

The Paradox of Accountability System of Grassroots Cadres in China

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Abstract: The accountability system is an institutional arrangement for the government and civil servants to fail to perform or fail to perform their statutory duties due to deliberate or negligent actions. It is an important part of the construction of a responsible government. The survey results of the "precise poverty alleviation" work in XX County of Henan Province show that the accountability system has promoted the initiative of grassroots cadres such as county townships and towns to a certain extent. However, because of too much emphasis on results-oriented, lack of incentives, and fault-tolerant and error-correcting mechanisms, it has led to paradoxes such as "do not be responsible for doing things", "less need to do less responsibility", and "doing full responsibility." Through the "due diligence" mechanism, this paradox can be resolved, and the "accountability system" can be truly exerted on the incentives and constraints of grassroots cadres.

1. Introduction

Accountability is the product of the development of Western democratic politics. In the view of Shepherz, high-ranking officials who are empowered by law or organization must be questioned and accountable for acts within their organizational positions or for their actions within the social sphere. Since the 1980s, under the impetus of global public administration reform, all countries are building responsible governments. The accountability system came into being and became an institutional thing. It used to be just an idea. The main purpose of accountability is to restrain and control the abuse of public power and promote continuous improvement of governance performance. The implementation of the accountability system is conducive to improving the selection and appointment mechanism of cadres, supervising and promoting the implementation of policies, and enhancing the government's sense of responsibility. The grassroots government refers to the county and township governments. The grassroots cadres have the closest contact with the people and are also the place where the central policies are implemented. The implementation of policies by grassroots cadres is directly related to the vital interests of the people. In grassroots work, accountability is usually used to check and promote work.

2. The Development of Accountability System in China and the Proposal of Paradox

There are different opinions on the division of the development process of China's administrative accountability system. Zeng Wenjun divided it into three stages: foundation, initiation, formation and development. In fact, in ancient China, "Shangshu Dazhuan" said, "If the people are not close to each other and the five qualities are not disciplined, they will be responsible for their disciples". Emperor's responsibility for private visits, imperial history inspection, and the assessment and accountability of officials are all the embryonic forms of official accountability system. From the founding of New China to the pre-reform and opening-up period, the state held responsible for the major corruption cases of Liu Qingshan and Zhang Zishan, the shipwreck accident of "Bohai Sea No. 2" and the Da Hinggan Mountains fire in 1987. The Constitution promulgated and implemented in 1982 provides a constitutional basis for the establishment of accountability system, thus entering the stage of legalization of accountability system. The Provisional Provisions on Procedures for Investigating Special Major Accidents promulgated by the State Council in 1989, the Provisional Regulations on State Civil Servants in 1993, and the Provisions on Responsibility for Implementing Party Conduct and Building a Clean and Honest Government in 1998 have made basic provisions

on the situation and manner of investigating responsibility according to law. The SARS crisis in 2003 set off a wave of accountability. In this event, the accountability of relevant officials was investigated continuously and on a large scale, which marked a new breakthrough in China's administrative accountability.

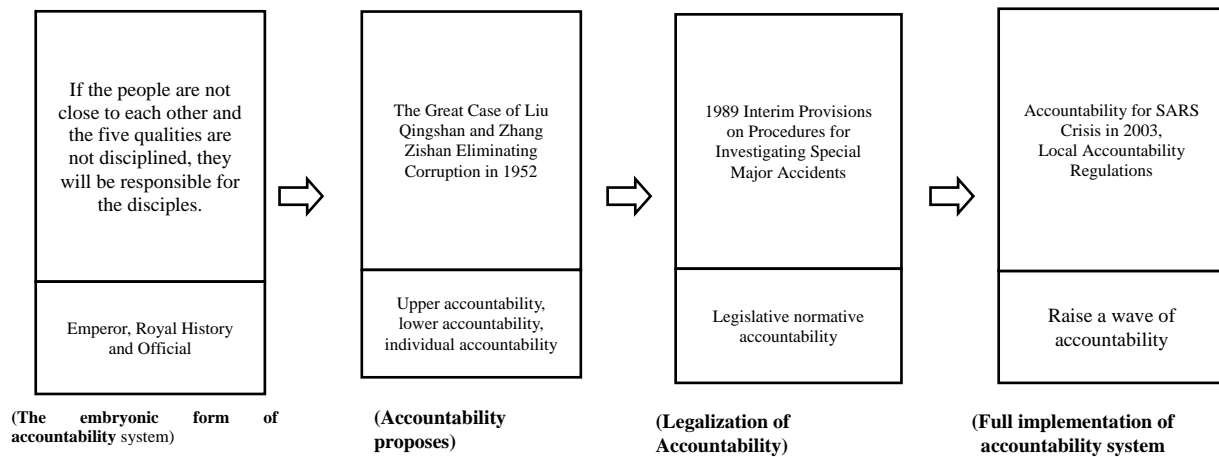


Fig. 1 Development of China's Accountability System

China's accountability system has always been in the operation of localized administrative departments in China. It is manifested in the pressure-based system. The higher government assigns target tasks to the lower government, carries out quantitative assessment, and finally carries out rewards and punishments according to the results. However, this kind of accountability puts government departments and their staff in the position of being prosecuted, which makes them suffer potential resistance in the operation of government power. Accountability system strengthens the sense of responsibility of local officials and is a progress of government governance. In the process of policy diffusion, government administrators have a clear understanding of the accountability system. When they fail to perform their duties correctly, they have corresponding punishment measures. People's understanding of the government's responsibilities is also gradually deepening. They know that the government can't do what they want. Power has boundaries, and they know how to restrain the government.

The current policy is forced to implement in the form of accountability, but it is normal for people to restrict and supervise it. If there is no accountability, the subject of responsibility is absent. If we don't hold people accountable from top to bottom, nobody will pay attention to it. But this way, many people take responsibility instead of doing things. Those who do nothing need not take responsibility and those who do less take less responsibility. Slowly, accountability becomes formalism, which is not conducive to the real implementation of the work. Internally speaking, the incentive effect of work has not been, but has turned into a negative incentive, which is not conducive to the overall positive civil service.

3. Performance and Causes of the Paradox of the Accountability System of Grass-roots Cadres

3.1 Paradox Performance

The precise poverty alleviation work in XX County of Henan Province has reached the key point of "gnawing hard bones". The task is arduous and the time is pressing. The county government has carried out regular and irregular supervision of poverty alleviation. At the inspection level, there are national inspection standards, provincial inspection standards and unannounced visits at provincial, municipal and county levels. The inspection forms include supervision and inspection, third-party assessment, on-site poverty alleviation and relocation, and "big competition" activities to fight poverty. In addition, there are also visits and surveillance tours, focusing on resolute accountability

and accountability, to solve the problem of lax discipline. During the interview, we found that "accountability", "exemption", "motivation" and "very tired" are the four most frequently used words.

3.1.1 No responsibility for doing nothing

The interviewed civil servant A said, "I am poorer than poor households. Some villagers want to get something for nothing. When the superiors check the effectiveness of poverty alleviation, they threaten to say that the work is not in place without giving priority to the allocation of houses. Some cadres who help the poor find excuses and never go down to the grass-roots level. They can't talk about responsibility. Implementing poverty alleviation is the pressure of all the cadres stationed in villages. Poverty alleviation is not easy to do." Under the pressure of accountability, responsibility will pay the price, so some grass-roots cadres avoid contradictions and dare not be responsible, holding the self-insurance logic of "doing more, doing less, not doing good", passive idle work, daring not do, unwilling to act.

3.1.2 Less work and less responsibility

"5+2, white and black, is the normal work of our work, even if excellent, there will be no bonus, if according to the inspection of different regions, once the responsibility, will be deducted points, even if it is very responsible, can not expect to get promoted". The interviewed civil servant B's words make people feel the hardship of grass-roots work and the problems in accountability. In the actual work of poverty alleviation, inspection and evaluation is an important means of checking the implementation of policies, and people are overwhelmed by inspection, assessment and evaluation at all levels. Grass-roots cadres need to consciously record the implementation of poverty alleviation work effectively through text, pictures, videos and other materials, as verification materials, the integrity and standardization of materials directly determine the evaluation scores. This kind of "mark-type" performance appraisal makes surface work become an exemption tool, which disrupts the implementation and effect of Accountability Policy measures. Overburdened and unfair treatment at the grass-roots level, coupled with lack of flexibility and flexibility, neglected incentives, greatly reduced work efficiency.

3.1.3 Full responsibility and due diligence

Like other cadres stationed in villages, C, who has been stationed in villages for a long time, said, "I only go home once a week and I have to be punished for what I have done. Poor households do not understand it. Some people complain and need to do their work. Once someone reports, everything goes to naught. In the process of verification and identification of accountability, accountability belongs to ex post facto punishment and tends to be "accountable for mistakes". The more we do, the greater the responsibility. In poverty alleviation work, once this kind of negligence is "vetoed by one vote", the previous efforts will be in vain. Poverty alleviation is apportioned directly to the grass-roots level, and cadres in poverty alleviation are trembling. Facing the complex situation of poverty alleviation and endless checks, the target of poverty alleviation is unsatisfactory, the non-poverty alleviation households are unsatisfactory, and various contradictions are intertwined. The harsh "one-vote veto" has brought serious pressure for grass-roots cadres to shoulder more responsibilities. At present, this situation of "competence is wrong" has given birth to people who do not seek merit but do nothing, increased their unwillingness to act, and curbed the courage of cadres.

3.2 Causes of Paradox

3.2.1 The design of accountability system is top-down, cronyism, over-emphasis on result orientation and neglect of process

This process reflects the working attitude of cadres in poverty alleviation work and can not be fully reflected in the achievements of poverty alleviation work. The effectiveness of higher-level government inspection lies in multi-inspection, through which problems can be found, rectified and

accountable. However, there are many kinds of inspections, such as high frequency, repetition, emphasizing traces, ignoring pragmatism, often using the number of traces as the basis for judging the quality of work, pursuing "short, fast and effective", which seriously increases the burden of grass-roots units. In order to cope with the inspection by the higher authorities, the grass-roots government must stick it on the data sheet all day long. Its formal meaning is greater than the actual content, and it can not reflect the voice of the masses.

3.2.2 Fault-tolerant and error-correcting mechanism is not perfect

Fault-tolerant and error-correcting mechanism aims at tolerating cadres' mistakes and mistakes in reform and innovation, and really supporting cadres who dare to play their roles. At present, grassroots cadres generally lack confidence in their work because they are afraid of taking responsibility and making mistakes. One of the important reasons for this phenomenon is the lack of a perfect fault-tolerance and correction mechanism, which fails to distinguish the mistakes of cadres from the illegal and criminal behaviors due to the lack of experience, and fails to distinguish the intentional negligence from the intentional behaviors for personal interests. In order to improve the enthusiasm of cadres, we should treat them differently instead of adhering to the principle of "one size does not equal all" and pursue their responsibilities indiscriminately regardless of the environment, nature and nature. Sometimes it is difficult for cadres at the grass-roots level not only to do their work on time and step by step, but also to satisfy all aspects of their work. The innovation of grassroots work needs to take the risk of responsibility, invest a lot of time and energy cost, and need the support of resources and system.

3.2.3 Imperfect incentive mechanism

Just like poverty alleviation work, the higher level should not only give demands, but also financial, technical and training support. If it falls to the grass-roots level, equalitarianism will increase the intensity and difficulty of work at the grass-roots level. Grass-roots work has a wide range of names and is important. "Thousands of lines above and one needle below". The implementation of the policy is entirely carried out by grass-roots cadres. Grass-roots cadres hold several posts at the same time. There is no clear incentive mechanism. Grass-roots cadres lack the motivation to work. They are prone to negative idle work and do more or less well or badly. Moreover, the promotion space of grass-roots departments in China is narrow, the channels for promotion are single, the competition pressure among leading cadres at grass-roots level is great, and the career development opportunities are limited. It is difficult to guarantee the work efficiency and service enthusiasm of grass-roots cadres, and to exert their subjective initiative.

4. Possible Ways to Eliminate Paradoxes

The above phenomenon of reluctance and daring of grass-roots cadres seriously harms the initiative of grass-roots cadres and deviates from the original intention of the accountability system. We should be accountable, responsible and accountable, so as to carry out strict work responsibilities, resolve the paradox by establishing a "due diligence and exemption" mechanism, and truly play the role of "accountability" in encouraging and restraining grass-roots cadres. The main approaches are as follows:

4.1 Improving the design of accountability system

The rigid form of material assessment can no longer truthfully reflect the actual work of grass-roots cadres. In practical work, we need to reduce the proportion of materials in the evaluation score summary, improve the weight of mass satisfaction in the evaluation, and distinguish cadres' achievements from simple indicators. Introduce the public satisfaction assessment, and construct a top-down and bottom-up evaluation model. Assessment should be inclined to performance, conduct field investigation and research, listen to the feedback of grass-roots cadres and the masses, emphasize the participation of the masses, and ensure that the behavior of grass-roots cadres and personnel is measured by meeting the public interests. In addition, in the examination and

assessment of grass-roots work, we can refer to the big data cloud platform of poverty alleviation, share information, reduce the repetitive work at the grass-roots level, and devote energy to the masses, so as to truly realize the essence of public management serving the people.

4.2 Implementing fault-tolerant and error-correcting mechanism to improve work enthusiasm

Fault-tolerant and error-correcting mechanism is the basis for cadres at the grass-roots level to exercise due diligence and exemption. If this mechanism can be truly landed at the grass-roots level, it can let cadres reduce their ideological concerns and further stimulate the enthusiasm of grass-roots cadres. Secondly, we should establish a list of due diligence and exemption, formulate a complete list of powers and responsibilities and a negative list, identify what circumstances can be exempted, and guarantee the labor achievements of grass-roots cadres who perform their duties in accordance with the law. Detailed post responsibilities, so that rewards and punishments are clear, rewards and punishments lazy. In addition, cadres should be effectively linked up with the mechanism of competence and competence, so that cadres who have done something and are willing to do something can have a seat and promote fairness and justice. Finally, due diligence and exemption should adhere to the principles of objectivity, fairness, openness and transparency, accept the supervision of the masses, and be more scientific, objective and impartial in disciplines and accountability.

4.3 Establish a promotion incentive system to stimulate the vitality of the role

Promotion incentive has the dual functions of material incentive and spiritual incentive. It can not only increase the salary and welfare of civil servants, meet their physiological and safety needs, but also enable civil servants to have greater powers and responsibilities, meet the needs of respect and self-realization, so as to maximize their enthusiasm for work. Grass-roots work is trivial and arduous. We should follow the principle of consistency of power and responsibility, increase the incentives for promotion of grass-roots staff, and increase the level of the same position under the same situation. Mobilize staff's enthusiasm through the increase of rank and salary. It is necessary to select excellent talents through political incentives and tap their potentials in depth so as to provide a broad platform for the development of capable and practical personnel.

5. Research Prospects

These phenomena can be seen everywhere, whether they are poverty alleviation, rural revitalization, environmental protection, production safety accidents and urban governance. Therefore, the phenomenon of "doing well is better than saying well" appears in the civil service, which is not conducive to the growth of cadres, social stability and the completion of many things. Therefore, we must eliminate the paradox of accountability, create an atmosphere of diligence and progress, stabilize the civil service and promote fairness and justice. This article mainly uses the way of interview to study, which is subjective, and needs more samples to quantify the degree of paradox objectively. I hope that there will be conditions for further discussion in the future.

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