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Achievements of and challenges facing the Korean Disabled People's Movement

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ABSTRACT

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ARTICLE HISTORY

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Q1

Points of interest

- This paper explores the impact of the Disabled People's Movement in South Korea since 1945.
- The Korean Disabled People's Movement first emerged at the end of the 1980s with a campaign to claim basic rights to life for disabled people and, since this time, the movement has hugely influenced welfare policies and Korean society.
- Despite great achievements, the Korean Disabled People's Movement struggles to change Korean society and culture, in which disabled people still are marginalised, oppressed, discriminated and excluded.
- Future challenges for the Korean Disabled People's Movement are also discussed.

Introduction

The Disabled People's Movement, as a global movement, was created in an attempt to replace oppression with empowerment and marginalisation with full inclusion. Although disability movements in different countries have differing histories and have been created based on differing ideologies (e.g. Cooper 1999; Hayashi and Okuhira, 2001; Zhuang 2016), academic discussion on the Disabled People's Movement in non-western countries has remained relatively sparse. Compared to western countries, the Disabled People's Movement in South Korea (hereinafter Korea) has a short history. Nevertheless, the Korean Disabled People's Movement, much like its counterparts overseas, has had some success with regard to improving rights for

Table 1. Key nationwide Korea Disabled People's Movement Organisations.

	Korea Differently Abled Federation	Korea Federation of Organisation of the Disabled	The Solidarity Against Disability Discrimination
Values	Disability and human rights	Dang-Sa-Ja-Juwui and disability rights	Democratic movement
Members	Disabled people's organisations and supporting organisations	Disabled people's organisations (physical impairment)	Disabled people's organisations and citizen-activist organisations
Main methods of taking action	Making policy and legislation proposals relating to disability	CILs	Public protests

disabled persons. As a result of the activism in the Disabled People's Movement, Korean society's view of disabled people has slowly changed from considering them to be strangers to regarding them as human beings (Kwon and Noh 2009). Another example is 'Disabled Persons' Day', which was established in 1991 to raise public awareness about disabled people and to promote their rights. Through direct and indirect actions of disabled people's organisations (DPOs), where the authors as non-disabled activists and academics were also involved, the Korean Disabled People's Movement has played a central role in introducing and revising disability policies that enhance disabled people's rights. Despite these achievements, many issues continue to affect disabled people in Korea. Disability is still predominantly viewed through the lens of conservative culture and medical practice; for instance, the Disability Grading System still operates based on medical assessment. Disabled people continue to be discriminated directly or indirectly and treated unequally in every sector of Korean society. Consequently, the Korean Disabled People's Movement continues to work toward ensuring that disabled people's voices are heard. Nevertheless, the history of the Korean Disabled People's Movement has not been well documented because disabled activists had predominantly focused on direct and indirect activism and less on writing histories or engaging in theoretical reflection on the activism of the Disabled People's Movement. As a result, there are very few sources available which discuss the development of the Korean Disabled People's Movement, and they were generally written by non-disabled activists and academics such as the authors who have closely worked with/for disabled people's organisations (e.g. Yu 2004; Lee 2005; Kim 2012). This paper has analysed their work. To analyse detailed information about key disability activism events through the perspective of disabled people, this paper also examined key policy and activism documents produced by disabled people's organisations. Three key nationwide disabled people's organisations controlled by a majority of disabled people were selected for this paper (see Table 1). Last, this paper looked at two well-known media produced by disabled people, 'Ablenews', which is an online portal newspaper,

86 and 'HamkkeGulum', which is the oldest monthly magazine for disabled peo-
87 ple published by the Research Institute of the Differently Abled Person's
88 Right (RIDRIK) since March 1988.

89 In exploring various literature, this paper will initially discuss the origin
90 and development of the Disabled People's Movement and its impact on the
91 lives of disabled people; secondly, its theoretical foundations; and finally, the
92 current challenges the Korean Disabled People's Movement is facing.
93

94 The emergence of the Korean Disabled People's Movement 95

96 The Disabled People's Movement consists of various strands and factions
97 and, therefore, any account of its history is inevitably partial, contentious
98 and open to debate. The term 'Disabled People's Movement' has been used
99 since the late 1980s in Korea but there is a dispute about the notion of the
100 Disabled People's Movement. Many disabled activists in Korea have defined
101 the Disabled People's Movement as a movement to tackle the full range of
102 barriers and discriminations that disabled people encounter and to acknow-
103 ledge disability rights (HamkkeGulum 1993). But other disabled activists have
104 defined the Disabled People's Movement as a social movement led by dis-
105 abled people only. For instance, RIDRIK (2001) defined the Disabled People's
106 Movement as disabled people's proactive efforts to get over the dilemmas
107 and barriers that disabled people face. Currently, there is no objection to
108 defining the Disabled People's Movement as the movement 'by the disabled,
109 for the disabled and of the disabled' but the Disabled People's Movement is
110 still subject to a dispute between political activism, campaigning and protest
111 created by disabled people's organisations only and in making connections with
112 non-disabled activists. We will talk about this issue later. The development of
113 the Korean Disabled People's Movement can be considered to have occurred
114 over three phases: the quickening, developing and diversity periods.
115

116 The quickening period: 1945–mid-1980s

117 Before the enacting of the Act on Special Education for Disabled Persons in
118 1977 and the Disabled Persons Welfare Act in 1981, there was no disability
119 policy in Korea.

120 During this period, there were no support services for disabled people,
121 and welfare policy focused on institutional 'housing' with an emphasis on
122 social control. This lack of a welfare state means that many disabled people
123 were unaware of their rights to 'secure a reasonable standard of life'
124 (Campbell and Oliver 1996:60). The absence of a welfare state, in combin-
125 ation with negative social and cultural attitudes towards disability, also
126 meant that the only option for disabled people was to receive care from
127 their family or relatives (Hwang and Roulstone 2015). While there was no

128 collective, and concerted the Disabled People's Movement during this period,
129 a small amount of disability activism was ongoing, mainly involving creating
130 petitions to help certain disabled people gain access to employment and
131 education. In 1967, for instance, a student with polio was refused admission
132 to Busan Middle School, which was one of the most prestigious secondary
133 schools in Korea. The student achieved a perfect result of 100% in an aca-
134 demic examination, but he did not pass the mandatory physical test for
135 admission because of his disability (Korea Rehabilitation Fund 1996).

136 Consequently, the Korea Polio Association created a petition demanding a
137 revision to the unfair admission process for disabled students. As a result, the
138 Korean government decreed that disabled students would be exempt from the
139 physical-examination aspect of admission tests for middle and high schools in
140 1972 (HamkkeGulum 2009). In 1982, four disabled people who passed the
141 national bar examination were not appointed as judges, with no appropriate
142 reasons given. Approximately 20 organisations for disabled people conse-
143 quently created a petition concerning this issue. As a result, the Supreme Court
144 ordered the Ministry of Justice to appoint them as judges (Ablenews 2010a).

145 Influenced by the United Nations International Year of Disabled Persons in
146 1981, this period also saw the first steps taken in creating major disability
147 policy, as evidenced by the enactment of the Disabled Persons Welfare Act
148 in 1981; this Act outlined the responsibilities of central and local govern-
149 ments, and stipulated basic policies concerning the welfare of disabled peo-
150 ple. This Act concentrated mainly on medical and vocational rehabilitation,
151 and protecting the livelihoods of disabled people (Kim 2008). Disability in
152 this Act was medically defined as the experience of substantial restrictions in
153 or social life for an extended period due to physical impairment, visual
154 impairment, communication difficulties, hearing impairment or mental health
155 Q6 problems. This definition was in official use until 1999 when a classified sys-
156 tem was adopted. Under this Act, disabled people living in institutions bene-
157 fited more than other disabled people (HamkkeGulum 1996).

158 Another important occurrence during this period was that many organisa-
159 tions for disabled people were established by non-disabled activists, mostly
160 in an attempt to support disabled people who were being discriminated in
161 education and employment. However, these organisations did not work col-
162 lectively to remove disability discrimination (Yu 2004), rather they were
163 merely individual efforts. The key issue for disabled people's organisations at
164 this time was obtaining 'care' for disabled people.

166 The developing period: late 1980s–mid-1990s

167 Since 1960, Korea had been ruled by successive military and authoritarian
168 leaders. However, in 1987, the democratic movements that were ongoing in
169 Korea changed into social movements that evolved in the context of the

170 highly repressive system of rule in Korea (Shin and Chang 2011). DPOs were
171 inspired by the social demands that were being made and learned the activ-
172 ism of conducting democratic struggles (Yun 2012). For instance, the
173 National Union of Students with Physical Disabilities (NUSPD) was trans-
174 formed into an organisation called *Ullimteo* in 1986, which devoted itself to
175 promoting mutual friendship, but this was the first disabled activist group to
176 highlight that the oppression disabled people were facing was a social prob-
177 lem rooted in the economic and social structures of capitalism (Ullimteo
178 1993). In 1987, key members of *Ullimteo* joined the National Organisation for
179 People with Physical Disabilities (NOPPD) to lead the organisation, but the
180 existing members of NOPPD struggled to collaborate with the newly arrived
181 disabled young activists' radical activism (Hong 2016). As a result, *Ullimteo*
182 was dissolved in 1992 and almost all disabled young activists from *Ullimteo*
183 joined the Association for Young Disabled People's Activism (AYDPA)
184 (Ullimteo 1993).

185 In 1987, young disabled activists from AYDPA discovered that the budget
186 for the 1988 Seoul Paralympic Games was over four times that of the total
187 welfare budget provided for disabled people (HamkkeGulum 2003, 16). This
188 caused them to organise a mass public protest demanding the boycotting of
189 the Paralympic Games and to demand sufficient resources and services for
190 disabled people. The protest was held under the name 'Union for Enacting
191 Two Acts', which was not a disabled people's organisation but a group of
192 people, including non-disabled activists, who were campaigning to achieve
193 full human rights and equality for disabled people. From 1988, disabled acti-
194 vists began to engage in mass radical, but non-violent, direct actions such as
195 demonstrations on streets, hunger strikes and sit-in strikes at politic parties
196 or government offices (HamkkeGulum 1991). Such non-violent direct actions
197 represented important measures towards pressuring the government to
198 respond to the needs of disabled people in the country. Their actions also
199 empowered other disabled people to form various organisations for the dis-
200 abled adopting the slogan 'emancipation from disability' (HamkkeGulum
201 2008). The leading group of the movement in this period was a small num-
202 ber of educated people with physical impairments and non-disabled activists.
203 For instance, RIDRIK was established in 1987 to lobby politicians and profes-
204 sionals to introduce disability-related policies and legislation, while another
205 key organisation was the National Association of the Physically Disabled
206 Undergraduate Students (NAPUS), which was formed in 1978 and which
207 mainly organised radical public protests against the government (Ablenews
208 2015). At the end of the 1980s, disability welfare policies and services were
209 radically challenged by the Disabled People's Movement. In 1988, the Korean
210 government began a national register to identify eligibility for welfare bene-
211 fits. But eligibility criteria were linked to type and severity (on a scale of 1-6)

212 of impairment that focused on physical and functional limitations (Kim 2006,
213 862). As a result of direct and indirect actions and agitation of these organi-
214 sations, key disability-related legislation (e.g. the Welfare for People with
215 Disabilities Act 1989 and the Disability Employment Act 1990) were also
216 enacted or amended during this period. Under the Welfare for People with
217 Disabilities Act 1989, financial support was initiated for disabled people and
218 included social security pensions, medical cost allowance, children's educa-
219 tion tuition fee allowance, mortgage and tax exemption. Nevertheless, the
220 role of the government was largely limited to financial support (Kim 1996).

221 Kim (2008, 70) argues that the Disabled People's Movement in this period
222 was qualitatively different from the previous period because the focus of
223 activism changed from helping individuals who were discriminated against
224 to demanding human rights for all disabled people. Yu (2004) also argues
225 that during this period the Korean Disabled People's Movement began to
226 consider disability to be a social problem and initiated attempts to gain the
227 assistance of other citizen movement groups in an attempt to change social
228 values and systems for disabled people. Hence, disability activism slowly
229 shifted from 'care' and 'charity' to 'rights'; the most important issues now
230 related to survivorship and the right to employment and education (Kim
231 2008). However, Yu (2004) also mentions criticisms of the movement, particu-
232 larly that although the Disabled People's Movement in this period developed
233 and flourished by meeting oppressed disabled people's demands through
234 organising democratic movements the Disabled People's Movement did not
235 extend its activism beyond democratic movements. At this time, no attempts
236 were made to introduce western social models concerning disability or
237 disability studies in Korea.

240 The period of diversity: late 1990s–present day

241 In the late 1990s, the number of disabled people's organisations began
242 to multiply. For instance, disabled activists seeking recognition of disabled
243 persons' rights divided into several nationwide organisations (Yun 2012).

244 These included nationwide organisations such as the Korea Differently
245 Abled Federation (KODAF), formed in 1998, and the Korea Federation of

Q7 246 Organization of the Disabled (KOFOD), established in 2002. Additionally,
247 the new philosophical and conceptual approaches have introduced to
248 the Korean Disabled People's Movement such as *Dangsajajuwui*,¹ the
249 Independent Living Movement (ILM), and consumerism; while the ILM was
250 introduced in 1993 through Japan's Human Care Association, *Dangsajajuwui*
251 was introduced in 1991 by the Korea Disabled People's International (KDPI),
252 that particularly emphasised disabled peoples' rights to self-determination
253 and self-representation. Relating to ILM, 10 Centres for Independent Living

254 (CiLs) were established in Korea in 2005 with government funding, and
255 almost 200 CiLs were in existence in 2017 (Yu 2017, 309). The Korean gov-
256 ernment revised the Welfare of Persons with Disabilities Act in 2008 to pro-
257 vide legal grounds for its support of CiLs. The Korean government has also
258 operated 90 Independent Living Experience Homes (ILEHs) since 2009, in
259 which disabled people are supported to live independently, outside of insti-
260 tutions or care homes (Korean Disability Forum 2014). ILEHs provide
261 ‘transitional support’ to disabled people, training them in the ability to per-
262 form various daily activities independently, both at home and in the local
263 community, while still receiving some assistance when needed. This enables
264 such disabled people to make a successful transition from living in institu-
265 tions to living in their local communities. ILM’s philosophy, which emphasises
266 consumer control, and the idea that disabled people are the best experts on
267 their own needs, was integrated into *Dangsajajuwei* in 2002 by the KOFOD

Q9 (Lee, Choi, and Lee 2007). However, there has been great debate on the
269 orientation of ILM and the method by which it should be used to campaign
270 for disabled people’s rights. Some disabled people’s organisations, such as
271 the Korea Federation of Centres for Independent Living of Persons with
272 Disabilities (KOLL), have criticised the Korea Council of Centres for
273 Independent Living (KCIL) for failing to recognise disabled people’s opinions;
274 the basis of this viewpoint is that many non-disabled people and profession-
275 als function as the representatives of CiLs (Yun 2012). In fact, this criticism
276 caused ILM to split into two groups in 2006: an advocacy-oriented group
277 and a service-oriented group.

278 In another related development, in 2003, 60 disability organisations joined
279 the Disability Discrimination Act of Solidarity in Korea (DDASK) to create a
280 different version of the country’s anti-discrimination law (DDASK 2003). The
281 radical and direct activism of DDASK contributed to the introduction and
282 enactment of the anti-discrimination law that adequately reflected disabled
283 people’s experiences and opinions.

Q10 Also in this period, two more nationwide disabled people’s organisations
285 emerged (i.e. KODAF and KFOD). The two organisations used non-violent
286 actions, such as seminars, public hearings, education, publications and policy
287 conferences to achieve their goal to develop and recommend new policy to
288 promote disabled people’s rights (see http://kodaf.or.kr/bbs/board.php?bo_
289 [table¼E03](http://kodaf.or.kr/bbs/board.php?bo_)). However, other disabled people’s activists that disagreed with
290 the actions of the above two nationwide organisations also emerged, such
291 as the Solidarity Committee of the Disabled to Obtain Mobility Rights
292 (SDOMOR), which is notable for its response to a much-publicised incident in
293 2001. In this incident, a 70-year-old wheelchair user and his wife fell down
294 an elevator shaft at Oeido subway station; the man was seriously injured and
295 his wife died. As a result of this accident, SDOMOR started a public campaign

296 to obtain mobility rights for disabled people, which had never been
297 issued in Korea. To achieve this, disabled activists in SDOMOR began using
298 radical and direct action such as occupying public transport, shackling
299 themselves to subway tracks and staging a sit-in demonstration in front
300 of Seoul Metropolitan City Hall. Through these radical and public actions,
301 both disabled and non-disabled activists were arrested by police, and
302 the resultant media attention raised the public awareness of their campaign
303 (see the documentary film 'Report on the Strife for the Disabled's
304 Mobility Right-Let's Take a Bus! [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v¼
305 OTg688BNfC8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v¼OTg688BNfC8)). Consequently, the Korean government enacted 'The
306 Law Concerning Transportation and Mobility Rights for the Disabled, Elderly,
307 and Pregnant Women' in 2005. In 2007, SDOMOR and other disabled
308 people's organisations merged to become the Solidarity Against Disability
309 Discrimination (SADD), with this organisation also advocating the use
310 of radical, and direct actions. Further, SADD strongly argued that non-
311 disabled activists or professionals should not lead the Disabled People's
312 Movement. Specifically, they argued that the Disabled People's Movement
313 could not transform a society if the movement is not controlled by disabled
314 people themselves (Yun 2012). In this period, people defined as having
315 severe impairments² became a leading group in the Korean Disabled
316 People's Movement because the needs of those people defined as having
317 'mild impairments' had been met through the enacted or amended laws
318 relating to access to education and employment (Kim 2008). This change
319 in the focus of the Korean Disabled People's Movement was supported by
320 the fact that the ILM had become influential in the lives of people defined
321 as having severe impairments.

322 The Korean Disabled People's Movement has made great progress since the
323 2000s. For instance, in disability discrimination legislation enacted in 2007,
324 new disability-support legislation and rights-based disability policies were
325 introduced to uphold disabled people's rights; further, western social
326 models concerning disabled persons were also introduced in Korea during this
327 period. However, the number of direct actions aimed at changing the social
328 system has slowly reduced, and solidarity among the various factions within
329 the Korean Disabled People's Movement has been largely absent since 2007. In
330 fact, the Korean Disabled People's Movement has become practically and
331 theoretically divided (see Table 1). As Table 1 shows, there are currently three
332 nationwide disabled people's organisa- tions in Korea, and these seldom
333 work cooperatively; nevertheless, they do agree on the core purposes and
334 philosophies of the Korean Disabled People's Movement. The three
335 organisations have very different views on the Disabled People's Movement
336 and on the necessary strategies required to accomplish their goals.
337

The theoretical features of the Korean Disabled People's Movement

Unlike western countries, where social models concerning disability have provided the Disabled People's Movement with a theoretical lens through which to understand and make efforts to improve the status of disabled people in society (Finkelstein 2001), the underlying theories of the Korean Disabled People's Movement are rooted in 'disability liberation', 'Dangsajajuwei' (literally meaning 'the person/party concerned-ism') and 'human rights'.

Disability liberation

As presented above, the disability liberation in the Korean Disabled People's Movement began as a voluntary organisation of young disabled adults who were greatly influenced by the democracy movements of the 1980s. The disability liberation defines the Disabled People's Movement as a democratic revolution movement (Yun 2012). Further, disability liberation aligns the Korean Disabled People's Movement with Marxism (but it is not supportive of the North Korean regime), and believes that capitalism is responsible for the discrimination and oppression toward disabled persons present in society and that it continues to be the main hindrance to achieving equality (Yun 2012). Kyungseok Park, who is a wheelchair user and leader of SADD, argues that:

speed and competition are prioritised, and lagging behind someone can be seen as sin in capitalism. So, disabled people have been treated as losers because they always fall behind. Therefore, the movements should be against capitalism. (Kim 2011)

Adopting this theoretical paradigm, disabled activists began to advocate the theory that disability was socially created by the nature of Korea's capitalistic society. Further radical disabled activist's organisations have emerged, favouring direct action strategies to transform society, instead of soft-action strategies such as government lobbying and raising awareness of disability issues amongst Korean society. In particular, disability liberation activists aim to build a strong collaboration with other civil rights movement groups in order to make a concerted effort to overcome the powerful forces of capitalism (Yu 2004). Such a sentiment has existed since at least 1986, when desires to achieve disability liberation caused disabled people's organisations to align themselves with civil society groups in order to publicly demand that the government reform education, health care, employment and the transportation system. For instance, SADD adopted the tactic of making direct political protests in order to raise awareness of both disability and of the discriminatory barriers existent in Korean society (HamkkeGulum 2011). SADD has been proactively establishing strategic partnerships with other

380 mainstream human-rights-based organisations, such as the *Sarangbang* for
381 Human Rights Movement (1993), with the objective of broadening the activ-
382 ities to successfully create a definitive change in Korean society (Park 2010).

383 Adhering to disability liberation principles, the Korean Disabled People's
384 Movement aims to radically change social systems and liberate disabled peo-
385 ple from productivity- and utility-related demands created by capitalism and
386 create an equal society for all; consequently, radical activism has become the
387 main part of disability liberation (HamkkeGulum 2014). However, the same
388 disability liberation principles are critical of *Dangsajajuwei*, as some disabled
389 activists believe that it cannot be the purpose or aim of the Korean Disabled
390 People's Movement because there are no existing civil rights movements
391 based on *Dangsajajuwei* (Yu 2004; Kim 2012). Specifically, they believe that
392 *Dangsajajuwei* could be important in terms of self-representation of disabled
393 people, but it does not provide any direction or values for the Disabled
394 People's Movement (Yu 2004; Kim 2012).

396 Dangsajajuwei

397
398 *Dangsajajuwei* emphasises that disabled people should be able to make their
399 own decisions and have control over the Disabled People's Movement, and
400 non-disabled activists and professionals are not able to create suitable con-
401 tent and establish systems or facilities for disabled people (Ablenews 2017a).
402 Therefore, the Disabled People's Movement should prevent non-disabled
403 activists and professionals gaining power over the Movement. As seen in
404 debates on the appropriate capacities and roles of non-disabled people in
405 the Disabled People's Movement (Drake 1997; Branfield 1998; Duckett 1998),
406 *Dangsajajuwei* represents powerful resistance against organisations 'for' dis-
407 abled people and also criticises exercising power on behalf of disabled peo-
408 ple. Since 2002, this notion has become a key political ideology and
409 attempts have been made to use it to transform the Korean Disabled
410 People's Movement. However, it is not clear whether *Dangsajajuwei* should
411 be classified as a theory or activism. Lee (2005), who is a well-known dis-
412 abled academic in Korea, argues that it is difficult to regard *Dangsajajuwei* as
413 a theoretical model relating to disability because *Dangsajajuwei* stems from
414 an individual's consciousness of the problem concerning the limitations
415 experienced by disabled people in society, rather than from awareness of
416 innate deficits, which is very similar to social models concerning disability.
417 However, differing from social models, *Dangsajajuwei* does not contain a
418 clear definition of disability. As such, Lee (2005) insists that *Dangsajajuwei*
419 should be considered a social and political movement involving resistance
420 against a dominant hierarchical social system, because activism based on
421 *Dangsajajuwei* is usually expressed in political campaigns by major disabled

people's organisations aimed at highlighting the need to remedy the inequalities experienced by disabled people. *Dangsajajuwei* also advocates the DPI's philosophy, that disabled people are themselves acting as catalysts of change towards achieving full participation and demanding equality with their fellow citizens. Although there are commonalities between *Dangsajajuwei* and certain disability rights movements, such as being theoretically based on a social model and possessing a consumer-centred approach, *Dangsajajuwei* involves a criticism of the fact that disability rights movements have overlooked a key point: that equal opportunities and equal rights for disabled people cannot guarantee equal participation in all decision-making processes. As Gill (1994) argues, decision-making is regarded as a political process rather than a product of equal rights; so, *Dangsajajuwei* can be regarded as a new form of transformative political action for disabled people that is aimed at creating significant social change. However, these arguments do not clearly explain who the main group that constitutes *Dangsajajuwei* is. Peters et al. (2009) state that social movements may contain within themselves a heterogeneity of membership, as well as different coalitions, geographies, episodes, and events, but they are linked by solidarity around a collective identity and vision. Kim (2003) criticises that there are many pseudo-*Dangsajajuwei*. Considering the above, it becomes clear that not all organisations 'of' disabled people can be included under the name *Dangsajajuwei* because the character of the Korean Disabled People's Movement is very hierarchical and patriarchal, despite its democratic basis. Some disabled people and their organisations exercise power over other disabled people and exclude them from taking political action. Through this practice, some disabled people are, paradoxically, being oppressive towards other disabled people. Kim (2012) criticises that this ideology can be transformed into exclusive collective group activism that involves focusing advocacy on only certain disabled people and becoming distant from the fight against oppression and inequality. Yu (2004) is also concerned that excessively emphasising collective identity and solidarity under *Dangsajajuwei* could mean that multiplicity and plurality of disability are neglected.

On the other hand, Ko (2007) argues that *Dangsajajuwei* is a progressive theory that promotes the idea that the Korean Disabled People's Movement must consist of, be led by and represent disabled people, and that a society should be reinterpreted through disabled people's viewpoints. Nevertheless, there is still no clear theoretical definition of *Dangsajajuwei*. For instance, Lee (2005, 12) defines it as follows: '*Dangsajajuwei* is a developed disability movement that, through political solidarity, aims to achieve disabled people's self-advocacy, self-determination, independence, and inclusion and to pursue disabled people's rights and choice-centred welfare in order to prevent unequal power relationships in disabling environment'. However, Kim

464 (2003) argues that *Dangsajajuwei* is not a model for or value of the Korean
465 Disabled People's Movement, but represents the principle that disabled peo-
466 ple should be involved as active agents in decision-making, policy formula-
467 tion, resource allocation and service provisions. These definitions do not
468 clearly explain who '*Dangsaja*' (the person/party) is and the definition of dis-
469 ability is still unclear. Therefore, this ideology remains, for the time being, of
470 limited utility in countering the powerful socio-cultural values that character-
471 ise disabled people as 'others'.

472 473 Human rights

474
475 In Korea, disabled people often experience human rights violations, conse-
476 quently being denied their right to live as equal citizens (Yu 2004). Further,
477 some disabled people have been involuntarily incarcerated in residential
478 institutions, where they are subjected to neglect and abuse (Lee 2015). The
479 Korean Disabled People's Movement has fought for fundamental human
480 rights, especially rights for living, since the late 1990s (Yu 2004). In addition,
481 the International Year for Disabled Persons 1981 and the Asian and Pacific
482 Decade of Persons with Disabilities (1993–2002) had a tremendous impact
483 on raising awareness of the infringements on disabled people's human rights
484 in Korea. As a result of this new-found attention, the Convention on the
485 Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) was drafted and adopted in Korea
486 in 1998. Since then, disabled people defined as having severe impairments,
487 who were the most oppressed people, have risen to the forefront of the
488 movement for change (Yun 2012). Based on the emergent needs of these
489 disabled people, therefore, activism towards protecting the rights to live, as
490 well as mobility, education and employment has become the core principle
491 of the Korean Disabled People's Movement. The Korean Disabled People's
492 Movement has also focused on formalising human rights. Through these
493 efforts, after CRPD came into force in Korea, the Disability Discrimination Act
494 was enacted in 2007 and amended in 2010. Furthermore, a number of new
495 legislations concerning the promotion of human rights of disabled people
496 have been enacted; for example, the Pension Act for Persons with Disabilities
497 (2010), which relates to supporting the livelihoods of people with complex
498 needs; the Act on Activity Assistance for Persons with Disabilities (2011),
499 which concerns supporting the granting of an allowance to disabled people
500 who require assistance in daily life and social activities; the Act on Welfare
501 Support for Children with Disabilities (2012), focusing on providing inclusive
502 welfare support for disabled children; the Act on Supporting the Housing
503 Impaired, including Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly (2012), which
504 concerns providing safe and convenient housing; and the Act on Assurance
505 and Support for the Rights of Persons with Developmental Disabilities (2015),

506 which relates to providing customised support that accords with the charac-
507 teristics and welfare needs of persons with developmental disabilities and
508 which suits their life cycles and secures their rights. Under this legislation, the
509 direction of the Disabled People's Movement has slowly begun to change
510 from the individual care approach to the right-based approach (e.g. the right
511 to vote, participate in the political activities of local authorities, inclusive edu-
512 cation, and participate in the management of local welfare facilities) (Yu 2017).

513 However, the Disabled People's Movement is still yet to instigate sufficient
514 social and cultural impacts on Korean society that change the traditional
515 negative perceptions of disability and disablement. In various respects, dis-
516 abled people in Korea are still being treated as lesser human beings, which
517 has resulted in segregation, discrimination and even physical abuse (Hwang
518 and Roulstone 2015). Disability activism in Korea has aimed to integrate dis-
519 abled people into the community (Kim et al. 2016), but residential institu-
520 tions for disabled people still remain the dominant form of service provision.
521 Further, deinstitutionalisation has yet to be shined in a policy (Lee 2015).
522 A report by the National Human Rights Commission of Korea (NHRCK 2009)
523 showed people with mental health problems have an 86% rate of involun-
524 tary institutionalisation in Korea. This report concluded that the rights of
525 most disabled people have been ignored, such as the right to self-determin-
526 ation. Further, although disabled people's organisations have consistently
527 asked the government to end institutionalisation in favour of supporting
528 disabled people's independent living, the Korean government has still
529 maintained its anachronistic and inhumane segregation-centred policies (e.g.
530 Disability Grading System), which are based on a medical perspective. Moreover,
531 disabled people's voices are often filtered through the views of service
532 providers, professionals and family members. According to the 2015 Annual
533 Report of the National Human Rights Commission of Korea (2015), an analysis
534 of the complaints relating to discriminatory acts that have been received
535 between the commission's foundation and December 2015 revealed that dis-
536 ability-based discrimination accounted for 45% (9,462 cases) of a total of 20,981
537 cases. Considering this, Lee (2005) argues that the Korean Disabled People's
538 Movement has merely used disability as a campaign slogan of a 'human rights'
539 issue and has both failed to actively promote disabled people's rights and
540 strongly challenge the notion of disabled people as vulnerable beneficiaries,
541 which is deeply embedded in Korean society and the country's welfare system.
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544 Current challenges to the Korean Disabled People's Movement

545 The Korean Disabled People's Movement faces a number of complex
546 challenges, some of which are common to the Disabled People's Movement
547 in other countries, while others are unique to the Korean context.

548 The first challenge is that although western social models concerning
549 disability have been introduced, there have not yet been any debates within
550 the Korean Disabled People's Movement and among disabled academics
551 concerning theoretical models of disability in the Korean context. While the
552 Korean Disabled People's Movement has raised public awareness of disabili-
553 ty, the traditional Korean culture, which praises physical perfection, has still
554 largely failed to fully grasp the challenges of disability (see Kim 2017).
555 Definitions of disability and their effects on disabled people are still based
556 on medical and cultural perspectives. Disability is traditionally conceived
557 as a tragic medical problem in Korea and it has been taken for granted that
558 solving the issues relating to disability is the responsibility of the families
559 of those affected (Hwang and Charnley 2010). In an attempt to combat this,
560 various efforts have been made by disability-advocacy organisations and the
561 Korean government to reduce stigma against disabled people. In one such
562 attempt, from the early 1990s, disability advocacy groups such as RIDRIK
563 led by professionals campaigned for the introduction of the new term
564 *Jangaewoo* ('disabled friends') to refer to disabled people (Ryu 2009), instead
565 of the official legal term *Jangaein* ('disabled person'). However, introducing a
566 new term does nothing to alleviate the deeper social injustices in existence,
567 which require social and political change. Consequently, in the early 2000s,
568 disabled people's organisations, especially KOFOD, rejected using the term
569 *Jangaewoo*, stating that it was never used by disabled people to refer to
570 themselves, and that highly problematic implications remain concerning
571 acknowledging disabled people's human rights and identity (Chammal 2010).
572 Moreover, the Korean Disabled People's Movement has attempted to address
573 theoretical or hegemonic ideas and practices in Korea society, but disabled
574 activists and academics have agreed that there has, as yet, been no critical
575 discussion of these theories and concepts (HamkkeGulum 2008). As discussed
576 above, there has also been a lack of vigorous academic discussion
577 concerning disability liberation, *Dangsajajuwei*, and human rights, as well as
578 philosophical/theoretical debate relating to the implications of disability.
579 Factional tensions, political rivalries and ideological disagreement between
580 theories have caused the Korean Disabled People's Movement to consistently
581 remain outside any vigorous debate on disability theories, and it has had
582 little influence on the theoretical arena of disability.

583 The second challenge relates to the constituent organisation of the
584 Disabled People's Movement. The Korean Disabled People's Movement has
585 successfully managed to represent the various forms of DPOs. As discussed
586 in the previous section, each DPO is rooted in different politics, strategies
587 and tactics and the organisations are led by various leading groups, includ-
588 ing the parents of disabled people, non-disabled activists and professionals.
589 In Korea, the term 'DPO' has been used without a clear distinction between

590 organisations of the disabled and organisations *for/with* the disabled (see
591 Oliver's typology, 1990). For instance, there are three big nationwide DPOs,
592 and each insists on referring to themselves as the truly 'authentic and repre-
593 sentative' organisation 'of' or 'for' disabled people (Ablenews 2016).
594 Moreover, they have unnecessarily competed to take control of the initiative
595 of the Disabled People's Movement. They have seldom worked cooperatively
596 at a national and local level, and occasionally have even been hostile to
597 each other (Yun 2012). For instance, KOFOD criticised KODAF for not being a
598 disability organisation *for* disabled people because the organisation is con-
599 trolled by the parents of disabled people and professionals; SADD has also
600 been significantly critical of non-disabled activists and the values of the dem-
601 ocracy movement. On the other hand, SADD strongly argues that KODAF is
602 an interest group that does not take any action, and that KOFOD is an anti-
603 movement group seeking to take control of social welfare services (Kim
604 2012). Additionally, the government has had difficulties in negotiating/coop-
605 erating with these organisations in its attempts to tackle disability issues.

606 In addition to the three largest nationwide DPOs, there are also approxi-
607 mately 347 local and regional DPOs (e.g. Solidarity of Parents of Disabled
608 Children) in Korea. Once again, there is a lack of collaboration evident at this
609 level. Instead of seeking solidarity between DPOs based on the common
610 interest of helping all disabled people, each DPO acts as representatives and
611 stakeholders of a specific group of disabled people (e.g. Autism Society of
612 Korea or The Association for People with Physical Disabilities). They have
613 often competed to obtain funding from the government or local authorities,
614 but have failed to create productive partnerships with each other. The scar-
615 city of resources available has also led to intense competition between the
616 organisations. For instance, no disabled activists and disabled people's
617 organisations have been appointed as national advisory board members to
618 monitor the implementations of UNCRPD because of disputes between
619 Q13 DPOs. This was particularly evident during the preparation of the report to
620 the UNCRPD monitoring body (Ablenews 2010b). Therefore, the Korean
621 Disabled People's Movement must work collectively to make its various voi-
622 ces heard and to radically change policies, practices and society.

623 Third, the Korean Disabled People's Movement has focused on integrating
624 disability issues into mainstream welfare policy and law, but not towards
625 changing society and culture. As a result, the most evident change created is
626 that various disability legislation (e.g. the Act on Welfare of Persons with
627 Disabilities, Disability Discrimination Act (2007), Activity Support Services for
628 Personal with Disabilities (2007), and Pension for Persons with Disabilities
629 (2010)) have been enacted. Moreover, the Korean government has recently
630 Q14 confirmed steadily phasing out the disability grade system from 2019
631 (Ablenews 2017b). Although Korean disability activism has resulted in the

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enactment of appropriate laws and the systematisation of services, the introduction of these new laws and services has led to a rejection of the necessity for direct political action to change Korean society. As a result, the number of direct political actions taken to make disabled people's voices heard has reduced enormously after introducing the Korean DDA 2007, even though disabled people still remain disempowered in Korean society.

Conclusion: future directions

According to Beckett's (2006) critical points regarding the nature of the Disabled People's Movement, the Korean Disabled People's Movement can be regarded as a new social movement because it is based on the unifying principles of addressing difficult disability-related issues. Second, the major achievements of the Korean Disabled People's Movement have been gaining acknowledgement that disabled people were second-class citizens who were being denied their basic rights to life, education, employment and healthcare, and securing the resolution of disability issues through legislative changes. Through its activism, the Disabled People's Movement has influenced changes in the official language concerning disabled people; for example, transforming 'cripple' into 'person'. Moreover, various disability welfare policies and supports have been introduced, such as disability pensions in 2009, personal assistance services in 2008, and adult guardianship in 2014. Third, the Korean Disabled People's Movement has multiple identities (Shakespeare and Watson 2001), but it is not strongly linked by solidarity to a collective identity and vision.

Although the Korean Disabled People's Movement has undoubtedly made great advances, there is much more to be accomplished. The Korean Disabled People's Movement has not developed a coherent political strategy or changed social and cultural perspectives of disability. Further, the problem of disablement has not yet become fully recognised as an urgent issue for Korean society. In particular, disability registration systems still exist, defining, classifying, registering and controlling disabled people. Additionally, the choices of the majority of disabled people are still limited to either being cared for by their families or living in institutions for their entire lives. To address these issues, the Korean Disabled People's Movement requires a commonly shared vision for achieving the goals disabled people's organisations are pursuing, and must also work to build better and closer networks and collaboration in order to establish solidarity between disabled people's organisations, even with non-disabled activists. Further, it should also play a key role in replacing the current disability registration system with a holistic approach that addresses all aspects of disabled people's lives.

Second, western social models have been introduced in the Korean Disabled People's Movement but disability studies discourse is still lacking in

674 the country. While the social model perspective provides a useful lens with
675 which to gain an understanding of culture, policy and laws relating to dis-
676 ability, policy and legal attention in Korea have been centred on the devel-
677 opment of support services for disabled people, not the eradication of social
678 barriers. In Korea, disability relies heavily on medical perspectives. Therefore,
679 a disability studies degree programme that contains a pro-active educational
680 approach and academic discipline should be introduced in order to critically
681 examine and expand the social model perspective in the Korean context.
682 This may even help to develop new disability activism in Korea.

683 Third, although the Korean government has introduced various services
684 for disabled people in an attempt to help them live in the community,
685 merely looking after the needs of disabled people by providing benefits is
686 insufficient. Disabled people have not been appropriately empowered to
687 gain the ability to control their use of services and their lives, and service
688 provision is still controlled in a top-down manner by state-approved service
689 providers. Therefore, a change of paradigm is required in which the paternal-
690 istic legal and instrumental frameworks of disability policy and services are
691 reconstructed to provide effective support for disabled people.

692 Notes

- 693 1. There is no compatible term in English but this term has a very similar meaning to
694 the slogan ‘nothing us without us’, which emphasises the principle of participation
695 and presents the belief that no decision should be made affecting disabled people
696 without their full and active involvement.
- 697 2. As explained on page 4, the medical-based criteria for the disability grading system
698 is used to define ‘categories of disability’ which helps the government manage
699 registration and grading of disabled people. The grades range from one to six:
700 grade one of the disability category system refers to the most severe level of
701 impairment, while grade six is reserved for the least serious impairment.

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