

Research on Optimization of Administrative Accountability System in China Based on the Perspective of Administrative Ecology

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Abstract: Accountability came from the West, and the accountability system was introduced in China in the early 20th century. After many years of development, the operation of administrative accountability in China has become institutionalized and standardized, but in developing localization, many inadequacies have gradually been revealed. Based on the theoretical analysis framework of administrative ecology, this paper discusses the optimization of administrative accountability. It analyzes and clarifies the current situation of China's administrative accountability system according to the three elements of social elements, communication network, and symbol system that can be applied to reality. There are some problems in China, such as weak consciousness of accountability subject, unclear object of accountability, limited content of accountability, and legal deficiencies. This research uses analysis and conclusions combined with five ecological factors of administrative ecology theory: economic factors, social factors, communication networks, symbolic systems, and political frameworks. In summary, it puts forward targeted opinions for optimizing China's administrative accountability system and promotes the improvement and development of the system.

1. Introduction

Administrative accountability originated in the West when it was limited to the internal administrative system, and the content of accountability was also limited. After the Renaissance, some famous thinkers such as Rousseau and Montesquieu began to think about reasonably restricting power as well as how to accountability. With the formation and development of large-scale capitalism in the West, citizen's awareness of their rights continues to increase. Accountability has become an effective way for citizens to protect their legitimate rights and is essential to the contemporary democratic system [1]. Western research on administrative accountability is wealthy. The background of this article is based on the administrative accountability system of China's situation, so the following contents mainly introduce China's administrative accountability.

"Accountability" was first introduced into the Chinese government in 2002. By implementing the senior official accountability system in Hong Kong, "administrative accountability" has gone into the views of governments at all levels of China. In 2003, the outbreak of SARS caused many Party and government leaders and cadres to be seriously held accountable for their poor behavior, which opened the prelude to the construction of China's administrative accountability system. Based on China's national conditions, Chinese scholars have a unique understanding of administrative accountability. Zhou Yayue pointed out two views on an administrative accountability system in domestic academic circles. First, some people think that the administrative accountability system is the system of the administrative system to its cadres, which belongs to single-subject accountability. Second, some experts think the administrative accountability system is public accountability to the government, which is allogeneic accountability [2]. Han put forward the definition of administrative accountability in "New Exploration in Establishing a Responsible Government—Administrative Accountability System." The administrative accountability system refers to the internal control and accountability system of existing administrative officials who fail to properly perform their statutory functions due

to intentional acts or negligence of competent agencies and the scope of their work, thereby affecting administrative order and efficiency, delaying administrative work or harming the legitimate rights and interests of administrative agencies and causing negative impacts and consequences for administrative agencies.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the administrative accountability system officially entered the public. After nearly 20 years of development, the administrative accountability system has become increasingly institutionalized, normalized, and scientific. With the rapid development of the Internet, the public's accountability means are more diverse, and the accountability results are more transparent, contributing to the construction and development of China's socialist democratic system. Nevertheless, China's administrative accountability system is in the legislative process, so there are many problems in the system construction, supporting measures, and implementation, which restrict the development of the system. The traditional perspective and approaches have been proven to have little effect. We try to figure out how to improve the construction of an administrative accountability system, how to make the administrative accountability system more suitable for the development of the times and the situation of society, and how to make administrative accountability a system that improves people's rights and enhances the credibility of administrative agencies. Therefore, we need a new perspective to examine China's administrative accountability system, which is the perspective of administrative ecology mentioned in this paper.

From the perspective of administrative ecology, analyzing China's administrative accountability system is the main innovation of this research. Administrative ecology, also known as ecological administration, was a relatively new theory in analyzing administrative systems in the 1960s and 1970s. It was introduced from the West to China later. The proposer of administrative ecology is the Western Scholar Fred Riggs. He believes that the administrative management model of human society is an extensive ecological system. Many factors inside and outside the system can affect administrative management, among which five factors are crucial, including economic factors, social factors, communication networks, symbolic systems, and political structures. Therefore, this paper takes the five factors of administrative ecology as the starting point to comprehensively analyze the problems existing in China's current administrative accountability system. In addition, this paper proposes targeted solutions from these five perspectives.

2. Analyze Existing Problems in China's Administrative Accountability System from the Perspective of Administrative Ecological Factors

China's administrative accountability system has achieved specific results after its development in recent years. There are some examples. First, the level of officials being held accountable has gradually increased. Second, the scope of accountability has been expanded to include not only local officials but also officials from other places. Third, the accountability time is shortened. However, we must realize that the administrative accountability system has not been developed in China for a long time and is strongly influenced by traditional culture. Therefore, China's administrative accountability system has many shortcomings. The following will analyze the shortcomings of China's administrative accountability system from the perspective of administrative ecology, based on three factors that can be applied to China's reality: social factors, communication networks, and symbol systems.

2.1 Social Factors-the Problem of Administrative Accountability Subject and Object

Social factors are generally social organizations, including but not limited to natural groups and social groups. Groups formed by blood ties are generally called natural groups, such as traditional big families. On the contrary, the collectives that gather together for interests are social groups, and churches and political parties are typical examples. From this perspective, we can find some problems with the subject and object of the administrative accountability system.

There are many administrative accountability subjects in China, including but not limited to the National People's Congress, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, social groups, and citizens.

Among them, the People's Congress lags on government accountability. Due to the professional characteristics of many deputies, they cannot correctly supervise government officials. The National People's Congress generally only initiates accountability procedures when officials make mistakes and are exposed. But at that time, the officials involved were all punished [3]. On the other hand, local government officials are elected by the National People's Congress, so the active accountability of deputies to the National People's Congress is also contrary to the traditional culture. The citizens are the most extensive accountability subjects in China. However, ordinary citizens are influenced by traditional culture. When problems arise, their first reaction is to look for social connections instead of holding them accountable. The result is that there are "accountability matters and no accountable actions."

The objects of administrative accountability in China are mainly local and central government officials. Many government officials have not yet developed the basic concept of "serving the people." Without serious consequences, officials tend to ignore demands for accountability. Although they bring accountability, they "turn big problems into small problems and small problems into nothing" to improve citizen functioning rather than holding officials accountable. As a result, the incident ended unresolved, and the punished officials immediately returned to serve in other departments without knowing the rule of law.

On the other hand, the "official-centered" mentality cultivated by China's two-thousand-year-old tradition is relatively severe, and the special relationship between the party and the government also significantly impacts the development of administrative accountability. Leaders at all levels of government are Party Secretaries. In this case, a system is still needed to determine whether the problem should be resolved through intra-party or administrative accountability. Therefore, the object of China's administrative responsibility needs to be clarified, and the critical phenomenon of accountability needs to be solved urgently.

2.2 Communication Network-the Problem of Administrative Accountability Content

The manifestation of the communication network mainly refers to the level of social civilization, people's use of language, and the ability of the media to spread. Information dissemination and communication is also the primary manifestation of the communication network. According to the communication network's research, the administrative accountability content can be determined.

The content of administrative accountability in China is gradually broader and more profound than that established, but there are still many problems. On the one hand, China's administrative accountability system attaches importance to major events and ignores other aspects. The administrative accountability system was established and developed from the root cause of large-scale public crisis events, including the SARS incident in 2003, the 'poisonous milk powder' in 2008, and the new coronavirus epidemic in 2020. They have promoted the emergence and development of accountability systems. On the other hand, it makes administrative accountability pay too much attention to major safety accidents or crisis events while ignoring the dereliction of duty of government staff and missing opportunities for accountability. The inaction of government staff is one of the neglected contents of accountability. Many administrative personnel choose not to act because they fear punishment. "Seek no merit, but no fault" is already the principle of these staff. Although this behavior will not cause significant faults or problems, it directly affects a department or entire administrative agency, significantly reducing work efficiency and seriously delaying local development. To sum up, it not only reduces the credibility of the government but also harms the people's happiness.

2.3 Symbol System-the Legal and Institutional Issues of Administrative Accountability

The symbol system includes political symbols such as political myths, laws, and decrees. From the perspective of the symbol system, we can see the problems existing in the legal and institutional mechanisms of China's administrative accountability system.

So far, China has mainly promulgated three types of administrative accountability legal documents.

The first is the text of national supervision and inspection regulations, generally formulated by the central government. The second is the regional supervision and inspection and legislative norms, and

the corresponding laws promulgated by different places according to the instructions of the superior government. The third is the accountability legal system on specific aspects such as environment and health. The continuous improvement of relevant laws and regulations has promoted the development of standardization of China's environmental administrative supervision. However, China must establish a reasonable, sound, institutionalized legal system [4]. The lack of laws and regulations has caused the need for a judicial basis for the administrative accountability system, which will encounter obstacles in the specific implementation process.

The main problem of China's administrative accountability at the macro level is the lack of legal protection. In contrast, the problem at the micro level lies in the need for more relevant inspection and supervision mechanisms in specific implementation. China's administrative accountability mechanism has low operability and needs to provide detailed provisions on many issues, leaving loopholes for officials to exploit. In addition, the lack of complete and adequate procedures makes the accountability results not publicized promptly. Many officials turned to other positions after being held accountable. After being held accountable, administrative accountability officers are quickly rehired, returning mysteriously, which seriously affects the reputation of the administrative accountability system. All this reflects flaws in the design and operation of the administrative accountability system [5]. Only by constantly strengthening the system's rigidity and promoting the legalization process can we use the deterrent force of the rule of law to ensure the implementation of the administrative accountability system and avoid the gap between law enforcement and justice.

3. Suggestions for Optimizing the Administrative Accountability System from the Perspective of Administrative Ecology

As a system closely related to the external environment, we should pay attention to the interaction with the external ecosystem during the operation of the administrative accountability system. Administrative ecology provides an ecological perspective for optimizing the administrative accountability system. From the perspective of the five ecological factors of administrative ecology, we put forward corresponding suggestions for optimizing China's administrative accountability system.

3.1 Economic Factors: The Development of the Socialist Market Economy with Chinese Characteristics

The economic foundation determines the superstructure, and the economic elements are also the essential elements that affect the administrative accountability system. From the perspective of administrative ecology, China is a 'transitional society' with a limited market economy model, and the market economy development needs to be improved. Therefore, in administrative activities, we consider both sides' actual situation and elements such as social status, family background, and interpersonal relationships. Many changes occur because of the social relations of the subject or object. In other words, "market" and "identity" work simultaneously, and the administrative accountability at this stage will not achieve the original purpose due to various problems. Therefore, we must unswervingly develop the socialist market economy. The more perfect the market economy, the smaller the impact of other factors on administrative accountability.

3.2 Social Factors: Mobilizing the Vitality of Various Types of Accountability Subjects

Social factors have a significant impact on the administrative accountability system. In the practice of China's administrative accountability from 2003 to 2006, among the 73 accountability incidents, there were 59 hierarchical accountability incidents. The initiators were superior party and government departments, accounting for 81%; the proportion of initiators of accountability being higher-level party and government departments accounted for 99% [6]. It shows that in the initial reality, the role of social groups and most people is still fragile. The leading agencies are party agencies and higher authorities. This will undoubtedly reduce the scale of accountability. Therefore, the government needs to streamline administration and delegate power, vigorously develop non-political organizations and other social groups, and give these social groups sufficient discourse power in politics and give full

play to their rights to mobilize the vitality of sectors of society and allow the whole society to supervise the operation of power.

3.3 Communication Network: Create a Good Channel of Communication

The quality of the communication network determines whether policymakers can know public opinions and formulate reasonable policies. Through the development of networked media, a certain degree of technical democracy has been achieved. Everyone has the right to speak; ordinary people can also disseminate information online. The cyber society is a communication network in all directions, and everyone is the node of the communication network. [7]. In addition, the creation of communication networks has an important impact on enriching and developing the channels and content of China's administrative accountability. First, we must build a new communication channel so that administrative accountability in the information age adapts to society's development. The government pays attention to public opinions online and comprehensively analyzes them. The best outcome is the emergence of reduced administrative accountability. Second, the government should pay attention to information sharing. People have paid much more attention to publicizing government information in recent years. For the information that can be publicized to the public, including the appointment and removal of officials, as well as the purpose of taxation and the salary of officials, the government should publicize it transparently. As a result, we can prevent government work from becoming a "black box" and improve centripetal force and engagement.

3.4 Symbol System: Launch a Complete Legal System and Accountability Procedures

The administrative accountability system in China does not have a complete macro-level symbology. There needs to be a reasonable and transparent legal system for administrative accountability. Most of the laws related to administrative accountability are in other kinds of laws, which leads to a series of problems, such as long processing time, less basis, and low effectiveness. Therefore, the State Council should issue a unified legal document on administrative accountability as soon as possible, and all localities should promulgate various regulatory documents according to the actual situation, coordinate between upper and lower levels, and then gradually form a complete legal system. Managers should clarify the power relationship between relevant accountability procedures and implementation. They standardize and clarify all aspects and processes of accountability. The state ensures that laws are to be followed during implementation, which can enhance accountability, strictly prevent wrongdoing, ensure correctness, and improve error tolerance and correction mechanisms.

3.5 Political Structure: Promote both Intra-Party Accountability and Administrative Accountability

From the perspective of administrative ecology, the main content of political structure is the relationship between politics and administration. Politics represents the decision of the policy, and administration represents the implementation of the policy. Due to China's national conditions, the boundaries between politics and administration are blurred and difficult to separate. Among them, the most apparent manifestation is the party and government relationship. The ruling party status of the Communist Party of China determines that the top leaders of governments at all levels are party secretaries. Therefore, when there is an incident, the accountability within the party is more, and the administrative accountability is less.

The advantage of accountability within the party is that it is launched quickly. When there is a problem, the higher party organization will hold the lower party organization accountable. However, the disadvantage is pronounced. Most of the accountability within the party has yet to be publicized in the end or ends up with nothing. Given the ruling party's stance, the opinions of government officials and other social groups do not matter. Therefore, China implements inner-party and administrative accountability, giving them equal attention. At the same time, we judge whether to carry out administrative accountability, which can significantly improve efficiency and ensure that accountability results are fair and open. In this way, China's party and government situation will become an advantage in promoting the development of an accountability system.

4. Conclusion

The administrative accountability system is an important part of socialist democratic politics, with great potential and prospects. The reasonable use of China's administrative ecological environment can promote the development of the administrative accountability system, enhance the government's credibility, and thereby build a harmonious society. Administrative ecology provides a reference, so we must learn and use it appropriately. At the same time, administrative ecology is a theoretical product of Western administrative management. We maintain the right attitude, absorb it selectively, and learn from it. What foreign administrations have abandoned is what we can learn from. What foreign countries advocate for administrative management may differ from China's situation. Adjust measures to suit local conditions, change over time, learn from each other, and seek the truth, in reality, to effectively apply administrative ecological theory to serve the country. One phoneme in China is "The tangerine is grown in Huainan and Huaibei. The fruits only have similarities but have a different taste." Therefore, we must also adjust the theory to suit the actual situation.

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