

## **History and Breakthrough: The Track and Reform of Chinese Local Government Performance Management**

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### **Abstract**

*With the advance of the Chinese local government management system innovation, the Chinese local government performance management theories and the diversity of practice have been gradually rising and developing since the 1990s. Facing the requirements of political reform and the practice of administrative reform, there is still a lot of obstacles in the local government performance management practice. The core task of the local government performance management reform in the next decade is to get rid of these obstacles.*

**Key Words:** Chinese local governments; performance management; track and reform

Since the 1960s, the developed countries represented by UK and USA have launched the government performance management reform movement to improve administrative efficiency, which is called “the revolution of the government” because of its depth and breadth. The reform has opened new horizons to the government management of developed countries, and established a new administrative mode, which the developed countries relayed to complete the modern transformation of government.

Only in a profound administrative ecological environment, can the administrative system be generated, established effectively and played a role. There are significant differences between developed countries and China in the implementation of performance management system environment. It is effective and successful to use the Government Performance Management as a management tool in developed countries, which has its unique institutional conditions. Actually things are like that the governments of developed countries are enjoying more favorable, convenient and incomparable Institutional arrangements than local governments in China. Therefore, it is a necessary research to discover and crack the obstacles faced in the local government performance management in the future practice by studying the theoretical developments and practical evolution of local government performance management.

### ***1. The Development of Chinese Government Performance Management Research***

The theory research of Chinese Government Performance Management started in the mid-1990s has experienced three stages so far.

#### ***1.1. The First Stage: Preliminary Exploratory Stage (1994 - 1999)***

In 1994, Chinese scholars translated the David • Boning Han’s article, UK local government use of the observation of the performance evaluation scale. In 1995, the Chinese scholars introduced the history, main content and technical methods of UK organizational performance management, which is still in its initial exploratory period during that age. With the introduction of the concepts and methods of Western governments’ performance management system by Chinese domestic scholars, the idea of the government performance management began to enter China, but did not pay theorists’ and administrative officials’ enough attention.

### **1.2. The Second Stage: The Expansion Phase (2000 - 2003)**

Since 2000, the Government Performance management problem has caused some concern in China, and the relative theories also expanded. At this stage, the new public management theory is gradually on the rise in China, which is essentially an administrative reform movement under the guidance of performance management theory. The Academic circles began to pay attention to the effective tool of improving government performance --- the study of Performance Management. The theoretical study of this period is mainly concentrated in three areas:

First, the introduction and presentation of concepts and methods of Western governments' performance management system. Chinese scholars described performance management practices in details in the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, New Zealand and other countries, researched its meaning and concept in depth. It concluded that Performance measurement is a way of government management adopted by western countries in the basic frame of existing political system and after the marketization of part of government function and the delivery of public service, and is also important ways and methods to express public interests and participate in government management. It reflects the orientation of the government to seek the development of social justice and democratic values and contains the philosophy of public responsibility and customers first.

Second, the Chinese government has taken steps to improve its performance in management, and discussed the feasibility of such a task. The Chinese Public Administration Society Joint Task force pointed out in its report that China's political management practice is divided into three types: A, B, and C. China's proposed standards are to establish efficient basic principles and ideas. Xu Shuangmin (2003), of the Chinese local government, first suggested that steps be taken to improve China's government's management. He also warned that the main obstacle was the differences in the nature of government, the Chinese government, and the CPASJTF. The Chinese government has had drawbacks in its management, because of the specific barriers in an administrative organization.

Third, the performance of the local government is trying to design an experimental management system. Zhang Zhang (2000), a designer of the Local Government Performance Management, pointed out that the current performance management design is designed by the government. Tan Gongrong (2001) made a tentative theory of a modern administrative index system, which is a set of system from six different administrations.

### **1.3. Refinement and Innovation Phase of the Third Stage --- (2004-Present)**

During this period, China's local government performance management has caused great concern to the majority of scholars, and all levels of government departments have under the Government Performance Management are to explore and try to do it. This phase of the theoretical study reflect the three characteristics. Research progressive refinement and depth. In these studies, more representative: Excellence (2004) built upon the main body of the public sector performance management and object selection problem. OF QUANTITATIVE (2004), the basic procedures of local government performance management, information fidelity system, are to apply the results of the research system and other issues. Ripa (2005) focuses on government performance management issues in order to study from the perspective of the financial expenditure performance. Hu Tax Root of an Empirical Study (2006) writes from the perspective of performance management reform of the administrative examination and approval system. Chen Guoquan (2005), the introduction of stakeholder theory ,which is a comprehensive definition of government performance, and at the same time frame laid out the full range of the performance management body, in order to explore a new perspective for performance management theorizing. Package States Constitution, Cao Xian (2006) to study the "three powers" of Local Government Performance Evaluation: The evaluate of the management rights, the right to evaluate the organization, and the source of the specific rating rights, ownership and specific content, a clear government performance management of each participant's right to boundaries of responsibility.

Second, the continuous development of government innovation theory provides theoretical support for the Government Performance Management. The government innovation theory is that Chinese scholars learn the theory of organization and management, Organization and management theory applied to government management, will build learning, service-oriented, responsible-government. Yu Keping (2006), wrote that an innovative government should not only have democracy, the rule of law and civilized government, but also should change to a progressive and efficient government.

It can be said that the development of the theory of government innovation for Government Performance management provides a good theoretical support, but also to build a theoretical framework for government performance management and manipulation tools.

## ***2. China's Local Government Performance Management Practices Development Course***

Since the 1980s, work for the establishment of efficient, coordinated operations, code of conduct for the Chinese administrative system, has been carried out in the on-going reform of the administrative system. In the concept of change, transformation of functions, adjusting the organizational structure, reform occur at the same time. From the introduction of international popular new management mechanism and management techniques and tools, efforts have been put in place to improve government performance. Since the 1990's the Chinese government has been influenced by Western governments. The management in the Chinese government has been a growing concern, and they have been implementing the western government model in a variety of ways, from the local level to the national level.

### ***2.1. The First Stage : From the Mid – 1980s to the Early 1990s***

In this stage, Performance management is not really carried out in China's administrative departments, as the precursor of the performance management, evaluation method mainly actualized from two aspects. The first one is in the circumstance of target responsibility system. During this period the implementation of the target responsibility system is voluntary, and the central put forward no uniform requirements and the corresponding standards and practice guidelines. The second is the performance check started in 1989. Target responsibility system get start in the mid of 1980s, is the flexible application of MBO which is popular the entire world in China. From a view of technical point, performance management in MBO is obviously different from the one in the modern organization: organizational goal specific to each position, target completion of the assessment is the jobholder's contribution to the organization's goals, rather than the system of the state in the organization performance assessment. In China, however, the target responsibility system takes its form in government leaders. Their leadership responsibilities are the same as the responsibilities of the department. Therefore assessment of the problems within the management of either is similar. In 1988 the management objectives were set up, involving thirteen large and medium-sized cities. The target responsibility system up until this point was only used in various departments and levels of government. However the lack of data and completion of the project made it difficult to analyze the results. The performance monitoring began in 1989 in order to monitor the effectiveness of supervision and inspection of the government. The second national monitoring work conference held in December 1989 explained the basic functions of government administration “including performance monitoring with independent commission monitors. Having performance monitoring from the beginning.

### ***2.2. The Second Stage: From The Early 1990s To The Late 1990s***

In this stage the reform of the government administration system has been to enter the depth. Governments at all levels attached importance to the improvement of administrative efficiency and quality of service. This was a period of great prosperity of Performance management development in China, in which local government at various levels were constantly exploring a new form of Performance management. Owing to their efforts on innovations and reforms, with the impact of international experiences, various types and patterns of Organizational performance management emerged one after another; presenting a trend of diversification, meanwhile the Performance management fully played a role as a tool for government administration reform. In the 1990s, there were three main methods for Performance management:

First, Social service commitment system and Organizational performance management. In June 1994, aimed at addressing the problems of poor service offered by urban society which aroused strong resentment among the general public, Yantai Shandong province took the lead to try out Social service commitment system in construction commission, drawing on the experience of social management department in England and Hong Kong. In July 1996, on the basis of summarizing experience on Social service commitment system in Yantai, the central government of China made the decision that use promotion of Social service commitment system as a key work for strengthening officials style and professional ethics construction. Then the Social service commitment system was spread all over the country and variety of industries. Second, application of Target responsibility system.

Compared with 1980s, Target responsibility system in 1990s had two characteristics: pushed on systemically from top to bottom; take focus on economic growth. Central government organs and superior authority set digitized goals of economic growth, then assigned them to Subordinate units in the form of indicators and tasks, constituting into a pyramid structure for a target. Completion of these tasks and indicators was a foundation to assess and judge performance, official's promotion in Subordinate units was in accordance with his completion of indicators assigned from superior authority. The divided level of target responsibility pushed forward rapid economic development in China. In 1993, according to the spirit raised by central government that deepen the reform of the cadre and personnel system, ministry of organization in Hebei province began to explore enacting the Cadre performance appraisal system, published the 《On the county (city, area) party and government main leaders cadre incentive and constraint mechanism of try out method》. From 1999, Qingdao municipal Party committee and local government drawn lessons from experiences of developed countries and new models of modern enterprise management, integrated inspection with objective performance management, investigation and assessment together, just as a new model of inspection. Third, a Performance management system in which citizen played a key role for assessment, formerly Performance management based on the assessment from government itself, although there had some advantage in information, assess by oneself may make it formalized, which cannot get its own objective.

In October 1999, Zhuhai promote the activity which was called "evaluate government by myriads of citizen". One group which made up by national delegates、member of the CPPCC、journalist、enterprise representative evaluate organizations by "satisfied" or "unsatisfied" with a secret ballot. Then Zhuhai continue this kind of activity on a large scale. This activity was promoted in other parts of China, just like 1998 "review government of shenyang city", once a year since 2000, hangzhou "is not satisfied with their campaign" and once a year since 2001, nanjing "ten thousand government", etc.

### ***2.3.3. The Third Stage: Since the 21st Century***

Entering the 21st century, new changes have taken place in China's local government governance concept. New policy ideas require the transformation of government governance mode and organization performance management which has entered the third stage of development. Response to senior leadership "construction of scientific government performance evaluation system" requirements, academia and practice circle pay great efforts to build evaluation system can reflect the concept of scientific development: "green GDP", "well-off society" evaluation index such as academic research, out of the ivory tower and step by step in practice. Such as Sang's group put forward the three level index, 33 secondary index comparison system composed of local government performance evaluation index system. Can say that the new policy ideas and governance patterns shift not only clear the position of organization performance management, but also brings the evaluation mode, enforcement mechanisms, a major change in the focus and scope. China's local government performance management has entered a new stage of development, and formed the distinctive Chinese local government performance management model, such as Qingdao, hangzhou, fujian, gansu, etc. However, due to the existing weak foundation and implementation time is very short, these patterns are still in testing and perfecting stage.

## ***3. Systemic Obstacles for Reform of China's Local Government Performance Management***

Since the 1990 s, China's local government performance management practices have received certain effect, promote the change of government management concept, and improve the level of the government's public management and public service quality. But in the process of China local government performance management introduce a sharp movement, the formal characteristics and scientific and legalization level is not high, hinder the performance management to the deeper development. This is because in terms of system, the implementation of China's local government performance management still exist many obstacles, embodied in the following aspects:

### ***3.1. Responsible for the Hierarchy is the First Obstacle of Local Government Performance Management***

Chinese local governments face two subjects: one is the bureaucratic system of the government at a higher level, one is area of it governance within the general public. Due to the lack of general direct elections and the people's congress system is imperfect causes all of the local government is "on", the main body of government performance management is the government at a higher level.

China's local governments often cannot achieve the independence of the local governments of developed countries, the feature is entanglements of various functions, the relations between local and central China have not reached a market on the basis of the positive interaction of constrained. Responsible for the hierarchical caused the weak service consciousness of local government, the local government's first priority is to complete assigned by the superior government affairs, the government performance management to stay within the government of the establishment, the process of repair. Although this kind of performance management can also be made a certain achievement, but it stays on the surface of the efficiency is not only unsustainable, and performance management are different. Social change is driven by the government of China, as a hairstyle, after the government leading the development of the society change. In and within the government, in general, strong central government was the first to feel the need of change and develop top-down implementation of a series of system, local governments are often tasked by the government at the next higher level, the policy implementation of the government at the next higher level, less consciousness. For local governments, the forward's main source of power is superior. Although along with the reform step by step, the government is constantly give place to a variety of autonomy power, but in the social transition period, still need to maintain the authority of the central government, for the control of places should not be weakened. It's decided to at least during the period of social transformation, the responsible for the hierarchical mechanism won't change now, this may cause the negative effect on the performance management in the short term will not disappear.

### ***3.2. The Boundary of Power in Government, Political Party and National People's Congress is Unclear, Lead to a Lack of External Supervision to Performance Management in Local Government***

Unlike developed countries, the systematism level of Chinese political party is the highest in the process of modern transformation. Chinese political party not only strives for the ruling power in institutional environment, but also dominates the design and implementation of all the system in the national modernization, the functions of the party is not separated from those of the government becomes a feature of Chinese political. Although the boundary is emphasized between party and government all the time, as well as the lead of party is considered to be an indirect leadership and the lead to political ideas and policies. Today, the separate of party and government is still a major issue that Chinese government focuses on. Excessive expansion of party's power also has effect on organs of state power; party habitually put the people's congress as an instrument which policy of party gain legitimacy. The supreme status of authority is hit. At the same time, the development of the administrative state and the inflation of the administrative power inappropriate much more authority's space, which makes people's congress in China face unprecedented embarrassment, and its independence and function has been a challenge, making National People's Congress had become worthless. Excessive expansion of political and governmental power makes China's government performance management must be driven by political parties from top to bottom, and the characteristic of centralized, internal motivated is obvious in performance management. This way on the one hand, can cause performance management relies on the power of the party is rapidly spread across the country, but more likely to cause local government performance management quickly to formalize and movement in the absence of external supervision.

### ***3.3. Lacking of Unique Bureaucratic in Local Government Results in Missing Basement of Performance Management***

Base and core of rational bureaucracy is under the rule of law, admiring the authority of the law instead of traditional and personal, but in local government in China, personal authority often is much more important than of the law, and the law is not respected, in other words, it is said "There is a policy, there is countermeasure". We do have the complete legal system to regulate daily behavior and protect the rights of the individual, but the system is fragile and never into reality. What we rely on to solve the problems in daily life is not formal rules and regulations but tradition and habit. This is because we are in the process of the transformation of traditional society to modern society, the transformation of the individual authority to the rational authority and the differentiation of institutions function are not finished. In addition, because of the unique bureaucracy in China, the government leadership has much effect on the government's work, which means traditional rule of man, the problem we are facing is not too much development of bureaucracy but relative shortage of it. From the practice, administrative procedures of the current China's local governments place emphasis on interior orientation, process-oriented and responsible for the superior, as well as managing society by enforcement and education methods, that is to say, on the basis of the whole society is based on public interests with enforcement.

Because of the unique bureaucracy in China, administrative responsibility of local government is reflected in the administrative rule and administrative procedures, government workers only responsible for the program and is responsible for the supervisor and is not responsible for the results. Therefore there is logic contradiction between the administrative pattern and government effectiveness, making government workers become a formulaic and their duty is to carry out the system of rules and the superior's order, as long as without violation of program rules, they would not make mistakes, and it makes no difference on results and effects. Therefore, if the procedure is legitimate, whether the active is reasonable become insignificant, which lead to the omission of the public service consciousness and efficiency awareness of the government workers, and the shortage of creativity and initiative.

#### ***3.4. Bureaucrats in Elite Politics Result in Local Government Performance Management to Inadequate Preparation***

From traditional political system, the design of it in china is typical elite politics, bureaucracy as political elite; dominate the political system design, administrative implementation and the social interest coordination, and even the realization of the social moral consensus and so on. Accordingly, the requirement of bureaucratic administration level and the moral level in the political system is very high; bureaucracy must have a good education, a political vision and administrative skills, particularly in moral to into perfect. In this able-man politics, bureaucracies are like parents while people are like children and people rarely initiative to participate in the administration, the efficient and effective operation of the administrative system depends on the observation high-quality bureaucrats give, which is called "For the people in charge". So, under the condition of overall quality in bureaucratic team is higher and political correctness, the whole administrative agencies will more pay attention to alleviate people's burden, increasing people's welfare; while the bureaucratic team become corruption and lower moral standard, bureaucracy change to tools to enslave the people, leading to inefficiency or negative administrative efficiency. For a long time, politics in China is to a certain extent is still an elite politics model, adhering the theory of the premise that "working class is a representative of the advanced productive forces, the communist party is working-class vanguard organization", bureaucratic team win the elite status, and maintain the elite status in the era that class struggle is the social theme.

However, in the period of social transformation, elite status establish by relying on war and revolution experience great challenges. Political elites generally faced with embarrassment for the shortage of modern management methods and experience in building the social services, corruption within the political elite further shakes the purity of the elite. At the same time, the modern civil servants system has been set up, but bureaucratic team is still not fully grown up and account for all management positions from central to local governments. In view of the feature of government-promote in China's local government performance management, the implementation of performance management in local government becomes very difficult, just because boosters of performance management itself don't have the modern scientific management methods and means that performance management requires. For example, develop desirable performance management index system is especially important for government, yet bureaucrats often lack the specialized personnel. Government organizations usually can't find the relationship between good products and services, existing resources and budget levels that they provide and the obtained results they expect, resulting in that the government doesn't know by what kind of measures can improve the performance of the government. Because of Matthew effect on talent flow, the lower administrative level is, more backward region economy is, the lower the overall quality of the contingent of bureaucracy is, therefore, although performance management could obtain a higher level of government approval, the lack of related technologies and the absence of performance management legislation makes the local government bureaucrat use the traditional management means instead of performance management methods in the process of social management. The low quality of the contingent of bureaucracy also causes the resistance of performance management reform itself, the implementation of performance management is bound to a series of institutional changes, researchers to streamline and strength of budget control, as we know, the government is not entirely rational, and local government bureaucracy is also in the pursuit of self-interest maximization, so local government bureaucrats may instinctively oppose government performance management in this area.

### ***3.5. Lack of Institutional Job Analysis and Job Description, Cause Work Responsibility and Target are Not Clear***

Local governments in China are lack of scientific understanding in the design of human resource management system, and haven't realized that job analysis is the basis and prerequisite for all the functions work in modern human resource management. Because local governments never had a job analysis system, basically did not have the job description of specification, which means the lack of the basic file in the performance management. For the moment, China's local governments are influenced by the traditional personnel management system and organizational structure, although the responsibility department also requires each department to create positions personnel allocation and set different persons on different position of responsibility, due to the fact that the determination of these responsibilities are mostly engaged in this job according to their own conditions and leadership of directed, rather than a thorough job analysis results, job responsibilities and post actual requirements are deviating, working goals, job responsibilities and requirements are obviously weaken, and position value decouple with practical ability of the post staff and the actual situation of the post work. This reality causes that government staffs are lack of objective performance measurement indicators in performance management, each link of performance management on China's local government civil servants has no basis and foundation of evaluation, and administrative efficiency is low.

## ***4. Institutional Approaches of Local Government Performance Management Revolution in China***

### ***4.1. Make Use of the Favorable Factors of Performance Management in the Current System***

Because of the characteristic of progressive in China's revolution, performance management in local government needs focus on future to design the desirable system blueprint as well as these days to use the favorable factors in the existing system and explore the benign interactive mechanism in performance management and local government revolution. Although there are many system blocks that are not conducive to local governments in China in the design of performance management system, at the same time it also contains the favorable factors, what we should do is that reform the downside in local government system and play the favorable factors. Firstly, it is relative that there are still parts such as special economic zone, enjoy part of national autonomous areas and major cities having the legislative power Under China's unified centralized system. Moreover, after the reform and open policy, the central government is constantly on the devolution of power. So, local governments in china still have the autonomous rights on some local affairs, the crux of the problem is how to make these power enjoy for the citizens in a region instead of stay within the government. Secondly, People's congress system at least protects the citizen's political participation and administrative supervision to the government in theory. If National People's Congress can really give play to the role of legislation and supervision, it can effectively promote the reform of local government performance management. Thirdly, democratic parties can play the role of supervision in the political party system. Democratic parties have the function to participate in the government; they can give the local government the suggestions of the performance management and act as a "third party power" in the assessment of local government performance management. The last, the wide spread of have impact on the local government. The system of community level self-governance has changed transition control of township government in rural areas for a long time, through the system of rural autonomy, villagers gain some autonomous power on rural affairs, rural township government that only carries out a will has changed into a bond linking rural with governments of higher levels, and must consider the more interests of farmers in its policy and management activities. Although, autonomous system in China is limited in both rural and urban residents' committees, it breaks the ice of the excessive centralization in China's local government, having the certain osmosis for the reform of the system of the whole place.

### ***4.2. Continue To Expand Local Autonomy Power and Improve the System of Local Democracy***

On the basis of the marketization and scientific management, performance management movement in developed countries continuously expands citizen's political and administrative rights, which depends on its good local autonomy and democracy mechanism. The core concept of performance management is the democratization. Now a democratic mode suitable for China's local governments' characteristic is not sure, and the construction of democracy also involves the relations between central and local governments, but it is doubtless that the essence of democracy lies in participation.

Local government performance management needs to expand not only the local authority but also the citizen's democratic rights; it means the reduction of the central powers and the extension of the governmental powers, really transforming the power of the government into civil rights. In the past all previous decentralization of the central government to the local is actually the power cut in the government. The long-time propulsion of the local government performance management is out of government instead of itself. Local government performance management must combine the expansion of local self-government power with the perfection of the system of local democracy, constantly broadening the content and channels of citizen's political participation. No matter which kind the local democracy is, it must ensure citizens' political participation in the following three dimensions: the first is to determine the tallest leadership and important head by electing; the second is the processing of specific public affairs and public policy participation; the third is to supervise the administrative department of the performance.

### ***4.3. To Reshape China's Local Government Administrative System***

Chinese society is in the transition from traditional agricultural society to industrial society, lack of bureaucratic has become an important problem troubling the government efficiency, so many scholars advocate to establish a rational management system which regards efficiency as the goal. However, in today's globalization, the developed countries are trying to critique of bureaucracy, the new public management, and the theory of good governance are put forward to rebuild the new kind of government administrative paradigm. Moreover, the disadvantages of too much bureaucracy malpractice in some area of China have appeared. Therefore, rational bureaucracy must be restored by the related theories of new public management while establishing the rational bureaucratic system of local government, in order to make it more suitable for the need of China's local governments and have more characteristics of the times.

The first, Constructing rational bureaucratic system of local government is the first step to reshape China's local government administrative system. Rational, science, and the rule of law is a fundamental element in bureaucracy, is also the basic guarantee of efficiency. First of all, position classification management is necessary for the local government, giving a clear definition to responsibility, right and profit for different departments and different positions and creating positions and personnel allocation strictly. Next, in order to set up the authority of the law in the local government, "the civil servant law" and "administrative procedural law" and other laws must be carried out, and cannot indulge illegal administrative behavior, truly making the law become the highest standards of public administration. Finally, a sound system of civil servants must be completed.

The second, rational bureaucracy must be restored by the related theories of new public management. First of all, pursuit of the efficiency of rational bureaucracy should be combined with the concept of fairness and justice. Rational bureaucracy can only ensure the internal efficiency of the bureaucracy, but democracy and justice concept in political is not involved in rational bureaucracy, devotion to the results of the mechanical efficiency will cause the administrative inefficiency in the end. So, the rational bureaucratic system should be combined with the concept of fairness and justice in new public management and persevered with people-oriented, building a service-oriented government. Lastly, the bureaucratic hierarchy mechanism should be combined with accountability requirements of new public management. A typical feature of bureaucracy is pyramid level mechanism and emphasizes the superior authority, which is one of the important obstacles to implement performance management. So, on the basis of guarantee the government authority, the government's responsibility consciousness must be strengthened, emphasizing on responsible to the public and establishing a responsible government. Finally, the professional management in the rational bureaucracy should be combined with the participation of people, expanding the channels and content of citizens' political participation, establishing a sunshine government which regards public system, hearing system, administrative review system as the core.

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