vandenbroeck, M., Uban, M. and Peeters, J. (eds.) *Pathways to professionalism in early childhood education and care*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 1–13.

Verschueren, J. (2001) 'Predicaments of criticism', *Critique of Anthropology*, 21(1), pp. 59–81.

Weir, M. and Skocpol, T. (1985) "State structures and the possibilities for 'Keynesian' responses to the great depression in Sweden, Britain, and the United States", in Evans, P., Rueschemeyer, D. and Skocpol, T. (eds.) *Bringing the state back in.* New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 107–168.

Wendt, C. (2009) 'Mapping European healthcare systems: a comparative analysis of financing service provision and access to healthcare', *Journal of European Social Policy*, 19(5), pp. 435–455.

White, G. and Goodman, R. (1998) “Welfare orientalism and the search for an East Asian welfare model”, in Goodman, R., White, G. and Kwon, H.-J. (eds.) *The East Asian welfare model: Welfare orientalism and the state.* London: Routledge, pp. 3–24.

White, L. A. and Friendly, M. (2012) ‘Public funding, private delivery: states, markets, and early childhood education and care in liberal welfare states a comparison of Australia, the UK, Quebec and New Zealand’, *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis,* 14(4), pp. 292–301.

Wilensky, H. L. and Lebeaux, C. N. (1965) *Industrial society and social welfare.* New York: Free Press.

Williams, J. (1999) *Unbending gender: why family and work conflict and what to do about it*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Williams, J., Blair-Loy, M., and Berdahl, J. L. (2013) ‘Cultural schemas, social class, and the flexibility stigma’, *Journal of Social Issues,* 69(2), pp. 209–234.

Woelfel, J., and Fink, E.L. (1980) *The measurement of communication processes: Galileo theory and method*. New York: Academic Press.

Women’s Affairs Committee (2004) *Report on the meeting with women’s organisations and representatives from childcare providers’ organisations* [*yŏ-sŏng-tan-ch'e mich' po-yuk-tan-ch'e tae-p'yo-wa-ŭi kam-tam-hoe po-ko-sŏ*] [Online]. Available from: https://legislation.na.go.kr:444/women/reference/reference05.do?mode=download&articleNo=532516&attachNo=419460 [Accessed 15 December 2020] (in Korean).

Wong, J. (2004) *Healthy democracies: welfare politics in Taiwan and South*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press

Woods, D. R. (2012) *Family policy in transformation: US and UK policies.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

World Bank (2021a) *Labour force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15-64) (modelled ILO estimate)* [Online]. Available from: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS [Accessed 21 December 2021].

World Bank (2021b) *Fertility rate, total (births per woman)* [Online]. Available from: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN [Accessed 21 December 2021].

Yang, J.-J. (2017) *The political economy of the small welfare state in South Korea*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Yang, M., Choi, E. and Kim, H. (2018) *The role of national/public childcare facilities and policy plans to strengthen publicness in regard to their operation* [*kuk-kong-lip-ŏ-lin-i-chip yŏk-hal mich' un-yŏng-ŭi kong-kong-sŏng kang-hwa pang-an*]. Sejong: Department of Childcare, Ministry of Health and Welfare (in Korean).

Yang, S. and González-Bailón, S. (2017) "Semantic networks and applications in public opinion research", in Nicoll, J. N., Montgomery, A. H. and Lubell, M. (eds.) *The Oxford handbook of political networks.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 327–348.

Yates, S. (2004) *Doing social sciences research*. London: SAGE.

Yoon, J.-H., Youn, J.-H. and Hwang, S.-O. (2019) 'The causes of female workers' low participation in labour union activities: a study on the experiences of female officials of trade unions [yŏ-sŏng no-tong-cha-ŭi no-cho-hwal-tong ch'im-ch'e wŏn-in: no-tong-cho-hap yŏ-sŏng-kan-pu-ŭi kyŏng-hŏm]', *Korean Journal of Labour Studies*, 25(2), pp. 1–35 (in Korean).

Yoon, S. and the Coalition for Strengthening Publicness of Long-Term Care (2017) *Legislation on strengthening publicness of social services and establishing public corporations of social services should be instituted for the dignity of care and labour* [*chon-ŏm-han tol-pom-kwa no-tong-ŭl wi-han sa-hoe-sŏ-pi-sŭ kong-tan sa-hoe-sŏ-pi-sŭ-kong-kong-sŏng kang-hwa pŏp-lyul-lo ch'u-chin-hae-ya*] [Press release]. 16 October. Available from: https://www.peoplepower21.org/index.php?mid=Welfare&page=56&listStyle=list&document_srl=1589920 [Accessed 15 December 2020] (in Korean).

Yoon, S., National Health Insurance Trade Union, Korean Public Service and Transport Workers' Union, GongGam Human Rights Law Foundation, Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, Institute of Health and Welfare Resources, Seoul Elderly Care Support Centre, Trade Union of Personal Assistants, Good Care Practice Group, People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy, Federation of Korean Trade Unions, Korean Women's Associations United, Korean WomenLink, and the Coalition for Strengthening Publicness of Long-Term Care (2017) *Why has the electoral promise regarding public corporations of social services not been met?* [*sa-hoe-sŏ-pi-sŭ-kong-tan yak-sok, ŏ-ti-lo kass-na?*] [Press release]. 2 November. Available from: https://www.peoplepower21.org/index.php?mid=Welfare&page=69&document_srl=1534036&listStyle=list [Accessed 15 December 2020] (in Korean).

Zagel, H. and Lohmann, H. (2020) ‘Conceptualising state-market-family relationships in comparative research: a conceptual goodness view on defamilisation’, *Journal of Social Policy*, 50(4), pp. 852–870.

Ziegler, C.-N. (2012) *Mining for strategic competitive intelligence: foundations and applications.* London: Springer.

Zohlnhöfer, R. and Huß, C. (2016) “How well does the multiple-streams framework travel? Evidence from German case studies”, in Zohlnhöfer, R. and Rüb, F. W. (eds.) *Decision-making under ambiguity and time constraints: assessing the multiple-streams framework.* Colchester: ECPR Press, pp. 169–188.

APPENDIX I

Table A1.1. Childcare ownership, 2003–2020

Government	Year	Public spending on expanding national/public childcare facilities		Total number of childcare facilities		Maximum number of spaces available per 1,000 children using childcare services	
		In real terms (₩1 million) [1]	As a % of total childcare spending	National/public (directly operated/ outsourced) [2]	Private (for-profit/ not-for-profit) [3]	National/public	Private (for-profit/ not-for-profit)
Roh (03/2003–02/2008)	2003	0	0.00	1,329	22,813 (21,790/1,023)	127	1,055 (990/65)
	2004	4,710	0.91	1,349	25,554 (24,345/1,209)	122	1,096 (1,022/74)
	2005	17,761	2.24	1,473	26,894 (25,610/1,284)	122	1,112 (1,028/84)
	2006	21,626	1.92	1,643	27,590 (26,167/1,423)	124	1,107 (1,020/87)
	2007	21,963	1.60	1,748	29,108 (27,725/1,383)	123	1,099 (1,016/83)
Lee (03/2008–02/2013)	2008	11,959	0.83	1,826	31,673 (30,289/1,384)	124	1,134 (1,053/81)
	2009	10,554	0.51	1,917	33,633 (32,262/1,371)	125	1,137 (1,058/79)
	2010	10,657	0.44	2,034	35,987 (34,624/1,363)	120	1,096 (1,023/73)
	2011	3,016	0.10	2,116 (474/1,642)	37,726 (36,318/1,408)	117	1,086 (1,014/72)
	2012	3,241	0.09	2,203 (637/1566)	40,324 (38,819/1,505)	110	1,048 (978/70)
Park (03/2013–03/2017)	2013	17,314	0.32	2,332 (578/1,754)	41,438 (39,822/1,616)	114	1,084 (1,009/75)
	2014	34,641	0.60	2,489 (641/1,848)	41,253 (39,560/1,693)	120	1,083 (1,004/79)
	2015	23,190	0.38	2,629 (1,064/1,565)	39,888 (38,114/1,774)	130	1,103 (1,017/86)
	2016	24,539	0.40	2,859 (1,102/1,757)	38,225 (36,316/1,909)	136	1,082 (990/92)
Moon (05/2017–present)	2017	40,682	0.64	3,157 (1,057/2,110)	37,081 (35,093/1,988)	145	1,067 (971/96)
	2018	62,165	0.86	3,602 (795/2,807)	35,569 (33,546/2,023)	163	1,061 (961/100)
	2019	69,702	0.86	4,324 (430/3,900)	33,047 (31,028/2,019)	197	1,038 (934/104)
	2020 [4]	76,632	N/A	4,958 (379/4,579)	30,394 (28,355/2,039)	243	1,066 (950/116)

[1] Real term figures indicate the figures that are adjusted to the 2020 price level by using the GDP deflator from the Korean Statistical Information Service.

[2] Data regarding the public/private operation of these facilities does not exist prior to 2011. Data is based on the month of December in each of the given years.

[3] The categorisation of private childcare facilities into for-profit and not-for-profit followed the analysis provided by Kim (2013). For-profit private childcare facilities include 'home-based childcare facilities', 'centre-based childcare facilities', and 'social welfare corporations' childcare facilities', whilst not-for-profit childcare facilities include 'legal foundations' childcare facilities', 'co-parents' childcare facilities', and 'workplace childcare facilities'.

[4] The figures for public spending in real terms are based on budgets, not actual expenditure due to the absence of data.

Table A1.2. Childcare funding, 2003–2020

Government	Year	Out-of-home childcare				At-home childcare			
		Supply-side [1]		Demand-side [2]		In-home caregiver services		Homecare allowances	
		In real terms (₩1 million) [3]	As a % of total childcare spending	In real terms (₩1 million) [3]	As a % of total childcare spending	In real terms (₩1 million) [3], [4]	As a % of total childcare spending	In real terms (₩1 million) [3], [4]	As a % of total childcare spending
Roh (03/2003–02/2008)	2003	378,113	91.67	0	0.00	–	–	–	–
	2004	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	–	–	–	–
	2005	750,783	94.84	0	0.00	–	–	–	–
	2006	1,080,794	96.06	0	0.00	–	–	–	–
	2007	1,317,159	95.87	0	0.00	3,226 [5]	0.23	–	–
Lee (03/2008–02/2013)	2008	1,383,246	96.30	0	0.00	6,207 [5]	0.43	–	–
	2009	443,075	21.47	1,501,263	72.76	23,702	1.15	24,675	1.20
	2010	491,505	20.18	1,850,535	75.97	22,842	0.94	38,237	1.57
	2011	501,178	17.15	2,241,108	76.67	41,154	1.41	102,630	3.51
	2012	555,730	15.10	2,916,611	79.24	48,023	1.30	123,802	3.36
Park (03/2013–03/2017)	2013	654,888	12.13	3,738,069	69.25	68,172	1.26	868,105	16.08
	2014	681,306	11.71	3,614,228	62.14	86,633	1.49	1,318,163	22.67
	2015	793,278	13.12	3,805,406	62.93	82,731	1.37	1,277,611	21.13
	2016	910,252	14.91	3,817,827	62.56	85,333	1.40	1,216,148	19.93
Moon (05/2017–present)	2017	1,019,293	15.93	4,126,283	64.47	88,573	1.38	1,085,453	16.96
	2018	1,083,471	15.01	4,960,340	68.71	108,687	1.51	943,225	13.07
	2019	1,326,479	16.45	5,453,943	67.62	227,405	2.82	903,506	11.20
	2020 [6]	1,551,030	N/A	5,352,674	N/A	243,993	N/A	842,855	N/A

[1] Supply-side funding includes ‘support for childcare subsidies’ (between 2003 and 2008), ‘basic subsidies’, ‘subsidies for operating childcare facilities’, and ‘support for childcare facilities’.

[3] Demand-side funding includes ‘support for childcare subsidies’. The name of this policy programme changed over time.

[3] Real term figures are the figures adjusted to the 2020 price level by using the GDP deflator from the Korean Statistical Information Service.

[4] The symbol (–) indicates that the policy did not exist that year.

[5] The policy programme existed in some local authorities only, but not nationwide.

[6] The figures for public spending in real terms are not actual governmental spending but based on figures from the fourth supplementary budget (September 2020) due to an absence of data.

Table A1.3. Childcare regulation, 2003–2020

Government	Year	minimum education level (ISCED 2011 classification) and minimum duration of work experience/practice required for staffs [1], [2]		compulsory ongoing staff training (every 3 years)	maximum number of children per teacher by children's age				
		director	teacher		0	1	2	3	>4
Roh (03/2003–02/2008)	2003	level 3	level 3	20-40 hours	5	5	7	20	20
	2004	level 3	level 3	20-40 hours	5	5	7	20	20
	2005	level 3	level 3	20-40 hours	5	5	7	20	20
	2006	level 3 + 3 years	level 3 + 4 weeks	40 hours	3	5	7	15	20
	2007	level 3 + 3 years	level 3 + 4 weeks	40 hours	3	5	7	15	20
Lee (03/2008–02/2013)	2008	level 3 + 3 years	level 3 + 4 weeks	40 hours	3	5	7	15	20
	2009	level 3 + 3 years	level 3 + 4 weeks	40 hours	3	5	7	15	20
	2010	level 3 + 3 years	level 3 + 4 weeks	40 hours	3	5	7	15	20
	2011	level 3 + 3 years	level 3 + 4 weeks	40 hours	3	5	7	15	20
	2012	level 3 + 3 years	level 3 + 4 weeks	40 hours	3	5	7	15	20
Park (03/2013–03/2017)	2013	level 3 + 3 years	level 3 + 4 weeks	40 hours	3	5	7	15	20
	2014	level 3 + 6 years	level 3 + 4 weeks	40 hours	3	5	7	15	20
	2015	level 3 + 6 years	level 3 + 4 weeks	40 hours	3	5	7	15	20
	2016	level 3 + 6 years	level 3 + 6 weeks	40 hours	3	6	9	18	23
Moon (05/2017–present)	2017	level 3 + 6 years	level 3 + 6 weeks	40 hours	3	6	9	18	23
	2018	level 3 + 6 years	level 3 + 6 weeks	40 hours	3	5	7	15	20
	2019	level 3 + 6 years	level 3 + 6 weeks	40 hours	3	5	7	15	20
	2020	level 3 + 6 years	level 3 + 6 weeks	40 hours	3	5	7	15	20

[1] The ISCED 2011 classification is comprised of six levels: level 0 (pre-primary education), level 1 (primary education or first stage of basic education), level 2 (lower secondary education or second stage of basic education), level 3 (upper secondary education), level 4 (post-secondary, non-tertiary education), level 5 (first stage of tertiary education), and level 6 (second stage of tertiary education).

[2] The minimum education level and minimum duration of work experience or practice required for staffs in the table is applied to private childcare facilities with 20 or less children. Stricter rules apply to childcare facilities caring for more than 20 children, children with disabilities, or 0-2 year-olds.

APPENDIX II

Table A2.1. Details of sections included for the analysis

Government	Policy proposal (year)	Sections included for the analysis
Roh government (2003–2008)	First Mid-/Long-Term Basic Plan on Childcare (2006–2010)	"Background of childcare policy establishment" (section 1); "Directions of childcare policy" (section 3)
Lee government (2008–2013)	Amendment of the First Mid-/Long-Term Basic Plan on Childcare (2009–2012)	"Background of childcare policy establishment" (section 1); "Problems facing families with children" (section 3); "Directions of childcare policy" (section 4)
Park government (2013–2017)	Second Mid-/Long-Term Basic Plan on Childcare (2013–2017)	"Background of childcare policy development" (section 1); "problems in the institutional environment of childrearing and its implications" (section 2); "Mid-/long-term vision, strategies and policy initiatives" (section 4)
Moon government (2017–present)	Third Mid-/Long-Term Basic Plan on Childcare (2018–2022)	"Background of childcare policy development" (section 1); "Mid-/long-term strategies and policy directions" (section 2)

Table A2.2. Formal speeches regarding childcare by government and type

Government	Political speeches					Total
	Overall national affairs [1]	Ministry events [2]	Women-related events [3]	Policy forums	Others	
The Roh government (02/2003–02/2008)	8	5	15	3	6	37
The Lee government (02/2008–02/2013)	10	1	5	1	13	30
The Park government (02/2013–05/2017)	5	2	8	3	7	25
The Moon government (05/2017–present)	7	0	2	1	1	11

[1] Overall national affairs include new year's speeches, Independence Day speeches and National Assembly speeches.
[2] Ministry events include ministers' inaugural addresses and welcome talks in ministry-sponsored events.
[3] Women-related events include celebrative speeches for Women's Day, Gender Equality Week, and for anniversaries of women's organisations.

Table A2.3. A semantic network analysis of the Roh government (02/2003–02/2008)

Concepts (codes) (*N*=22)	Mode (frequency)	Core (=1) or periphery (=0)	Normalised centrality	
			Degree	Eigenvector
Female workforce participation (FEM_WORK)	34	1	23.095	68.037
Expansion of public support for childcare (CARE_EXP)	35	1	24.762	67.197
Low fertility/population ageing (LOW_BIRTH)	27	1	18.810	56.147
Economic/national development (ECON_DEV)	17	1	15.238	47.978
Gender equality (GENDER_EQ)	13	0	11.429	35.855
Childcare quality (CARE_QLT)	9	0	9.048	26.434
Work-family life balance (W/F_BAL)	6	0	7.143	23.668
Utilisation of female human resources (FEM_HR)	6	0	5.952	23.100
Social/economic burdens of childrearing (BURDEN)	6	0	7.381	20.349
Women's rights and interests (FEM_R/I)	9	0	5.714	18.774
Family-friendliness (FAM_FND)	6	0	7.143	18.614
Child development (CHILD_DEV)	6	0	5.714	16.509
Subsidies for using childcare services (CARE_SUB)	4	0	5.952	13.302
Human capital (HUM_CAP)	6	0	5.238	13.132
Creation of women's jobs (FEM_JOB)	4	0	4.286	12.644
Forefront countries (FOREFRONT)	3	0	3.571	10.870
Family disorganisation (FAM_DISORG)	3	0	2.857	10.367
Expansion of national/public childcare facilities (PUB_CARE)	2	0	3.571	9.118
Social investment (SOC_INV)	2	0	3.095	9.062
Universalisation of publicly funded childcare services (UNIV)	3	0	3.095	4.893
Expansion of workplace childcare facilities (WORK_CARE)	2	0	1.905	3.038
Large families (LG_FAM)	2	0	1.667	2.038

Table A2.4. A semantic network analysis of the Lee government (02/2008–02/2013)

Concepts (codes) (*N*=25)	Mode (frequency)	Core (=1) or periphery (=0)	Normalised centrality	
			Degree	Eigenvector
Low fertility/population ageing (LOW_BIRTH)	24	1	29.167	54.013
Female workforce participation (FEM_WORK)	19	1	30.417	52.402
Strengthening the state's responsibility for childcare (STATE_CARE)	18	1	28.333	50.179
Social/economic burdens of childrearing (BURDEN)	17	1	26.250	48.065
Childcare expansion (CARE_EXP)	16	1	25.833	41.850
Economic/national development (ECON_DEV)	12	1	15.417	32.998
Childbirth-friendly environment (BIRTH_FND)	9	0	15.833	29.722
Subsidies for using childcare services (CARE_SUB)	9	0	14.167	26.212
Utilisation of female human resources (FEM_HR)	6	0	13.750	25.973
Career interruption (WORK_DISC)	7	0	11.250	24.454
Work-family life balance (W/F_BAL)	10	0	14.583	23.665
Homecare allowances (HOMECARE_SUB)	6	0	13.750	22.891
Women-friendliness (FEM_FND)	8	0	11.250	18.592
Child development (CHILD_DEV)	5	0	9.583	18.248
Investment for the future (FUTURE_INV)	5	0	10.417	18.126
Multicultural families (MC_FAM)	6	0	10.000	17.582
Customised/tailored welfare provision (TAILORED)	5	0	10.417	16.761
Childcare quality (CARE_QLT)	5	0	9.167	16.269
Purple jobs (PUR_JOB)	7	0	10.833	16.148
Free childcare for five year-olds (FR_CARE_5)	5	0	9.167	14.628
Human capital development (HUM_CAP)	3	0	7.083	12.365
Forefront countries (FOREFRONT)	3	0	5.000	9.258
Gender equality (GENDER_EQ)	3	0	4.583	9.039
Expansion of workplace childcare (WORK_CARE)	3	0	5.000	7.310
Family-friendliness (FAM_FND)	3	0	3.750	5.533

Table A2.5. A semantic network analysis of the Park government (02/2013–05/2017)

Concepts (codes) (*N*=26)	Mode (frequency)	Core (=1) or periphery (=0)	Normalised centrality	
			Degree	Eigenvector
Female workforce participation (FEM_WORK)	26	1	28.400	55.895
Low fertility/population ageing (LOW_BIRTH)	25	1	27.200	51.552
Free childcare (FR_CARE)	27	1	28.000	50.436
Work-family life balance (W/F_BAL)	17	1	23.600	45.229
Career interruption (WORK_DISC)	15	1	20.400	40.877
Economic/national development (ECON_DEV)	16	1	18.800	40.615
Flexible working arrangements (FLEX_JOB)	10	1	16.400	33.636
Part-time jobs (PART_TIME)	10	0	15.200	30.196
In-home caregiver services (CARER_HOME)	8	0	12.400	24.370
Expansion of workplace childcare (WORK_CARE)	9	0	11.600	23.544
Creation of women's jobs (FEM_JOB)	6	0	10.400	21.231
Customised/tailored welfare provision (TAILORED)	10	0	11.600	20.219
Childcare service provision (CARE_PROV)	16	0	12.800	19.309
Investment for the future (FUTURE_INV)	11	0	10.400	18.760
Utilisation of female human resources (FEM_HR)	6	0	8.400	18.337
Freedom of choice (FR_CHOICE)	14	0	11.600	16.699
Family-friendliness (FAM_FND)	3	0	6.400	13.963
Childbirth-friendly environment (BIRTH_FND)	4	0	6.000	12.395
Childcare quality (CARE_QLT)	7	0	7.200	12.067
Homecare allowances (HOMECARE_SUB)	8	0	7.200	10.647
Life-cycle-specific (LIFE_CYCLE)	5	0	6.000	10.057
Social/economic burdens of childrearing (BURDEN)	5	0	3.200	8.734
Dual-earner families (DUAL_EARNER)	5	0	4.400	8.022
Child development (CHILD_DEV)	4	0	4.000	6.787
Gender equality (GENDER_EQ)	1	0	2.000	3.826
Parental leave (CARE_LEAVE)	2	0	1.600	2.697

Table A2.6. A semantic network analysis of the Moon government (05/2017–present)

Concepts (codes) (*N*=20)	Mode (frequency)	Core (=1) or periphery (=0)	Normalised centrality	
			Degree	Eigenvector
Strengthening the state's responsibility for childcare (STATE_CARE)	11	1	36.842	60.929
Female workforce participation (FEM_WORK)	7	1	25.263	50.279
Parental leaves (CARE_LEAVE)	2	1	22.105	43.422
Low fertility/population ageing (LOW_BIRTH)	6	1	24.211	43.367
Expanding national/public childcare facilities (N/P_FACILITY)	7	1	27.368	42.812
Gender equality (GENDER_EQ)	3	1	20.000	38.778
Childcare 'publicness' (PUBLICNESS)	5	1	20.000	36.716
Childcare quality (CARE_QLT)	2	0	15.789	29.187
Housing support (HOUSING)	3	0	14.737	28.509
Men's participation in childrearing (PATERNAL_CARE)	2	0	13.684	26.179
Women's wages and promotions (FEM_WAGE/PROMO)	2	0	12.632	25.049
Innovation (INNOV)	2	0	12.632	23.925
Social/economic burdens of childrearing (BURDEN)	1	0	11.579	23.639
Inclusiveness (INCLUSIVE)	3	0	14.737	21.137
Social inequalities (SOC_GAP)	2	0	10.526	16.277
Child benefits (CHILD_SUB)	2	0	9.474	13.806
Childcare Accreditation System (CAS)	2	0	5.263	10.512
Economic/national development (ECON_DEV)	1	0	5.263	8.760
All day childcare services (ALL_DAY_CARE)	2	0	5.263	8.316
Expansion of social service jobs (SOCSER_JOB)	2	0	2.105	6.443

APPENDIX III

Table A3.1. Childcare policy goals and plans regarding public ownership under the four governments

	Roh government (03/2003–03/2008)	Lee government (03/2008-03/2013)	Park government (03/2013-03/2017)	Moon government (05/2017-present)
Policy goals	Strengthening childcare 'publicness'; Providing high-quality childcare services	Strengthening the state's childcare responsibility; Promoting healthy development of children; Promoting policies based on mutual trust	Strengthening the state's childcare responsibility; Promoting healthy development of children; Constructing a childcare system based on trust and participation	Strengthening childcare 'publicness'; Improving the quality of childcare services; Reforming the childcare system; Expanding support for parental care
Plan regarding public ownership	Expanding national/public childcare facilities by 400 per year	Expanding national/public childcare facilities in rural/low-income areas only, with no specific target number suggested	Expanding national/public childcare facilities by 150 per year	Expanding national/public childcare facilities by 450 per year

Source: Researcher's own summary based on each government's childcare plan

Table A3.2. List of interviewees

No.	Interviewees' position and affiliation [1]
1	Senior Deputy Director, Ministry of Health and Welfare
2	Former civil servant, Ministry of Gender Equality and Family [2]
3	Member, Presidential Committee on Ageing Society and Population Policy
4	Former Co-representative, Korean Women's Association United
5	Co-representative, Korean Women's Association United
6	Co-representative, Korean Women Workers' Association
7	Former Director, Federation of Korean Trade Unions
8	Director, Korean Confederation of Trade Unions
9	Vice-chairperson, Korean Public Service and Transport Workers' Union (Childcare Department)
10	Senior Specialist, Korean Employers Federation
11	Member, People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy
12	Co-representative, Political Mamas
13	Secretary General, Korea Edu-Care Association [3]
14	Academic consultant
15	Academic consultant
16	Academic consultant

[1] The interviewees' position and affiliation is based on when the interviews were conducted.

[2] The interviewee did not want the researcher to reveal his or her position that he or she served in the ministry.

[3] The interview was conducted *via* email.

Table A3.3. The pledges on childcare publicness during the 2017 presidential election

	Sim Sang-jung	Moon Jae-in	Ahn Cheol-soo	Yoo Seong-min	Hong Jun-pyo
Political party	Justice Party	Democratic Party	People's Party	*Bareun* Party	Liberty Korea Party
Party Ideology	Social democracy	Social liberalism	Liberalism, reformism	Liberal conservatism	Conservatism
Party spectrum	Centre-left	Centre to centre-left	Centre	Centre to centre-right	Right to far-right
Agenda regarding childcare publicness	▪ Expanding national/ public childcare facilities ▪ Reinforcing 'publicness' for private childcare facilities ▪ Establishing 'public corporations for social services'	▪ Expanding national/ public childcare facilities ▪ Establishing 'public corporations for social services'	▪ Expanding national/ public childcare facilities ▪ Establishing 'public corporations for social welfare employment'	▪ Expanding national/ public childcare facilities by converting centre-based and home-based private childcare facilities into national/ public ones	▪ Expanding national/ public childcare facilities in vulnerable areas

Source: Researcher's own summary based on the archived presidential election manifestos.

Table A3.4. The number of national/public childcare facilities by type of operation, 2011–2020.

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Directly operated national/public childcare facilities	474 (22.4%)	638 (28.9%)	578 (24.8%)	641 (24.8%)	1,064 (40.5%)	1,102 (38.5%)	1,047 (33.2%)	795 (22.1%)	428 (9.9%)	379 (7.6%)
Outsourced national/public childcare facilities	1,642 (77.6%)	1,566 (71.1%)	1,754 (75.2%)	1,848 (74.2%)	1,565 (59.5%)	1,757 (61.5%)	2,110 (66.8%)	2,807 (77.9%)	3,896 (90.1%)	4,579 (92.4%)
To individuals	777 (36.7%)	742 (33.7%)	845 (36.2%)	900 (36.2%)	965 (36.7%)	1,072 (37.5%)	1,261 (39.9%)	1,796 (49.9%)	2,645 (61.2%)	3,245 (65.4%)
To organisations	119 (5.6%)	108 (4.9%)	130 (5.6%)	144 (5.8%)	92 (3.5%)	111 (3.9%)	155 (4.9%)	176 (4.9%)	224 (5.2%)	286 (5.8%)
To social welfare corporations [1]	368 (17.4%)	359 (16.3%)	395 (16.9%)	400 (16.1%)	235 (8.9%)	279 (9.8%)	327 (10.4%)	360 (10.0%)	422 (9.8%)	429 (8.7%)
To other legal corporations	334 (15.8%)	315 (14.3%)	343 (14.7%)	359 (14.4%)	121 (4.6%)	137 (4.8%)	172 (5.4%)	208 (5.8%)	295 (6.8%)	311 (6.3%)
To school foundations [2]	–	–	–	–	60 (2.3%)	64 (2.2%)	87 (2.8%)	103 (2.9%)	117 (2.7%)	115 (2.3%)
To religious foundations	–	–	–	–	75 (2.9%)	77 (2.7%)	96 (3.0%)	145 (4.0%)	165 (3.8%)	163 (3.3%)
To social cooperatives [3]	–	–	–	–	3 (0.1%)	6 (0.2%)	9 (0.3%)	18 (0.5%)	27 (0.6%)	30 (0.6%)
To other uncategorised entities	44 (2.1%)	42 (1.9%)	41 (1.8%)	45 (1.8%)	14 (0.5%)	11 (0.4%)	3 (0.1%)	1 (0.0%)	1 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Total number of national/public childcare facilities	2,116 (100%)	2,204 (100%)	2,332 (100%)	2,489 (100%)	2,629 (100%)	2,859 (100%)	3,157 (100%)	3,602 (100%)	4,324 (100%)	4,958 (100%)

Note: The data is based on the month of December in each of the given years.

[1] The term ‘social welfare corporation’ means any corporation established to implement social welfare programmes.

[2] The term ‘school foundation’ means a corporation organised under the Private School Act to establish and operate only a private school.

[3] The term ‘social cooperative’ means a not-for-profit cooperative that carries out business activities related to the enhancement of rights, interests, and welfare of local residents or provides social services or jobs to disadvantaged people.

Source: Ministry of Health and Welfare (2021b)

APPENDIX IV

Table A4.1. List of interviewees

No.	Interviewees' position and affiliation [1]
1	Senior Deputy Director, Ministry of Health and Welfare
2	Ministerial member who was involved in childcare policymaking during the Park government (03/2013–03/2017) [2]
3	Ministerial member who was involved in childcare policymaking during the Moon government (05/2017–present) [2], [3]
4	Former Aide to the Saenuri Party member who was affiliated with the National Assembly's Health and Welfare Committee, Grand National Party [3]
5	Member, Presidential Committee on Ageing Society and Population Policy
6	Member, Presidential Committee on Ageing Society and Population Policy
7	Member, Presidential Committee on Ageing Society and Population Policy [4]
8	Member, Presidential Committee on Ageing Society and Population Policy
9	Former Co-Representative, Korean Women's Association United
10	Co-Representative, Korean Women's Association United
11	Secretary General, Korea Edu-Care Association [3]

[1] The interviewees' position and affiliation is based on when the interviews were conducted.

[2] The interviewee did not want to reveal his/her position and affiliation and the interview could only be conducted on this condition.

[3] The interview was conducted *via* email.

[4] The interview was conducted *via* email first and then virtually.

Table A4.2. The pledges on childcare policy during the 2007 presidential election

	Kwon Young-ghil	Chung Dong-young	Moon Kook-hyun	Lee Myung-bak	Lee Hoi-chang
Party name	Democratic Labour Party	Grand Unified Democratic New Party	Creative Korea Party	Grand National Party	Independent, formerly Grand National Party
Party ideology	Democratic socialism	Social liberalism	Centrism, reformism	Conservatism	N/A
Party spectrum	Left	Centre to centre-left	Centre	Right to far-right	N/A
Pledges on childcare	▪ Free childcare for all pre-school children ▪ Increasing the proportion of national/public childcare facilities to 50%	▪ Free childcare services for all pre-school children ▪ Increasing the proportion of children using national/public childcare facilities to 30% by expanding them ▪ Increasing support for private childcare facilities to improve the quality of their services ▪ Increasing wages of childcare teachers working at private childcare facilities	▪ Increasing the proportion of children using national/public childcare facilities to 50% by expanding them ▪ Providing free education for children aged 3-18	▪ Providing subsidies for using childcare services for all 0 to 5 year-olds ▪ Introducing homecare allowances for families not using publicly funded childcare services ▪ Upgrading the private childcare market and diversifying childcare services	▪ Providing publicly subsidised childcare services ▪ Providing free childcare services for all 3 to 5 year-olds from low-income households ▪ Increasing support for private childcare facilities ▪ Establishing childcare facilities for 0 to 2 year-olds ▪ Increasing workplace childcare facilities

Source: Researcher's own summary based on the archived presidential election manifestos.

Table A4.3. Growing preferences towards welfare expansion and tax increases in South Korea

Year	Total	Gender		Age				
		Male	Female	20s	30s	40s	50s +	60s +
2003 [1]	39.2	40.2	38.3	38.1	37.4	41.7	39.8	N/A
2006 [2]	36.4	38.5	34.5	40.6	35.1	38.1	33.3	33.7
2007 [3]	39.3	42.3	36.4	34.0	39.5	39.7	42.7	43.5
2008 [4]	38.9	42.2	35.7	34.5	40.3	39.1	40.5	39.8
2011 [5]	53.1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2012 [6]	55.2	N/A	N/A	65.0	61.1	54.2	51.7	45.0
2013 [7]	43.0	50.0	37.0	54.0	46.0	45.0	37	35

Source: Ahn (2011); Korea Gallup DB (https://panel.gallup.co.kr/Gate/Panel/F023.aspx); Park (2012)

Note: The table shows the percentage of respondents who answered either 'strongly agree' or 'agree' to the question of "to what extent do you agree with the statement that we should improve the welfare standard even if it is accompanied by tax increases?"

[1] Data was obtained from phone interviews (conducted on 29/04/2003) with 1,041 respondents aged 20 and above. Sampling error was ± 3.0% with a confidence interval of 95%.
[2] Data was obtained from phone interviews (conducted between 27/02/2006–28/02/2006) with 1,027 respondents aged 19 and above. Sampling error was ± 3.1% with a confidence interval of 95%.
[3] Data was obtained from phone interviews (conducted on 04/03/2007) with 1,011 respondents aged 19 and above. Sampling error was ± 3.1% with a confidence interval of 95%.
[4] Data was obtained from phone interviews (conducted on 02/03/2008) with 1,022 respondents aged 19 and above. Sampling error was ± 3.1% with a confidence interval of 95%.
[5] Data was obtained from phone interviews (conducted between 22/01/2011–23/01/2011) with 800 respondents aged 18 and above. Sampling error was ± 3.5 with a confidence interval of 95%.
[6] Data was obtained from phone interviews (conducted between 03/10/2012–04/10/2012) with 1,500 respondents aged 20 and above. Sampling error was ± 1.96 with a confidence interval of 95%.
[7] Data was obtained from phone interviews (conducted between 21/01/2013–25/01/2013) with 1,569 respondents aged 19 and above. Sampling error was ±2.5 with a confidence interval of 95%.

Table A4.4. The pledges on child-related cash benefits during the 2017 presidential election

	Sim Sang-jung	Moon Jae-in	Ahn Cheol-soo	Yoo Seong-min	Hong Jun-pyo
Party name	Justice Party	Democratic Party	People's Party	*Bareun* Party	Liberty Korea Party
Party ideology	Social democracy	Social liberalism	Liberalism, reformism	Liberal conservatism	Conservatism
Party spectrum	Centre-left	Centre to centre-left	Centre	Centre to centre-right	Right to far-right
Pledges on child-related cash benefits	▪ Introducing child benefits (₩100,000; €75 per month) for all children	▪ Introducing child benefits (₩100,000 per month) for all 0 to 5 year-olds	▪ Introducing child benefits (₩100,000 per month) for 0 to 11 year-olds from households in the lower 80% income bracket	▪ Introducing child benefits (₩100,000 per month) for all children ▪ Increasing homecare allowances by ₩400,000 (€301) per month for children aged up to 2 and ₩200,000 (€150) per month for 2 year-olds)	▪ Introducing child benefits (₩150,000; €113 per month) for elementary and middle school students ▪ Doubling homecare allowances ▪ Introducing childbirth grants (₩10,000,000; €7,525) for the second child onwards

Source: Researcher's own summary based on the archived presidential election manifestos.