
How to enhance social integration after the unification: Role of social care services

Young Jun Choi
Gyu Seong Hwang

This study examines the role of social care services for children and disabled adults as a means of enhancing social integration based on the assumption that South and North Korea are unified in 2020. Existing literature on unification tends to pay heavy attention to political and economic aspects of the unification. Or social welfare literature relating to the unification tends to focus on the adaption of North Korean defectors in South Korea or current social care laws and policies in North Korea. However, there are very few studies discussing the role of social care policies after the unification.

In this context, this research attempts to investigate the influence of social care policies on social integration with special attention to four care-related aspects, 1) child development, 2) quality of life of disabled adults, 3) gender equality, and 4) women's employment. And, this study also discusses what kinds of social care services could be desirable after the unification. As a research method, TAIDA, one of future scenario planning methods developed by Kairos Future, was adopted. For predicting socio-economic changes and the role of social care services after the unification, firstly, the study analyses the

socio-economic and policy trends in North and South Korea during the last two decades after ‘the arduous march’ in North and ‘the financial crisis’ in South. Secondly, it critically reviews the role of social care services in the process of the German unification. Then, by analysing the expert survey in which 30 experts took part in, the study highlights the importance of social care services after the unification and proposes policy strategies to expand social care services in North after the unification.

This study emphasizes the importance of social care services after the unification, which could enhance social integration not only by protecting children and the disabled but also by creating stable jobs and restraining massive migration from North to South. It also proposes the immediate universal childcare services using current infrastructure in North in post-unification Korea whereas the government could adopt the more gradual approach in expanding the adult social care considering the role of cash benefits and how to establish care infrastructure.