On the Optimization Path of Public Service Performance Evaluation Index System of Hangzhou Government

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Abstract. This paper analyzes the development concepts of the performance evaluation index system of Hangzhou Government based on the optimization model of Hangzhou’s government performance evaluation index system that emphasizes both on "Democracy and Standards". The paper can be divided into two parts, the first is to promote the standardization level of the performance evaluation index system, and the second is to stress on the improvements of standardization level of the performance evaluation index system.

Performance evaluation of government public services is the core of government management, and it plays an extremely important role in improving administrative efficiency, reducing administrative costs and improving the capacity of government management and level of public service. The so-called government performance assessment refers to the government's evaluation of reasonableness of investment of resources, the whole process, the subjective efforts of public servants and the final outcomes.

Affected by globalization and the information technology revolution since the 1990s, China has introduced the concept of performance evaluation into the government reform process to improve the level of government services, and to inject fresh momentum to the promotion the construction of a service-oriented government. In this context, Hangzhou has started its explorations and practices in government performance evaluation since in 1992 and has gradually established and improved the government performance evaluation system with "democracy and standard" as the main characteristic. This article attempts to summarize and discuss the characteristic achievements of Hangzhou government's performance evaluation system. Specifically, two paths are now available for the optimization of the performance of Hangzhou government's public service evaluation index:

Gradually promote the democratization process of design of performance evaluation indexes

In the context of social transformation, improved level of social modernization and awakening civic consciousness of the masses, people are expecting higher level public administration and public services. Hangzhou government’s performance evaluation index system also fully embodies democratization.

Ensure smooth flow of transmission of performance evaluation information

The smooth flow of transmission of performance evaluation information reflects the degree of transparency in government administration. To achieve this goal, Hangzhou Municipal Government continues to improve the bi-direction channel of information disclosure and collection from the people, specifically:
First, it focuses on comprehensively and objectively discloses information about public performance. Access to government information on performance evaluation is the fundamental requirement to promote the democratization of government performance evaluation and the precondition of the citizens’ participation in index system design and optimization.

Only citizens fully understand the basis of evaluation activities, they can have the choice to safeguard their own interests, otherwise their cognition and thought will be restricted and the participation in evaluation becomes unrealistic.

Any possible disclosure of government management will not only help citizens oversee the process but also help the government communicate with citizens in order to stimulate the active participation of citizens in the evaluation of the government's public service.

Second, it focuses on accurately and effectively collecting public proposals. Hangzhou Municipal Government extensively collects documents related to public services and information on all aspects, and especially the collection and treatment of proposals plays an important role in improving performance evaluation. Proposals from the general public are not only an important source of information in assessing the government's public service performance, but also the key element to optimize the government's performance evaluation index system. Information processing necessitates the refinement and screening of information as well its accuracy and timeliness. Citizen's advice presented are often varying in quality, enormous in number, and many of them are of no effect.

So scientific methods should be followed to rapidly filter and categorize effective information, and proposals that help to improve indexes will be summarized in this process.

**Establishment and perfection of public satisfaction indicators**

Public satisfaction serves as an important dimension in the government performance evaluation system of Hangzhou and this is a key step in the process of government democratization. This indicates that the public have realized that the essence of government management is service rather than administration. Customer-oriented value is an inevitable requirement of building a service-oriented government and the public have the final say on the performance objectives of public service and their achievements. The assessment of public satisfaction deserves due attention in government public performance evaluation. Communication with the general public should be made sufficiently prior to the establishment of government public service performance evaluation which should no longer be unilaterally determined by the government. Although the index system mentioned in this research has included public satisfaction as an integral part, the design of public satisfaction indexes is still insufficient since the evaluation of government performance based on public satisfaction is still in the initial stage of exploration. Coupled with the bureaucracies among government officials and poor performance in the transmission of information and low public participation, evaluation based on public satisfaction will not be smoothly carried out in its implementation process. That is why we need in the future to continue to improve indicators of public satisfaction in the course of implementation. More scientific approaches should be introduced to improve the public satisfaction evaluation index system, and to constantly increase its proportion within a reasonable extent.

The construction of a scientific, effective and public satisfaction based evaluation index system is the prerequisite for an accurate and objective assessment of the performance of public service. In designing indicators, neutral feedback on establishment of indicators should be raised. Authoritative intermediary organizations or experts can be entrusted to so that the
indexing system may exclude the impact of human factors, and this will be more acceptable to administrative staff and the public. In addition, the government may also collect suggestions from the public on the design of the evaluation indexes. The government, in order to more accurately understand the will of the people, can establish a regular mechanism of public opinion polls since a precise analysis of data is more pertinent to the development of public satisfaction indexes. Performance legislation and system construction are also effective ways to improve public satisfaction indexes.

First, it is necessary to clarify the legal status of indexes of public satisfaction, so that it will become a fundamental composition of the system of performance evaluation of the public service index, rather than a formal performance project. Second, the promulgation of relevant systems and standards are needed to make detailed arrangements for the design, pilot, and improvement process. Finally, it should be ensured that the satisfaction indexes can be applied in practice and the results of the evaluation must also be taken seriously.

**Channels to extend citizens’ participation in index design**

The people-oriented value in the public service performance evaluation of Hangzhou Municipal Government requires that public service performance evaluation should be targeted on the results expected by citizens and that performance evaluation should be an effective mechanism in promoting the construction of a service-oriented government.

We need to change the previous government-centered evaluation mode to achieve the goal since the general public should not only be a receiver, they should participate broadly in in government public service performance evaluation, of which the participation in the development of the evaluation index system is an important pattern of manifestation of citizens’ dominant position in public service performance evaluation.

The participation of citizens in the design of index system, which is both a technical problem of instrumental rationality and a cognitive problem of value rationality, requires citizen participation in technical feasibility while formalism should be avoided at the same time. According to past experience of citizen participation in governance, major challenges citizens face in their participation in index design are the restrictions on cost and effectiveness. Approaches with good effects brings greater pressure on financial and human resource costs, however, lowly priced approaches are usually counterproductive. The author thinks that we should gradually broaden the channels for citizen participation in the design of indexes and promote a variety of complementary channels. For example, internet based participation is characteristic of easy statistics, simplicity, rapidness, and low cost, but the viewpoints are lack of representation, subjective and biased. So through questionnaire surveys reflect public opinions, the cost is expensive and there will be some requirements on participants, so it is necessary to combine the two so as to exploit the advantages to the full.

**Emphasis on improving standardization of performance evaluation index system**

Government performance evaluation method originally comes from enterprise management, but the actual effect is far inferior, a very important reason is that the government only takes advantage of the form of external performance evaluation and cannot really achieve the same level of standardization as business management. Standardization is based on the practical experience of repetitive things and gradually changes from technical specifications to behavioral specifications. Public service performance evaluation is a repetitive job and can be used for a standardized object.
Thanks to the efforts of the Hangzhou Municipal Government, some government agencies used as pilot units have introduced standardization as a new way of thinking in changing problematic traditional governance thought and administration. The standardization process of the public service performance evaluation index system is the process of formulating, implementing and revising the evaluation standard so as to optimize and deepen constantly. Standardization is a process to develop, execute and modify evaluation standards and to make them more perfect and optimized. Standardization is a new way to optimize the government public service performance evaluation index system.

**Establishment of a unified government public service standard system**

Development of public service scope and standards must be subject to scientific theory studies and be consistent with the value of performance evaluation and the current status of economic and social development. Co-ordination of the supply of government public service in different regions and at different levels is the key and difficult point of the development of a unified public service standard. Hangzhou Municipal Government clarifies plans for different periods and stages, guarantees implementation of service standards, and ensures continued improvements. Formulated standards need to cover all fields of government public service and single or incomplete indexes should be avoided. Also standards are expected to be scientific and practical so as to protect public services in a fair and orderly manner.

Hangzhou Municipal Government considers the development of standards from two perspectives, the first of which is the contents covered by government public service fields, including public education service, public medical service, social insurance, and public security. Corresponding standards should be developed for those categories before summary and conclusion to build an organic system that has a complete structure and close connection.

The second is to develop uniform standards by providing public service flows or operational procedures, including in terms of public service resource configuration, administrative staff, infrastructures, budgets and quality of public service.

Establishment of standards for all aspects of public service may help to regulate the specific service behaviors, effectively improve efficiency and effectiveness, and ensure high-quality public service quality.

Standardization of government public services is to determine the requirements the government is supposed to satisfy in the provision of public services, and that is the clearly defined objectives for public services.

It is in essence the combination of indexing system performance evaluation and performance target system to form the standard indexing system of performance evaluation by a standardized means to improve the indexing system.

"General standards" for public service have been developed with summary and refinement of government public service to realize conceptual innovation and transformation from extensive management to meticulous management and to promote the construction of government performance management.

Therefore, the establishment of unified system of government public service standards lays foundation for further standardization of public service performance evaluation.

**Cultivation a professional team for government performance standardization**

The standards established by Hangzhou Municipal Government’s public service department is strongly challenging and pioneering. Judging by current practice of standardization, the understanding by Hangzhou Municipal Government officials of the scope and depth of
standardization has been greatly improved, so that the government can complete the task of standardization and innovation.

In addition, Hangzhou Municipal Government attaches importance to the cultivation of performance standardization personnel, effective solving the shortage of government performance and professional standardization talents.

Lack of professional personnel is also an important factor affecting the performance of standardized practice. The prerequisite to determine the establishment of public service performance evaluation standardization system is to equip each person in public service sector with basic knowledge and quality on standardization. Therefore, standardization is after all a very technical job, for which government support should not be only reflected with money; instead, the government should introduce and cultivate a number of complex senior talents familiar with performance management and having mastered standardized professional knowledge. They will play their role in the early development of the standard system, standardized implementation stage and later improvements. With the promotion of public service performance evaluation standards, authorities will pay increasing attention to the training and introduction of standardized professionals, enhance the exchange of experiences with other sectors, and create a team of professional talents with a reasonable structure and matching performance evaluation. Obviously, talent based promotion is more powerful than capital investment, and they will play an important role in the future, and ensure that the cause of government's public performance evaluation standardization will continuously develop.

**Formation of standardized index system standardization work procedures**

Standardization of government public service performance evaluation index system is a complex job and it requires the government to formulate standardized work procedures in a strategic way.

First of all, we need to improve relevant laws and regulations. Improved legal system is an important guarantee for performance standardization. The government should take consideration of specific facts of the region in response of possible problems encountered in standardization work, sufficiently summary relevant policies, laws and regulations to ensure compliance.

Thorough investigation is needed for formulation and execution of standardization management regulations and methods, and improvements should be made as per actual conditions for unified management to prevent repeated management.

Secondly, we should form a complete performance standard management mechanism. Standardized management of government public service performance is to organize, coordinate and guide the construction and implementation of the whole standards.

It is suggested that the government should establish a performance index standardization strategy leadership team composed of representatives from various departments to formulate corresponding policies and measures and provide necessary financial support for performance standardization.

Finally, supervision over the implementation of public service standards should be strengthened. A complete standardization implementation monitoring mechanism should be set up to timely feedback problems occurred in the implementation of public service standards and to propose appropriate solutions.

At the same time, the government should regularly solicit opinions and suggestions from the public, experts and scholars, analyze and evaluate the effect of index standardization measures, and deeply optimize the index system.
Government public service performance evaluation index can strongly guide behaviors because it can clarify and strengthen the focus and direction of change of government work. If the evaluation index system itself is unreasonable, it will not only cannot accurately reflect the actual level of government work, but also mislead government behaviors, and even cause more adverse effects.

Therefore, it is extremely important to optimize the government public service performance evaluation index system since it is related to the establishment and improvement of a performance-oriented government management mechanism.

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References


