

# *The Study of Chinese Government Performance Management on Public Comment: Taking the Public Comment in Kunming as Example*

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**Abstract**—Scholars who study government performance evaluation will not neglect the public comment, for it is largely beneficial to improve the government’s administrative efficiency, public service level and public satisfaction. Public comment in China, with the distinctive Chinese characteristics, is one of the most effective forms using by Chinese local governments to let citizen participate in government performance evaluation. But most local governments all over the country pay little attention on citizen participation in government performance evaluation. No matter the selection of evaluation subject, or the design of the evaluation index system is not that reasonable. To solve the problem of public comment in our country at present stage, to make our public comment a more scientific and effective one so that it can be given full play, we should starting from four aspects, including selecting evaluation subject, deciding evaluation content, designing evaluation index and using the evaluation results.

**Keywords**—government performance evaluation; citizen participation; public comment

## I. INTRODUCTION

Government performance management, using the scientific methods, is aiming at improving government performance. It is based on the accurate evaluation of government performance, which including four aspects, performance planning, performance monitoring, performance evaluation and performance feedback. Performance evaluation is the core content of government performance management. And the key to performance management is to achieve the objectivity, scientificity, fairness and effectiveness of the government performance evaluation. Accordingly, we believe performance evaluation is essential to the government performance management. Public comment in China, usually under the leadership of party committees and governments at all levels, is a tool to promote administrative efficiency and to improve the public service level by organizing public participation in government performance evaluation orderly. As one of the most effective forms of citizen participation in government performance evaluation, public comment is an indispensable part of the study on Chinese government performance management for being full of Chinese characteristics.

## II. THEORETICAL BASES OF PUBLIC COMMENT

### A. *New Public Management Theory*

Following the western administrative reform wave after 1980s, new public management theory comes into practice. It is a modern form of public administration theory, a crystallization of applying “managerialism” to the public sector. The assumption was made by new public management theory that the management of public organization and private organization are similar in nature. This theory emphasizes results, focuses on clients, adopts management method which used to be in the private sector to promote administrative efficiency, and introduces competition mechanism to improve the quality of public service. Public comment, as an effective form of government performance evaluation, happens to coincide with the idea of new public management theory to emphasize results. In addition, “customer oriented” stresses in new public management theory means government should regard public or citizens as its clients and provide them with high quality public service. As a result, citizens should be involved in the evaluation subject during the process of government performance evaluation. And this could explain the rise of the public comment in Chinese local government.

### B. *New Public Service Theory*

New public service theory, based on the criticism of the new public management theory, is a series of thoughts and theories about the role public administration plays in the governance system which placed the public service, democratic governance and citizen participation in the center position. The basic idea of new public service is that the fundamental responsibilities of the government neither to “steer” nor to “paddle”, but respond to citizen’s demands, provide service to the citizens, take responsibility for the greater public interest, by considering citizens as the owner of the country and the government. Because of this, government performance evaluation, including public comment, has to center on citizen, regard the satisfaction of the citizen as the standard, and the evaluation process must involve a wide range of citizen participation.

### III. CASE REVIEW OF THE PUBLIC COMMENT IN KUNMING

As one kind of public comment, Kunming municipal government's professional style masses appraisal in Yunnan Province, under the leadership of the CPC municipal committee and municipal government, made a great achievements in further improving the professional style and connecting with the general public, by letting the public appraise the professional style of 87 municipal departments and 27 public enterprises and institutions. Over the years, although the positive exploration of public comment in Kunming has achieved results, its appraisal still has some problems to be solved. By learning about the program and the actual implementation of appraisal in 2014, we can review this appraisal, at the same time, conducts an in-depth analysis of its existing problems and causes.

#### A. Program of Appraisal

##### 1) Constitution of Evaluation Subject and Rules of Appraisal

The evaluation method was adopted by the way of the combination of appraisal questionnaire survey(50%), online assessment(10%), orientation measurement(10%) and daily evaluation(30%), and its synthesis score will be the final evaluation result. In the questionnaire survey part, more than 5,000 particular representatives were asked to complete 2014 Kunming masses appraise the professional style of municipal government questionnaire (hereinafter referred to as appraisal questionnaire). These particular representatives are more than ordinary citizens, they have another important identity, like representative of CPC Kunming Committee, member of the CPPCC Kunming Committee, deputy of Kunming Municipal People's Congress, and even representative of municipal leaders and officers. The online assessment is finished by people from all walks of life visiting the official website of Kunming and fulfilling the online evaluation. Both the questionnaire survey and the online assessment have a question about the professional style appraisal of the government department to all the Kunming municipal government departments. Under this question, there are four options, namely, "Satisfaction", "Basic Satisfaction", "Dissatisfaction" and "Have no Idea". "Satisfaction" is worth 100 points. "Basic Satisfaction" is worth 85 points. "Dissatisfaction" is worth 50 points and "Have no Idea" regards as invalid vote which does not count. The scoring method is to sum all the points together to get the final score of the appraisal. Orientation measurement part is to evaluate a department by selecting a certain proportion of its staffs as delegates to assess its work. There is a special department in Kunming municipal government which is in charge of the daily evaluation. Both the orientation measurement and the daily evaluation are beyond the scope of citizens participation in the government performance evaluation, cause they do not involve the citizens participation, hence will not be discussed in this article.

##### 2) Evaluation Content

The evaluation content mainly concerned about five aspects: the implementation of "eight-point" guideline for fighting bureaucracy and formalism and rejecting extravagance

among party members and "ten-point" regulation for transforming the working style and maintaining the close contact with the general public among party members in Yunnan, the execution of remediation on the issue about four forms of decadence deployed by the municipal government, the rectification of the program of mass line education and practice launched by the CPC, the improvement of the administrative efficiency and the public service level and the handling of the problems reported by masses or news and media.

##### 3) Evaluation Index

There is only one evaluation index in both questionnaire survey and online assessment. That is, the professional style appraisal of the government department. The evaluation index consists of four options, namely, "satisfaction", "basic satisfaction", "dissatisfaction" and "have no idea". Besides an extra questionnaire, the appraisal questionnaire survey is almost the same as the online assessment. The extra questionnaire includes only three questions, which is a single-choice question about the overall evaluation of municipal government's professional style, a multiple-choice question about the professional style problem existing in municipal government, and an open question about the suggestions to strengthen the construction of the professional style in municipal government.

##### 4) Evaluation Result Using

In this public comment, the evaluation result using includes five major approaches. The first of these is to use the evaluation result as a part of the target assessment. Secondly, those departments which were the bottom of the synthesis score ranking list would be supervised and urged to overhaul. Thirdly, the main leader from the department which had been the bottom of the ranking list for two consecutive years would have a persuasion and admonition. Fourthly, the evaluation score ranking of all departments would be published from the top down to the bottom in municipal media. Fifth, Appraisal Office of the Municipal Government will give the feedback came from the public to all the departments and urge them to rectify.

#### B. Implementation

2014 Kunming municipal government's professional style masses appraisal started to make preparations in July 2014, and released the final evaluation result in January 2015. It lasted for half a year. During this time, 5399 valid questionnaires were collected, more than 162,000 people participated in the online assessment, and 689 suggestions were given. The evaluation score ranking of all departments should be published from the top down to the bottom in municipal media according to the program of appraisal. But the reality is that neither can we find the evaluation score ranking nor can we know which department is the last one on the ranking list. All the information we can get just the highest score, the lowest score and the name of the departments on the top of the ranking list. There is no other comprehensive or specific information. Except a piece of simple news on the official web site of Kunming, seldom had this public comment been reported after the appraisal.

#### IV. PROBLEM ANALYSIS OF THE PUBLIC COMMENT IN KUNMING

##### A. Existing Problems

###### 1) Evaluation Subject Selecting Is Improper

The selecting of evaluation subject in Kunming public comment is improper. The evaluation subject consisted of more than 5,000 particular representatives and over a hundred thousand people who participated in the online assessment. According to the program of appraisal, these more than 5,000 particular representatives have a huge difference with ordinary citizens. There seems to be some undeniable but subtle connection between these representatives and the government. So those particular representatives cannot represent ordinary citizens and the appraisal made by them is also not objective, impartial enough. In this case, the evaluation result is hard to be approved by the public as the appraisal questionnaire survey which accounted for a large proportion of the whole appraisal was done by those particular representatives. In the second place, no matter evaluation subject is particular representatives or ordinary citizens, any one of them cannot know the responsibilities and performance from all 114 municipal government departments. Asking these people to appraise all the departments can never get a trustworthy evaluation result.

###### 2) Evaluation Content Deciding Is Unreasonable

Although the evaluation content is considered to be very comprehensive, specific and highly consistent with the aim of the appraisal, the decision of evaluation content neglects the difference between each evaluation object. Using the same evaluation content to all the evaluation objects cannot embody the features from diversified evaluation objects. And it even leads to a decrease in validity of appraisal. Moreover, there is another very considerable factor being neglected when deciding the evaluation content, that is, its feasibility study. Ordinary citizens can hardly know the information like the implementation of “eight-point” guideline for fighting bureaucracy and formalism and rejecting extravagance among party members, the rectification of the program of mass line education and practice launched by the CPC or something like that. In other words, that evaluation content is considered to be impractical.

###### 3) Evaluation Index Design Is Unscientific

Compared with the evaluation content, the evaluation index design of Kunming municipal government’s professional style masses appraisal is too simple, and is far from forming a set of evaluation index system. For each of the municipal government department, there is only one evaluation index, consisted of four options including “satisfaction”, “basic satisfaction”, “dissatisfaction” and “have no idea”, to evaluate the professional style of each department. Firstly, as the evaluation content carrier, evaluation index should involve some more detailed, more specific index, rather than design a single, broad index based on concrete evaluation content. Moreover, “professional style” is a very abstract, comprehensive concept. To make the appraisal a valid one, several second-level indexes must be set under the first-level index when using “professional style” as the first-level index. One last important point about evaluation index is the set of four options. The accuracy and objectivity of the evaluation

result may severely affected, with “satisfaction”, “basic satisfaction”, and “dissatisfaction” such vague options , because of some psychological factors. It should be noted that these options just so hard to be quantified. While the difference in them definitely exists, the dividing line is not always a clear one.

###### 4) Evaluation Result Using Become Formalistic

According to the program of appraisal, Kunming municipal government’s professional style masses appraisal has five seemingly various evaluation result using approaches. According to the program of appraisal, Kunming municipal government’s professional style masses appraisal result using has five approaches. It seems various approaches are used, but this is not the case. First of all, the publication of the evaluation result in this public comment did not do well. The evaluation score ranking of all departments should be published in municipal media according to the program of appraisal. But there is only a piece of simple news been reported symbolically with little detailed information which is closely related to the evaluation result. Secondly, the evaluation result using should involve all the participating departments. But the public comment in Kunming focuses too much on the ranking. No matter the supervise and urge to overhaul, or the persuasion and admonition to the main leader, these evaluation result using approaches only pay attention to the department which rank last. Many departments do not rank last, but they do have some problems to be solved in reality. The neglect of these departments in the evaluation result using prevents them from performance improving and organizational capability developing. The most important thing is that these approaches are almost inoperative. All the evaluation result using approaches fail to pose a big pressure on the participating departments, but only have an indirect affect.

##### B. Causal Analysis of the Existing Problem

###### 1) Evaluation Subject Know Little about Evaluation Object

Evaluation subject is the core of the performance management. Selecting evaluation subject reasonably directly determines the accuracy of performance evaluation result, affects the scientificity of performance evaluation. From an information processing standpoint, performance evaluation, completed by evaluation subject, is the process of observation, collection, storage, extraction, integration and calculation of performance information related to the evaluation object. The subject’s familiarity with the evaluation object determines its mastery of the evaluation object’s performance information. Objective evaluation result came, only when enough information about evaluation object was got by evaluation subject. The evaluation subject selection in this public comment is too simple to reasonably select citizen who really knows the evaluation object.

###### 2) Evaluation Content Is Not Targeted

The deciding of evaluation content is an important factor affects the effectiveness of citizen participation in government performance evaluation. Proper evaluation content should be adapted to the evaluation subject, evaluation object, and the purpose of evaluation. To get a valid evaluation result,

evaluation content must be consistent with the purpose of evaluation, target to each evaluation object, and can be easily mastered by evaluation subject. No matter how large the amount of the evaluation subject is, or how scientific the design of the evaluation index system, it will never get reliable evaluation result if the government is evaluated by people who know little information about evaluation content. In a word, the reason why the evaluation content of public comment in Kunming is improper is that the evaluation content is not targeted.

### 3) *Evaluation Index Is Abstract, Simple and General*

Evaluation index is the decisive factor that affects the scientificity, accuracy and the objectivity of the performance evaluation. It is about from which aspects the performance of the evaluation object will be measured or evaluated. Performance evaluation index is the carrier of the evaluation content, and it is also the external manifestation of the function of evaluation object. This requires that the performance evaluation index should be targeted, and can not be a single abstract, general indicator, but a set of evaluation index system composed of a number of relevant indicators. Abstract, general and broad evaluation index is not conducive to get an accurate evaluation. It also cannot help to improve the performance of the evaluation object. Evaluation index in Kunming public comment is too simple, abstract and general. So its evaluation index design has to be perfect, and a set of scientific evaluation index system has to be formed.

### 4) *Evaluation Result Using Did Not Give Full Play*

An effective public comment cannot be separated from the full use of the evaluation results. Evaluation result using extent has a direct influence on the effectiveness of public comment. If the evaluation result cannot make full use of, not only the great effort taken to get an accurate evaluation result would be wasted, but also the effectiveness of the public comment would be weakened. In this public comment, the complete, detailed evaluation result did not be released as it was asked to. The object of the evaluation result using did not cover all the appraised departments, and the approaches of evaluation result using fail to pose a big pressure on the participating departments. Because of all these, Kunming public comment did not give full play and even almost became a mere formality.

## V. COUNTERMEASURES TO THE EXISTING PROBLEM OF THE PUBLIC COMMENT IN KUNMING

Some citizens may lack of public information, knowledge and rationality, even so, the significant value of citizen participation in government performance evaluation in promoting the administrative efficiency and improving the public service level should not be denied. To solve the problem of public comment in our country at present stage, to make our public comment a more scientific and effective one so that it can be given full play, we should rethink about those four aspects, including selecting evaluation subject, deciding evaluation content, designing evaluation index and using evaluation results.

### A. *Select Proper Evaluation Subject*

Evaluation subject is an important factor affects the efficiency of public comment. According to the performance management theory, the primary principle to choose evaluation subject is that the evaluation subject must have the information about the evaluation content. It is hard to promise an accurate evaluation result, if the evaluation subject was asked to evaluate something he or she does not know. A proper evaluation subject should know both evaluation object and evaluation content, and have the information required for evaluation. Direct relative person had direct contact with government, which gives them a great say to the performance or professional style of the government, making them a proper evaluation subject. Meanwhile, ordinary citizens have limited access to the information related to the government. So it is very necessary to involve a certain amount of direct relative person in public comment. Just as Kunming public comment, the evaluation subject is random in most city. Most of these random evaluation subjects belong to indirect relative person. Not as direct relative person, they are not familiar with the evaluation object. Too many indirect relative person participate in the public comment is bad for the objectivity. An increase in the amount of direct relative person when select the evaluation subject should be consider, which can surely improve the accuracy of the evaluation result.

### B. *Decide Reasonable Evaluation Subject*

Reasonable evaluation content should be decided based on a comprehensive consideration for three factors, which are the purpose, the subject and the object of the evaluation. First of all, the evaluation content should be consistent with the purpose of the evaluation. Only when evaluation content is consistent with the purpose of evaluation, the evaluation can achieve the intended purpose, and play the role of evaluation. Secondly, reasonable evaluation content need to take the characteristics, responsibilities and work content of the evaluation object. Different evaluation object should be evaluated by different evaluation content because of its varied working emphasis. The public comment in Kunming forgot the difference in evaluation object, used the same evaluation content to evaluate various municipal government departments. It is very irrational and reduces the effectiveness of the evaluation. Third, to decide reasonable evaluation content, its validity also needs to be given a consideration to. Using the evaluation content knew by the evaluation subject ensures the accuracy of the evaluation. Considering the limited public access to the governmental information, and the current work done by Chinese government in making government affairs transparent is not enough. The evaluation content like the implementation of "eight-point" guideline for fighting bureaucracy and formalism and rejecting extravagance among party members, the rectification of the program of mass line education and practice launched by the CPC or something like that is really improper. These things are hard to be known by the ordinary citizens. Without the support of enough information, that evaluation content would be regarded as useless ones.

### C. Design Systematic Evaluation Index

Evaluation index design is a highly technical work directly relates to the accuracy of evaluation result, affects the effectiveness of the evaluation activities. A well-designed evaluation index can turn abstract and complicated evaluation content into an easy-to-understand one, and reflect the actual performance of the evaluation object. Therefore, a delicate evaluation index system has to be built to make public comment more scientific, reliable and effective. Firstly, a set of evaluation index system involved several related indexes should be built to serve the comprehensive evaluation content, as evaluation index is the carrier of evaluation content. Secondly, the evaluation index had better be easy-to-understand and able to be quantified, while abstract, general and broad concept should never be used as evaluation index. This can help evaluation subject transform the subjective experience to objective score. Thirdly, evaluation index design needs to give attention to both publicness and otherness. Normally, multiple departments with varied characteristics, responsibilities and work content would be appraised by same set of evaluation index system. Hence, both the publicness and the otherness of evaluation index should be taken into account in the index designing process. Featured index based on the different characteristics, responsibilities and work content should be included in the evaluation system. Unified index and featured index together form a delicate set of evaluation index system.

### D. Make Full Use of the Evaluation Result

Evaluation result is not only the product got from the performance evaluation, but also the basis to carry out an evaluation result using. Government performance evaluation should never be a mere evaluation. If the evaluation result has not been made full use of, the whole evaluation would be meaningless and become formalism. Making full use of the evaluation result not only can improve the performance, but also play a role of performance evaluation in regulation, guidance and incentives. However, taking Kunming public comment as an example, the evaluation result using work has not done well. On the use of the evaluation result, the first consideration should be doing a good job in evaluation result publication. To release the result of government performance evaluation can play a significant role in the incentives and supervision of the government. It is also a kind of response and respect to the public comment. And the best way of it is to publish the evaluation report through different channels to accept oversight by the public. Secondly, public comment is not a simple ranking inside the government. Hence, evaluation result using should not be just the reward or punishment based on the ranking. It ought to emphasize the process of the existing problem analysis and countermeasure implementation. Each evaluation object should be required to analyze the existing problems objectively, put forward rectification opinions and implement the rectification. Finally,

linking the evaluation result to the appointment of the main leader of the evaluation object might be worth exploring in solving the problem that public comment fails to pose a big pressure or motivation on the participating departments. That is to say, use evaluation result as one of the references in cadre appointment. For example, priority to the appointment could be given to the leader comes from the department which ranked top in three consecutive years, or transferred the leader comes from the department which ranked bottom to other department. Under such a great stress, more attention will be paid to, and the problem that public comment becomes a mere formality can be solved.

## VI. CONCLUSION

After more than ten years of active exploration, public comment has been widely carried out in nationwide, many provinces and cities have basically formed its own operation mode of public comments. Chinese practical experience shows that public comment, including the government's professional style masses appraisal, is one of the most effective forms to let citizen participate in government performance evaluation. It is largely beneficial to improve the government administrative efficiency, the public service level and the public satisfaction. Public comment, involving citizen to the process of government performance management, is consistent with the idea in polycentric governance theory which stressed the independent but correlated multiple governance subjects share the responsibilities of governing the public affairs in a certain range. Hence it will help to build a "polycentric governance" mode with the participation of government, market and society, and achieve sustainable development of public interest.

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