Research on the Application and Experience of Policy Tools in China's Grassroots Governance since the Reform and Opening-up

--Taking Zhuanglang County of Gansu Province as an example

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Abstract. This paper takes 376 policy texts issued by Zhuanglang County government from 1979-2022 as the research object, and uses content analysis to sort out the use of policy tools and the history of changes in the process of grassroots governance in Zhuanglang County after reform and opening up. In terms of the types of approaches, the use of coercive tools, hybrid tools and voluntary tools in grassroots governance is comprehensive, but there is an imbalance in the use of policy tools in stages: overflow of coercive tools and lack of hybrid and voluntary tools; the types of policy tools tend to be concentrated and lack of innovation; and insufficient nesting and synergy among policy tools. In terms of evolutionary logic, the overall shift from confrontational to cooperative instruments follows a gradual contraction of coercive and confrontational elements and a steady expansion of flexible and synergistic elements. Among them, the development of voluntary policy tools is highly valued, and the participation of common subjects in policy networks becomes a new trend in grassroots social governance. In addition, through the analysis of the historical stages of policy tools, with the help of the theory of institutional change and the theory of synergetic governance, this paper summarizes the experience of the use of policy tools: paying attention to the flexibility and diversity of the use of policy tools; Pay attention to the innovation of policy tools and establish dynamic adjustment mechanism; Adhere to the logic of gradualism and the principle of bounded rationality. "History, reality and future are interlinked". The summary of experience is to better look forward to the future. We should adhere to the pertinence, comprehensiveness and synergy of the use of policy tools to achieve the modernization of grass-roots governance.

Keywords: grassroots governance; policy tools; policy networks.

1. Introduction

Reform and opening up not only promoted rapid economic development and a substantial improvement in people's living standards, but also released the economic, political and social rights repressed in the era of planned economy, stimulated the diversified interest demands of society, led to the differentiation of social classes, and formed a new pattern of social interest relations. At present, Chinese society has entered a period of transformation, gradually moving towards diversification, differentiation, discretization and complexity. In the transition period, it is necessary to establish economic, administrative and social systems commensurate with social development. Once institutional innovation lags behind economic development, it will produce institutional constraints, affect economic development, and bring social contradictions and conflicts. The contradictions and conflicts caused by social problems often settle in the grassroots society and induce various incidents, causing risks to local social stability. In accordance with the principle of territorial management, under the pressure of stabilizing and resolving contradictions, grass-roots governments are bound to seek a variety of feasible action strategies and choose a variety of governance policy tools to cope with the increasingly complex social environment and respond to diversified interest demands. Under the current administrative system, how to choose the social governance policy tools of the grass-roots government? What is the legitimacy standard to evaluate the logic of the government's social governance action? How to respond to conflicting interests?

These questions have become the questions that the grass-roots government must answer in the practice of social governance during the period of state-society readjustment. The solution to the social problems faced by the governance practice of the grass-roots government in the transition period is to realize the modernization of the grass-roots governance, which depends on the reform of the governance mode of the grass-roots government, and the improvement of the governance mode must be realized by introducing new government tools or modern public management technology. Because, "means innovation is a prerequisite for good governance".

2. Research status of policy instruments in grassroots governance

2.1 The theoretical view of instrumentalism

2.1.1 advantage

Instrumentalism pays attention to the research on the characteristics and attributes of policy instruments, and is committed to finding out universal principles and characteristics through the analysis of policy instruments, hoping to form a scientific theory of policy instruments through empirical research and scientific interpretation . Instrumentalism believes that the characteristics of policy instruments themselves determine the effect of policies, that the failure of policy implementation or the poor effect of policies is caused by the unreasonable selection of policy instruments and their own defects, and that the reasonable selection of policy instruments can "revive policies from the dead", which implies the concept of instrumentalism. The defect of instrumentalism lies in the neglect of policy environment factors. Policy implementation is confronted with a dynamic, complex and integrated social environment system. Policy success and failure are affected by a variety of policy environment factors, one of which is the factor of policy instrument itself. Instrumentalism overstates the role of policy instruments, overgeneralizes them, and lacks an overall systematic analysis.

2.1.2 shortcomings

The defect of instrumentalism lies in the neglect of policy environment factors. Policy implementation is confronted with a dynamic, complex and integrated social environment system. Policy success and failure are affected by a variety of policy environment factors, one of which is the factor of policy instrument itself. Instrumentalism overstates the role of policy instruments, overgeneralizes them, and lacks an overall systematic analysis.

2.2 The theoretical view of proceduralism.

2.2.1 advantage

Proceduralism adheres to the idea of gradualism and adaptation. It holds that the choice of policy tools cannot be made overnight, and we should try to find policy tools to solve social problems in the constantly developing social environment[1].

2.2.2 shortcomings

Proceduralism believes that policy instruments should be constantly revised and adjusted according to different circumstances, and there is a great difference among policy instruments, so it is difficult for some policy instruments to have universal adaptability. Thus, proceduralists emphasize the repetitive process of the development of policy instruments rather than the characteristics of policy instruments

2.3 The theory of contingency.

Different from instrumentalism, which attaches importance to the characteristics of policy instruments, contingency doctrine focuses on the combination of policy instruments and policy environment . According to the contingency doctrine, the process of using policy instruments will be affected by the environment of policy instruments, and there is a multi-variable functional

relationship between the choice of policy instruments and the environment of policy implementation. The nature of the problem, policy objectives, target groups and other policy tools will have an impact on the application process of policy tools. According to different variables, policy tools should be selected flexibly. In addition, contingency theory believes that the choice of policy instruments is to meet the needs of social problems. Therefore, the emphasis should be placed on identifying specific needs to solve problems, and on this basis, selecting policy tools that match social problems.

2.4 The theoretical viewpoint of constructivism.

Constructivism goes further than the study of contingentialism. Its research gradually shifts from objective to subjective, and weakens the study of the "instrumental" characteristics of policy instruments to the study of their subjective significance. Constructivism theory holds that it is necessary to have an in-depth understanding of the subjective meaning of policy tools, their symbolic and ethical connotations, and their released value characteristics. Policy tools represent a constructed form of practice, and the legitimacy of which will be constantly constructed and reconstructed in practice [2]. Actors need to adapt their behaviors to the environment. The choice of tools is regarded as a match between tools and environment. When environmental incentives and policy tools change, the institutional structure will also change.

3.   Experience in the application of policy tools

The main body of the application of policy tools is government agencies, and the governance concept, thinking mode and value orientation of government agencies will have a profound impact on the application and development of policy tools. To some extent, it can be said that government agencies dominate the direction and path of the evolution of policy tools. Since the reform and opening up, with the development of market economic system and the change of government governance concept, the government has realized that to establish a socialist market economic system, the market must play a decisive role in the allocation of resources. Therefore, in the process of grassroots governance, the government extensively applies market-oriented mechanisms to provide public services, gives play to the role of non-profit organizations, and emphasizes the establishment of voluntary participation mechanisms and self-serving mechanisms. It is the trend of social development that policy tools are changing from compulsory to voluntary and mixed. More importantly, the government takes the initiative to grasp the trend, innovate policy tools, and realize the transformation of the grass-roots governance system[2].

With the development of society into the era of information and intelligence, the ways and means of government to deal with the problems of grassroots governance reflect the distinctive characteristics of The Times. For example, in social affairs, the government attaches importance to strengthening the information communication mechanism and administrative guidance, and attaches importance to the disclosure of administrative information. Non-coercive tools such as information communication mechanism and administrative openness can adapt to the trend of flat organizational structure and decentralization of rights, and liberate governance objects and the government itself from the one-way order and obedience relationship, which highlights the respect for human rights and the pursuit of administrative democracy[3]. In the information age, flexible governance tools can effectively resolve conflicts, reduce friction and conflicts, enhance cooperation and trust, and better adapt to the complex and changing grassroots environment, so they are widely welcomed.

In the process of China's grassroots governance, the development and changes of policy tools are not only influenced by technological factors that conform to the changing times, such as big data, cloud computing and blockchain, but also by China's unique political system. Both rural and village organizations and urban communities are the basic units of grassroots governance and important platforms for the Party to lead social development. To strengthen the leadership of the Party comprehensively in grassroots governance is not only the need to implement the spirit of the central

Committee, but also an effective starting point for grassroots social governance[4]. Historical experience shows that in the process of urban community governance, adhere to the core leadership of the Communist Party of China, build a "concentric circle" grassroots governance model, give play to the leading role of the Party building thought, and lead all parties to full cooperation and coordinated development. It can not only ensure the effective governance of urban communities, but also ensure the people's subjectivity in grassroots governance. "Party building guidance" has become an important institutional arrangement to promote multi-subject collaborative governance and enhance the overall governance capacity of the grass-roots governance system[5]. It has important strategic significance for promoting the reform of service-oriented government, leading the orderly development of community-level social public services, and realizing the full coverage of the grass-roots "governance network". Since the 18th CPC National Congress, special attention has been paid to Party building, giving full play to the leading role of Party organizations, which are policy tools with Chinese characteristics.

4. Summary

In the long-term policy practice, the grass-roots government has developed many correct and effective policy tools, and gradually formed a set of experience system about the application of policy tools in the process of grass-roots governance. The 13th National Congress of the Communist Party of China put forward the construction of socialist market economy system and started the course of the transformation of economic system. In the new stage of development, China still adheres to the principle of seeking truth from facts, proceeding from reality and progressing step by step, gradually forming a policy making model of "crossing the river by feeling for stones", which lays an ideological foundation for the innovative development of policy tools. The government has transplanted the experience of policymaking to the selection and application of policy tools.

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