A Study on the Main Body of the Rescue and Protection Mechanism for Children in Difficulty

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Abstract: The Opinions on Strengthening the Protection of Children in Difficulty issued by the Ministry of Civil Affairs of the State Council in 2016 specified the rescue and protection basic principle for children in difficulty of ‘the conscientiousness of family, the leading of the government, the participation of the society, the classification of security’, which requested that the welfare system for children in difficulty in which the multiple subjects of families, governments and the society should share out the work and cooperate with one another should be established. Therefore, the regions have formed different guarantee modes in practice. The article took the J city in Hubei province as example, used qualitative research to carry on the field investigation, specified the main body of rescue and protection mechanism for children in difficulty, described the situation of authority and responsibility division of each subject, analyzed the existing problems and forming reasons of these main bodies in practice on this basis, and put forward the corresponding countermeasures from three fields: playing the function of families, improving the role of the government and developing the social force.

1. Introduction

Child welfare is a major issue that the country is concerning about at present, and China has gradually established the policy orientation of ‘moderate inclusive child welfare model’, which regards the children in difficulty and left-behind children in rural areas as the focus of protection of child welfare system. The traditional child welfare in China has always regarded the government as a leader, and the country assumed the rescue responsibility, established social security system, founded welfare houses, pushed the children’s charity system. However, the vicious incidents happening in the recent years such as the suicide of left-behind child in Bijie, the case of the hungry child in Nanjing have pointed out that the lack of the main bodies such as family, community and society in the single child welfare system would result in the failure of the rescue and protection mechanism for children in difficulty.

The welfare pluralism thinks that the government plays three roles of the framer and performer of the rules, the provider of the fund and the provider of service in welfare supply. However, the idea of ‘national power’ points out that the parental power is the first one. The families provide children with the most basic welfare protection, while the country has the obligation to provide service, support, supervision even perform guardianship duties for children and their families short of or lack of guard capability to make the national power active and make it become the supplement for parental power. In summary, family and government are essential components of the main body of rescue and protection for children in difficulty, while the concept of social governance affirms the function of social forces in establishing social undertakings, participating in the social governance and solving social issues. Therefore, social forces should be introduced to make up the deficiency of the government supplying welfare singly in order to improve the main body of rescue and protection mechanism for children in difficulty.

The Opinions on Strengthening the Protection of Children in Difficulty issued by the Ministry of Civil Affairs of the State Council in 2016 first specified the rescue and protection basic principle for children in difficulty of ‘the conscientiousness of family, the leading of the government, the participation of the society, the classification of security’. Then under the guidance of this policy, how is the specific protection for children in difficulty implemented? The research analyzed and responded to this issue through the empirical analysis of J city in Hubei province.
2. Material and Methods

In order to have an in-depth knowledge of the current situation of China’s rescue and protection mechanism for children in difficulty, this research used qualitative research method to launch one-month field research in several areas of Hubei province in 2019, took the data collection methods such as document research, semi-structured interview and field observation to obtain full and accurate research data and selected J city as an example to explain the main body and relevant issues of rescue and protection mechanism for children in difficulty. Among them, the intensive research method is semi-structured interview. The contents of the interview start from two dimensionalities of the model and evaluation of the division of subject power and responsibility, the objects include eighteen people respectively in five categories: government departments, public institutions, group organizations, social organizations, and service objects. The interview data corroborate and supplement each other, sketching the constitution of the local rescue and protection mechanism for children in difficulty and generalizing the existing problems in the current practical work and providing the relevant enlightenment.

3. The Main Body of Rescue and Protection Mechanism for Children in Difficulty

3.1 Family is the basis

According to the principle that the parental power is prior to the national power, improving families’ child rearing capacity and monitoring technique is the primary part to protect the children in difficulty. When families’ child rearing capacity and monitoring technique are sane, family is the main body of supplies for child welfare, on the contrary, communities, society and country should assume the responsibility of welfare supply together and start the rescue and protection mechanism for children in difficulty.

3.2 Government is the guarantee

The meaning of government used in this article is the government in a broad sense, in the following article, this concept is divided into variety of departments in the people’s government, procuratorates, courts and other organs of state power, rescue station, juvenile protection center and other public institutions.

The civil administration department leads and coordinates various government departments to launch work. In J city, it is the civil administration department to lead to hold joint conference for children in difficulty to interact all departments, manage subordinate bodies and units; establish dynamic information system for children in difficulty and mandatory reporting mechanism; establish the work team for basic-level children consisted of director of child welfare and child supervisor; purchase social services in the form of project or post to push the accurate support.

The procuratorate and other judicial departments provide assistance for juveniles involved in crimes or falling victim. The procuratorate, the Communist Youth League Municipal Committee, and social protection center for juveniles in J city signed the cooperation agreement together to facilitate the establishment of the local juvenile procuratorial social support system. The procuratorate provides legal aid for the juveniles involved in crimes and referrals the follow-up service for case under community correction to the social institutions; at the same time, it also provides support for the juveniles falling victim, docks with professional medical, social and psychological counseling institutions to protect the legal interests of victim against re-injury.

The public institutions set up by the government such as rescue station, social protection center for juveniles and welfare institutions provide direct and specific services for children in difficulty, provide temporary refuge for wandering juveniles and juveniles falling victim, put national liability of guardian into practice; cultivate the organizations supplying child services and purchase social services; widely launch the publicity of awareness of children’s rights, protection concepts and relevant laws; guide to launch the business training for supervisors of child welfare and directors.
3.3 Society is the supplement

The intervention of society is a necessary force to perfect the welfare system for children in multiple difficulties and the society cooperates with the government leading welfare system. The group organizations such as women’s federation and youth league committee participate in the formulation of relevant laws and regulations in the institutional aspect to safeguard the rights of children in difficulty; provide hotline platform, assistance and help service for children in difficulty and purchase relevant social projects in the practical aspect. The social institutions undertake the projects bought by the government and group organizations and widely establish cooperative relationship and provide professional child service. The charity is always regarded as the supplement for the government work to provide cash assistance and psychological care. In addition, the participation of volunteers, voluntary workers and other caring enterprises and people has provided the human, material and financial support for direct service.

4. Problems and countermeasures of rescue and protection mechanism for children in difficulties

4.1 Family functions are difficult to play

As the smallest unit of children's living environment, family should have priority in the subjects sequence of children's welfare supply, however, the reality is that according to the policy classification of children in difficulties, except for children who get into trouble because of serious illness and disability, most of the difficulties are caused by the poverty of their families and the lack of guardianship, it means that children in difficulties are faced with extreme weakening of the family welfare supply function, the material and emotional support they can provide is extremely limited, so the rescue and protection mechanism based on "family responsibility" is difficult to play its due role.

Aiming at the deficiency of family function, on the one hand, it is necessary to strengthen the function of raising, guardianship and education of the original family by strengthening family education and parent vocational education training for guardians; on the other hand, when the guardian is unable to be supervised due to objective restrictions such as illness, disability and sentence, or is deprived of the right of guardianship due to subjective negligence such as abuse and abandonment, the guardianship shall be implemented through the intervention of the state's parental power; the emotional care service provided by social organizations and volunteers for children in difficulties is the last link of care.

4.2 The role of the government needs to be improved

4.2.1 Overlapping responsibilities among government bodies

Whether the rights and responsibilities division of the government for the relief and protection of children in difficulties is clear is closely related to its own institutional settings and personnel arrangements. The division of labor is relatively clear when cooperation is carried out among the judicial, administrative and procuratorial fields with clear power structure; and the embedded service form the government "internal production" is adopted in the civil affairs system and its subordinate institutions, the responsibilities of different subjects overlap due to the homogeneity of authority. For example, both the rescue station and the welfare home are responsible for receiving children without guardianship, the only difference is that they need to be transferred to the welfare home at the end of the rescue station's housing period, so the pertinence and stability of monitoring services are weak; minor protection centers are mostly set up in rescue stations, just "one team, two brands", the name of the institution has not been unified and the staffing has not been solved, so the civil affairs department should issue policy documents as soon as possible to unify the institutional settings of each unit, clarify the division of rights and responsibilities, and determine the staffing.

4.2.2 Lack of professional grassroots children staff
The welfare institutions, facilities and personnel are insufficient in the welfare delivery of children in difficulties. The survey found that the working group children in difficulties has expanded, mainly including children's welfare director and the child welfare supervisor. However, their daily responsibilities are cumbersome and heavy workload, and they need social work professional background or children's work and service experience, not simple administrative work to carry out care and visit work, but most of the children's welfare directors are part-time women directors, lack of training and lack of professionalism. Under the contradiction between the lack of existing grassroots staff and the great demand for professional services of children in difficulties, the government needs to launch a more complete grassroots children's work team policy. In terms of system specifications, regulations and indicators such as appointments, assessments, and incentives should be introduced; in terms of establishment guarantees, social workers should be promoted into the establishment, and professional child protection social workers should be introduced into the grassroots child work team; in terms of financial support, salary subsidies and service allowances should be provided for part-time child welfare directors and supervisors; in terms of training and assessment, systematic training should be conducted, tracking and assessment mechanisms and case accountability mechanisms should be established, and the implementation of child services at the grassroots level should be supervised.

4.3 Inadequate development of social forces

4.3.1 Long-term lack of children's social organization

The functions of the Minor Protection Center include supporting the introduction and development of children's social organizations to participate in the protection of children in difficulties. However, in the underdeveloped City J, the number of other social organizations, such as social work institutions, is far less than that of large cities. The number distribution and development of social work institutions in the urban area and the county of J City also show obvious regional imbalance. In addition, these social work institutions are short of service funds, lack of social workers in universities, and lack of ability to undertake services. When bidding for projects, they are also subject to fierce competition from provincial capital cities, which is difficult to support the development of local children's social organizations. Under this background, in order to promote the development of local children's social organizations, it is necessary for the minors' protection center to fulfill the cultivation responsibility and mature social organizations to provide incubation assistance.

4.3.2 Social workers receive insufficient attention

The development of the social work industry is still limited by funds and manpower, and has not received the attention of local governments. This is related to the attitudes and concept of local leaders. Social work institutions not only have no stable source of funds, but also have low pay and high mobility, and social work personnel in universities are unwilling to enter counterpart industries. Strengthening the construction of social work talent team is an important thrust to promote the professionalization of child protection work and the systematization of family services in difficult situations. The construction of social work talent team needs to be reformed from the aspects of finance, establishment and assessment. In response to the central government's opinions on strengthening the construction of social work professionals, the purchase of social workers' assistance and protection services for children in difficulties will be included into the government's regular budget to ensure that social work institutions receive stable financial support; provide social workers who are resident in relief stations and unprotected centers with career establishment, improve their treatment, release the restrictions on social workers to apply for the examination of civil servants, and encourage social workers to enter the government system; improve the professionalism of civil affairs departments relevant staff, support staff to participate in the professional training of social workers and apply for the examination of relevant qualifications, and cultivate more professional talents for children's welfare work. On the basis of policy support, social work institutions should also ensure their own professionalism, speak with actual results and
show their own value. Not only should they give full play to the ability of linking resources to solve problems in case work, but also consider how to establish long-term cooperation between different subjects at a more macro mechanism level to promote the sustainable development of the rescue and protection system for children in difficulties.

5. Summary

This paper conducts an empirical study on the main body of the relief and protection mechanism for children in distress, and divides the main body of children in difficulties welfare supply into three categories: family, government and society. Among them, the family gives priority to providing the most basic welfare, the state and government mainly provide policy support, funds and services of state-run welfare institutions, while the society transforms social policies into concrete, direct social services For each subject, the paper analyzes the existing problems such as lack of family functions, overlapping government responsibilities, unprofessional children's staff, lack of children's social organization, and insufficient attention to social workers, and then makes the theories of welfare pluralism and social governance as a guide, combined with the experience and findings of field investigations, from the perspective of giving play to the functions of the family, improving the role of the government, and developing social forces, puts forward specific opinions to promote the rescue and protection of children in distress, and responds to the current status of practice, which has certain practical significance.

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