

Variable Analysis on Restriction the China's Citizen Participation in Public Policy Process

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Abstract – It is a dynamic process citizen participate in the public policy process, including the accepted mechanism, the policy-maker, the citizen itself. If one variable changes, the others will also change. Then, the whole situation will be changed. Therefore, analysis the restriction of the citizen participation on the process of public policy is significant for overcoming the constraint and completing the citizen participation on the process of the public policy.

Keywords –Process of public policy; Citizen Participation; variable relationship; Dependent variable

1. Background information

Citizen participation in public policy process is an action that the citizen or the organization directly or indirectly express personal or collective interest, willing and opinion about the public policy making, execute and effect according certain ways and procedure to influence the policy making, execute and effect. It is a most direct and important way that keeps the publicity of commonality agrees with the democratic rights of citizen, and makes the public policy respond to the will of the people effectiveness to realize the equitable distribution of the social resources. With the complication and diversification of modern society and the stronger trend of “the new citizen participation movement” in the world, citizen participation plays a more and more important role in the process of public policy, which has already, becomes an indispensable part of modern social governance and public policy. But the development of the object is hunting in the contradiction. It is imposable that the citizen participation is as right as rain. For China which is at the transformation period, there are numerous and complicated difficulty and hinder in the citizen participation in public policy process. The restriction variable of the citizen participation policy process is not only influenced by the independent variable but also the dependent variable.

As the decision subject, the government has its localization. The statesman and the official is an economic man in the process of making and carrying out the policy. The governmental agencies also are not an organization without interest. Due to the dilemma the government faces in the society life and the economic life, making it gain the private interests by the fame of gaining the society interests when making and executing public policy. Then, more and more people are wild about dealing with the failures of the government by governance mechanism. The ideal realm of the governance mechanism is good governance, which actually is the regression of the state power to society, and the process of which is a process of returning the power of government to the hands of the people.

According to the ways of cooperation and consult and partnership, the cooperative network will be built. John Clayton Thomas especially emphasizes the effect of the citizen participation. He thought that the citizen participation can not only enforce the officials' responses, but also improve the performance of the government public serve.

The whole process of the public policy is based on the citizen. Citizen participation in the public policy process not only enforces the public's understanding on the policy, but also let them know why the policy should be this. Then they will have more consciousness on the policy running and all of this could improve the public policy efficiency and benefit.

In order to realize and maintain the deserved interest and pursue the maximize of the benefit on the basis of the market economic law, the masses continuously express the personal benefit and demand to the policy system by the policy participation and participate in the distribution of the social interest positively, which can realize the government and citizen's benefit fusion as far as possible and make it beneficial for themselves. All of this will inevitably promote the development of the citizen participation in the public policy process.

In a word, the defect and insufficient the government exposed when it dealing with some complicated social affairs afford the possibility for the citizen participation in public policy process.

2. Setting up the frame and confirming the variable.

2.1 The set up of the analytical framework of citizen participation in the policy process.

When we analysis the variable relationship of the citizen participation in policy process, the first thing we should do is to build an analytical framework of the citizen participation in policy process. Because the framework can define the research scope and guide the analyst pay more attention to the main feature of the society and nature. According to refining the different variable and their relationship, the framework provides a

foundation for the exploration. The analyst framework of citizen participation in the policy process is based on the internal logical relation between the citizen participation and the policy process. The mechanism of action is that the citizen participation in the policy process and the

responses of the political system to the citizen participation.

According to the mechanism of the action of citizen participation in the policy process, the analysis framework as following:

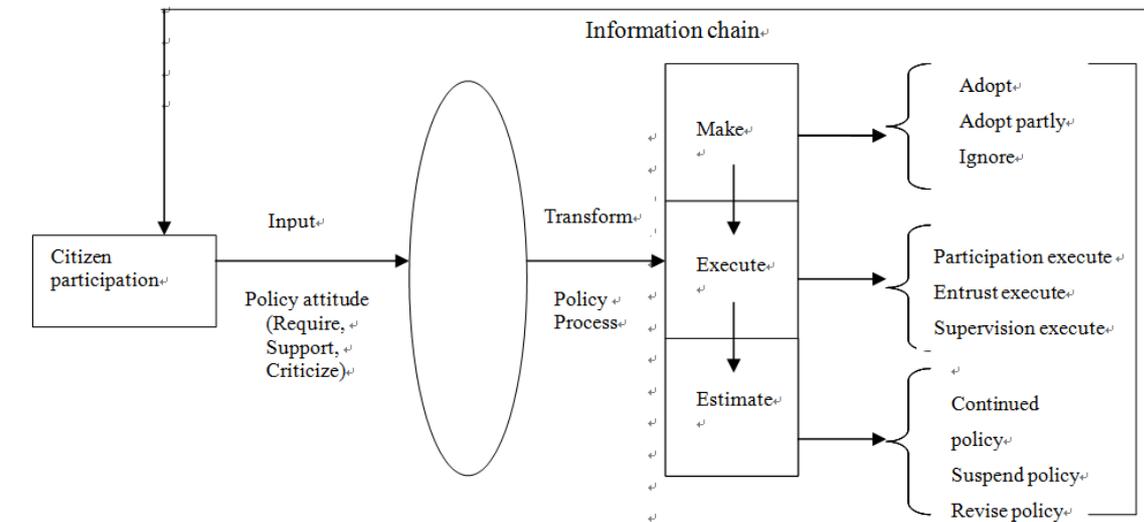


Figure1. The analysis framework of citizen participation in the policy process

2.2 The basic restriction variable of citizen participation in the policy process.

After building the analysis framework of the citizen participation in the policy process, all kinds of restrict variable and their relationship of the citizen participation in the making, executing, estimating of the policy have been become the focus we should pay attention to. Because we set the restriction of citizen participation in the policy process as the main analytical clue, the choice of the key variable is based on the related degree of this clue. In accordance with this standard, we can take the accepted mechanism, the policy maker and the citizen as the basic restriction variable of citizen participation in the policy process. The reason is expounded as follows:

2.2.1 The accepted mechanism is the basic element of the restriction of citizen participation in the policy process;

When the citizen take part in the public policy process, the making and executing of the public policy must have an effective system or model to keep the citizen participation effectively and reasonably. China’s citizen participation in the public process belongs to the start stage; therefore, there are many restrictions on it. Due to the lack of such system or model, the policy makers usually lose their head about the citizen participation.

First, appoint the participant. If the policy maker only accept a few citizens to participate the public policy decision-making process, the effect of the citizen participation will be restrict greatly. Correspondingly, if all of the community residents are accepted, it will have the same results. Consequently, a set of system and model should be made for the policy maker. According to it, the policy maker could select the exact civil to participate the public policy process.

Second, appoint the participation pathway. There are many ways of citizen participation in the public process. In most situation, the policy maker should decide how to use two or above participation ways, and also decide the participation opportunity.

Third, rule the participation scope. The policy maker usually cannot make sure the degree which the citizen participate in the public policy and the scope which decision-making power should be shared. An extreme situation is probably that, the citizen may be allowed to participate in the public policy process completely, and be allowed to exercise the substantial decision-making power, and the policy maker just in charge of the duty of consultant. Another extreme situation is probably that, the citizen may only be grant very limited power, which could not have the influence on the policy, and the decision-making power still belongs to the maker. As middle choice, the influence of the public decision-making power will be shared both by the policy maker and the public inevitably. But it is still an unsolved problem about the percentage each side should take.

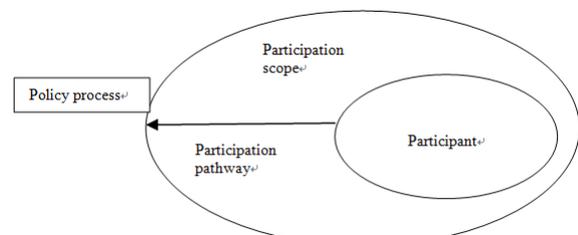


Figure2. The specific expression of the accepted mechanism’s restriction

2.2.2 the policy maker impose restrictions on the citizen participation in the policy process;

First is the unwillingness of the separation of powers. Before the reform and opening-up, China is the planned economy system which is reasonable for the

specific national conditions at that time. With the speed up of the reform and opening-up pace, China's policy environment has changed. Both of the diversification of the social benefits and the improvement of citizen participation consciousness require the change of traditional policy making model. But there are still some policy maker have not realize the change, they do not want to shared the decision-making power with citizen. Meanwhile, they think that shared the decision-making power with citizen will influence the quality of the policy and the stabilization of the social. Some policy makers have realized the necessity of the citizen participation, but they are afraid that the citizen participation will be harmful for their vested interests. So, they will obstruct the citizen participation.

Second is the lack of the new management skills. The citizen participation in the public policy process will make the job category of the policy maker and the management skill of the job take change. The policy maker will have more and more pressure from the outside environment. In order to solve these new problems, the policy maker should have some new management skills. But at the present stage, China's policy maker lacks of the new skills of solving the new problems about the citizen participation, which will make the citizen participation in the public policy process invalid.

2.2.3 Citizens play a key role of restrictions in the participation of the policy process;

The first is personal autonomy. The final purpose of citizens' participation is to realize the public interests, but because of the time and cost spend on the citizens' participation in public policy; the effectiveness of the problem solving will be influenced. In order to take the efficiency of citizens' participation in public policy as consideration, it is inevitable to keep the balance of participation system. The role of individual citizens is an important support for the participation system. As followers and participants, if every citizen follows highly positively or negatively in participation process, the balance of system will be hard to sustain. For this reason, the citizen participation must take the public's personal as autonomy as foundation, the efficiency and balance of system will be maintain. At present there are some progresses in the personal autonomy of China's citizen participation, but remains need to be further strengthened.

The second is the thinking and measure on the cost efficiency. For citizens, the people who participate in the policy process at the first time will face a lot of risk, especially when the policy involved in some officials' vested interests. Personal participation in public policy, will collect information about the policy question, put forward policy scheme, and assist the executive of the policy. All of these will take participants a lot of time and money cost. For Individuals, if the cost of participation beyond the expected returns, participants will choose to quit or not participate.

The third is the psychology of hitchhiking. There is an inevitable problems in the participation of public policy is hitchhiking. Some people keep the mentality that anyway there will be someone to solve the problems, and they do not want to participate by themselves. The characteristics of public property could not rule out these

people who don't fulfill their obligation and only enjoy their rights and interests. So citizens lack the power of participation in policy process. From the reality, the direct result of hitchhiking is the choice of doing nothing. Then, the legitimate rights and interests of public cannot get maintained.

The fourth is the lack of social responsibility. Social responsibility takes the emotion activity as the mental foundation. Citizens participate in the public policy in order to realize their ideal and belief or shoulder some career missions. It is a high level of participation in reason from the theory. Social responsibility is connected with the Individuals' own literacy and their relevant social class. With the development of the market economy and the further expanded of reform and open policy at the moment, All kinds of thoughts surged into the in our life, such as Money Talks, individualism, Hedonism and so on. It brings a lot of shock to our life, and makes citizens personal interest and the public interest conflict. Although we are enhance the citizens' ideological and political education continuously, especially the youth education, under the idea of practical and realistic market, the education effect is not obvious. The effect of the social responsibility cause is very low, and has a downward trend.

The fifth is the lack of experience. Because of the various reasons in social history and so on, the level of education and culture quality of Chinese citizens is generally low. Generally speaking, the citizens' education level is higher; the ability of participation is higher. Owing to the low cultural quality, narrow horizon, lacking of policy knowledge, the low level educated poorly understand the development of policy domestic and foreign. They can't carry out the obligations and exercise rights very good, even involving in the process of the policy. In addition, the ability of participation in public policy only cultivate in the practice of participation. However, Chinese citizens lacked participation exercise in a relatively long period. This makes Chinese citizens don't know how to affect the formulation and execution of the policy related to themselves interests according to legal procedure in the participation of the policy process.

3. Restrict variable relationship between the public participation and the policy process.

The three variables of limit citizen participation in the policy process are in a relationship of interdependence, mutual connection and interdependent. There are changing conditions between each other, and the causal change each other, that is one variable changes can cause other variable changes, and lead to the change of limited factors of citizen participation in the policy process. Each of them is not only the condition but also the cause of others. They act on the policy process commonly and influence the policy process deeply.

3.1 Acceptation mechanism.

On one hand, citizens participate in the policy progress through acceptance mechanism, expressing their own idea and wishes for important policy; On the other hand, only through acceptance mechanism, the public can enter into the supervision and the implementation of

the policy, to protect their own rights and interests, to supervise the wrong, disguised or not in the position of policy implementation behavior and executives, to ensure the policies are implemented correctly.

3.2 Policy makers.

The change of policy makers' concept determined the degree and range of citizen social participation and affect in the policy progress. The participation and limitation of citizens in the policy process depends largely on the government's attitude for citizen participation, cooperation between government and civil relations, as well as the two game levels. John Clayton Thomas thought that, public participation in the policy process must build the strong cooperation between the government and the citizens. As the general principle, if the participation of citizens did not firstly get the government leaders' agreement or recognition, the participation of citizens will not be introduced. That is to say, Leaders must be approved that the establishment of good relationship is the result of the citizen participation.

3.3 Citizens.

It makes for the citizens participation in the policy process to enhance the consciousness of participation. Influenced by the traditional political culture thought, a lot of citizens have the dependent psychology, lowly personality and yes-thought. The development of the market economy created all kinds of market subject, and strengthened the citizen's subject status and participation. More and more people showed strong interests and attention on the politic. The citizens began to participate in the policy process, and to reflect their own interest demand in the policy process to maintain their own rights and interests.

4. The restraining dependent variable of the public participation in the policy process.

The dependent variable is the variable which is changed with the external factors. The variable relationship conversion between the public and the policy process is not only influenced by the independent variable of restraining factor, but also the dependent variable of the restraining factor. The most important dependent variable of the public participation in the policy process is the restriction of the policy environment. They are mainly displaying in the following respects:

4.1 The socialist market economic development level is the important restraining dependent variable of the public participation in the policy process.

The accepted mechanism, the policy-maker and the public itself come about, develop, change in the socialist market economic environment, so the socialist market economic development level is the key constraint of the three variables. In the 1980s, with China's reform and openness, the reform which took the economic privatization, political democratization and social autonomy as orientation broken down the traditional situation that total state unified the whole country. The

relationship between state and social has changed. The public participation in the policy process also generates restriction with socialist market economic development level. With the socialist market economic development, the accepted mechanism, the policy-maker and the public itself of the public participation in the policy process will also take change. Although China is a socialist state which productivity level has improved largely, it will be and will be a long term in the preliminary stage of socialism which productivity levels are low. First is the restriction of material life, traffic and communication condition. The economy is the basic of the politic, and the economic basis determines the superstructure. There are a large quality of masses that is still in the impoverished situation or just live a life with just enough food and clothing. They could not get ample information about the participation of the public policy and make an effective discuss about the public policy. Second is the imbalance and insufficiency of the economic development. On the one hand, China's economic development is imbalance at present, which will make a negative effect on the development of the public participation in the policy process. On the other hand, because of the insufficiency of the economic development, the faultiness of the reform of the economic system and the existence of the feudal autocratic socialist ideology at a certain extent, it will inevitably make a negative effect on the political development especially the public's value. Consequently, the public participation in the policy process will be influenced.

4.2 Democratic culture mode also is the important restraining dependent variable of the public participation in the policy process.

According to Marxism, democracy is a political form based on the specific economic and benefit relationship which can guarantee the public political right realized equality. As a political form, the democracy takes the freedom and equality of the citizen power as the nuclear principle, takes the indirect democracy and direct democracy as the basic enforcement mode, and takes the rule of law as the practice condition and security. The development of the democratic culture mode could supply ample supporting resources for the three variable of the public participation in the policy process.

China has two thousand years history of the feudal autocratic rule, so the negative level of the traditional political culture and the long-term existence of the villagers' political culture type suppress the generation of the public's political consciousness, which produce psychological barriers in the contemporary Chinese citizens' participation in the public policy. Some of the masses still lack of the Change consciousness and independent personality. Sometimes they may conceive a participation requirement, but did not know whether should express and how to express. All of these have seriously blocked the Chinese citizen's participation in the policy process.

From the reform and open up till now, there are still a large quantity of social groups do not know what is the public participation, not to mention about the complete of the participation independently, which constraint the benign development of the China's public participation.

Democratic culture mode is the product of public awareness arousal and also the product of standardization of the government behavior. Hence, the ways of shaping a kind of political culture of public participation in the public policy process are to improve the citizens' consciousness of participation, improve the government's democratic consciousness, reduce the cost of public policy and improve the efficiency of public policy.

4.3 Social and political conditions are the key restraining dependent variable of the public participation in the policy process.

First of all, the political participation of the specific system is incomplete and the political participation of democratic operation mechanism and procedures has not formed. In the modern democratic state, citizen participation in politics is realized by a set of wholesome system. China has achieved remarkable results in the citizens' participation in political affair, such as the system of people's congresses, under the leadership of the communist party of China's multi-party cooperation and political consultation system, the system of community level self governance and so on. However, there is this or that biases in the specific measures in the system and implementing in the practice, which will seriously affect and prevent citizens into public policy process effectively and hold the initiative of the state management and as masters and will affect China's construction of democracy progressing smoothly. Only abolish these disadvantages and perfect the system, the high level of political participation and democratic political system will be generated.

In the next place, the reform of the political system lagged far behind the developed country, which blocked the citizens participation way. The complexity of the political life decided the reform way of the political system boosted gradually, which will lag behind the economic reform process. It is the most important influence factor of the public participation's normal development. With the continuous development of the reform and open up, the enthusiasm of China's citizen participation and the ability of participation have developed unprecedented as a whole. More and more social members germinate strong participation requirement. However, the hysteretic state of China's political restructuring and related aspects, could not adapt to the reform and opening up policy and the modernization construction of the complicated political situation.

According to the restricting variable relationship between the participation of citizens and the policy process, we can see that: The participation of citizens in the policy process is a complicated process. The accepted mechanism, the policy-maker and the public itself are the three restricting variable. Each of them is not only the condition but also the cause of others. They act on the policy process commonly and influence the policy process deeply. Meanwhile, under the drive of the socialist market economic development level, democratic culture mode and social and political conditions, the change rate of the three variables are not consistent. One variable will change or fast or slow. But the overall trend is that: the acceptance mechanism of the policy process,

the policy makers and the citizens are further perfecting; the restricting power of the public participation in the policy process will be smaller.

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