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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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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 organisa- tions and supporting organisations	Disabled people's organisations (phys- ical impairment)	Disabled people's organisa- tions and citizen-activist organisations
Main methods of taking action	Making policy and legisla- tion 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,

and ‘*HamkkeGulum*’, which is the oldest monthly magazine for disabled people published by the Research Institute of the Differently Abled Person’s Right (RIDRIK) since March 1988.

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

The emergence of the Korean Disabled People’s Movement

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

The quickening period: 1945–mid-1980s

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

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

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

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

Influenced by the United Nations International Year of Disabled Persons in 1981, this period also saw the first steps taken in creating major disability policy, as evidenced by the enactment of the Disabled Persons Welfare Act in 1981; this Act outlined the responsibilities of central and local governments, and stipulated basic policies concerning the welfare of disabled people. This Act concentrated mainly on medical and vocational rehabilitation, and protecting the livelihoods of disabled people (Kim 2008). Disability in this Act was medically defined as the experience of substantial restrictions in or social life for an extended period due to physical impairment, visual impairment, communication difficulties, hearing impairment or mental health problems. This definition was in official use until 1999 when a classified system was adopted. Under this Act, disabled people living in institutions benefited more than other disabled people (HamkkeGulum 1996).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The period of diversity: late 1990s–present day

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

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

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

(CiLs) were established in Korea in 2005 with government funding, and almost 200 CiLs were in existence in 2017 (Yu 2017, 309). The Korean government revised the Welfare of Persons with Disabilities Act in 2008 to provide legal grounds for its support of CiLs. The Korean government has also operated 90 Independent Living Experience Homes (ILEHs) since 2009, in which disabled people are supported to live independently, outside of institutions or care homes (Korean Disability Forum 2014). ILEHs provide 'transitional support' to disabled people, training them in the ability to perform various daily activities independently, both at home and in the local community, while still receiving some assistance when needed. This enables such disabled people to make a successful transition from living in institutions to living in their local communities. ILM's philosophy, which emphasises consumer control, and the idea that disabled people are the best experts on 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 orientation of ILM and the method by which it should be used to campaign for disabled people's rights. Some disabled people's organisations, such as the Korea Federation of Centres for Independent Living of Persons with Disabilities (KOLL), have criticised the Korea Council of Centres for Independent Living (KCIL) for failing to recognise disabled people's opinions; the basis of this viewpoint is that many non-disabled people and professionals function as the representatives of CiLs (Yun 2012). In fact, this criticism caused ILM to split into two groups in 2006: an advocacy-oriented group and a service-oriented group.

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

Q10 Also in this period, two more nationwide disabled people's organisations emerged (i.e. KODAF and KFOD). The two organisations used non-violent actions, such as seminars, public hearings, education, publications and policy conferences to achieve their goal to develop and recommend new policy to promote disabled people's rights (see [http://kodaf.or.kr/bbs/board.php?bo_](http://kodaf.or.kr/bbs/board.php?bo_table%4E03)

Q11 [table%4E03](http://kodaf.or.kr/bbs/board.php?bo_table%4E03)). However, other disabled people's activists that disagreed with the actions of the above two nationwide organisations also emerged, such as the Solidarity Committee of the Disabled to Obtain Mobility Rights (SDOMOR), which is notable for its response to a much-publicised incident in 2001. In this incident, a 70-year-old wheelchair user and his wife fell down an elevator shaft at Oeido subway station; the man was seriously injured and his wife died. As a result of this accident, SDOMOR started a public campaign

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

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

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

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

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

Dangsajajuwei

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

(2003) argues that *Dangsajajuwei* is not a model for or value of the Korean Disabled People's Movement, but represents the principle that disabled people should be involved as active agents in decision-making, policy formulation, resource allocation and service provisions. These definitions do not clearly explain who '*Dangsaja*' (the person/party) is and the definition of disability is still unclear. Therefore, this ideology remains, for the time being, of limited utility in countering the powerful socio-cultural values that characterise disabled people as 'others'.

Human rights

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

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

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

Current challenges to the Korean Disabled People's Movement

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

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

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

organisations of the disabled and organisations *for/with* the disabled (see Oliver's typology, 1990). For instance, there are three big nationwide DPOs, and each insists on referring to themselves as the truly 'authentic and representative' organisation 'of' or 'for' disabled people (Ablenews 2016). Moreover, they have unnecessarily competed to take control of the initiative of the Disabled People's Movement. They have seldom worked cooperatively at a national and local level, and occasionally have even been hostile to each other (Yun 2012). For instance, KOFOOD criticised KODAF for not being a disability organisation *for* disabled people because the organisation is controlled by the parents of disabled people and professionals; SADD has also been significantly critical of non-disabled activists and the values of the democracy movement. On the other hand, SADD strongly argues that KODAF is an interest group that does not take any action, and that KOFOOD is an anti-movement group seeking to take control of social welfare services (Kim 2012). Additionally, the government has had difficulties in negotiating/cooperating with these organisations in its attempts to tackle disability issues.

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

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

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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

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

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

Notes

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

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