

Social Governance of China: Problems and Solutions

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Abstract

The reinforcement of social governance is an important segment of the harmonious society construction of China. Since the reform and opening-up policy, the social governance of China has gotten a series of momentous achievements. But it still faces some problems. In the next step of work, those measures should be taken to continuously advance the social governance innovation of China such as ameliorating the system and mechanism of social governance, perfecting the talent training system and strengthening the top-level design.

Key words: Social governance; Public participation; System and mechanism; Top-level design

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INTRODUCTION

Since reform and opening up in 1978, China has made the development strategy focusing on the economic construction, and has acquired the world-famous achievements. The national economic aggregate has been rapidly increasing, and China has become the second largest economic power in the world. At the same time, the living standard of people has been also increasingly improved, while the material life has been greatly ameliorated. It is said that the achievement in the

section of the economic construction of China in the recent more than thirty years should have been generally acknowledged by other countries in the world. However, it should be paid attention to that the comprehensive national power of a nation embodies on not only the economic faction but also the political, social and cultural factions. Though the change of the economic faction of China is very outstanding, the social construction faction appears comparatively feeble. Therefore, in such a background, China has begun to emphasize the social construction since 2002, and has definitely brought forward the policy claim of constructing the socialistic harmonious society. The social governance is an important segment of the harmonious society construction. In the recent years, China has carried on many reforms on the social governance section and has obtained the significant success. But, there are still also many fields in the social governance section that need to be improved. Accordingly, this paper chooses the social governance of China as the research object, and mainly interprets the major problems facing the social governance of China as well as the corresponding countermeasures and suggestions.

1. MAJOR PROBLEMS FACING SOCIAL GOVERNANCE OF CHINA

1.1 Unbalance and Inharmony of Economic and Social Development Intensify Difficulty of Social Governance

China has begun to enter the medium term of industrialization as a whole since 2002. As the social governance system with the single subject has not been broken through radically, the change of the developing pattern of the extensive economy whose growth mainly depends on investment and export has been slow, and the disadvantages of unbalance, inharmony and non-

continuation in the economic and social development has been outstanding increasingly, the society in the period of transition has been receiving much more impingement that embodies in:

Firstly, with the weakness of the organization system as the extended functions of the social governance and the welfare supply as well as the orientation blur of functions of the sub-district office and the resident (villagers) committee as a supplement to the organization system, the urban-rural divisional household registration system has been progressively loosening, the scale of the urban-rural floating population has been more and more enlarging, and the management of the community construction is hysteretic, which leads to the gradual powerlessness of the social governance and mobilization ability of governments.

Secondly, the urban-rural gap and the developing gap among regions have been expanding, which has become the biggest systematic and structural barrier to the further productivity development and the accelerated social advancement in China. In 2001, the gap between the per capita disposable income of the residents of cities and towns and the per capita net income of the rural residents in China is 4,493.2 RMB; in 2013, the urban-rural per capita income gap is 18,059 RMB. Within the more than ten years, the urban-rural income gap has been enlarging 4.01 times. The economic development level among the eastern, middle and western regions of China is not balanced, either. GDP of the eastern region accounts for 55 percent or so of the national gross, and surpasses the GDP summation of the middle and western regions. The urban-rural gap and the gap among regions are broadening, which causes the falling degree of recognition among every social estate.

Thirdly, the economic rapid growth has not automatically brought the social development along, and problems such as the extreme disparity between the rich and the poor as well as the social injustice have been paid high attention to. The Gini coefficient of 2013 published by National Bureau of Statistics was 0.473 that is higher than 0.412 of 2000, which reveals that the tendency of the expanding income gap of Chinese residents has not been held back over more than ten years. Furthermore, those problems have not been solved fundamentally, for example, children of the rural migrant workers cannot receive the compulsory education and take the college entrance examination in cities and towns that the rural migrant workers work in, and the floating population is very difficult to integrate into the local society.

1.2 Lack of Democratic Ideas and Practical Experience Result in Not High Participation Degree of the Masses in Social Governance

Influenced by the planned economy for a long time, the social governance pattern that government takes on everything has made the public accustomed to relying on

government, their consciousness and capability of self-management and self-service are relatively weak. The social governance policy that government is the single subject is hard to excite the positivity of the public in the social governance. The decision-making process of the public service affairs of the grass-root society is not open and transparent enough. The grass-root cadres are devoid of the democratic consciousness and style, and often regard the owner committee and the villager assembly as the work arrangement meeting and the hands-up meeting for passing items. The masses have not been the practical experience and the detailed methods of the democratic participation, which causes the not high positivity of the public in taking part in the social governance.

1.3 Quantity and Quality of Social Work Talents Are Even Hard to Support Pattern of “Small Government and Big Society”

At the present time, the small scale and the unbalanced distribution of the social work talents are a major bottleneck in propelling the social governance innovation. The statistical data indicates that with regard to the proportion of the professional social workers to the gross population, that is 0.2% in U.S.A., 0.5 percent in Japan, 0.22% in Canada, and 0.39% in Hongkong. Calculating according to the 0.2% in U.S.A., China needs 2,600,000 social work talents at least. But there are only more than 500,000 social work talents nowadays, and such a small quantity of the social work talents are far away from meeting the basic demand. Moreover, the domestic social work talents primarily focus on the big and middle cities, and the towns and the rural areas are much empty of the social work talents. Besides, because of those factors such as the low social cognition degree, the deficient capital, the unsound laws and regulations, along with the lack of the training management, the social work talents contingent of China is difficult to meet the social demand whether in quantity or in quality.

1.4 Lack of Top-Level Design of Social Construction Systems Makes It Difficult of Collaborative Advance of Social Governance Innovation

Currently, the social policy of China presents the fragmentation development pattern, which instead broadens the social imparity again and solidifies the urban-rural dual structure and the hierarchical identity structure (Yu, 2012). In term of the macroscopical level, the stratum rupture phenomenon and the social exclusion problem are prominent. For example, according to the new poverty line standard of per capita 2,300 RMB in 2011, there are still more than one hundred million poverty populations in the rural regions of China. Such phenomena as “the rich second generation”, “the poor second generation” and “the retirement dual-track system” of the stratum solidification give rise to people’s anxiety about the social equity and

justice. As far as the microscopical level is concerned, as the regional segmentation, the social policy faces the technical operation difficulty such as the problem that the new rural cooperative medical insurance arranged comprehensively by the county-level government and the medical insurance of the urban employees and residents arranged comprehensively by the city-level government rarely reimburse the nonlocal medical fees. The production of those problems is because that ideas and positioning of the social construction are not exact enough, the policy-making subjects are dispersive, and the system design is not reasonable enough, which makes the social reform measures including the social governance innovation incapable of overall planning and all-round consideration and short of the entire coordinated operation so that the effects of the system implementation do not reach the anticipated goal.

2. SOLUTIONS TO REINFORCEMENT OF SOCIAL GOVERNANCE OF CHINA

2.1 New Co-Constructive and Co-Sharing Pattern of Social Governance Should Be Constructed, and the System Innovation of Social Governance Should Be Accelerated to Boost

At present, China has entered the latter part of the industrialization medium term. Innovating in the social governance system and reforming the traditional social governance system have become an urgent and great strategic task that relates to the overall situation. The social governance system is the institutional system established surrounding the six social operation systems including the social integration, the social inclusion, the social security, the social service, the social work and the social control (He, 2009). The establishment of those governance systems must be suitable for the social governance mission of the latter part of the Chinese industrialization medium term. Combining the practical economic development level of the local areas, government should set up the new pattern of the multiple-governance and co-construction and co-sharing social governance. Reforming the community governance system and the social organization and management system is the emphasis of the multiple participation in the social governance work. China should explore constructing the community organization frame of the separate government and community, peel off the governmental functions that the community neighborhood (village) committee took on before, realize the residents (villagers) self-government, make functions of the neighborhood (village) committee practically focus on resolving the livelihood issues of residents. At the same time, aiming at the actuality that the quantity of the Chinese social organizations is comparatively few, China should energetically foster and develop the social

organizations, and take those measures such as debasing the access threshold of the social organizations, hatching the social organizations, and governments' purchase of the organizational service, to support and develop the social organizations, fully exert the important effects of the social organizations in the social service including the public service, charity and relief, culture and gym so as to improve the living and cultural quality of the community residents. Co-sharing is letting the whole social members generally enjoy the social and economic development fruits, especially the basic public products and the public service. China need to start off from the ideas of the social equity and justice and for the basic sustainable public service system that is led by government and covers the urban-rural regions to exert oneself to improve the people's livelihood.

Firstly, the payout in the governmental fiscal budget for the people's livelihood field should be increased in total quantity. Per capita GDP of China reaches 5,414 US\$ in 2011, and China has entered the upper middle-income country rank. However, the proportion of the budget for the people's livelihood field to the fiscal payout is 32.1% that just reaches the lowest level of the middle-income country, which reveals that there is still much room for further improving the proportion of the people's livelihood payout of China to the fiscal budget.

Secondly, China should improve the people's livelihood structurally. The central transfer payment should be inclined to the rural areas, the remote and border areas, the poverty-stricken area and the areas inhabited by ethnic groups to accelerate the public service equalization. As the educational fiscal expenditure input of China has been lower than 4% of GDP and the limited educational expenditure has concentrated upon the large or medium cities in a long term, the national fiscal expenditure input on the education of the former revolutionary base areas should be increased especially. Though the fortune of a society cannot be the absolutely fair, governments should try to realize the opportunity equity of citizens. Education is the vital approach of the opportunity reallocation. Only the priority development in education and cultivating a great lot of the excellent talents that the economic society needs urgently can not only increase the intelligence support of the economic and social development but also create more opportunities for the stratum flowing.

Thirdly, governments at all levels should, from the angle of the social integration, impel the social governance system reform, practically settle the actual difficulties of the local residents and the floating population, decrease the social exclusion, carry out the generalized system of preferences in such aspects as education, medical treatment and social security so as to let the whole public take part in the modernization course and jointly enjoy the modernization fruits.

2.2 System and Mechanism of Social Governance Should Be Reformed, and the Public Should Be Motivated to Actively Participate in Social Governance

To change the negative situation that people passively accept management and service and let them actively participate in the social governance, the following work need to be done well:

Firstly, the social governance powers should be further decentralized to realize the governmental change in the social governance from taking on all things to the government-leading, society-cooperative and citizen- participative multiple cooperative management. "Though governments' work is of the highest efficiency, it is often of the highest cost." (Liu & Jiang, 2011) Later, exploring the operation system of the social governance can follow such a sequence: the public self-management—the marketization operation—the non-governmental organization service—the governmental governance.

Secondly, governments should boost the grass-root community self-government, and impart the feasible democratic participation knowledge to citizens from the angle of technique so as to improve the operation skills of the public in taking part in the community governance and practically improve the participation capacity and level of the public. In the 12th Five-Year Plan period, governments should combine the law popularization propaganda to push the community governance reform, intensify the right and responsibility consciousness of townspeople and villagers, continually perfect the decision-making rules and procedures of the community owner committee as well as the resident (villager) committee, and guarantee the decision-making participation right, the execution participation right, the dispute verdict participation right and the supervision participation right of townspeople and villagers in the social construction through the technical education and training so as to let townspeople and villagers feel that the social affairs in close relation to their own vital interests are "negotiated and decided and managed by themselves" to fully inspire the ownership consciousness and the participation consciousness of the public accordingly.

Thirdly, governments should further change the traditional thoughts that the social policies are attached to the economic policies, and foster the participation consciousness of the public. The social policies of China have been attached to the economic policies in a long term, and have pursued the value idea of the "efficiency priority". The major contents of the social polices mostly pay attention to the national development strategies and the macroscopical social problems, and draw relatively less attention to the individual living quality (Lin & Zhang, 2011). Later, the core of the social policies must be put in such sections as how to form the new social relation, pursue the diversity of the individual living value

and life-style so as to lead citizens to pursue their living quality and social quality.

Lastly, the interest demand mechanism, the public opinion poll mechanism and the public supervision mechanism that are convenient and favorable for the public should be further perfected through those approaches such as the public benefit call, the open hearing of the social affairs and the network investigation. Previously, some places have done much beneficial exploration, but the feelings of the public still have a not-small gap when compared with the original design intention of those approaches. Some comparatively mature practice in the developed countries can be used for reference by us. For instance, Los Angeles of U.S.A. sets up the free citizen service call. Computers can transfer the related information to the administrative department, automatically trace and supervise the feedback from the administrative department within the prescriptive time, and publicize the statistical data in Internet that will be the performance evaluation basis of the municipal government. The social governance as well as the intelligitizd and networked service always yields twice the result with half the effort.

2.3 Cultivation and Management System of Social Work Talent Should Be Perfected, and Core Supporting Capacity Should Be Reinforced

Perfecting the long-term mechanism of the social work talent cultivation is of highest priority. To accelerate the coordinated development of the special social work talented team and economy and society, the following work should be done well:

Firstly, the cultivation wok of the social work talents should be intensified, the cooperation between the higher education institutions and the local areas should be carried out so as to fully exert the important effects of the higher education institutions in the cultivation of the social work talents. For instance, the training system of the social work major of U.S.A. is very enormous, a lot of higher education institutions have set up the social work department, and there are 74,000 students who choose the social work major through the full-time studying or the work-study program every year (Shao, 2010). In china, the higher education institutions cultivate only 10,000 special social work talents every year nowadays. Therefore, it is imperative to carry out the cooperation between the higher education institutions and the local areas and let the higher education institutions take over the order service of the social work talent cultivation.

Secondly, the training work of the existing social work talent team should be strengthened, and the professionalization and specialisation level of the social work should be continually increased. Because the social work professional education of China is in the beginning phase, it is universe that much importance is attached to the theory teaching not the practical teaching and to

the classroom teaching not the specialty practice in the cultivation in the social work professional talents as a whole. The social work talent training base based on districts (counties) should be set up. According to the detailed demands of the local social work, the training work should be carried out with the pointed purposes to improve the professional quality of the social work talents.

Thirdly, the introduction channels of the social work talents should be expanded through the inner stabilization and the exterior introduction, and the effective mobilization system should be established to stabilize the social work talent team. Governments should constitute the social work talent introduction policies, and attract the splendid social work talent from such regions as Hongkong and Macao to the mainland to work, which can not only settle the extremely urgency of lack of the superior social work talent nowadays, but also improve the professionalization and specialisation degree of the social work talent of the mainland as soon as possible.

Besides, the laws and regulations of the social work talent should be established and perfected, and the development of the social work talent should be managed standardly and introduced scientifically. Now, the domestic social work talent management mainly depends on such department regulations as “*National Professional Standards of Social Workers*”, “*Professional Evaluation Level Temporary Regulations of Social Workers*” and “*Professional Level Test Implementation Measures of Social Workers*”. “*Social Workers Law*” should be explored to constitute to definitely prescribe cultivation, training, qualification, the license issuing, the test management, the major classification and the rank standard, define rights and obligations of the social workers, and guarantee the healthy and orderly development of the social worker team.

2.4 Top-Level Design of Social Construction Systems Should Be Enhanced, and Social Governance Innovation Should Be Compositively Advanced

The top-level design of the social construction systems of China should include the following three contents:

Firstly, the planning and design of the total goals of the social construction. The relative measures consist of guaranteeing the political, economic and cultural rights of the public on the basis of systems, realizing the change of the development strategy from “efficiency first, fairness considered” to “fairness generalized, efficiency considered”, setting up the fair and just social circumstances, and accelerating the social integration.

Secondly, the organization and control of the social construction process. The subject of the social construction is assignment, which includes not only the economic assignment of “demanding a part of social members (always the rich) to take out a portion of money

from their own purses to let the other social members (always the poor) enjoy” (Zheng, 2012) but also the assignment of the social rights and guaranteeing the equality of opportunity of the public. This need implement “completing the supervision system actualized by constitution”, perfecting the system of people’s congress, systematically constituting the laws and regulations of the social construction from the national lay, preventing the urban-rural dual and the stratum identity solidification, changing the slice segmentation situation of the social-policy making subjects, and avoiding the fragmentation of the social policies that are put forward by the Fourth Plenary Session of the Eighteenth Central Committee of Communist Party of China. At the same time, the organization guarantee of the social construction should be further perfected to change the pattern that there is only one social development department of the national development and reform commission at the national layer and there are no corresponding butted leading departments in provinces, cities and districts (counties) so that the social construction organizations are lack of the upper-lower linkage. It can be considered to establish a social construction commission in Party Central Committee to carry out macro-coordination, the overall consideration, planning, organizing and controlling of the whole social construction so as to make every social construction work be implemented orderly and effectively (Lu, 2011). Every level of local governments should also try to set up the social work commission to instruct the local social construction work. Further, the risk evaluation and early-warning mechanism of the social policy implementation should be completed to make the social order more harmonious and orderly by preventing and controlling the aberration and conflict actions.

Thirdly, the implementation and performance of the social reform policies. The social reform policies and measures should be reliably advanced according to the principle of step by step and starting with the easy part and getting difficult gradually. The decomposition reform is the important mode to impel the social construction. According to the different phases, a multitude of social reform tasks should be made the overall planning and the all-round consideration and gradually finished. According to the demands of “strengthening the social construction in perfecting the people’s livelihood and innovating the social governance” of the eighteenth National Congress of Communist Party of China, let such hot problems as education, the medical treatment, the guaranteeing housing, and employment that people care about most be the sally port of the social construction, do it first from guaranteeing and perfecting the people’s livelihood, and actively boost the change of the economic development way. The three reforms should be largely boosted in the social governance innovation to impel the self-management course of residents, that is, the community governance mechanism reform, deepening

the grass-root democratic construction, and building the community governance frame on the basis of separating the functions of governments from the social organizations. The administrative management system of villages and towns should be reformed to intensify the social governance and the public service functions of the grass-root governments and found the service-oriented governments satisfying people. The management system of the social organizations should be reformed to assist and develop the social organizations and mobilize the folk force to take part in the common governance. The social governance should be realized from the single-subject to the multi-subject, from governance to service, from unit to community, and the static state of the dynamic state, to achieve the economic and social harmonious development.

CONCLUSION

The social governance is the important contents of the social construction, and its success directly relates to the smooth advance of the socialistic harmonious society construction of China. Since beginning to gradually exert itself to intensify the social construction in 2002, China has made the vital achievements in the social governance. For example, the social governance rules have been continually normalization and legalization, the social governance actions have been gradually systematization and decentralization, and the social management manners have been increasingly informationization and network-based. But there are still many problems in the social governance of China that need to be attached importance to. The outstanding problems among them are the following: unbalance and inharmony of the economic and social development of China intensify the difficulty of the social governance; lack of democratic ideas and practical experience result in not high participation degree of the masses in social governance; quantity and quality of social work talents are even hard to support pattern

of “small government and big society”; lack of top-level design of social construction systems makes it difficult of collaborative advance of social governance innovation. In the next step of work, China need further intensify and perfect the social governance work through making more practical and effective measures that is including: new co-constructive and co-sharing pattern of social governance should be constructed, and the system innovation of social governance should be accelerated to boost; system and mechanism of social governance should be reformed, and the public should be motivated to actively participate in social governance; cultivation and management system of social work talent should be perfected, and core supporting capacity should be reinforced; top-level design of social construction systems should be enhanced, and social governance innovation should be compositively advanced.

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