



# Analysis on the Dilemma and Countermeasures of the Third-Party Evaluation of Chinese Government Performance

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**Abstract.** At present, the third-party performance evaluation, as an important form of government performance evaluation, can better make up for the defects of internal government performance evaluation and improve the government performance management capacity with its independence and professional rights. However, due to the late start of the third-party evaluation of government performance in China, it is facing difficulties such as the weak professionalism and independence of evaluation institutions, the insufficient ability to obtain evaluation information, the lack of cooperation mechanisms between evaluation subjects, the lack of strong institutional guarantee and support in the evaluation process, and the serious falsification of evaluation results. Therefore, cultivating professional evaluation talents, improving the comprehensive ability of the third-party subject, deepening the disclosure of government performance information, and improving the guarantee system of the third-party evaluation system have become the important tasks of improving the third-party evaluation of government performance.

**Keywords:** China; government performance; third-party evaluation; dilemma and countermeasures

## 1 Introduction

Since the introduction of government performance evaluation into China in the 1980s, through the practice and exploration of governments at all levels, many evaluation methods have been formed. Among them, the third-party evaluation has strong independence, professionalism, accountability and democracy because of its "external person" characteristics in the evaluation subject and evaluation process, which effectively makes up for the shortcomings in the internal evaluation of government performance, improves the accuracy and objectivity of evaluation to a certain extent, and gradually becomes one of the important selection modes of government performance evaluation. However, in the practice of public management, the third-party evaluation has exposed many defects while achieving professional supervision of government behavior and evaluation of government performance. This shows that the third-party evaluation is

not a perfect expedient that can effectively measure the effectiveness of the government, and it also has the phenomenon of failure. So, we should treat the third-party evaluation dialectically.

## **2 Concept and characteristics of third-party evaluation**

"Third-party evaluation" originated in western countries. In 1906, Bruere and others initiated the establishment of the New York Municipal Research Institute, which took the lead in conducting preliminary performance evaluation of the New York City Government. This is the earliest practice of performance evaluation, performance measurement and performance accounting that can be retrieved. It's essentially a "third-party evaluation" created by a research institution which is external to the government and aims at exploring government management. Subsequently, drawing on the reform experience of western countries, China introduced the third-party evaluation mechanism into the government performance evaluation, which played a positive role in promoting the transformation of the style of government departments and the transformation to a service-oriented government.

In Chinese academic circles, there is no standardized and unified definition of the concept of third-party evaluation. At present, there are mainly the following representative views: third-party evaluation is an evaluation organized and implemented by non-governmental departments<sup>1</sup>, and it is an evaluation implemented by intermediary agencies, social organizations, media and individual citizens<sup>2</sup>. This article believes that the third-party evaluation refers to the organizational activities that are independent of the government institutions, such as schools, social institutions, academic groups, evaluation companies, social media and so on, to independently measure and evaluate the management efficiency and benefits of the government in all aspects.

## **3 The development of the third-party evaluation in our government performance evaluation**

Since the introduction of government performance evaluation in China, it has been attached importance by all levels of government departments. However, with the widespread popularity of performance evaluation, some scholars have found its operational problems. For example, Zhou Zhiren pointed out that various problems in government performance evaluation have surfaced, of which the most popular one is the problem of "self-evaluation" and "self talk" in performance evaluation<sup>3</sup>. In order to correct this problem, on August 26, 2015, Premier Li Keqiang pointed out that the way to break through the "self talk" performance evaluation is to promote the third-party evaluation and elevate it to the height of "Innovating the current government's management mode". This shows that the third-party evaluation has been highly valued by the party and the state in China, and has been greatly guaranteed at the level of guiding policy documents.

In addition, the third-party evaluation of government performance is also carried out in the practice of local governments at all levels. In Chen Cong's article, he comprehensively combed the local governments that carried out the practice of third-party evaluation of government performance from 1998 to 2007, and summarized these practices into four evaluation modes: public evaluation of government; Government commissioned university evaluation; the government entrusts a professional institution to evaluate; Independent "third-party evaluation"<sup>4</sup>. The achievements of these earlier third-party evaluation practices have provided experience for the subsequent third-party evaluation of government performance.

## **4 Problems of the third-party evaluation in government performance evaluation**

### **4.1 The professionalism and independence of the appraisal institution are not strong**

The professional problems of the third-party evaluation institutions mainly lie in the lack of professionalism and business knowledge of the staff in the evaluation institutions, and their lack of understanding of the operation of the government institutions conducting the evaluation. In addition, in the actual operation process, the third-party evaluation agency will also be affected by various factors, so it can not maintain its independence as a third party independent of government agencies. Therefore, there are problems in the development of professionalism and independence of the third-party evaluation of government performance in China, which also leads to the decline of its evaluation effectiveness and reliability. Improving the professionalism and independence of the third-party evaluation is a very critical step.

### **4.2 Insufficient ability to assess information acquisition**

At present, the local government of our country has not established a perfect government information disclosure system, which makes the third-party evaluation agency unable to grasp the relevant information needed for the evaluation work in a timely, comprehensive and accurate manner. Compared with the traditional government self-evaluation method, one of the disadvantages of the third-party evaluation is that it is not familiar with the entrusted department or the entrusted project, and the lack of corresponding information communication mechanism and information transmission platform makes the government have an opportunistic mentality, provide false information or one-sided information, and mislead the third-party evaluation work.

### **4.3 Lack of efficient cooperation and coordination mechanism among assessment subjects**

There are many problems in the third-party evaluation, not only from the resistance of government departments and doubts from the society, but also from the defects of the

third-party evaluation subject. In addition, the scientific design of evaluation indicators, high-end data statistics and analysis, and meticulous demonstration and evaluation all put forward high capacity requirements for third-party evaluation subjects. However, due to the lack of effective coordination and cooperation mechanisms among the third-party assessment subjects, they can not effectively share information and lack the spirit of cooperation to deal with difficulties.

#### **4.4 The evaluation process lacks strong institutional guarantee and support**

Institutional guarantee is the cornerstone of the third-party's effective participation in government performance evaluation and the necessary condition for the orderly and standardized operation of the third party evaluation. However, in China, the relevant laws and regulations of the third-party assessment are not perfect and lack of effective system guarantee. Its operation is interfered by all parties and it is difficult to maintain its own characteristics. Compared with western developed countries, China's government performance evaluation started relatively late, and the form of third-party evaluation of government performance has only appeared in China for less than 20 years. Although our governments at all levels have done a lot of practice in this regard, and scholars have also made a lot of exploration in theoretical research, the relevant legislation is far behind the theory and practice.

#### **4.5 The application of evaluation results is ineffective**

In the practice of the third-party evaluation in China, there are problems of ideological exclusion and unclear status of the third-party evaluation, which cause the government to resist or belittle the results of the third-party evaluation, pay insufficient attention to the feedback of the third-party evaluation, and make the third-party evaluation become a mere formality and can not play the role of optimizing the evaluation object. Xu Xuanguo pointed out that China's existing governance structure does not define the structural position of the third-party assessment<sup>5</sup>, and the existing institutional framework lacks the construction of the legitimacy basis of the third-party assessment, which leads to the consequences of role deviation, function failure and professional suspension of the third-party assessment in practice, making the third-party assessment unable to operate according to the expected role and function, and the problem of "Involution" has emerged.

### **5 Optimizing the paths of third-party evaluation in government performance evaluation**

#### **5.1 Combining internal evaluation with external evaluation to cultivate professional evaluation talents**

The way to solve the lack of independence of the evaluation institution is to combine

the internal evaluation with the external evaluation, not only considering the opinions of the third party evaluation comprehensively, but also not ignoring the internal self-evaluation opinions of the unit. The integration of the two evaluation results can reflect the actual performance of the evaluated unit more objectively. The key to solve the lack of professionalism is the cultivation of professional talents, which can be combined with the establishment of relevant counterparts in universities and the development of relevant professional training in society.

## **5.2 Deepening and promoting the disclosure of government performance information**

To promote government performance information disclosure, we need to strengthen the implementation and supervision of government information disclosure. On the one hand, within the legal framework of the regulations on government information disclosure, we should conscientiously implement the specific requirements of legal documents and promote the public disclosure of performance information. Not only should government information be fully disclosed to the public, but also "three public funds", "three public consumption" and all kinds of public information related to public interests in the process of government should be fully disclosed to the public. While comprehensively promoting information disclosure, we should also pay attention to broadening the channels of information disclosure. E-government is a new type of government office mode generated with the development of network technology and communication technology. Official government websites, official microblogs and Wechat have become the necessary channels for the disclosure of political performance information, and news media, newspaper broadcasting and other channels should also be fully utilized.

## **5.3 Establish a cooperation and sharing mechanism with third-party evaluation institutions to improve evaluation capabilities**

By strengthening the coordination and cooperation with other third-party subjects, integrating dispersed forces, improving the scientificity and objectivity of performance evaluation, and enhancing the influence of third-party evaluation. On the one hand, in order to carry out the third-party evaluation smoothly, we can use platforms such as Weibo, wechat, Internet and public media to carry out advertising marketing of the third-party evaluation, intensify publicity of the important significance and main advantages of the third-party evaluation, and enhance the public's understanding of the third-party evaluation. On the other hand, the third-party evaluation subject can ensure its independence by establishing public welfare funds, and break its dependence on government funds by means of public welfare venture capital and absorbing social capital.

#### **5.4 Improve the institutional guarantee system of the third-party evaluation**

At present, the third-party evaluation in China does not have legal authority and unity, so the solution to the problem of the lack of status of the third-party evaluation in the law should start from the following aspects: first, according to the relevant experience and lessons summed up in the practice of various places, formulate relevant laws on the government performance of the "third-party evaluation" to ensure that the "third-party evaluation" occupies a legal position; secondly, we should formulate the "third-party evaluation" norms in the legal sense, make relatively uniform legal provisions on the process, form and content of its participation in government performance evaluation, and standardize its operation; thirdly, build and improve the reputation and reputation incentive system of the third-party evaluation subject. The specific performance, business ability and credit degree of the third-party evaluation subject in the government performance evaluation should be recorded, and analyzed and archived through big data technology, providing a basis for other government subjects to screen the third-party evaluation subject and for subsequent incentive compensation.

#### **5.5 Establish an application monitoring and tracking system for third-party evaluation effectiveness**

The results of the third-party evaluation are often ignored by administrators, which makes the role of the third-party evaluation ineffective. Therefore, we should establish a professional institution to supervise and track the application of the third-party evaluation efficiency to ensure the effective use of the third-party evaluation results. On the one hand, the third-party subject can be given the right of supervision, providing it with effective channels and ways to supervise and safeguard its rights, so that it can independently exercise the right to supervise and track the application of evaluation results to the evaluated object. In addition, an evaluation result application supervision institution independent of the third-party evaluation institution can be established to supervise and evaluate the application of the third-party evaluation results by government staff.

## **6 Conclusions**

In China, there are many problems in the traditional internal evaluation model of government performance, and the introduction of a third-party evaluation in government performance can effectively eliminate the drawbacks of internal evaluation and improve the objectivity, fairness and scientificity of evaluation. The third-party evaluation is not only to evaluate the results of political achievements, but also to evaluate the source work and process of the government. Because the third-party evaluation in our country is facing the problems of weak professionalism and independence, insufficient information acquisition ability, lack of cooperation mechanism between evaluation subjects, lack of strong institutional guarantee, and serious falsification of results.

Therefore, cultivating professional evaluation talents, improving the comprehensive ability of the third-party subject, deepening the disclosure of government performance information, and improving the guarantee system of the third-party evaluation system have become the important work of improving the third-party evaluation system of government performance.

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