

# Research on China's Policy Problems and Countermeasures Based on Public Policy Evaluation

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**Abstract:** Public policy evaluation can be used as an important basis for deciding whether to continue, adjust or re-formulate policies. Public policy is a multi-level and multi-faceted continuous dynamic process. Its purpose is to obtain information about these aspects as the basis for deciding policy changes, policy improvements and formulating new policies. According to whether the evaluation subject comes from the administrative organization, it can be divided into internal evaluation subject and external evaluation subject. At present, a remarkable feature of China's policy process is the dual-track structure and function system of administration, and no scientific and specialized policy evaluation organization has been established. With the development of the times and the continuous improvement of public policies, in order to keep pace with the world, develop and be efficient, it is necessary to evaluate the policies we implement in order to achieve higher progress. This paper summarizes the concept and significance of public policy evaluation, analyzes the shortcomings of the current subject system of public policy evaluation in China, and puts forward some countermeasures to improve the subject system of public policy evaluation in China.

## 1. Introduction

Public policy evaluation is an important link in the policy process, an important content of policy analysis, and an important tool and means in the process of public sector performance management. Policy evaluation is one of the weak links in China's policy process, and the subject of policy evaluation plays a leading role in the whole policy evaluation activity and will have a very important impact on the evaluation results[1].

Theoretically, all policies formulated to solve social public affairs and realize social public interests are public policies. As a country with a strong official-oriented ideology, the policies formulated by the government should only be obeyed, and there is no need to question them, let alone evaluate them[2]. It is of positive significance to analyze the main difficulties in China's public policy evaluation and study its countermeasures.

## 2. Significance of Public Policy Evaluation

Public policy evaluation can be used as an important basis for deciding whether to continue, adjust or re-formulate policies. Public policy is a multi-level and multi-faceted continuous dynamic process. In the actual operation process, some aspects are in line with the objective situation, while others are out of touch with the actual situation, and must be adjusted before continuing to implement[3]. Policy evaluation individuals refer to those who often engage in policy evaluation activities and produce policy evaluation knowledge in their own names. Policy evaluation organization is the trust and carrier of evaluation activities, and also a platform for integrating various policy evaluation resources. Public policy evaluation is an important means to test the quality and level of public policy, an important basis to decide the continuation, improvement or termination of public policy, and the basis to ensure reasonable and effective resource allocation. In addition, it also plays a certain role in enhancing the sense of responsibility of members of public sector organizations such as the government.

Public policy reflects and embodies the will and actions of the state on the development of public

utilities. Any new policy goal and new policy plan are not isolated and produced out of thin air, but always take the original policy and its implementation effect as the background[4-5]. The summary function of policy evaluation determines that policy evaluation can provide necessary basis when redefining policy objectives and formulating new policies. Its actual operation is a dynamic activity process composed of policy formulation, policy implementation, policy evaluation, policy monitoring and policy termination.

### **3. China's Policy Problems**

#### **3.1 Lack of Public Policy Evaluation Organization**

A notable feature of the current policy process in China is the dual-track structure and functional system of administration, namely, Party committees and people's governments at all levels from the central to the local. Locally, the research institutions of public policy are uneven, and whether these institutions can play a role in the policy process and the size of their role depends entirely on the personal qualities of leaders. There is no scientific and specialized policy evaluation organization[6]. For a long time, most local public policies in China have been formulated by leaders based on their personal experience, lacking in-depth investigation and public consultation, and almost no in-process and post-event evaluation, so it is impossible to identify whether the plan chosen by the leaders is satisfactory or not and whether the implementation status of the executive department is ideal.

#### **3.2 Insufficient Understanding of Policy Evaluation**

Public policy evaluation is a political act to judge the benefit, efficiency and value of policies according to certain standards and procedures. The purpose is to obtain information about these aspects as the basis for deciding policy changes, policy improvements and formulating new policies. According to whether the evaluation subject comes from the administrative organization, it can be divided into internal evaluation subject and external evaluation subject. The evaluation subject is the core element of the policy evaluation system and plays a leading role in the evaluation process.

Some subjects of public policy evaluation lack scientific understanding and attitude towards public policy evaluation, and have not formed a scientific policy evaluation mechanism. They use evaluation to rationalize policies with poor results and poor performance to cover up their improper or incompetent policy actions, and even use improper evaluation to slander others. Public policy evaluation carried out within government departments is generally carried out by evaluation organizations affiliated to the government, and its independence needs to be improved, resulting in unfair results of public policy evaluation[7]. As an internal government agency, the internal evaluation organization is not independent economically and politically, which greatly reduces the objectivity of the evaluation results. As an external evaluation organization such as a "think tank", the objectivity of its evaluation is also unsatisfactory due to the asymmetry of information and some concerns about the government.

#### **3.3 Uncertainty of Policy Objectives**

Practice has proved that through policy evaluation, people can be widely mobilized to participate in policy formulation and implementation, so that policy operation can truly reflect public opinion, concentrate people's wisdom, ensure people to be masters of their own affairs, and contribute to the democratization of policy operation. However, the policy evaluation still faces many practical difficulties that are difficult to be solved in a short time. It has just started in all countries in the world, and it is a relatively weak link in the policy process of China. This phenomenon is more common and obvious in economically backward and low-level governments.

The determination of public policy objectives is based on value judgment. Different individuals and groups have different understandings of the objectives because of their different values, so it is difficult to form a unanimous view of all members of society[8-9]. For political reasons, public policy makers are either unwilling to accept the restriction of clear goals or want to get more

support, and often deliberately express their goals vaguely.

Most policies have multiple objectives, and even there are contradictions among some objectives. In the process of policy implementation, policy objectives may change due to changes in the objective environment. Sometimes policy makers and executors deliberately express and explain policy objectives in vague and uncertain forms, so as to increase their ability to respond. Many goals are achieved in conflict and compromise, which cannot be completely separated and objective and fair. It is often difficult for policy makers or executors to clearly define and explain policy goals when they have to make decisions and implement policies in special or emergency situations.

### **3.4 The Technology of Public Policy Evaluation is Not Advanced**

The process of evaluating the extent to which public policies have achieved the expected goals and the social, economic and ecological benefits generated by policies. Only through the scientific evaluation of a public policy can we judge the value of the public policy itself, so as to decide the continuation, innovation or termination of the public policy.

Public policy evaluation is a new field in China, and its theory and method are developing, and a standardized and institutionalized evaluation system has not yet been formed, which brings many technical difficulties to the specific evaluation work. The relative separation of policy evaluation and decision-making in China has caused the incomplete policy information system and the difficulty in obtaining data. In addition, policy information has not attracted enough attention, information work has just started, and the information collection system has not been formed, which will lead to incomplete information and data, making the evaluation lose its foundation and support. Compared with the past, the ideological concept has faded, and the standard of moral right and wrong will also change to some extent. What is more prominent is that people emphasize their own economic interests more than at any time in history. This will inevitably lead to changes in the evaluation standards and methods of public policies.

## **4. Countermeasures to Promote China's Policy Evaluation**

### **4.1 Raise Awareness of Policy Evaluation**

It is imperative to change people's ideas and strengthen ideological construction[10]. First of all, we should increase publicity. Governments at all levels and policy evaluators should make use of various media, including newspapers, magazines, television, internet and other channels to increase publicity and give full play to the advantages of China's socialist media. The fundamental purpose of policy evaluation is to promote the scientific and democratic decision-making and the optimization of policy effect. Therefore, policy evaluation should be carried out in a realistic manner. In addition to summing up experience and affirming achievements, it is also necessary to find problems, find out deficiencies, explore reasons, and give full play to its diagnostic and critical functions, rather than being a means for decision makers to pursue fame and fortune.

### **4.2 Clarify the Objectives of Policy Evaluation**

The evaluation goal is the preparation work before the policy evaluation. It is used to diagnose whether the policy has brought any social problems, and to define whether the expectations have been achieved, and to guide how the policy will be carried out in the future and what actions can be taken to improve the problems and achieve more optimization of the policy. Public policy evaluation should be a standardized work behavior guaranteed by the system, and it is also a highly professional and high-tech research activity. Theoretically, any policy should be evaluated. In reality, not every policy can be evaluated due to the limitations of manpower, material resources and financial resources and the factors of the policy itself. Therefore, the appraiser must carefully select the appraisal object.

### **4.3 Improve Evaluation Methods and Techniques**

Policy evaluation is by no means an easy task, which requires evaluators to master various evaluation methods and technologies skillfully. At present, the common evaluation methods include

before-and-after comparison, object evaluation, expert judgment and self-evaluation. The technology of policy evaluation mainly includes planning evaluation technology, important path method, cost-benefit analysis, cost-effectiveness analysis and so on. Therefore, it is necessary to establish and improve an all-round public policy evaluation subject (Figure 1).

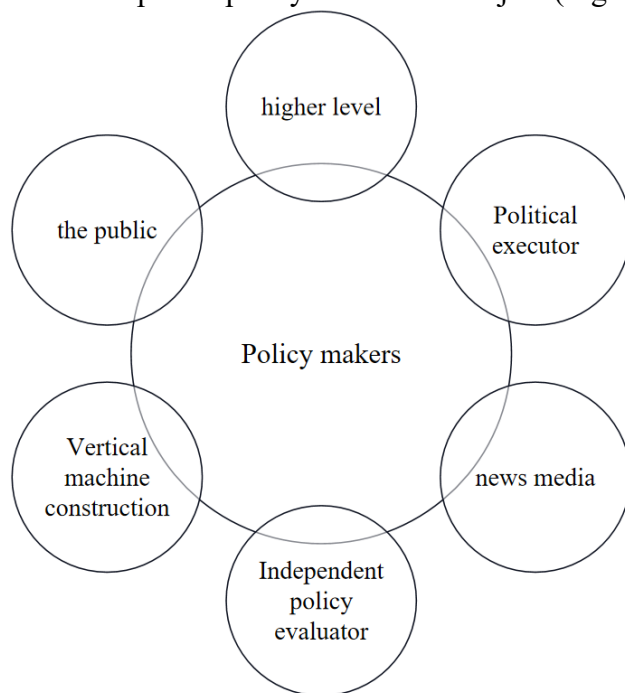


Fig.1 Comprehensive Public Policy Evaluation System

A fast information feedback network covering the whole society should be established to maximize the effective communication between decision-making centers, evaluation organizations and the public, and to minimize information interception and distortion. For policy evaluation organizations, it will help them to obtain as much information as possible under the premise of saving costs and reduce the evaluation cost; Various evaluation methods can also be used, such as before and after comparison, object evaluation, expert judgment, self-evaluation and so on; Appraisers should be able to choose and use flexibly according to the specific situation of our country, and if necessary, they can comprehensively use various methods and technologies to improve the credibility of the evaluation conclusions.

#### 4.4 Realize the Institutionalization of Public Policy Evaluation

To evaluate policies effectively, the system is the guarantee. Through the system, except for symbolic or symbolic public policies, all policies should be evaluated to varying degrees when possible. Appraisers should strive for a systematic, comprehensive and fair evaluation in the spirit of seeking truth from facts. We should pay full attention to the evaluation role of the people. Public policy is a public product provided by government departments to the public, and its basic value orientation must be public interest. We should attach importance to the evaluation conclusion and digest and absorb the evaluation results. Any public policy is bound to involve the allocation of social resources. In order to prevent decision-makers from making arbitrary decisions and executors from abusing their powers, it is necessary to directly link the evaluation conclusions with the rewards and punishments of relevant personnel through the system, truly realize the unity of rights, responsibilities and interests in the policy process, and make policy evaluation play its due role.

### 5. Conclusions

Policy evaluation is one of the weak links in China's policy process, and the subject of policy evaluation plays a leading role in the whole policy evaluation activity and will have a very important impact on the evaluation results. Public policy reflects and embodies the will and actions

of the state on the development of public utilities. Any new policy goal and new policy plan are not isolated and produced out of thin air. It is always based on the original policy and its implementation effect. The determination of public policy objectives is based on value judgment. Because of different values, different individuals and groups have different understandings of the objectives, so it is difficult to form a unanimous view of all members of society. We should not only see the significance of policy evaluation in the whole policy process, but also recognize the difficulties it faces and the future development direction. Therefore, the development of policy evaluation has a long way to go, and it requires the long-term and unremitting efforts of party committees and governments at all levels and people with lofty ideals from all walks of life.

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