

# Service-oriented Government Construction and Township Government Function Transformation

Taking Yangchang Town, Dafang County, Guizhou Province as an Example

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**Abstract**—Building a service-oriented government is the main reform orientation of Chinese government and an integral part of China's political civilization construction. Service-oriented government shall focus on service, that is, in essence, the main force of service-oriented government construction is the grassroots level government. Township government is the main executor to serve rural area and the main responsible party to solve the problem of agriculture, rural areas and farmers. Due to the realistic problems, China cannot develop the grassroots level government directly authorized by the masses, and the masses are unable to organize the supervision department with substantial power directly, which makes China's service-oriented government construction lacks actual power. Especially at the level of county and town, in the circumstances of no adjustment to administrative institutions, the so-called service-oriented government construction is usually convening the meeting, conveying the superior spirit and writing practical material, which makes the township government function transformation just a form. Taking Yangchang Town, Dafang County, Guizhou Province as an example, this paper describes the general problems in construction of service-oriented government at grassroots level. And provide the specific measures and ideas for township government function transformation under the background of service-oriented government in combination with the relevant professional knowledge, with the expectation to provide certain references to the researchers of relevant problems.

**Keywords**—service-oriented government; township government; functional transformation; Yangchang Town

## I. INTRODUCTION

After the foundation of China, our country established the control-oriented government structure which is suitable to the planned economy following the Soviet system, together with diplomatic decision-making errors and constant participation in and starting wars, the security environment in our country prior to 1980s is poor, and the administrative system in wartime established before the war of liberation was also preserved. After the reform and opening up, China gradually establishes the market economic system, so the migration of people and thinking activities are more and more difficult to control, especially the function characteristics of control-oriented government has already seriously restricted the

development of market economy. Although masses' strong desire to change the quality of life has promoted the rapid development of economy and the government is gradually delegating power in some sectors, it is undeniable that the phenomenon of "difficult to handle affairs" is still serious. The rural population accounts for 55% of the total population in our country, as the main server of rural economic development, the functions of township government directly determines the speed to solve the problems of "agriculture, rural areas and farmers".

Huang Qionгна (2014) argues that the key of China's service-oriented government construction lies in governments at grassroots level, especially the township government. At present, the township government is neither a service-oriented one, nor the control-oriented government. Agricultural tax exemption and farmers' out-migration for work make township government's control in the blank state. The development of voluntary poverty alleviation and spontaneous infrastructure construction by famers makes the township government function cannot be given to play and the government has no pressure to take the initiative to serve the farmers. Such situation makes the administrative staff in the county or township government relatively "leisure". Wen Guoqing (2014) argues that, if there is no relevant system design, service-oriented government cannot be established through theoretical propaganda and index evaluation. And the core of the system design is the legal design that relies on legal system. If the township government directly responsible for the villagers can be established relying on the constitution and on the basis of villager self-governance, then many current problems relating to grassroots level government can be solved. Such system design involves neither the problem of stability nor the system transformation, which can be achieved completed within the existing framework.

Based on the above understanding, this paper will consider the problems in township government's specific work and analyze the causes further from the perspective of service-oriented government in the process of research. Yangchang Town is located in Dafang County in Guizhou Province, because this town has serious problems of "agriculture, rural areas and farmers" with complex population structure, so it is the appropriate case study. This paper will take Yangchang

Town as an example, to analyze the general problems in China's township government function transformation, and discuss its main problem from the viewpoint of ideological understanding, social supervision, financial input as well as power and responsibility division, and provide the countermeasures which are feasible in terms of policy and operational in terms of implementation.

## II. INTRODUCTION TO THE THEORY OF SERVICE-ORIENTED GOVERNMENT

### A. *Meaning of a Service-oriented Government*

Service-oriented government is the government to serve the people, which can be described as serving the society in political language, and serving the masses in professional administrative language. It takes serving the society and the masses as the basic purpose for government existence, operation and development, and it is the government establish according the public's will under the guidance of social standard and citizen standard concept, in the framework of the whole social democratic order through legal procedures and marked by fair law enforcement, with the purpose of serving people and assuming the responsibility. It is also the concrete manifestation of the important thought of "three represents" and the scientific outlook on development in government management field.

### B. *Characteristics of Service-oriented Government*

1) *Governed by law*: Service-oriented government is an effective government governed by law. The law-based administration is a basic feature of modern government, which is the precondition to build a rational relationship between government and society, government and market as well as government and citizens. Chinese government, in terms of its nature, is established according to the principles of constitution and it operates in accordance with the principle of constitution. Constitution is the fundamental law in China, only by respecting the constitution and handling affairs in accordance with the principle of constitution can the government set up its authority in the whole society and establish social credibility of the government.

2) *Decentralized authority*: Service-oriented government is a government that has realized reasonable decentralization. Reasonable decentralization is the important content to perfect the government management and optimize the government structure, and the important means of building a service-oriented government. In general, the basic content of decentralization mainly includes: decentralization within government departments; power delegation between superior and inferior; authority division between government and social intermediary organizations; authority division between central government and local governments, etc. Rational decentralization is an important feature of modern government and an important means to improve the government's efficiency.

3) *Welfare supply*: Service-oriented government is a government to provide public products and services for the

whole society. The core of providing public products and services lies in the guidance of public finance and budget as well as fiscal transfer payment, to really pay attention to the ordinary people's interests, needs and desires. Use the money in the undertaking that can really benefit to the daily life of millions of people, and make people live and work in peace and contentment with ease feeling and happiness life. And really care about social vulnerable groups. Government must be determined to invest the money into the aspects of improving people's quality of life, and the compulsory education, public health, social welfare and social security, labor unemployment and training, environmental protection, public infrastructure, social security and order, etc. that are relating to numerous households.

## III. BRIEF INTRODUCTION OF YANGCHANG TOWN

Yangchang Town is located at southeast of Dafang County, about 14 kilometers away from the county, 156 km from Guiyang. The transportation of this town is very convenient, as Qingbi Highway runs through, and Guibi Highway, the high grade highway, runs straight through the whole territory, and there are ramps connecting to the township. The town governs 10 villages, namely Yangchang Village, Pingzhai Village, Tongjing Village, Chuanyan Village, Zhuzhonghe Village, Longjing Village, Pingba Village, Xintian Village, Longgong Village and Shibai Village, and 1 neighborhood committee. This town has a population of more than 26600 people, land area of 9596.67 hectares, per capita arable land area of 0.38 hectares and population density of 274 people/km<sup>2</sup>. It is mainly inhabited by the nationalities of Han, Yi, Bai, Miao and Mongol. There are no metal and mineral resources within this area, the underground rocks are mainly the carbonate and shale with serious "desertification". The topsoil is mainly the yellow soil, lime soil and purple soil, which is suitable for growing the Chinese herbal medicines such as gastrodia elata, pinellia, bletilla striata, platycodon root and honeysuckle. In order to solve the problems of agricultural industrial structure adjustment, the common people have begun to plant pinellia, gastrodia elata, and honeysuckle, and have achieved success. Now, the growing enthusiasm is very high, but hasn't formed the scale, belong to free planting and trading, and its potential has not been fully excavated.

## IV. VIEWING THE PROBLEMS IN TOWNSHIP SERVICE-ORIENTED GOVERNMENT CONSTRUCTION AND THE CAUSES FROM YANGCHANG TOWN

### A. *Problems Exist in Township Service-oriented Government Construction*

1) *Overstaffing of basic institution setting*: Though Yangchang Town is just a town, it has 12 main leading cadres, and main missions charged by the 12 leaders are seriously repeated. For example, the chairman of the township People's Congress mainly takes charge of agriculture and poverty alleviation, while deputy chief of the town is responsible for economic development and ecological construction. Considering Yangchang Town is a pure agricultural town

with heavy poverty alleviation pressure and serious ecological environment destruction, the two tasks can be charged totally by one leader. Some departments of Yangchang Town are needed to be set besides the overstaffing of leaders, which is waste of public resources, adding the financial burden. For example, ethnic minority group is of little value, as the nationality of Han and minorities live together, with little customs and habits of their own. So there is no national work needs to be done, and there is no need to set up this department.

2) *Weak service consciousness*: Yangchang Town is a poor town, and farmers' per capita net income is 5366 yuan, among which more than 3000 yuan is obtained by the immigrant laborers. It is very difficult to develop agriculture, and there is nothing to be relied on for industrial development. The farmers' life has been changed just a little for a long time, and there is no change in rural landscape, so the problem of "agriculture, rural areas and farmers" is still serious. Before 2000, the farmers always grow the corn with lower productivity and poor earnings. Afterwards, farmers spontaneously try to grow the Chinese herbal medicines such as pinellia ternata and gastrodia elata, and have achieved good effects. The government didn't intervene during the whole process. It is the main reason why Chinese herbal medicine of Yangchang Town has not realized the market-oriented management, revealing the weak service consciousness of the government.

3) *Unscientific public goods distribution*: 97% of the population of Yangchang Town is concentrated in countryside, and there are only 3% of the people having rural household registration. But most of Yangchang Town's public resources are invested into Yangchang Village and the surroundings, and the other nine villages have poor infrastructure, so public resources are not divided reasonably. Yangchang Village has four well-equipped clinics, but the clinics in other villages can only provide medicines.

4) *The phenomenon of "difficult to handle affairs" still exists*: Through field visits, the phenomenon of "difficult access, bad looks, unpleasant words and difficult affairs handling" still exists to a certain extent. The author visited the human resources office of Yangchang Town during the period of investigation at weekends, there was no personnel providing guidance, and no relevant leaders were on duty. The guard known nothing about the situation, and asked the author to come on Monday. In addition, according to the information, villagers of Yangchang Town reported that they ask relevant leaders to sign for the application of loan, but the leaders shifted the responsibility, and the loan was not approved ultimately.

#### B. Causes of the Problems of Township Service-oriented Government Construction

1) *Misunderstanding of ideological understanding*: At present, there is only general idea regarding how to carry out the construction of grassroots service-oriented government

and lack of system design. Yangchang Town is a reflection of such situation. Part of the township cadres have misunderstanding in terms of ideological understanding, as they think service-oriented government is to serve the people, and there is no difference with that of before, so they didn't adjust their work methods. Some regions launch the measures facilitating and beneficial to the people, thinking they are the service-oriented government, but actually, there is no change in function.

2) *Lack of social supervision mechanism*: Yangchang town has no effective social supervision system, which makes the administrative staff have strong sense of responsibility toward superior, and have weak consciousness to the inferior. Currently, the social supervision department of Yangchang Town is only the township people's congress. People's congress and government are two brands of one same group; as a result, the effective supervision among them is almost impossible to be realized.

3) *Township finance facing financial stress*: The main reason of public resource allocation problems in China's township government is the financial stress. Compared to the county level, the township government has no taxation power, but township government is responsible for almost all the rural infrastructure construction, which makes the township government have tight financial expenditure for a long time, and the government is difficult to gain great development.

4) *Unclear division of authority and responsibility*: The cause of the phenomenon of difficult to handle affairs is the unclear division of authority and responsibility. In Yangchang Town, for example, the rural poverty alleviation, economy and ecological environment protection are actually belong to one kind of work, but it is charged by three leaders and three sets of institutions, which has not only increased the institution intensity, but also made it hard for work collaboration, emerging the problem of one even solved by three departments.

### V. COUNTERMEASURES FOR THE TRANSFORMING TOWNSHIP GOVERNMENT TO A SERVICE-ORIENTED ONE

#### A. Improve the Ideological Understanding of Grassroots Public Officials

Although the requirement of building a service-oriented government has been issued for many years, and the service-oriented government is also one of the important contents in the annual government work report, the administrative institutions in our country, especially the administrative institutions at grassroots level, have no clear thought about what is service-oriented government, how to build service-oriented government and which functions are needed to be made in terms of function.

- The township government is bounded by system to the smallest degree, so it can conduct system reform freely. The "three groups" may be abandoned to establish just one group in terms of government institution setting.

And the highly repeated functions of Party committee and the township government can be merged.

- The township government's main job is to service the country, so the reform shall be made on function, for example, remove part of the urban functional department. Take Yangchang Town as an example, although there are only less than 3% of non-agricultural population, there is still an urban endowment insurance office, which is of little value in terms of function. It is the core for township government function transformation to close to the rural works in terms of function.

#### *B. Establish and Perfect the Social Supervision System*

From the point of reality, the internal supervision system of government is difficult to change a lot. Social supervision system must be established to realize effective supervision. Although rural grassroots works are trivial, they usually do not involve in the matter of stability, and it is relatively simple to adopt collective vote on important matters. We can follow the example of Japan to establish the social supervision system directly formed by farmers. First of all, set up farmers' autonomous committee, and select one representative from every 20 neighboring families, with a maximum of ten representatives in each village. The representative has the right of public service application and the accountability power, to make scoring about the grassroots administrative staff's performance, with the results to be recorded in the annual assessment, and eliminate at least one grassroots administrative staff each year.

#### *C. Increase Rural Public Products Supply*

The unreasonable public resources allocation between urban and rural areas has been discussed for a long time, but there are very few concrete operation suggestions. There are various reasons for such phenomenon, but the financial stress of township government is one of the main reasons. There is no need to carry out tax reform to solve this problem, as a flexible budget system can alleviate effectively. First of all, the township government shall have the power to develop budget independently. The budget shall not like that at county or city level only with the major items, but it shall specific to the place, time and project. The government at county or city level shall establish the independent acceptance group to check and accept budget implementation. In this way, the township government's enthusiasm can be improved, and can ensure the funds to be used safely.

#### *D. Scientific Division of Power and Responsibilities*

It can be seen from the example of Yangchang Town that, problems exist in township government's division of power and responsibility, which have affected their own functional transformation. A lot of foreign advanced experience can be referred to regarding these problems. First of all, China can refer to the French experience, to set up only the grassroots service station for the government at township level, such as the service stations of agricultural technology, market development and life service stations without setting up the administrative agencies. As for politics, such as people's

congress election can be charged directly by the government at county or city level. In addition, China also can draw lessons from the experience of Japan, to determine the power and responsibility according to population distribution in the township government. For example, in the problems with prominent education problems, the township education management department shall conduct field office at this place, and shall not go to the next place until the problems are resolved. Cancel the fixed working premise, and back to the government at county level after the problems are resolved.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This paper discusses the problems in township government function transformation under the requirement of service-oriented government, and analyzes the problems in township government function transformation in detail taking Yangchang Town as an example, and has provided the specific countermeasures. The paper holds the opinion that, in order to solve the problems in township government on service-oriented government construction, the original institutions need to be changed, and establish independent social supervision system, obtain the financial power, and divide the power and responsibility reasonably. Looking forward to the future construction of political civilization in China, we have reason to believe that, under the strong leadership of the Party, we will achieve great achievement.

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