

Exploring the path of correction of deviations in the implementation of public policies of grass-roots governments ——Take COVID-19 protection as an example

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Abstract: *Public policy implementation is an important part of government public administration, and is the central link to achieve policy objectives and solve practical problems. The effective implementation of public policies is not only an important guarantee for the stable, orderly, harmonious and healthy development of society, but also a strong political guarantee for winning the "double victory" of epidemic prevention and control and economic and social development. However, due to the influence of multiple factors, public policies often deviate in the implementation process, resulting in disorder or loss of control in social management. Conducting research on the deviation of grass-roots governments in implementing public policies for COVID-19 protection, exploring the causes of deviations in depth, and proposing effective countermeasures in a targeted manner according to the reasons has certain practical significance to help improve the implementation of grass-roots governments in China.*

Keywords: *Public policy, COVID-19, Grassroots government*

1. Introduction

1.1 Formulation of questions

Policy implementation is a crucial link in the process of public policy from formulation and adoption to implementation, and it also reflects the essential characteristics of its interest orientation and publicity. Since the founding of New China, the Party and the government have promulgated a series of public policies, and China has gradually formed a set of public policy implementation models with Chinese characteristics. Effectively implementing the public policies formulated by the Party and higher-level governments is an important duty of grassroots governments, and it is also an inevitable requirement for realizing social public interests. Improving the ability and level of grassroots government policy implementation can not only effectively promote the implementation of public policies and enhance the prestige of the government, but also be of great significance for promoting the construction of socialist democratic politics and maintaining the harmonious and stable development of the country. [1]

However, in the process of top-down implementation of public policies, there are also many deviations, resulting in the failure to implement the decrees promulgated by the state that are conducive to social development, so that they cannot benefit the broad masses of the people and promote social development. [2] This phenomenon is particularly acute in the grim context of the ongoing development of the new crown. Under the fierce situation of the new crown epidemic, the deviation of the grassroots government's public policy analysis is exposed, which will also directly affect the epidemic protection of the general public, so that increasing the number of people affected by the new crown epidemic is not conducive to the prevention and control of the epidemic nationwide. Nowadays, the epidemic situation is still grim, the epidemic prevention and control is normalized, and China is undoubtedly an "excellent student" role in epidemic protection, but in the process of effective epidemic prevention and control, it has also exposed some problems of grassroots governments in the implementation of public policies. Based on this, this paper takes the prevention of the new crown epidemic as an example to explore and research the path of correcting the deviation of the implementation of public policies of grassroots governments, in order to provide certain theoretical references for the implementation of public policies of grassroots governments.

1.2 Understanding of the concept of public policy implementation by grassroots governments

Public policy refers to a series of policies issued by the state to fully mobilize and utilize limited resources with a strategic vision to make economic and social activities and relations more harmonious. Government public policy implementation refers to the various actions taken by the government or grassroots institutions in the process of policy formulation to ensure that their set goals can be achieved, and finally a series of results. Policy practitioners and grassroots organizations as a whole interact and influence with other elements to support the effective implementation of public policies; At the same time, it is also necessary to ensure that the public interest is not harmed to carry out decision-making and implementation to obtain public recognition of the plan. However, in the specific practice of public policies in China, the original intention of the policies promulgated by the higher-level government is often good and has the essential characteristics of the public orientation of interests, but in the process of top-down transmission, policies are often inevitably affected by multiple factors such as policy implementation environment, implementation objects, and subject quality, and will contradict the original intention of promulgation in implementation, and such phenomena are defined as deviations in the implementation of public policies.

1.3 Review of research on public policy implementation theory

After reading a large number of relevant literature, combined with statistical data, the research of Chinese society by Chinese scholars developed from about 2000 and reached a peak around 2008, many of which are related to the implementation of local government policies, explaining the reasons for the deviation in the implementation of local government policies and countermeasures. [3](Yu Bo, 2005; Zhuang Guobo, 2005; Zhou Renbiao, 2014; Dai Yanjun, 2003) For example, Qian Bye et al. believe that the phenomenon of "medium obstruction" in the process of public policy implementation is mainly due to the attitude, quality, and ability of policy implementation themes, and countermeasures should strengthen the function of political socialization and improve the policy knowledge level and policy implementation ability of policy implementation subjects; Strengthen policy publicity and enhance policy recognition among policy implementers; Establish and improve accountability systems for the implementation of public policies. [4](Qian Jie-bye and Jin Taijun, 2002) Scholar Ding Huang believes that in order to improve the efficiency of public policy implementation and avoid policy implementation deviations caused by multi-factor constraints, it is necessary to improve the supervision mechanism, enhance the transparency of policy implementation, and ensure the independence of supervision institutions.[5] (Ding Huang, 2002) In recent years, there has been a lot of literature on grassroots government governance, but most of them are based on the implementation of a local policy as a case study, and there is a lack of research on macro policies (He Qing et al., 2020; Chen Guangjie, 2020; Luo Yuting, 2020; Ding Ruifang et al., 2020; Wu Zengxia, 2020; Feng Bing, 2019; Liu Tianfei, 2019; Ren Guoqin, 2019), or mainly explore the impact of grassroots government public policy implementation deviations on the masses (Zhou Yun et al. 2020; Zeng Haojie, 2020; Zhou Yun, 2019; Yang Cheng; 2018) Specifically, from the perspective of new crown epidemic protection, to prevent repeated epidemics, we must pay attention to the optimization of the epidemic prevention and control system (Li Jingqi et al.; 2021) It is necessary to divide labor and collaborate, share information, and consolidate the foundation for the implementation of public policies of grassroots governments (Li Hongmei; 2020)

This article is based on the current normalization of the new crown epidemic, the deviation of relevant public policy implementation has a particularly significant impact on the whole society, and there are still many areas where the local epidemic outbreak has occurred due to the deviation of the implementation of grassroots government public policy, endangering social and economic development. As one of the subjects of public policy implementation, it is of great practical significance for grassroots governments to explore the path of implementation deviation.

2. Problems arising in the implementation of public policies of grassroots governments

2.1 Formal implementation

That is, when implementing public policies by grassroots governments, they only pay attention to whether the superficial form and procedures are appropriate, and ignore the effective implementation of their connotation and essence. This formal implementation of public policy is extremely deceptive and hypocritical. On the surface, the grassroots government has implemented the decrees issued by the higher level government, but in fact it cannot have a substantive effect, and it is only a formalism. [6] Such

behavior not only deceives the leaders at higher levels, increases the financial burden of the government, is not conducive to establishing the authority of the government, but also harms the fundamental interests of the broad masses of the people.

Taking the protection of the new crown epidemic as an example, during the new crown epidemic prevention and control period, efficient public health data statistics can enhance the intensity and effectiveness of epidemic prevention and control work, and effectively protect people's lives and health, but the formal implementation of public policies by local grassroots governments has turned it into a day in which the broad masses of the people are busy filling in multiple forms with similar content and format, which is the phenomenon of "form anti-epidemic". [7]The original intention of the higher-level government to fill in the epidemic prevention and control form was to strengthen the precise prevention and control mechanism of the epidemic and provide information support for scientific decision-making in the epidemic prevention and control, but in the actual implementation process of the grassroots government, the form filling gradually became formalistic, resulting in the grassroots complaining about the huge workload of form collection and processing, the dissatisfaction of the people filling out multiple forms, and the criticism and criticism of the public media. The originally important, emergency and normal information feedback work has become a useless behavior that hinders epidemic prevention and control due to the formal implementation of grassroots governments.

2.2 Simplistic implementation

That is, the phenomenon of "one-size-fits-all" in policy implementation, in which grassroots governments implement public policies in a simplified way regardless of the specific actual situation such as the implementation target and the implementation environment, and the final effect is biased. The new crown epidemic in Xi'an, which began to appear on December 9, 2021, has many typical cases of simplistic implementation of policies in Xi'an's anti-epidemic road. Such as the collapse of One Code Pass in Xi'an. As we all know, since the outbreak of the new crown epidemic in China, China has adopted a series of epidemic prevention measures, combined with big data technology, and various places have successively responded to the call to use health codes, one-code passes, etc. However, the Xi'an government's one-code pass policy did not make a plan for the outbreak of the local epidemic in Xi'an, and when the large-scale epidemic in Xi'an was menacing, the one-code pass system collapsed. Nowadays, the passage of showing codes can be described as a national consensus, and it is difficult to achieve unnecessary codes. The simplification of the health code policy by the grassroots government in Xi'an has adversely affected Xi'an's epidemic protection and damaged the government's credibility and authority. In addition, the nucleic acid testing organized by the Xi'an government also showed a "one-size-fits-all" phenomenon, so that many people were infected with new coronary pneumonia during the nucleic acid testing process.

2.3 Performance-oriented implementation

It refers to the behavior of grassroots government officials when implementing policies that only focus on the performance of the time, while ignoring the long-term development of the implementation environment and the avoidance of accountability risks in a "top-down" high-pressure management environment. In the implementation of public policies, due to the high-pressure accountability mechanism of higher-level governments, the failure to make long-term plans for local development due to the high-pressure accountability mechanism of higher-level governments, the avoidance of responsibility thinking-oriented implementation of policies, is also one of the manifestations of laziness and neglect of government. There have been several cases of new crown pneumonia in Xi'an, but the Xi'an government has not paid too much attention to and paid attention to this, failed to make plans in advance, caught off guard when the epidemic broke out on a large scale, and issued local policies repeatedly, which is not conducive to epidemic protection.

2.4 Delayed implementation

It means that the attitude of policy implementers towards the actual operation of policies is relatively passive, passive, and forward-looking in the stage of policy implementation. Some grassroots government officials, out of consideration of avoiding accountability risks and lazy government thinking, do not immediately implement a new public policy, but observe whether the policy will change, wait and see and wait for the implementation of other implementing agencies, thereby weakening the timeliness of public policies. [8]Policy implementers are afraid of the emergence of new things and dare not move

forward, so that policy implementation is delayed and the best opportunity for policy implementation is missed. The delayed implementation of public policies has greatly reduced the efficiency of policy implementation and seriously damaged the authoritative image of the government in the minds of the people.

3. Analysis of factors affecting deviations in the implementation of public policies by grassroots governments

3.1 Policy implementation environment

In China, the implementation of public policies and the environment for policy implementation are closely related. On the one hand, the people's responsiveness and support for public policies, whether they trust the grassroots government, and whether they can fully understand the policy implementation behavior of the grassroots government all have a great impact on the policy implementation of the grassroots government. China's ancient "subject" consciousness still has a certain influence on the present, and political modernization is still developing, which leads to the urgent improvement of the people's ideology in the policy implementation environment. On the other hand, nowadays, performance-oriented concepts are widespread, and grassroots governments are facing the implementation pressure of higher-level governments, evading the assumption of responsibility, and problems in the concept of political performance, copying and implementing public policies completely according to the instructions of superiors, deviating from the public interest of public policies. Moreover, even the most basic copying cannot be effectively implemented, and the consequences of this situation will continue to undermine the authority of grassroots governments, reduce the credibility of grassroots governments, and further worsen the policy implementation environment of grassroots governments. In addition, in the context of China's economic downturn, the financial burden of the grassroots government is serious, and the revenue cannot be covered and the debt is heavy. The implementation of public policies requires a lot of human, material and financial resources, and the insufficient financial resources of grassroots governments seriously affect the implementation of policies. As we all know, China has been a "society of acquaintances" since ancient times, sheltering each other, but today some grassroots governments are still affected by the long-standing "acquaintance society" form, and it is difficult to implement policies justly and equitably, or it is difficult to effectively promote policies, and the implementation is biased.

3.2 Policy messaging

Modern society is an information society, due to the lack of smooth information and the confidentiality requirements of relevant government policies, various policies can not be directly communicated to the recipient, and after layers of transmission and transmission, it will inevitably have the personal subjective color of the transmitter, resulting in policy distortion and effect loss. Information asymmetries caused by information transmission between superiors and subordinates, and between governments and the people, have emerged one after another, so that public policies cannot be effectively implemented. The implementation of public policies also involves the game between the central and local governments, and sometimes the interests of the central government and the local interests are not completely equivalent, so that when implementing public policies, the grassroots government only takes into account the situation of the government at its own level and ignores the original intention of the central policy. It is difficult for the central idea of the decree issued by the higher level to be completely transmitted to the lower level, let alone implemented to the people, so the implementation process of the lower level grassroots government "tastes" the original policy, resulting in deviation in the implementation of public policy.

3.3 Quality of policy implementers

In the implementation of public policies, the quality of policy implementers is also an important influencing factor. As the main body of public policy implementation of grassroots governments, the shortcomings of policy implementers' ability and quality will directly lead to policy implementation deviations and even hinder policy implementation and implementation. As the implementer of public policies, they should not only have excellent implementation ability and quality, but also pay attention to the cultivation and development of political views and righteous interests. For example, the lack of ability to understand and grasp the essence of the policy, the reason for the miscommunication of the implementer is the insufficient capacity of the policy implementer. In addition, if policy implementers

attach too much importance to the realization of private interests, they will seek self-interest for themselves in the process of policy implementation, which will violate the original goal of public policy, resulting in distortion and ineffectiveness of public policy.

4. The path for correcting deviations in the implementation of public policies by grassroots governments

4.1 Optimize the implementation environment and provide basic safeguards for the implementation of public policies by grassroots governments

First, it is necessary to build a solid mass foundation for grassroots governments. Give play to the role of grassroots organizations as the "backbone", take the initiative to respond to the interests and concerns of the masses in a timely manner, lead the masses to participate in grassroots social governance, and strive to enhance the people's sense of gain and security with visible and tangible people's livelihood and well-being. [9] Give play to the leading role of culture, enhance the people's sense of identity and belonging, organize and carry out publicity and education activities at multiple levels, and stimulate the sense of ownership of the masses. Clarify the relationship of power and responsibility and the scope of functions of grassroots governments, social organizations, individual citizens, and other governance entities, and clarify the boundaries of power. At the same time, grassroots governments actively carry out policy introduction lectures and other activities to improve the comprehensive quality of the people's analysis and understanding of public policies and improve the cultural level of the people.

The second is to enhance the financial strength of grassroots governments. Grassroots governments can appropriately reduce government expenditure by reducing unnecessary expenditures, eliminating luxury and waste, and improving government procurement behavior, while developing the economy with local characteristics according to local conditions, actively attracting investment and expanding tax channels to increase grassroots government revenue. At the same time, higher-level governments should increase financial allocations to grassroots governments in a timely manner, increase reasonable financial subsidies to grassroots governments and investment in some industries and projects, and effectively help grassroots governments get out of financial difficulties. The strengthening of the economic strength of grassroots governments will contribute to better implementation of public policies and policy activities.

The third is to strengthen the building of democratic politics and strengthen legal education. In view of the phenomenon of "acquaintance society" of grassroots governments, it is necessary to strengthen legal education for the masses of the people, promote the process of policy implementation to pay more attention to jurisprudence, and highlight "jurisprudence" as the mainstay, supplemented by "reasonableness". Adhere to the principle of openness and transparency in the implementation of public policies, improve the supervision of the implementation of public policies by grassroots governments, avoid policy implementation deviations caused by humanized implementation of policies, and seek a balance between law and reason, so that policy implementation deviations caused by the "acquaintance society" can be effectively corrected.

4.2 Establish and improve policy information transmission mechanisms to reduce the flexibility of public policy implementation

Establish and improve policy information transmission mechanisms, institutionalize information transmission, and use modern big data technology to build policy information transmission networks to ensure the breadth, depth and authenticity of information communication. At the same time, establish and improve a multi-level, multi-functional, internal and external communication, and information control network that combines upper and lower levels to increase the transparency of policy implementation.[10] The greater the flexibility and levels of public policy implementation, the greater the likelihood of conflicting interests at different levels; The more choices of benefits experienced in policy implementation, the easier it is to deviate from the achievement of policy objectives and the more likely it is to deviate from the actual implementation process. [11] Therefore, when formulating public policies, it is necessary to reduce the flexibility of public policy implementation, refine public policies, strengthen the policy interpretation of relevant provisions, clarify the goal connotation of public policies, and clarify the relationship of interests and responsibilities, so as to effectively reduce the deviation of public policy implementation.

4.3 Improve the quality of policy implementers and strengthen ideological education for policy implementers

To improve the quality of policy implementers is to improve the policy understanding level and policy implementation ability of policy implementers, and grassroots government departments should vigorously promote the continuing education, re-education and related training of grassroots government policy implementers, and effectively improve the quality of policy implementation teams. Those who deepen the training of policy implementers and strengthen their sense of identification and understanding of the policies promulgated by their superiors can also continuously improve their theoretical and practical level through practice, laying a good foundation for more efficient policy implementation. Through ideological education and other means, strengthen the professional ethics of policy implementers, standardize the implementation of public policies, and enhance higher ideological and political consciousness and overall awareness, so as to overcome the abuse of power for personal gain, local protectionism and departmental protectionism, so as to correct the deviation of grassroots government public policies. [12]

4.4 Establish a scientific fault-tolerant mechanism to encourage policy implementers to work actively

The establishment of a scientific fault-tolerant mechanism can stimulate the initiative and enthusiasm of policy implementers. At present, in grassroots governments, policy implementers often passively avoid responsibility due to improper rights and responsibilities to reduce the direct or potential risks caused by uncertainty. The establishment of a scientific fault-tolerant mechanism can effectively enhance the enthusiasm of policy implementers and effectively avoid performance-oriented bias to a certain extent. The scientific fault-tolerant mechanism is not blindly covering up mistakes, but is organically connected with the current accountability mechanism and incentive mechanism. Fault tolerance and accountability mechanisms are dialectically unified, and the two complement each other. [13] We should not dare to tolerate fault, cannot tolerate fault, or even evade or shirk responsibility because of accountability. The premise for policy implementers to correctly carry out policy-related activities is that their own interests can be met in the process of policy implementation, rather than being held accountable for the implementation of policies. In addition, when quantifying the performance level of policy implementation, it is also necessary to bind the public interest after policy implementation with the interests of policy implementers to produce a binding effect and further motivate policy implementers to correctly implement relevant policies.

4.5 Strengthen in-process supervision and management of policy implementation to improve the efficiency of policy implementation

At present, China's grassroots governments have a relatively complete pre-assessment and post-accountability mechanism for the implementation of public policies. However, for the policy implementation stage, there are still big gaps in supervision that need to be filled. In the actual operation stage of the policy, it is necessary to establish a set of effective supervision and management mechanisms, strengthen the grasp of the implementation of the policy and the process through the means of big data informatization and the supervision of special personnel, timely discover the deviations in the implementation process, and take effective adjustment measures and remedial plans to improve the efficiency of policy implementation. In addition, due to the particularity of grassroots governments, while party committee supervision and administrative supervision organs play a supervisory role, they need to give full play to the supervision effectiveness generated by social media and social groups such as the masses of society, and establish a more sound social supervision and management system.

5. Conclusion

The correct and effective implementation of public policies is a socially oriented work, especially in the current situation of the normalization of the new crown epidemic and the urgent need for China's economic and social recovery, it is an important work related to the public interest and even social development. The internal control, mechanism construction, quality training, and external publicity and cooperation of grassroots government departments determine whether the implementation of the policy is smooth. This paper summarizes the problems and causes of deviations in the implementation of public policies of grassroots governments, and explores the path of correcting deviations, and believes that through continuous research and practice, the implementation of public policies of grassroots

governments will inevitably be further improved, and the original goals and effects of public policies will be brought into play.

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