

On the Status Quo and Pathway of Third-Party Evaluation in the Government Governance Innovation

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Abstract—Third-party evaluation, driving the innovation in local government governance, has become the main means to assess government performance as it can eliminate the disadvantages of traditional internal government evaluation and ensure objectivity and impartiality of the evaluation. This paper, through methods like literature theoretical analysis, explored the application of third-party evaluation in the government performance evaluation. Establishing the third-party evaluation institutions and the selecting mechanism of the institutions. Maintain the independence of the third-party evaluation institutions. Strengthen their role of supervising and managing. Improve the participation of ordinary people in third-party assessments. By all these means, the third-party evaluation can run effectively in the innovation in government governance to promote the optimization of the government functions.

Keywords—third-party evaluation; government performance; governance innovation; pathway

I. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

As the governance tool of the government, the third-party evaluation originates from 1980s. It is a kind of external assessment that is born in western countries and performs wells in their government ruling. The third party generally refers to the authoritative professional intermediary or organization that formulates a series of evaluation standards for their industry members, and based on which deliver convincing results or reports. It was in 2014 that the State Council of the China approved to introduce the third-party evaluation. Efforts have been made on discussion over the role of the evaluation in the social governance by the government, and the system drawbacks and development difficulties. Finally, the optimization strategies for the evaluation are put forwarded, in a bid to create benign interaction relationship between the government and non-government organizations and innovate a long-term mechanism for collaborative governance of social services.

At the beginning of the 21st century, China has attempted to figure out the performance evaluation model and pathway that suit our national condition and began to draw on the theories and methods of government performance evaluation employed by western countries. On the Third Plenary Session

of 18th CPC Central Committee, it is pointed out that deepening the reform comprehensively aims to improve and develop the socialist system with Chinese characteristics and promote the modernization of the country's governance system and governance capability. On the Fifth Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, the important goal, to build moderately prosperous society was specified into make each system mature and develop remarkably the governance system and the capability. Under this circumstance, how to establish a scientific government performance evaluation system to constantly improve the government performance management is particularly important.

Since the 21st century, Chinese academic community has studied the theories and methods of western government performance evaluation, actively explored and verified the performance evaluation model suitable for China's national conditions, which played an important role in promoting the construction of China's government performance evaluation and the development of government performance evaluation activities. Among multiple government performance evaluation systems, the third-party evaluation gradually receives the widespread attention. The third-party evaluation means that the third-party organizations that have no leadership relationship or interest relationship with the government assess the performance activities of the government and its functional departments.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Foreign Researches in the Field

Western scholars started earlier the study on the third-party evaluation of government performance. In the 1970s, it was mainly carried out by professional audit institutions, and private sector evaluations of all kinds are rising and developing. The United States took the lead in carrying out performance audit, while the United Kingdom gradually matured in theory and method after years of practice. The performance audit of the above countries has the following characteristics: (1) the scope, content and procedure of performance evaluation is conducted in accordance with relevant laws; (2) emphasize the principles of objectivity, impartiality and openness; (3) set up special audit institutions to audit government performance; (4)

Wisdom salon project of Shandong association for science and technology in 2014: Study on the Decision-making of Government to Purchase Public Services of Social Organizations (Project No.: SL201409)

the audit content is clear, the index system is perfect, and the audit report is complete. As a private institution, the famous "Campbell Institute" in the United States has intervened in the government performance evaluation and carried out a large-scale government performance evaluation activity, which is highly valued by the American government and supported by the public. As a third party to evaluate government performance, foreign non-governmental organizations have the following characteristics: (1) various types of organizations, including academic institutions, governmental organizations and non-governmental organizations; (2) oriented towards "public satisfaction". Since the 21st century, with the deepening improvement and continuous reform of government performance management (GPM) models around the world, GPM has shown the trend of institutionalization, legalization and diversification of evaluation subjects, so as to cope with the increasingly prominent complexity, comprehensiveness and diversity in the process of performance evaluation, as well as the interest of the application of evaluation results. Government performance evaluation has been widely carried out in governments all over the world.

In the 1980s, the value orientation of government performance evaluation changed from efficiency to the pursuit of economy and efficiency. In the 1990s, the discussion and research on the subject of government performance evaluation aroused a heated discussion. Some scholars have proposed that a principle is usually followed in the whole government institutions, that is, the evaluation activities should be carried out by an organization that conforms to the evaluation content and is not affected by the development results of the project. [1]

B. Domestic Researches in the Field

The theory of government performance evaluation in our country first appeared at the end of the twentieth century. Scholars carried out in-depth research and analysis on the performance evaluation of foreign governments in accordance with the development of foreign government performance, evaluation system, scope, methods and technology etc. They gave some suggestions on the promotion of performance evaluation in China. At the beginning of the 21st century, the third-party evaluation of government performance gradually appeared and heated up rapidly, and many practical cases on government performance evaluation appeared. "Lanzhou Experiment" is the first attempt of third-party evaluation of government performance in China, which has formed the model of local government performance evaluation in China, namely "Gansu Model".

However, at present, the domestic theoretical research on third-party evaluation is still at the level of foreign theoretical introduction. On the one hand, it lacks in-depth exploration of the theoretical background of third-party evaluation in China's administrative ecological environment; on the other hand, it lacks research on the theoretical support of third-party evaluation. Therefore, at present, domestic research on the third-party evaluation theory lacks the theoretical basis of Chinese political science, administrative management and public service research, which will inevitably fall into the trap of western theories being copied by China. Such basic theories will inevitably result in the ineffective guidance in practice and

lack in predictability and operability. Therefore, this paper, based on China's unique administrative ecological environment, discusses how to cultivate and guide the third-party evaluation institutions in line with China's current public sector reform, and how to enrich the theory and practice of third-party evaluation with Chinese characteristics, so as to create a healthier ecological environment for the development of third-party evaluation in China.

In comparison, the third-party evaluation activities in foreign countries are relatively mature. They set up a special evaluation institution by dividing the tripartite boundary to evaluate the performance of the government. Besides, the non-governmental organizations have been instrumental in the government's work, because they are relatively independent compared with the government and gradually recognized by more people through their continuous improvement of professionalism and credibility. However, the domestic evaluation and research activities are still in the exploratory stage. Through slightly better, there are still more space for improvement. The promotion and professionalism of the third party need to be further improved, and the scope of the third-party evaluation needs to be expanded, which are of far-reaching significance in the research of the third-party evaluation in China.

III. CURRENT SITUATION AND PROBLEMS OF THIRD-PARTY EVALUATION IN SOCIAL GOVERNANCE OF GOVERNMENT

In the context of social governance, the role of the government needs to be fundamentally adjusted, for which the third-party evaluation is an important starting point. As a necessary and effective external check and balance mechanism, third-party evaluation makes up for the defects of traditional government self-evaluation. It not only significantly improves the evaluation system of government performance and the objectivity and impartiality of government performance evaluation results, but also improves the government image, enhances the government ability, and plays an irreplaceable role in promoting the construction of a service-oriented government [2]. The third-party evaluation is an objective social supervision, which is conducive to the transformation and optimization of government functions [3]. At present, China's third-party evaluation has the following problems in the practice of government social governance.

A. Dilemma of the role of the evaluation subject

1) The dilemma between survive and independence

The government has always occupied a leading position in the establishment and development of social organizations in China. No matter the source of funds or the confirmation of legal status, social organizations cannot do without the government. Social organizations controlled by the government also undertakes the administrative functions of the government, thus the government fails to make the most effective use of its functions, which affected the independent development of our social organizations. As third-party evaluation institutions are still part of social organizations, government support still accounts for a large proportion, and their funds mainly come from the government. In order to survive, third-party

evaluation institutions may not really enjoy certain autonomy and decision-making rights.

2) Expectation of two parties: the role and situation between different interest subjects

As a third party, third-party evaluation institutions should exist independently of social organizations and governments. However, since third-party evaluation institutions are entrusted by the government and are part of social organizations, the particularity of their dual identities leads to different expectations of the role of third-party evaluation subjects between the government and social organizations and the evaluators are caught between two expectations of the role. According to the contract, the third-party evaluation institutions should have clear rights, responsibilities, obligations and role positioning. They perform their own agency responsibilities, and evaluate the effectiveness of the project as an independent third party, without favoring the government or social organizations. The investor wants the third party to be a neutral and professional evaluator while the executive side hopes that it will be a cooperative partner of equality and mutual trust. The third party evaluation presents a dual role.

B. Questions about the relevant elements of the evaluation process

Judging from the current development of third-party evaluation institutions in China, Chinese government and social organizations, as the stakeholders of third-party evaluation institutions, have doubts about the matching degree of the professional level of personnel of third-party evaluation institutions and the indicator system. It is difficult to measure the service effectiveness, project industry influence, social influence and other evaluation factors in the evaluation index system with quantitative indicators, and the professional level of the evaluators is uneven. Besides, due to the influence of the development environment of social organizations, third-party evaluation institutions have a strong mobility of personnel, which has an impact on the authority of third-party evaluation institutions. In addition, due to the absence of supervision subjects of third-party evaluation, the behavior of evaluation is not subject to an effective external restraint system. The public may question its credibility.

C. Effectiveness in the application of evaluation results

At present, the Chinese government believes that there are two aspects of formalism in the application of the third-party evaluation results. First, the evaluation results are not fully feedback and publicity. Secondly, the evaluation results fail to have rigid constraints on social organizations.

In addition, there are still many problems in the practical application of third-party performance evaluation in China, including the narrow scope of the participation mechanism, the insufficient depth of influence, and the unsound relevant system.

IV. OPTIMIZED ROUTING FOR THE PARTICIPATION OF THIRD-PARTY EVALUATION IN THE INNOVATIVE GOVERNANCE OF GOVERNMENT

China is now comprehensively deepening the reform and improving the governance level and capability of the government. In this context, the third-party evaluation, as an important means to supervise the effectiveness of the reform and evaluate the governance capability, will gradually rise in the status of the government governance in China. In view of the fact that China's third-party evaluation practice precedes the establishment of evaluation system, evaluation theory research and evaluation system construction, China should comprehensively strengthen the construction of third-party evaluation and guide the development of third-party evaluation practice.

A. Cultivating third-party evaluation institutions of social organizations

Evaluation and management committees at the central and local levels should be established to be responsible to the top central and local authorities respectively. Responsibilities of evaluation committees at all levels are establish evaluation projects, organize expert groups to determine evaluation indexes, release evaluation funds, select and entrust evaluation institutions, supervise evaluation process, check and accept evaluation reports, and prepare evaluation budgets for the next year. Special evaluation funds will be allocated from the central and local governments. The final evaluation report should be submitted to the highest authority at the two levels for examination and verification, and the evaluation committee and the third-party evaluation institutions are responsible for the evaluation conclusion of the final report.

B. Establishing a selection mechanism for third-party evaluation institutions

The evaluation should be undertaken by the appropriate institutions, which is the premise to ensure the smooth and effective evaluation. Therefore, the selection of evaluation institutions should also be scientifically planned and organized to ensure the sustainable performance of the evaluation activities. The government can start from the operational level to carry out the selection, confirmation and entrustment of evaluation institutions. Before selecting the third-party institutions for the performance of evaluation authorization, internal analysis should be carried out on the existing problems of social organizations to keep a clear mind. The purpose of performance evaluation is to improve work efficiency and transform government functions, which may harm the interests of some departments and even individuals. Therefore, before considering the formal implementation of the third-party evaluation, it is necessary to sort out the stakeholders and try to eliminate the resistance factors in the implementation process. In addition, we can consider the implementation of public bidding for evaluation institutions, and refine the entrustment contract to clarify the responsibilities of third-party evaluation institutions and ensure that their behaviors do not go beyond the scope of performance evaluation. At present, there are four innovative third-party evaluation models, namely, expert evaluation model of universities [4], professional company

evaluation model, social representative evaluation model and public participation evaluation model [2].

C. Independence of third-party evaluation institutions

The professionalism, independence and credibility of third-party evaluation should be enhanced [5]. First, we should encourage and develop professional evaluation organizations and speed up the construction of public policy evaluation teams and the training of specialized personnel, and then encourage colleges and universities and research institutions to take advantage of their talent pool to train a large number of evaluation professionals. Secondly, scientific research institutions at all levels can be guided by scientific research policies to strengthen the research and practice of government performance evaluation, increase the investment in scientific research, and enhance the research on the theory, method and technology of public policy evaluation. Thirdly, we can cultivate excellent evaluation institutions with the help of market forces and professionalize the policy evaluation organizations in the society through the competition mechanism.

D. Improving the comprehensive evaluation system based on self-evaluation

First of all, the self-evaluation system of departments at all levels needs to be improved. Departments at all levels are required to submit mid-year self-evaluation reports in June and year-end ones in December. The self-evaluation report shall be submitted to the evaluation committee for preliminary examination and the highest authority for final examination.

E. Strengthening the supervision and management to the third-party evaluation institutions

The government should strengthen the supervision and management of the third-party evaluation institutions. The evaluation of social organizations is an effective way to strengthen external supervision. From both international experience and China's practice, social organization evaluation is an important measure to promote social organization reform, regulate social organization behavior and promote the development of social organization. In the process of evaluation, the principle of openness and transparency should be adhered to, that is, the evaluation process and results of social organizations should be open to the public, so that the public can understand the real situation of the operation of social organizations. The evaluation index system adopted by the third-party evaluation institutions should be compiled around the needs of the public and the corresponding services provided by the government, and the evaluation results should be transmitted to the government in the form of official documents for implementation. This will not only ensure that the evaluation and supervision activities are not affected by the government and the results are objective and fair, but also cause the government to provide services in accordance with the needs of the public to ensure that the government is qualified in the evaluation. This is conducive not only to the objective evaluation of the government behavior by the public, but also to the supervision of the government by the public, so

that the government is committed to providing services for the public and establishing its credibility.

F. Improving the participation of the public in third-party evaluation

First of all, the public's awareness of participation in third-party evaluation should be enhanced [6]. The government should change the emphasis on the third-party evaluation from the main conference advocacy to the mainstream media publicity to enhance public recognition and acceptability of the third-party evaluation. Secondly, we need to improve public ability to participate in third-party evaluation, strengthen the implementation of public compulsory education, continue to extend the duration of compulsory education, develop various forms of vocational education and adult education to improve the education level of the public.

V. CONCLUSION

Public policy evaluation is an important link in the administrative decision-making. Whether the evaluation activities are scientific and conform to the characteristics of The Times has a great impact on the quality of administrative decision-making. Introducing the third-party evaluation mechanism into the third-party evaluation activities of public policies not only increases the diversity of evaluation subjects, but also greatly optimizes the operating procedures and operating environment of previous policy evaluation activities.

The researches to be made in the future should take care of the following aspects. First, based on cases study, make in-depth analysis of the actual status of the domestic third-party evaluation and describe in detail the formation mechanism of the characteristics of the third-party assessment in the local ecological environment of China. Second, make emphasis on the public sector serving as the entrusting party, explore how to strengthen the communication between it and the third evaluation institution, to fully unleash its independence and professionalism. Third, focus on the objectiveness and the fairness of the third-party institutions to promote the innovation of the governing concept. Fourth, we can explore access mechanisms, industry standards and regulatory mechanisms for third-party assessment in China.

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