

Exploring Measures to Promote Official Development Assistance by Local Government in Korea

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Summary

The aim of this study is to derive the key policy requirements that are needed to strengthen the official development assistance (ODA) policies of local authorities, which are still at a weak level in Korea. For this purpose, data found in Korean academic papers and newspaper articles dealing with local government and ODA were analysed using the text-mining method. The results showed that the policy areas local authorities should prioritize in the future are: the role of college students in expanding local government ODA; legislation for local government ODA support; the need for a network in respect of grant aid; and the search for ODA support targets.

Keywords: Local government ODA, text mining analysis, Korean ODA.

Introduction

Official Development Assistance (ODA) is a collective term for aid provided by public institutions (central government, local government, public institutions) in order to promote economic development and welfare in developing countries (Choi et al., 2022; Johnson, 2001). Between 1950 and 1999, Korea received a total of 12.8 billion dollars in foreign aid. Since Korea joined the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in 2009, it has continuously increased the amount of ODA to underdeveloped countries. As of 2021, the amount of ODA provided by Korea to 125 countries around the world is approximately US\$ 2.855 billion. However, while ODA has been increasing at the central government or public institution level, it is very weak at the local government level (http://www.koica.go.kr/sites/koica_en/index.do). In particular, in the case of some local authorities, there is no local ordinance to support ODA at local government level (Choi et al, 2022; Chang, 2016).

Korea itself received aid in the past when living conditions were harsh, and so local government in Korea must in the future provide aid to underdeveloped countries in return. In addition, there is a need for local authorities to give close attention to ODA in order both to enhance their own quality and to raise the level of the local economy and social capital in the mid to long term. Against this background, this study aims to identify the important policy areas that local authorities in Korea should consider key in implementing ODA (Byun, 2016).

Overall Status of ODA by Local Authority in Korea

ODA scale of local authorities in Korea

The scale of ODA provided at local government level in Korea is extremely weak, as Table 1 shows. It can be seen that, between 2016 and 2021, only eleven out of seventeen metropolitan and local authorities in Korea are currently carrying out ODA projects, and six local authorities are undertaking none at all (Choi, 2022).

Table 1 Status of ODA projects undertaken by local authorities in Korea (by year)

Province	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Kyungbuk	67.8	58.3	65.8	41.1	46.5	31.6	311.1
Incheon	29.3	27.8	25.7	28.6	13.0	2.5	126.9
Kyungki	25.0	8.0	8.5	23.0	23.0	26.0	113.5
Seoul	26.6	15.2	5.8	–	7.1	3.6	58.3
Daegu	5.2	7.5	7.5	7.0	1.8	5.0	34.0
Kangwon	6.6	5.6	4.2	4.3	4.5	4.5	29.7
Kyungnam	3.4	0.4	1.3	0.5	0.5	1.0	7.1
Busan	–	1.5	1.4	0.5	1.1	0.6	5.1
Jeju	0.6	–	1.0	1.0	–	1.5	4.1
Gwangju	0.4	–	0.8	1.0	1.0	–	3.2
Ulsan	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.1	0.1	2.5
Total	165.5	124.9	122.7	107.6	98.5	76.4	695.6

Source: Prime Minister's Office (2021).

Table 2 presents data on the ODA promotion performance of local authorities in Korea, drawn from the ODA statistics homepage. Looking at the statistics for the period between 2010 and 2021, we can see that performance appears to have been very weak. Even in the case of Kyungbuk Province, the largest province, the financial sum representing contracts during the period 2010–21 was 15.08 million USD, and actual net expenditure was only 14.75 million USD.

Table 2 General status of local government ODA in Korea (unit = 1 \$ million)

심층분석 조회결과 (2010 ~ 2021, 백만불)

자료제출기관	사업 개수	약정액	총지출액	순지출액	증여등가액
지방자치단체(강원도)	58	1.33	1.33	1.33	1.33
지방자치단체(경상북도)	45	15.08	14.75	14.75	14.75
지방자치단체(서울특별시)	18	1.24	1.24	1.24	1.24
교육부	16	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40
지방자치단체(부산광역시)	6	0.11	0.11	0.11	0.11
지방자치단체(울산광역시)	4	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10
지방자치단체(대구광역시)	3	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05
지방자치단체(제주특별자치도)	3	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10
지방자치단체(경상남도)	2	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13
지방자치단체(광주광역시)	2	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09

Source: http://www.odakorea.go.kr/ODAPage_2018/category05/L01_S03.jsp

In contrast to this, in order for ODA to be stably implemented at the local government level budgetary support is required, and such budgetary support can easily be supported when a system such as an ordinance is established (Awortwi, 2011; Sabbi, 2017). However, only some local authorities in Korea have ordinances that can support ODA, most having not even enacted such ordinances.

Nevertheless, a few local authorities in Korea have ordinances containing explicit support regulations to promote ODA projects in accordance with the Framework Act on International Cooperation, rather than merely comprehensive ordinances to support co-operation such as international exchange. The cases of Seoul and Gyeonggi-do are the prime examples.

Analysis of Major Issues Concerning Local Government ODA in Korea

It is necessary, then, to analyse the rationale determining whether there is a need for ODA projects at the local government level, which requires the analysis of data on ODA topics at this level. Accordingly, we performed text-mining analysis on newspaper articles and academic papers dealing with ODA published in Korea. The period of analysis ran from 1 January 2010 to 30 September 2022.

Analysis of academic papers

The topic of analysis here was the academic papers registered in the Korea Citation Index (KCI). Papers with ‘local government’ and ‘ODA’ in their title were deemed eligible for inclusion. This criterion gave a total number of papers of 20. Figure 1 presents the word cloud analysis result for these papers published in academic journals.



Figure 1 Word cloud analysis for academic journal papers

Table 3 shows the frequency of occurrence of certain words. Text-mining analysis of the academic papers revealed that words such as ‘development’, ‘local’, ‘international’ and ‘autonomy’ appeared the most frequently.

Table 3 Frequency of appearance of words in academic journals

		1	2	3	4	5
	of Speech(P	Frequency	Word length	Name Type	Author	Keyword
1	개발	Common Noun"	137.0	2.0	"-	"False"
2	지방	Common Noun"	131.0	2.0	"-	"False"
3	국제	Common Noun"	95.0	2.0	"-	"False"
4	자치	Common Noun"	92.0	2.0	"-	"False"
5	원조	Common Noun"	87.0	2.0	"-	"False"
6	단체	Common Noun"	84.0	2.0	"-	"False"
7	협력	Common Noun"	73.0	2.0	"-	"False"
8	정부	Common Noun"	67.0	2.0	"-	"False"
9	사업	Common Noun"	43.0	2.0	"-	"False"
10	정책	Common Noun"	36.0	2.0	"-	"False"
11	교류	Common Noun"	28.0	2.0	"-	"False"
12	필요	Common Noun"	25.0	2.0	"-	"False"
13	중앙	Common Noun"	25.0	2.0	"-	"False"
14	규모	Common Noun"	23.0	2.0	"-	"False"
15	효과	Common Noun"	21.0	2.0	"-	"False"
16	기본법	Common Noun"	21.0	3.0	"-	"False"
17	한국	Proper Noun"	20.0	2.0	phical Name"	"False"
18	체계	Common Noun"	19.0	2.0	"-	"False"
19	지역	Common Noun"	19.0	2.0	"-	"False"
20	중심	Common Noun"	19.0	2.0	"-	"False"
21	도시	Common Noun"	19.0	2.0	"-	"False"
22	추진	Common Noun"	18.0	2.0	"-	"False"
23	발전	Common Noun"	17.0	2.0	"-	"False"
24	국가	Common Noun"	17.0	2.0	"-	"False"
25	활동	Common Noun"	16.0	2.0	"-	"False"
26	사회	Common Noun"	15.0	2.0	"-	"False"

Figure 2 shows the connection between the key words relating to local government ODA as discussed in the academic papers. By establishing this, it is possible to understand the connection structure of the words relating to ODA as it is discussed at local government level.

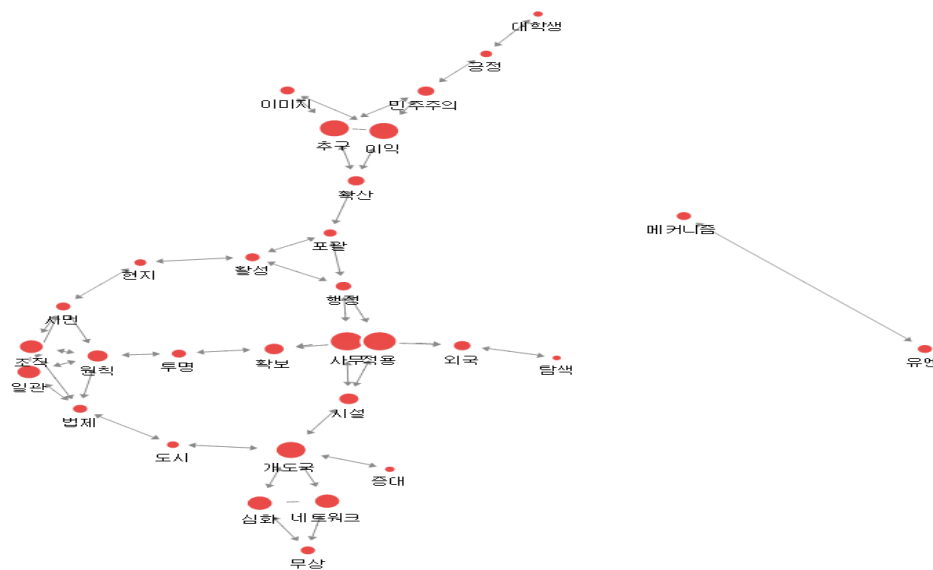


Figure 2 Word network for local government ODA (academic papers)

In order to understand the meaning of the above word network, cluster analysis was performed, and the results are shown in Figure 3.

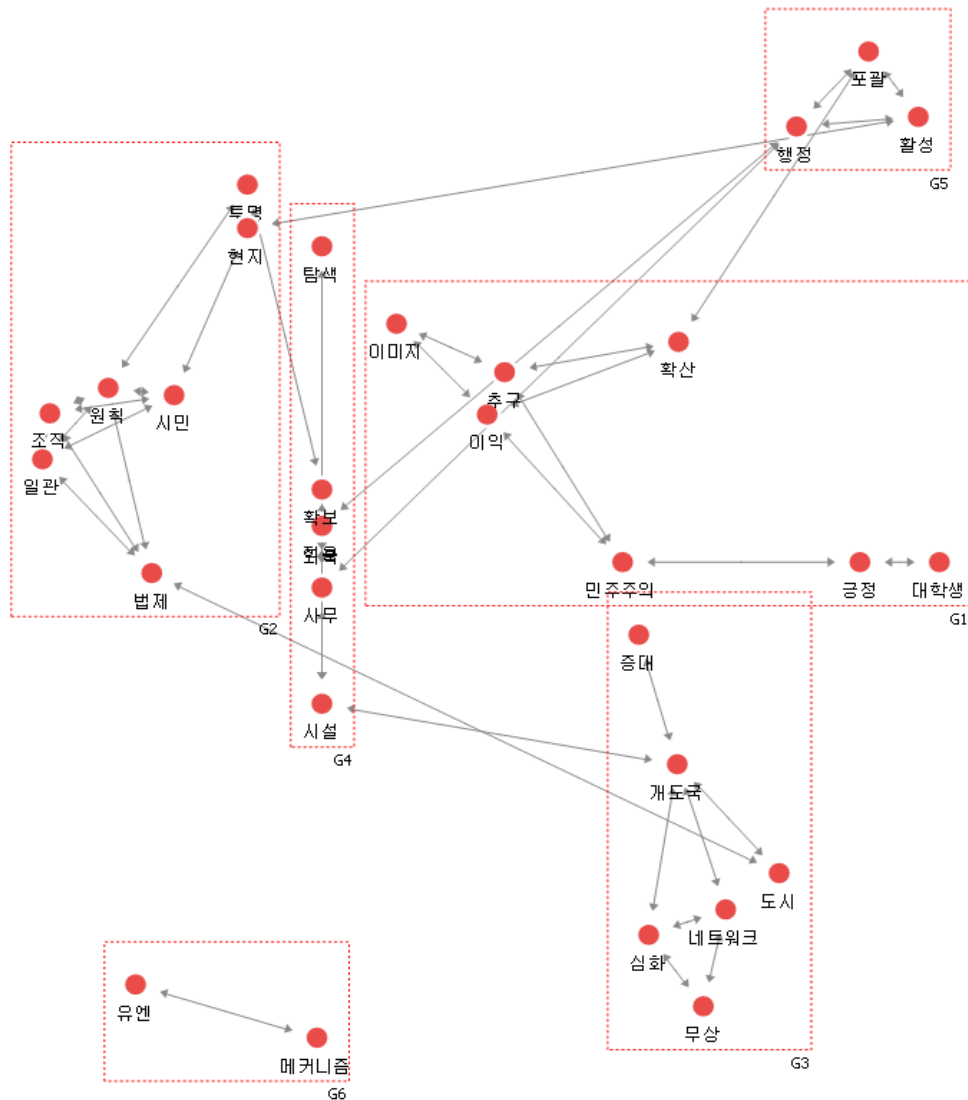


Figure 3 Results of cluster analysis

By examining the results of network analysis of academic papers relating to local ODA, the main issues attending local government ODA can be identified. The analysis suggests that the ODA-related issues facing local authorities in Korea number around six: legislation for local government ODA support; the role of university students in expanding local government ODA; network reinforcement for grant aid; exploration of ODA support targets; the role of the administration in local government ODA support; and, encompassing all these, the use of international organizations.

Analysis of media articles

Among Korean media articles published between 1 January 2010 and 30 September 2022, only content containing both the terms ‘ODA’ and ‘local government’ was analysed. Unlike academic papers, newspaper articles are meaningful in dealing with highly practical and realistic ODA issues at the local government level. The results of the word cloud analysis that was performed at the basic level for an in-depth analysis of 54 newspaper articles are shown in Figure 4.



Figure 4 Word cloud analysis of press articles

As Table 4 shows, the word that appeared the most was ‘business’, followed by ‘development’ and ‘cooperation’.

Table 4 Frequency of words appearing in press articles

		1	2	3	4
		of Speech(P	Frequency	Word length	Name Type
1	사업	Common Noun"	34.0	2.0	."
2	개발	Common Noun"	32.0	2.0	."
3	협력	Common Noun"	29.0	2.0	."
4	자치	Common Noun"	26.0	2.0	."
5	지방	Common Noun"	24.0	2.0	."
6	단체	Common Noun"	24.0	2.0	."
7	원조	Common Noun"	22.0	2.0	."
8	정부	Common Noun"	20.0	2.0	."
9	지역	Common Noun"	19.0	2.0	."
10	국제	Common Noun"	19.0	2.0	."
11	대통령	Common Noun"	17.0	3.0	."
12	국정	Common Noun"	16.0	2.0	."
13	국가	Common Noun"	15.0	2.0	."
14	정책	Common Noun"	12.0	2.0	."
15	대학	Common Noun"	12.0	2.0	."
16	발전	Common Noun"	11.0	2.0	."
17	국회	Common Noun"	11.0	2.0	."
18	한국	Proper Noun"	10.0	2.0	phical Name"
19	추진	Common Noun"	10.0	2.0	."
20	마을	Common Noun"	10.0	2.0	."
21	경제	Common Noun"	10.0	2.0	."
22	희망	Common Noun"	9.0	2.0	."
23	지원	Common Noun"	9.0	2.0	."
24	예산	Common Noun"	9.0	2.0	."
25	사회	Common Noun"	9.0	2.0	."
26	남북	Proper Noun"	9.0	2.0	phical Name"
27	교육	Common Noun"	9.0	2.0	."

Next, connection centrality analysis was performed, the results of which are shown in Figure 5.

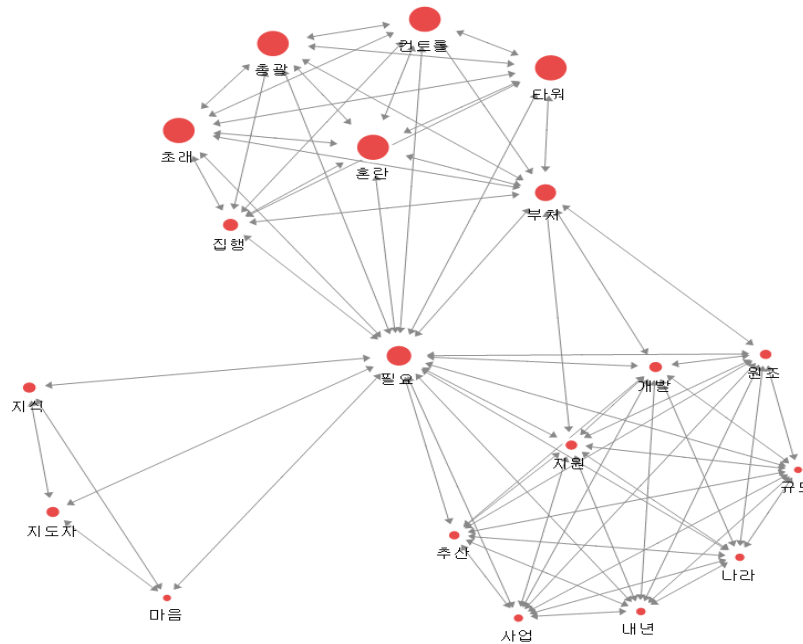


Figure 5 Results of local government ODA connection centrality analysis (press articles)

The results of the media article network analysis set out above can also be classified as topics identified through cluster analysis. The cluster analysis results for media articles are shown in Figure 6.

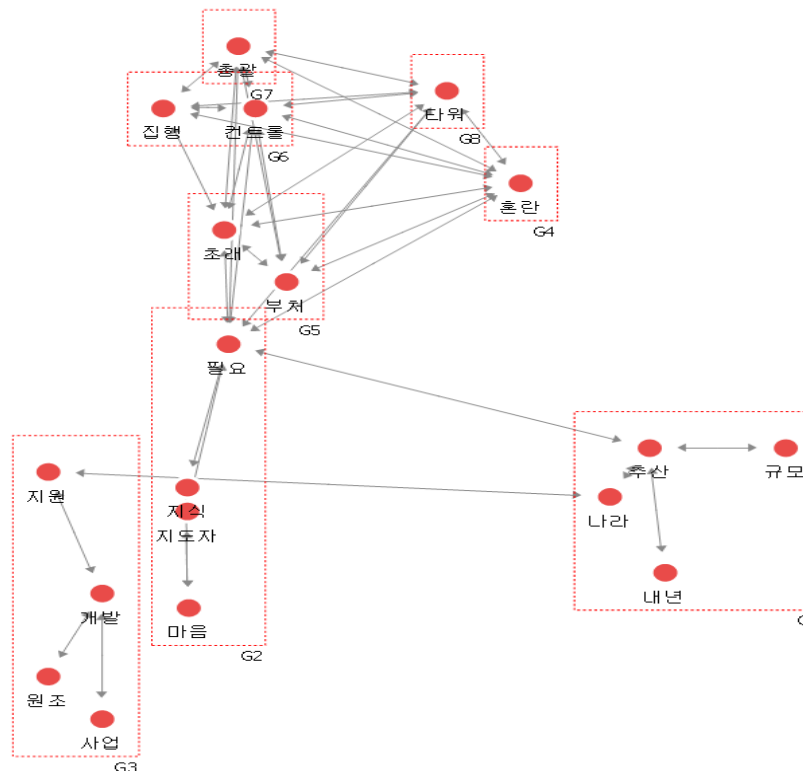


Figure 6 Results of cluster analysis on press articles

To judge from the results of the analysis of media articles, the main topics relating to local government ODA are: securing ODA-related budgets; local government leaders' awareness of ODA; local government support systems for aid projects; and control over local government ODA projects. The importance of the control tower and the need for an overall execution strategy were also found to be important..

Comprehensive analysis of academic papers and press articles

Summarizing the analysis results for academic papers and media articles relating to local government and ODA in Korea reveals several core themes. These represent core topics that Korean local authorities should adopt as suggesting important policy tasks which they should carry out in order to spread ODA and implement it effectively in the future. These topics include: the role of university students in diffusion; legislation for local government ODA support; the need for networks for grant aid; the search for ODA support targets; administrative support for local government ODA; and utilization of international organizations. Also important, it was found, are: local authorities securing their own ODA-related budget; changing the perception of local government leaders regarding ODA; the need to establish a support system for aid projects; and overall execution through the control tower. These core topics represent the areas that should receive attention first in order to strengthen local government ODA in the future.

Conclusion

It is not helpful to look at local government ODA from a short-term perspective. Instead it is necessary to take a long-term view, and to recognize that such ODA should be seen as a means that must be used to repay the aid that Korea itself has received to date. In addition, it is necessary to take a strategic approach to strengthening regional competitiveness through local government ODA. Between 1950 and 1999, Korea received around 12.8 billion dollars in aid from foreign countries. Now is the time to at least give back what has been received in the past. At the same time, it is necessary to make efforts to strengthen regional competitiveness, which should lead to strengthening national competitiveness through local government ODA. Local authorities need actively to enact ordinances aimed at encouraging ODA and to establish long-term plans to promote it effectively. Efforts should be made to include the important issues analysed above in conceiving these long-term plans.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF-2022S1A5C2A03092455)

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