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# Roles and Tasks of Women's Employment Service Agencies Resulting From the Expansion of a Comprehensive Employment-Welfare Service Delivery System

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# Roles and Tasks of Women's Employment Service Agencies Resulting From the Expansion of a Comprehensive Employment-Welfare Service Delivery System

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## 1. Background and Issues

- Korea's employment services have been controlled and delivered by the Public Employment Service (PES) of the Ministry of Employment and Labor, with the focus on offering unemployment benefits. Since the global financial turmoil of 2008 to 2009, Korea has tried to more actively provide employment services. The Successful Employment Package Program can be considered as an important model for offering employment services based on cooperation between public employment centers and private employment service providers. However, before the package was introduced, central and local governments and private non-profit organizations jointly carried out and tested another model to promote women's employment, which is called 'Re-employment Support Centers for Women' (hereinafter, RSCWs). This project has been actively implemented since 2009, one year after the Act on the

Promotion of the Economic Activities of Women was enacted in 2008. The number of the centers operating in Korea has jumped from 70 in 2009 to 150 in 2016.

- Since 2009, the number of RSCWs has consistently increased, with the centers recently being set up even in the county across the nation. They can be classified into career development centers, general service centers, and rural service centers, delivering employment services as employment support agencies. Starting in January 2014, they began to move into Employment-Welfare Plus Centers. With their entry into an Employment-Welfare Plus Center in Namyangju, RSCWs were established in 38 Employment-Welfare Plus Centers across the nation as of June 2016, offering services to female visitors.
- This research focuses on how the Centers will maintain their identity in the aforementioned comprehensive employment-welfare service delivery system and specifically, how they will support RSCWs in role and function. Specific research objectives are as follows:
  - First, the model for RSCWs in the Centers in terms of role was analyzed. Second, whether RSCWs can fulfill comprehensive roles in Employment-Welfare Plus Centers where heterogeneous agencies are located was explored, specifically centering on cooperative services among various institutions. Third, whether RSCWs' internal processes properly function was examined, analyzing if such processes are as effective as those that were implemented when RSCWs were located outside the Centers. Lastly, governance issues were reviewed and analyzed. In other words, we checked how the governance system of Employment-

Welfare Plus Centers based on cooperation among central and local governments and private agencies is working and to what issues RSCWs are exposed in the process, trying to come up with proper measures to improve the system.

## 2. Research Methods

- We conducted a survey of users of Employment-Welfare Plus Centers and RSCWs to have a clear understanding of the situation. For in-depth analyses on survey results, focus group interviews (FGI) were additionally carried out.\*

〈Table 1〉 Final Survey Sample Size

(unit: persons)

Classification	Target Sample Size	Real Sample Size
Users of RSCWs in Employment-Welfare Plus Centers	250	245
Users of general RSCWs	254	252

## 3 Analysis Results and Policy Suggestions

- In the situation where women-friendly accessibility can hardly be reflected sufficiently, whether RSCWs in Employment-Welfare Plus Centers can fully showcase their identity was explored. We think that this issue will be resolved only when other employment service agencies in the Centers and employment services for career-

\* The target sample size was set to 250 persons for each center, so that the total target sample size was 500.

It was difficult to secure the list for center users (by year), so that probability sampling based on an accurate sampling frame was almost impossible. As a result, a random assignment system was used, in which a certain number of users are assigned to each center by type for sampling.

interrupted women are handled via differentiated strategies in terms of function and target service recipients. RSCWs in Employment-Welfare Plus Centers can be segmented into a partial dispatch system and a full move-in system. The former can also be further classified into the following two cases: 1) some employees are dispatched from RSCWs around Employment-Welfare Plus Centers; 2) career planners are dispatched from metropolitan centers belonging to local governments. Taking into account actual performances and the degree of user satisfaction, we have to doubt whether the full move-in system is sufficiently effective in enabling RSCWs to produce their own results. In order for Employment-Welfare Plus Centers to fully act as a single gateway for regional employment services, RSCWs have to move in the Centers. However, further in-depth research is required to identify which move-in system is optimized to offer employment services to career-interrupted women.

- In connection with the awareness of Employment-Welfare Plus Centers and user allocation, initial counseling services must be offered. Moreover, service providers are required to agree on user allocation. Without the agreed criteria, in the process of competing to achieve performances, various conflicts can be brought about. In case we want to introduce the process of delivering necessary services to visitors via initial counseling at a single gateway, the specific manuals or cases should be prepared or gathered.
- Overlapping services and cooperation among agencies.
  - Interview results showed the following employment to employment



flow: employment service centers → RSCWs → employment service centers or career development centers. Such a process can be attributed to the characteristics or desire of job seekers. In case job seekers want vocational training or if they hope to be quickly employed, the aforementioned service connection process is carried out depending on the knowhow of employment service providers in discovering jobs or whether they can offer various vocational training services that job seekers need.

- However, the service to service process exposed the problem of delivering overlapping services. For example, women to whom employment service centers should offer job placement services can be handed over to RSCWs. This means that job seekers that the centers should park may be transferred to RSCWs. Therefore, this process has to be clearly defined.
- In order for such a connection service to be considered to be appropriate and effective, clear criteria concerning when such services are required and how related performances will be evaluated should be presented, rather than unconditionally highlighting performances in connection service.

□ Needs for vocational training and how Employment-Welfare Plus Centers operate vocational training systems.

- 88.6% replied that they desire vocational training. However, most Employment-Welfare Plus Centers don't have vocational training centers. Even if they have, only limited spaces can be used for a limited time. Therefore, many women complained that they have to receive vocational training services not in the centers but in other facilities.

- Women with higher education and experiencing long career interruption have more desire to benefit from vocational training. In fact, their social conditions make it difficult for them to effectively participate in normal labor markets. Even if so, they tend to overcome their fear of labor markets via multiple vocational training services and to use the services as a means of adapting to a new job environment. Against this backdrop, reexamining the weaknesses of job seekers and the significance of vocational training, how to allocate such services should be explored.
- According to research results, RSCWs in Employment-Welfare Plus Centers can't fully exhibit their capabilities mainly because service recipients can't sufficiently use vocational training which can be regarded as a medium. In particular, it was found that the desire of women experiencing long career interruption to be employed closely relates to vocational training. In case they visit RSCWs with high expectations but can't either obtain information about vocational training or receive vocational training services due to an absence of training spaces, the roles of RSCWs should be reduced. In fact, when they began moving in the Centers, RSCWs strongly pointed out this problem, but part of which was not sufficiently reflected in the governance system as a whole. All the parties concerned should acknowledge the importance of the issue.

#### 4. Policy Suggestions

##### **Suggestion 1) Reexamine ways to achieve geographical integration for comprehensive employment and welfare services.**

- ☐ The construction of a brand image as a comprehensive

employment – welfare service is deemed to be very important because it can play a pivotal role in eliminating blind spots in employment and welfare. However, it is necessary to carefully reexamine whether geographical integration is the only alternative plan.

**Suggestion 2) Seek ways to offer incentives to Re-employment Support Centers for Women (RSCWs).**

- ☐ Employment-Welfare Plus Centers have been established based on the parallel combination of local governments and central Ministries such as the Ministry of Employment and Labor, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Health and Welfare, and the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. Organizations such as RSCWs which are more similar to private agencies than to public entities should react to a fall in the number of visitors and changes in the features of key clients to whom RSCWs offered services. An incentive system should be operated to enable them to accept such changes and provide better services.

**Suggestion 3) Create an appropriate model by studying RSCWs' move-in systems.**

- ☐ It is necessary to more carefully check the effectiveness of a subbranch-type model in which some of the RSCW employees are dispatched to nearby Employment-Welfare Plus Centers. It is also necessary to carefully examine whether RSCWs should move in Employment-Welfare Plus Centers due to geographical

integration, even though there are other centers in the area, whose geographical accessibility is better.

**Suggestion 4) Diversify move-in models by using RSCWs in metropolitan areas.**

- ☐ For Employment-Welfare Plus Centers located in small-and-mid-sized cities or towns, the current model in which RSCWs in metropolitan areas dispatch employees to the Centers is deemed to be appropriate. It's because, as explained earlier, inter-agency governance system is very vulnerable but career planners have resolved various problems via their individual networks with responsible staff in regions or local governments. Moreover, because they have a clear understanding of community jobs in blind spots, they can more effectively discover employment opportunities. However, the biggest problem of this model is that it is very vulnerable to governance issues due to lack of systems.

**Suggestion 5) Develop a model for phasing in a full move-in system.**

- ☐ According to this research on the effectiveness of a full move-in system that was initially proposed by the Ministry of Employment and Labor, it can hardly be concluded that the model achieved statistically significant performances. Therefore, plans to fully introduce the system should be more carefully reviewed. Herein, it was proposed that we should phase in the program. In spite of that, if the full move-in scheme has to be introduced to systematize the brand image of employment and

welfare services, necessary conditions should be met in advance.

**Suggestion 6) Set up clear assessment criteria and systems for Employment and Welfare Plus Centers.**

- ☐ The most optimized service portfolio system for visitors, rather than a structure in which business is dumped on each other, should be set up to ensure seamless service connection. For example, if employment service centers can more effectively help the short-term unemployed land jobs, a counseling – employment portfolio for target visitors should be prepared. In case RSCWs are good at helping women experiencing long-term career interruption find jobs, a portfolio for this purpose should be devised. In this context, service connection issues have to be carefully examined. To minimize creaming and parking issues, the degree of employment difficulty should be reflected in the assessment of Employment-Welfare Plus Centers. In case job seekers with a high degree of employment difficulty successfully land jobs, substantial incentives can be offered. This system needs to be carefully explored. Moreover, by measuring how many clients with a high degree of employment difficulty are transferred, the degree to which they dump their business on each other should be clearly evaluated.

**Suggestion 7) Lead stakeholders to agree on initial counseling-related job allocation**

- ☐ Effectively controlling creaming and parking issues closely relates to properly establishing the functions and roles of initial

counseling. In this context, the current system relying on individual expertise is deemed to be inappropriate. In fact, the system does not function effectively in most agencies. Therefore, in order to fundamentally resolve allocation-related conflicts, stakeholders should review the unique features of their business, readjust target business and service processes, and clearly classify their roles. In fact, one of the reasons for the absence of initial counseling services is that spaces in Employment-Welfare Plus Centers are not designed to enable visitors to effectively receive counseling services. The current space design can be segmented into ‘a radial structure where visitors can scan all services at a glance’ and ‘a vertically layered structure in which visitors can easily find and use services that they need.’ Both structures enable visitors to easily use services even though they miss the ‘initial counseling’ booth once.

**Suggestion 8) Improve the vulnerable governance system of RSCWs:  
appoint a responsible counterpart in the Center**

- ☐ One of the issues facing career planners belonging to RSCWs in Employment-Welfare Plus Centers is closely connected with their position in the workplace environment. Even though they work as employees, career planners can hardly take part in decision-making processes. Because team leaders or center chiefs outside the Centers should participate in key decision-making processes, career planners can’t often directly resolve difficult problems. This also relates to RSCWs’ HR management systems. In case only one employee is dispatched, the planners oftentimes

encounter more serious problems. To improve such a situation, two or more full-time employees should be employed and dispatched. In this case, one of them, the one with more work experience, can fulfill more responsible roles. Of course, their position may be different from those of other staff and they can face problems for which decisions can't be easily made. However, it is more realistic than relying on the HR management system of RSCWs outside the Centers.

**Suggestion 9) Ask for environmental improvement to enable Employment and Welfare Plus Centers to carry out the counseling -> vocational training -> job placement package system, which is the strength of RSCWs in supporting the employment of career-interrupted women.**

- ☐ According to research results, RSCWs that move in Employment-Welfare Plus Centers via a full move-in system are inferior to nearby other RSCWs in terms of objective performances and user satisfaction, with related items revealing statistically significant differences. This means that the business process of RSCWs in Employment-Welfare Plus Centers has not been implemented effectively.

**Suggestion 10) Analyze RSCWs' core customers, developing customized services.**

- ☐ RSCWs generalize 'career-interrupted women' and offer services to them. However, as mentioned earlier, Employment-Welfare

Plus Centers need to develop new service manuals by considering the period of career interruption, age, women's desire for career development, and so forth.

**Suggestion 11) Promote differentiated customer identification, discovering regional jobs**

- ☐ The main function of RSCWs is to create many soft jobs in communities. Korea's labor markets are characterized by the fact that there are many jobs not included in the social insurance system. In particular, such jobs in public areas have been created in the name of social service since the year 2000. Moreover, a variety of part-time jobs have been generated in day-care centers and welfare facilities for the elderly. Regardless of the quality of such jobs, many career-interrupted women tend to prefer such jobs to regular ones as the initial means of re-entering labor markets. Women experiencing long-term career interruption strongly prefer such jobs because of their fear of full-time jobs. Therefore, at the initial stage, they join labor markets via such irregular jobs but some of them often enter regular labor markets by changing jobs several times on the basis of such work experiences.

**Suggestion 12) Improve the brand image of employment and welfare services by leading self-support centers to move into the Center.**

- ☐ To enable the function of RSCWs to be fully used for communities, this issue should be fundamentally resolved. In



case the function of self-support is not included in employment and welfare services, half of the required services will be deemed to have been excluded. Therefore, the issue that community self-support centers are not included in main service providers should be resolved in the future. Self-support projects are regarded as one of the key elements of welfare service to employment programs. The fact that they are excluded from Employment-Welfare Plus Centers\* signifies that main welfare service recipients who should also benefit from employment services can't use the system effectively.

**Suggestion 13) Seek ways to promote cooperation among service providers.**

- According to interview results, career planners in RSCWs have a poor understanding of the functions and roles of Employment-Welfare Plus Centers for which they are working. Some are told to have been trained for only a quarter of a day. Others are said to have started working without any understanding thereof. In particular, they have formed awkward relationships with other colleagues employed by similar service providers. The main reason is that those working for RSCWs are mostly from private agencies while a large number of experts working for career development centers are government employees. Such a difference in social status prevented them from naturally engaging with each other. Under the circumstances, real cooperation can hardly be achieved. Training sessions and

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\* This is deemed to have come from a failure to bring about agreement among Ministries.

workshops need to be held periodically to enable them to have a better understanding of each other's business. Some agencies have taken such actions to resolve the issue, which have been well received.

**Suggestion 14) Overcome the problem of welfare schemes failing to connect with employment services.**

- ☐ The function of the current system in welfare is deemed to be very weak. In reality, the system does not effectively connect with a welfare scheme. Unless this system is improved, only employment to employment processes, rather than employment to welfare flows, will be highlighted. Whatever the initial purpose may be, receiving employment and welfare services at a single gateway in the form of a portfolio is considered as a very attractive scheme. At present, the specific features thereof have yet to be presented but as mentioned earlier, both 'employment to employment' and 'employment to welfare service' systems should be fully established by employing experts at the stage of initial counseling and preparing service manuals more thoroughly.

## References

**Main Ministries :** Career-Interrupted Women's Economic Promotion Division and Women's Policy Division, Ministry of Gender Equality and Family

**Affiliated Ministries :** Unemployment Benefits Division and Women's Employment Policy Division, Ministry of Employment and Labor

※ The table of contents is subject to change, depending on research project topics, to be organized based on specific policy suggestions.