Research on the Construction of Government Performance Management System from a Standardization Perspective

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Abstract

With the continuous development of public management theory and the advancement of government governance modernization, government performance management has gradually become a crucial means to enhance administrative efficiency and optimize public service quality. However, China's current government performance management system still suffers from issues such as inconsistent standards, strong subjectivity in evaluation, and insufficient application of results. This paper, from the perspective of standardization, explores the construction path of a government performance management system, aiming to enhance its standardization and effectiveness by establishing a scientific, systematic, and operable standardized framework. The article first elaborates on the connotation and significance of government performance management, then analyzes the problems within the existing management system, and proposes the theoretical foundation and practical pathways for standardized construction. It aims to provide theoretical support and practical reference for the scientific and standardized development of government performance management in China.

Keywords: Standardization; Government Performance Management; Performance Evaluation; Governance System; Public Services

Competing Interests:

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

1.Introduction

Against the backdrop of global governance modernization, government performance management, as a vital tool for enhancing public sector efficiency and strengthening government credibility, has received significant attention from governments worldwide. Since the introduction of performance management concepts in China in the 1990s, local governments have successively undertaken performance evaluation practices, such as "Efficient Government Construction" and "Service-Oriented Government Creation." However, due to the lack of a unified standard system, significant variations exist across regions in aspects like indicator setting, evaluation methods, data collection, and result application, leading to poor comparability of results, insufficient credibility, and difficulties in genuinely fulfilling incentivizing and improvement functions. Standardization, as a critical tool in modern management, emphasizes enhancing the scientific nature and operability of management through unified norms. Introducing standardization concepts into government performance management helps construct a systematic, transparent, and replicable management framework, promoting the modernization of government governance capabilities. This paper, from a standardization perspective, explores the construction path of a government performance management system, aiming to provide theoretical support and practical guidance for the standardized and institutionalized development of government performance management in China.

2. The Connotation and Significance of Government Performance Management

Government performance management refers to a closed-loop management process wherein government agencies, during governance, scientifically set performance goals, systematically implement performance evaluations, promptly provide feedback on results, and continuously improve management behaviors and service processes based on evaluation information, aiming to comprehensively enhance public service quality and administrative operational efficiency. Its core philosophy is "result-oriented," breaking through the traditional administrative model that emphasizes input over output. It underscores the logical connection between resource input, management processes, and service output, focusing on the comprehensive measurement of policy implementation effects, public service efficacy,

and public satisfaction, thereby facilitating a profound transformation of government governance from "process control" to "result-based accountability"[1].

In the context of modern public management, government performance management is not merely a management tool but also a governance mechanism with profound and extensive significance. Firstly, it significantly enhances administrative efficiency. Through clear performance targets and assessment mechanisms, it pressures government departments to optimize organizational structures, streamline approval processes, and allocate resources rationally, effectively reducing functional overlaps and administrative redundancy, achieving "maximum output with minimum input." Secondly, performance management increases the transparency and accountability of government operations. The openness of the evaluation process and the traceability of results provide institutionalized channels for public supervision, making government actions more transparent and standardized, thereby enhancing government credibility and legitimacy. Thirdly, it vigorously promotes the construction of a service-oriented government. By incorporating indicators such as public satisfaction, service accessibility, and response speed into the performance evaluation system, it urges a shift in government functions from "management-oriented" to "service-oriented," truly realizing the people-centered development philosophy. Furthermore, government performance management provides a solid data foundation for scientific decision-making. Through the long-term accumulation and in-depth analysis of performance data, it can identify shortcomings and bottlenecks in policy implementation, allowing for timely adjustments in policy direction and resource allocation strategies, enhancing the foresight, precision, and adaptability of policy formulation. However, although government performance management demonstrates great potential in theory and practice, its actual effectiveness largely depends on the scientific, systematic, and standardized nature of the management system itself.

3. Problems in the Current Government Performance Management System

3.1 Lack of a unified standard system, resulting in poor comparability of evaluations

Currently, China lacks a nationally unified indicator system for government performance management. Significant differences exist across regions regarding the core content of performance evaluations, indicator weighting, and evaluation cycles. These variations are

closely related to local development stages and resource endowments. For instance, economically developed eastern regions often prioritize economic indicators like GDP growth rate, proportion of high-tech industries, and investment attraction amounts, aligning with their "high-quality development" positioning. Conversely, less developed central and western regions focus more on social and ecological indicators, such as consolidation of poverty alleviation achievements, coverage rate of basic public services, and (compliance rate) of ecological environmental protection, responding to urgent regional development needs. However, this "tailored-to-local-conditions" indicator setting also brings obvious drawbacks. On the one hand, evaluation results lack a basis for (horizontal comparison) across regions, making it difficult to establish a national performance evaluation benchmark[2]. For example, using "5% GDP growth" to measure the performance of developed and underdeveloped regions might be considered "below target" for the former but "exceeded target" for the latter. This discrepancy makes it challenging for the central government to accurately judge the actual performance capabilities of different local governments. On the other hand, fragmented indicators can weaken the integrity of performance management—some regions, to highlight "characteristic indicators," might neglect universal indicators like livelihood security and public safety, leading to "shortcomings" in government function fulfillment and disconnection from the overall goals of national governance.

3.2 Strong subjectivity in evaluation methods, lack of objectivity

In current government performance evaluations, qualitative assessments still dominate, with the application scope and depth of quantitative analysis being notably insufficient. Specific manifestations include: most evaluations rely on methods like expert reviews, leadership scoring, and inter-departmental mutual evaluations. For example, in a certain province's annual evaluation of municipal governments, qualitative indicators such as "comprehensive impression of the leadership team" and "smoothness of departmental collaboration" account for over 40% of the weight, with scoring criteria defined only by vague terms like "excellent, good, qualified," lacking specific behavioral anchors. This model is highly susceptible to human interference: firstly, phenomena like "favoritism scores" and "impression scores" are frequent. Some evaluation participants, due to departmental interests or interpersonal relationships, intentionally inflate or deflate scores. For instance, in a certain

county's inter-departmental evaluation, an unspoken rule of "you give me a high score, I'll give you a full score" existed, leading to a severe disconnect between evaluation results and actual work performance. Secondly, it breeds formalism. Some localities, to cater to the "preferences" of qualitative evaluation, focus energy on "packaging materials" and "presentation rhetoric" rather than substantive work improvement. For example, a municipal government, to improve its "expert review score," specifically organized a team to polish its presentation PPT but turned a blind eye to the delayed rectification of livelihood issues mentioned in the report.

3.3 Non-standardized data collection, weak information support

The scientific nature of performance evaluation highly depends on data quality. However, significant shortcomings remain in the collection and management of government performance data, hindering objective assessment. Firstly, data sources are dispersed, and statistical calibers are inconsistent. The same type of indicator might have different statistical standards across departments: for example, "new urban employment number" might be counted by the Human Resources and Social Security department as "number of signed labor contracts," while the Statistics department uses "new number of social insurance enrollees," with a potential data deviation of over 15%. This discrepancy requires repeated coordination of data sources during evaluation, even leading to "selectively using data favorable to oneself"[3]. Secondly, the timeliness and authenticity of data are questionable. Some grassroots units, due to limited IT capabilities, experience delays in data reporting. For instance, a township's "rural revitalization project progress" data is still manually reported monthly, causing a nearly one-month lag between collection at the municipal level and actual progress. More seriously, data fabrication exists in some areas to "meet targets." For example, a county, during the "air quality improvement" assessment, temporarily shut down surrounding enterprises to " rush to meet standards ," causing a disconnect between evaluation data and public perception. Thirdly, a data sharing mechanism is lacking. Severe data "silos" exist between departments. For instance, the Civil Affairs department's "low-income household information" and the Housing and Urban-Rural Development department's "affordable housing allocation information" cannot be shared, making it difficult to comprehensively assess the "coverage rate of housing security for low-income households," often relying only

on sample surveys[4].

3.4 Inadequate result application mechanism, limited incentive and constraint effects

The core value of performance evaluation lies in "using evaluation to promote improvement." However, the current connection between evaluation results and key government management processes is severely insufficient, leading to widespread phenomena of "evaluation without use" and "evaluation without improvement." From an incentive perspective, the linkage between performance results and cadre assessment and promotion is weak. Research in a certain province showed that only 32% of city and county governments incorporated performance evaluation results into the annual assessment of leading cadres, and the weight was generally lower than indicators like "Party building work" and "safety production," causing cadres to pay insufficient attention to performance management. From a constraint perspective, evaluation results are disconnected from resource allocation and policy adjustments. For example, a department ranked last for two consecutive years in "administrative approval efficiency" evaluation saw no impact on its subsequent budget allocation or staffing, making it difficult to pressure it into improvement. More notably, the phenomenon of "emphasizing evaluation, neglecting rectification" is common. Many localities conclude evaluations merely with "circulated praise/criticism," lacking targeted rectification plans[5]. For instance, a municipal government identified the issue of "cumbersome business startup procedures" in a "business environment evaluation" but failed to designate responsible departments or set rectification deadlines. Upon review six months later, the problem remained unresolved.

3.5 Insufficient public participation, weak social supervision

"People-centeredness" is a core principle of government performance management. However, public participation and influence in performance evaluation remain weak, failing to fully utilize social supervision. On the one hand, participation channels are single and formalistic . Public participation in most areas is limited to "annual satisfaction questionnaires," often containing general questions like "Are you satisfied with the work of the local government?" lacking targeted evaluation of specific policies or departments. For example, residents of a community reported "insufficient waste sorting facilities," but the

questionnaire had no relevant options, making it difficult for their opinions to enter the evaluation system. On the other hand, the weighting and feedback mechanisms for public opinions are lacking . In a certain prefecture-level city, the public satisfaction score accounted for only 10% of the overall evaluation weight, and the results were not publicly disclosed, so the public could not know if their opinions were adopted. More critically, there is a lack of an "opinion rectification feedback" link . For example, a county received concentrated feedback about "insufficient medicine in rural medical points" in a public survey, but after the evaluation, neither rectification measures were publicized nor progress explained to the public, leading to a gradual decline in public participation enthusiasm.

4. Theoretical foundation for constructing a standardized government performance management system

Standardization refers to activities aimed at achieving optimum order in a specific context by establishing common and repeated use rules for actual or potential problems. Its application in government management can significantly enhance consistency, comparability, and operability. Introducing standardization concepts into government performance management is supported by multiple theoretical foundations: Firstly, New Public Management theory emphasizes that governments should focus on efficiency, effectiveness, and customer orientation like enterprises. Standardization is a crucial means to achieve "result-oriented" management, ensuring clarity and measurability of government work objectives through establishing quantifiable performance indicator systems. Secondly, Total Quality Management (TQM) theory advocates improving service quality through standardized processes. Its emphasis on continuous improvement and customer satisfaction provides theoretical guidance for constructing a closed-loop performance management mechanism of "Plan-Do-Check-Act" (PDCA). Thirdly, ISO quality management systems (e.g., ISO 9001) provide mature standardized frameworks for organizational management. Government agencies can draw upon their core principles like "process approach," "continual improvement," and "leadership" to build a scientific and standardized performance management system. Finally, standardization hierarchy theory offers a structured approach for building a government performance management standard system. According to the national standard system framework, it can be divided into three levels: basic standards (e.g.,

terminology, data formats), general standards (e.g., evaluation processes, indicator frameworks), and specific standards (e.g., specific indicators for different sectors like education and healthcare), forming a systematic and differentiated standard system[6]. These theories collectively form the theoretical foundation for standardizing government performance management, providing crucial support for constructing a scientific and efficient performance management system.

5. Construction Path for a Standardized Government Performance Management System

Constructing a standardized government performance management system should follow the logical path of "top-level design — standard formulation — systematic implementation — continuous improvement," specifically including the following aspects:

5.1 Establish a unified performance management standard framework

Establish a unified government performance management standard framework to provide institutional basis and operational guidelines for performance management at all levels of government nationwide. This framework should be led by the central government or an authoritative national administrative body, coordinating various relevant departments to break the long-standing fragmented situation of "each acting its own way, standards vary" in performance management, and promote the formation of a nationally unified, standardized, and orderly performance governance pattern. The core of this framework lies in clarifying the standards for setting performance goals, namely following the SMART principle (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound)[7]. Simultaneously, the framework must classify performance indicators, covering economic, efficiency, effectiveness, equity, and public satisfaction categories, forming a comprehensive and unified indicator library to provide clear evaluation dimensions for all levels of government and departments. Furthermore, data collection and processing standards are indispensable. They require unifying data sources, statistical calibers, collection frequency, and quality requirements to ensure the authenticity, reliability, and consistency of evaluation data. Regarding evaluation methods, the framework should promote quantitative evaluation methods like Balanced Scorecard (BSC), Key Performance Indicators (KPI), Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA), etc., to reduce subjectivity and enhance the objectivity and accuracy of evaluations.

5.2 Construct a hierarchical performance indicator system

Based on the unified performance management standard framework, constructing a hierarchical and categorized performance indicator system is key to further refining and implementing performance management requirements. This indicator system must fully consider the responsibility characteristics of different levels of government (central, provincial, municipal, county) and different functional departments, ensuring that indicator settings align with their respective work priorities while facilitating horizontal comparison and vertical tracking. Performance indicators at the central government level should focus on strategic areas like macro-control, policy implementation, and national security, reflecting its overall guidance and regulation of national economic and social development. Local governments need to combine their actual situations, focusing on regional indicators like economic development, livelihood security, and environmental protection to promote comprehensive, coordinated, and sustainable local economic and social development. Functional departments, such as education departments focusing on core indicators like enrollment rates and teaching quality, and health departments focusing on key indicators like medical accessibility and patient satisfaction in healthcare, thereby promoting efficient operation and continuous improvement within each department[8]. By establishing a system combining "common indicators + specific indicators," it ensures comparability between different levels of government and departments while fully reflecting their differences, providing strong support for the precise implementation and continuous optimization of government performance management.

5.3 Promote the informatization construction of performance management

Currently, with the deepening construction of the digital government, traditional inefficient management modes like manual reporting, paper-based evaluation, and manual aggregation can no longer meet the requirements of performance management for data timeliness, accuracy, and systematicness. Therefore, it is imperative to accelerate the construction of a nationally unified government performance management information system, break down information barriers between all levels of government and functional departments, realize the automated collection, intelligent analysis, dynamic monitoring, and closed-loop feedback of performance data, and comprehensively enhance the technological empowerment

of performance management[9]. This system should integrate modern information technologies like big data, cloud computing, and artificial intelligence, possessing several core functions: Firstly, achieve automated data collection and intelligent cleaning. By interfacing with operational systems like finance, statistics, government services, and administrative approvals, it can capture relevant performance data in real-time and use algorithms to identify and correct outliers and missing values, ensuring data authenticity at the source, controllable processes, and credible results. Secondly, establish a dynamic monitoring mechanism for performance indicators. Set early warning thresholds for key indicators; once a trend deviating from goals or phased lag occurs, the system can automatically issue alerts, prompting relevant departments to intervene and rectify promptly, shifting from post-event evaluation to in-process monitoring. Thirdly, support multi-dimensional analysis and visualization display functions. Use charts, dashboards, heat maps, etc., to intuitively present the performance of various governments and departments, facilitating horizontal comparison and vertical tracking by decision-makers, enhancing the scientific nature of analysis and the agility of decision-making responses. Furthermore, the system should open channels for public participation and feedback, setting up functional modules like online evaluation, satisfaction surveys, and opinion solicitation to extensively gather genuine evaluations of government services from the public, businesses, and service recipients, making performance management truly reflect the "people-centered" value orientation. Through the deep application of informatization means , it can not only significantly reduce management costs and improve evaluation efficiency but also enhance the transparency and credibility of the performance process, promoting the transformation of government performance management from "experience-driven" to "data-driven," providing a solid technical foundation for constructing a scientific, precise, and intelligent governance system.

5.4 Improve the performance result application mechanism

Improve the application mechanism of performance results to truly exert the "baton" and "weather vane" role of performance management, avoiding the formalistic dilemma of "evaluation without use, assessment without effect." The ultimate value of performance evaluation lies not in the ranking itself but in whether the results can be effectively

transformed into incentive and constraint forces to promote the continuous optimization of government behavior. To this end, a systematic and institutionalized performance result application system should be established, deeply linking evaluation results with key administrative resource allocation and organizational management mechanisms[10].

Firstly, regarding budget allocation, a "performance budget" model should be implemented. Departmental performance evaluation results should serve as a crucial basis for financial fund distribution. Departments with excellent performance and high fund utilization efficiency should receive priority support and budget inclination, while units with chronically low performance and poor project execution should face appropriate budget cuts or suspension of funding, realizing a closed-loop budget management of "spending must ask for effectiveness, inefficiency must be accountable." Secondly, regarding cadre assessment and appointment, performance results should be incorporated into important evaluation systems for leading cadres, such as annual assessments, promotions, and commendations, strengthening the employment orientation of "merit leads to position," incentivizing civil servants to enhance their sense of responsibility and service efficiency, forming a virtuous competition mechanism where officials can be promoted or demoted based on performance[11]. Thirdly, at the policy adjustment level, a performance feedback-based policy optimization mechanism should be established. Through in-depth mining of evaluation data, identify blockages, difficulties, and failure points in policy implementation, timely adjust policy goals, optimize implementation paths, and improve supporting measures, enhancing policy adaptability and effectiveness, and promoting policy evolution from "formulation and issuance" to "continuous improvement." Finally, the function of publicizing performance results and social supervision must be strengthened. Authoritative, easy-to-understand government performance reports should be regularly released to the public. Key performance indicator achievements, existing problems, and rectification plans should be disclosed through official websites, government social media, press conferences, and other channels, proactively accepting supervision from the People's Congress, People's Political Consultative Conference, media, and the public, enhancing the transparency and responsiveness of government operations.

5.5 Strengthen public participation and social supervision

Strengthening public participation and social supervision is a crucial link in enhancing the credibility, responsiveness, and democratic legitimacy of evaluations, and is also a key path to realizing the "people-centered" governance philosophy. The ultimate criterion for judging government performance should not be limited to internal assessments and administrative logic but should reflect the lived experience of the people and overall societal satisfaction. Therefore, a performance governance mechanism involving multiple stakeholders must be established, breaking the limitation of traditional performance management being closed and internally operated by the government, and promoting a collaborative evaluation pattern led by the government with public participation, media supervision, and support from professional institutions[12].

Firstly, public satisfaction surveys should be conducted institutionalizedly. Through scientifically designed questionnaires, reasonable sample selection, and a combination of online and offline methods,extensively collect genuine public evaluations regarding government services, public policy implementation effects, and the on-the-ground situation of livelihood projects. Satisfaction indicators should be made a core component of the performance evaluation system with reasonable weighting, making the public's "sense of gain, happiness, and security" an important measure of government work effectiveness. Secondly, third-party evaluation institutions with professional capabilities and independent stances, such as university research teams, think tanks, and industry associations, should be actively introduced to undertake parts of performance evaluation tasks. They can play an objective, neutral, and professional role, especially in areas like policy evaluation, project post-evaluation, and analysis of cross-departmental collaborative effectiveness, effectively avoiding the problem of "being both referee and player" inherent in self-evaluation, significantly enhancing the fairness and authority of evaluation results. Simultaneously, the construction of a unified government performance information disclosure platform should be accelerated. Integrate information such as performance goals, monitoring data, evaluation reports, and rectification status from all levels and departments, open it for public query, support data visualization and multi-dimensional comparative analysis, making performance information transition from "internal knowledge" to "sunlight operation," effectively

safeguarding the public's right to know, participate, and supervise. Through institutionalized, normalized, and technologically enabled mechanisms for public participation and social supervision, not only can the transparency and responsiveness of government performance management be enhanced, but government departments can also be pressured to proactively improve services, optimize management, and enhance efficiency, truly achieving a profound shift from "government self-evaluation" to "social co-governance," injecting lasting momentum into the construction of an open, inclusive, and credible modern government governance system[13].

6.Conclusion

As an important tool for enhancing government governance efficacy, the standardization of government performance management is still in a process of continuous exploration and improvement. This paper attempts, from a standardization perspective, to provide a preliminary analysis of the problems existing in the current government performance management system and propose potential improvement paths, such as constructing a unified standard framework and a hierarchical indicator system. It must be pointed out that these discussions represent onlystage-specific reflections and require continuous adjustment and optimization based on specific local conditions in practical application. We believe that through continuous theoretical research and practical exploration, establishing a more scientific and standardized performance management system will contribute to enhancing government service quality and credibility. However, it is also necessary to clearly recognize that government performance management is a systematic project, whose perfection requires the joint efforts of the government, academia, and all sectors of society.

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