

Original Paper

The Formation Causes and Governance Strategies of Digital Formalism in Township Government from the Perspective of Policy Implementation Process

Minghu Wang¹

¹ School of Management, Northwest University of Political Science and Law, Xi'an, China

Received: January 9, 2024 Accepted: January 31, 2024 Online Published: February 20, 2024
doi:10.22158/uspa.v7n1p15 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/uspa.v7n1p15>

Abstract

In the era of big data, higher-level governments usually use digital technology to monitor and quantify the policy implementation of grass-roots governments in real time through digital indicators. In the case of fulfilling the tasks and objectives of the higher government on time, in quantity and unconditionally, the grass-roots government is usually burdened with a huge digital burden, exposing the formalistic behaviors such as digital coping behaviors and digital tournaments. Taking the “Rectification of land map spots” policy as an example, this paper describes the digital formalism of township government from two aspects of digital coping behavior and digital tournament and explores the reasons behind the digital formalism of township government from the aspects of pressure from multiple sources, constraints from internal and external environment, and lack of digital literacy of policy subjects. Then, it puts forward some strategies and methods to solve the digital formalism of township government from the aspects of optimizing the structure and mechanism construction of township government policy implementation, improving the environmental support of township government policy implementation, and improving the digital literacy of policy subjects.

Keywords

township governments, policy implementation, digital formalism

1. Question Raising

In today's world, the situation at home and abroad is complex and changeable, extreme climate, public health emergencies, global trade and geopolitical conflicts and other issues have profoundly affected the production and life of human society, and the international food market is facing huge uncertainties. As a populous country, China's importance of food security is self-evident in order to cope with various

uncertain factors and ensure the basic living conditions of the people. In order to achieve food security, so that the Chinese people's rice bowl at all times firmly in their hands, the area of arable land must be guaranteed.

General Secretary Xi Jinping has repeatedly stressed: "We must strictly guard against the red line of 1.8 billion mu of arable land, take hard measures to "long teeth", and implement the strictest farmland protection system." However, from the third national land survey, the 2020 National land change survey and supervision and law enforcement, some localities illegally occupy cultivated land to plant trees for green, dig lakes for scenery, occupy permanent basic farmland to develop forest and fruit industry and dig ponds for fish farming, and occupy cultivated land for illegal construction are still very prominent, seriously impacting the red line of cultivated land protection. In order to stop the "non-agricultural" of cultivated land and prevent the phenomenon of "non-grain" of cultivated land, the Ministry of Natural Resources issued the "Notice of the General Office of the Ministry of Natural Resources on carrying out the law enforcement work of the health film in 2022", and then local governments at all levels gradually carried out the "land map rectification" work.

Although the work of "Rectification of land map spots" has achieved some results in changing the types of cultivated land use, there are also many problems in the actual implementation of the policy, and digital formalism is one of them. Due to the lack of digital literacy of some grassroots law enforcement personnel and the masses, as well as the impact of various internal and external environmental factors, accurate rectification of land location coordinates and rectification area numbers will not simplify the implementation of rectification policies, and township governments have exposed a series of formalistic behaviors in order to complete the digital targets of higher governments. Through personal observation and conversations with township law enforcement officers and the masses, the author reveals the manifestations and causes of digital formalism in the process of policy implementation by township governments under the background of big data, and then puts forward targeted suggestions to correct the deviation in the process of policy implementation by grass-roots governments, so as to improve the effectiveness of policy implementation by grass-roots governments.

2. The Concept and Expression of Digital Formalism of Township Government

2.1 Concept of Digital Formalism

Digital formalism is a new form of formalism in the age of information and big data. With the mature application of digital technology in government governance, higher-level government departments gradually introduce digital technology in the implementation process of their policies, hoping to monitor and assess the implementation of lower-level governments' policies in real time through digital indicators formed by digital technology. The higher-level government can convert the task objectives into quantifiable digital indicators, which can "simplify the complexity" to a certain extent and make the work objectives of lower-level governments clearer. However, if the government excessively pursues digital

indicators, attaches too much importance to technical rationality and ignores the policy implementation environment, digital formalism may occur.

Therefore, digital formalism can be understood as a formalism phenomenon formed by grassroots governments in the digital administration process with the help of digital technology, by creating digital landscape, manipulating data information and other forms and means, which has the characteristics of being detached from the masses, concealing and making a show.

2.2 The Expression of Digital Formalism of Township Government

2.2.1 Digital Coping Behavior: Passive Means of Avoiding Responsibility

In the rapidly developing digital era, the implementation of a policy is basically the overall design of the policy by the higher level government and the formulation of digital targets, and then the digital indicators are communicated to the middle-level government through the form of administrative documents, and then the middle-level government is communicated to the grass-roots government and urged the grass-roots government to implement through pressure transmission, supervision and inspection, index assessment and other ways. The functional departments of the middle-level government cooperate with the grass-roots government to achieve the digital targets. However, in the actual policy implementation process, grass-roots public officials are not only the policy implementers, but also the direct responsibility bearers of the behavior results, and the problem of unequal power and responsibility is more prominent. Under the policy requirements and power pressure of higher governments, lower governments often lack power in the face of complex policy implementation environment, but the quantitative requirements of higher governments on grassroots governments are constantly increasing. Lower governments need to complete digital targets in accordance with the requirements of higher governments' digital indicators, and they have little discretion and can only implement them step by step. Lower-level governments are tired of ensuring the quantity of work within the prescribed time, but they are afraid of taking responsibility for dereliction of duty. Out of the need to avoid risks, grassroots public officials are more inclined to choose those simple and easy ways to complete the numerical targets.

Therefore, in order to complete the digital indicators, the public officials of the functional departments of the district government, township cadres, and third-party outsourcing companies, driven by the motivation of mutual benefit, reach cooperation among the three, through "processing" and "packaging" and other strategic ways to cooperate with each other, fabricate data or materials, "show" the "achievements" in policy implementation, and unilaterally pursue "beautiful" data. Regardless of the effectiveness of policy implementation.

During the implementation of the "Rectification of land map Spots" policy, due to the fact that the rights and interests of some groups could not be effectively guaranteed, they did not cooperate with the rectification work of the government departments through various means, resulting in the rectification work could not be carried out smoothly within the time specified by the superior government. In addition, due to the rural acquaintance society, township governments are unwilling to intensify their relationship with villagers and do not take tough measures to promote policy implementation, while avoiding petitions,

mass incidents, etc., but they are afraid of bearing the responsibility of passively implementing the policies of the higher government, and they rely on other ways to respond to the task requirements of the higher government.

The negative coping behavior is one of the formalistic behaviors of township governments to respond to the task requirements of the higher government. Township governments try their best to complete the numerical indicators through shortcuts, which leads to the phenomenon of actively pursuing results while ignoring the process. For example, due to the lag of uploading satellite survey data to the system terminal, some cultivated land has actually completed the land use type conversion, but the satellite image has not been updated, so the data in the database has not been changed in time. In order to complete the data tasks of the superior government on time and in quantity, the public officials dispatched by the functional departments of the district government and the staff of the township government actively contact the third-party outsourcing company that has mastered the cultivated land data, look up the location coordinates and area of the rectified cultivated land in the database, and then upload the pictures and videos of the rectified cultivated land in the system terminal. Complete the rectification area data required by the superior government. The township government can no longer rectify the newly issued satellite map spots that are not good to carry out work, temporarily complete the task requirements of the higher government, and achieve phased results.

2.2.2 Digital Tournament: The Number Increases under Multiple Pressures

Under the hierarchical pressure system in our country, the policy implementation increase is an important means for government departments to ensure that the policy implementation results can achieve the policy objectives. In the process of top-down policy implementation, the higher-level government takes the initiative to increase the policy, and then allocates the policy objectives after the increase to the lower-level government for implementation. There are also lower-level governments in the process of policy implementation, forced by the implementation of environmental factors, helpless to carry out passive policy increase.

(1) Proactively increasing numbers

In the implementation process of the “Rectification of land map spots” policy, the municipal government departments, in order to ensure the orderly and efficient progress of the cultivated land rectification work, from time to time, the rectification data of the city’s district, county and county-level city are ranked and assessed and accountable. The district-level government ranks the rectification data of the townships and street offices within the jurisdiction and announces it in the corresponding WeChat working group. For the townships and street offices with poor rectification data, the district discipline inspection Commission will interview the main responsible leaders of the townships and street offices. In order to cater to the “preferences” of the higher government and not fall behind in the competition ranking, some government departments, in order to cater to the “preferences” of higher-level governments and not fall behind in competitive rankings, excessively focus on data and numbers, and actively increase policy goals, standards, quantities, etc. layer by layer. The area of rectification continues to expand and the time for

rectification continuously shortens, leading to vicious competition in the digital tournament. As the lowest level policy implementer, township governments will actively seek “flexible” ways to complete digital tasks when faced with the digital targets imposed by the higher-level government.

(2) Passively increasing numbers

Government departments have applied many emerging technologies in the work of “Rectification of land map spots”, such as satellite remote sensing, big data, Internet, etc. Although these technologies can accurately determine the area and location coordinates of the land to be rectified, due to the lack of comparison psychology and digital literacy of the general public, as well as the lack of cooperation of some groups, leading to objective and quantitative policy implementation also faces many difficulties. Some people have said: “Why my family’s land is next to his family’s land, only cut down my tree, not cut down his tree, to cut down all, or not cut down”, this view also represents the aspirations of many villagers. In order to reduce the obstruction in the work and ensure the completion of the task indicators within the specified time, the township government adopts a “one-size-fits-all” policy, which no longer divides the forest and uniformly felled it, forcing it to increase the felled area, which leads to the excessive implementation of the policy.

3. The Formation Reasons of Digital Formalism of Township Government

Based on the problems exposed by township governments in the process of policy implementation, this paper constructs a pressure-environment-cognition analysis framework from three aspects: the pressure faced by township governments, the internal and external environment, and the digital literacy of township cadres and the masses as policy subjects, to analyze the causes of digital formalism in the process of policy implementation by township governments.

3.1 Generative Logic under Multiple Pressures

As the lowest level of the state power organization, the township government faces a lot of pressure in the process of policy implementation, including the top-down vertical pressure of the higher-level government, the horizontal competition pressure between the governments at the same level, and the bottom-up public opinion pressure of the ordinary people. Under multiple pressures, lower-level governments with heavy tasks can only be cautious everywhere and spend limited energy on dealing with reasonable forms, but it is difficult to ensure the quality of work content, which leads to the widespread existence of various formalism.

3.1.1 The Vertical Pressure under the Bureaucratic System

Under the hierarchical system, with the advancement of the government’s digital transformation, the government advocates quantitative work evaluation methods and converts work tasks into digital indicators. However, in the actual operation process of government departments, there is a phenomenon of over-emphasis on data indicators. Policy objectives are quantified and decomposed by the higher-level government and then transmitted to the middle-level government, and then transmitted to the township government layer by layer. In the process of top-down policy transmission, the middle-level government, in order to complete the task requirements of the higher-level government, gives more weight to the lower-level government, and urges the

grass-roots government to complete the digital indicators on time, and then reduces the power and responsibility, resulting in the policy implementation process of the grass-roots government and the policy objectives of the higher-level government.

In addition, the governance environment of grass-roots governments varies greatly, but subject to the rigid requirements of completing data indicators, grass-roots governments have little discretion in the process of implementing policies and cannot carry out policy implementation according to local conditions, which seriously weakens the flexibility of policy implementation of grass-roots governments.

In short, in the process of implementing the policies of the higher-level government, the grassroots government has less discretion and law enforcement power, and the law enforcement force is relatively weak, but it bears the responsibility of the higher-level government to “Pass the buck”. In the face of complex policy implementation environment, township governments cannot carry out their work efficiently and timely under the condition of power and responsibility imbalance. In order to avoid the pressure and accountability of the superior government, the functional departments of the district government and the township government, as the policy implementer, reached a consensus on interests, formed a community of interests, and responded to the superior government by fabricating data materials and other negative coping behaviors, resulting in serious formalization and externalization problems in the process of policy implementation.

3.1.2 Horizontal Competitive Pressure between Governments at the Same Level

Horizontal competition refers to the “tournament” between functional departments within the government or between governments at the same level in terms of work content and performance, so as to obtain the praise of the higher government and personal promotion. In the process of policy implementation, there is often a competitive relationship between the governments or departments at the same level. The superior governments or departments encourage the relevant units to actively complete the policy objectives through the way of “numerical ranking”, and the departments and individuals at the bottom of the ranking face the risk of being interviewed and held accountable. Due to the unitary incentive model and the need to avoid risks, and in order to win in the competition among governments at the same level, individual government departments, regardless of the actual situation, constantly improve the standards of policy implementation, and eventually evolve into impossible or divorced from the actual task, resulting in the policy implementation effect of grass-roots governments deviated from the policy goal and produced adverse consequences. Under the pressure of competition, relevant government departments have adopted a “one-size-fits-all” policy implementation method to actively complete tasks and goals on data, which has led to complaints from the grassroots and widespread formalism.

3.1.3 Bottom-up Public Opinion Pressure

The application of digital technology in government affairs has broken the traditional top-down ordering mode of information flow. In the process of policy implementation by government departments, when ordinary people perceive that their interests have been harmed, in addition to the traditional means of petitions, they can also express their interests through digital platforms such as 12345 citizen service hotline and government websites, or voice their voices through emerging media platforms such as Weibo and Douyin to form public

opinion and attract the attention of higher government departments, and then, with the help of top-down authority, pressure is exerted on grassroots governments to achieve their own interests and demands. Digital technology eliminates the spatial and temporal separation between grassroots cadres and villagers but reduces the buffer zone between the government and villagers, increasing the response burden of grassroots cadres.

In order to reduce the complaints of the masses and alleviate the contradictions between the government and the masses in their work, the public officials of the grass-roots government actively seek ways to avoid conflicts, which not only does not touch the interests of the masses, but also can cope with the supervision of the superior government. Formalism has become the expedient measure of the grass-roots government in the pressure of the superior government and the masses.

3.2 Constraints of Internal and External Environment

The effect of policy implementation is closely related to the internal and external environment faced by government departments. In the process of implementing policies, township governments mainly face the internal assessment system and external social environment constraints, which affect the smooth realization of their work objectives.

3.2.1 Too Tight a System of Assessment and Accountability

The emergence of “digital tournaments” has a certain relationship with the strict assessment and supervision of multi-level governments. With the gradual normalization of inspection by discipline inspection and supervision agencies in the implementation of government policies, grass-roots governments are facing huge pressure on assessment and supervision, and township governments are facing not only spot checks by the central and provincial governments, but also direct assessments by municipal and district-level governments and evaluation and inspection by third-party institutions. On the one hand, the assessment results are directly related to the job promotion of the relevant personnel, so in order to strive for a good assessment ranking, some townships pursue surface work and do not implement the policy. The results, on the other hand, are often accompanied by harsh accountability. A strict accountability system can control government departments’ reckless and disorderly actions in policy implementation. However, the government relies too much on accountability tools without considering the actual law enforcement environment of lower-level governments, leading to lazy policies at the grassroots level. In order not to be held accountable in a short period of time, the government attempts to create false data through illegal or even illegal means to get away with it. Create the appearance of being responsive and accomplishing the goals and objectives of higher authorities.

3.2.2 The Constraints of Rural Human Relations and Society

The countryside is a society of acquaintances, and many public officials working at the grass-roots level live in it. It is difficult for township cadres to break through the complicated rural human relations network in the process of implementing policies, and they are faced with the influence of many kinds of relationships such as family affection and friendship. In the study of the hypothesis of human nature, the hypothesis of economic man holds that man is self-interested, pursues personal interests, and takes the maximization of personal interests as the biggest motive. Similarly, the masses in rural society always weigh the advantages and disadvantages of government policies from their own perspective. Therefore, when they feel that the policies

of government departments are not conducive to their own interests, they lobby and bribe through their networks, do not cooperate with the government in implementing policies, and even fight against it. As a result, grass-roots government staff cannot really implement the policies of the higher government in a fair and honest manner. They prefer to solve difficult problems by avoiding difficult things, avoiding difficult people. Therefore, formalism has become an effective way for them to explain themselves to the above and not to offend the below, which can not only win the favor of the leaders, but also gain the “human favor” of others.

3.3 The Lack of Digital Literacy of Policy Subjects

In the context of the digital transformation of government departments, the digital literacy of policy subjects is particularly important for lower-level governments in the process of implementing policies of higher-level governments. Digital literacy refers not only to the ability to use software or operate digital devices, but also to a variety of complex cognitive, intellectual, and emotional skills. When township governments implement the policies of higher governments, the policy subjects are divided into township government officials and ordinary people in rural society. The cognitive level, acceptance degree and application ability of these groups to digital technology, as well as their cultural level and emotion, determine the effect of digital technology in township governments. However, the lack of digital literacy of policy subjects generally exists in the process of policy implementation by township governments, which makes it difficult for digital technology to play its due role in policy implementation.

On the one hand, with the continuous advancement of China’s urbanization process, China’s population flow shows an overall trend from township to urban areas, and urban areas absorb a large number of people from rural areas. The elderly, women and children have become the main groups in rural society. However, these groups are restricted by factors such as knowledge, habits and vision. Especially for some elderly people, they show indifference and distrust towards the application of digital technology in policy implementation. They follow the lifestyle orientation of past experience and habits to judge the advantages and disadvantages of policies for themselves. Sometimes, they may not cooperate with grassroots civil servants in implementing policies.

On the other hand, the civil servants with leading positions in township governments show a trend of aging in age structure, and the shortage of professional information technology talents restricts their understanding and implementation of policies to a certain extent. The deficiency of township cadres in age structure, educational level and other aspects directly limits their awareness of the policy and participation degree. Limited by the information knowledge level of township cadres, there is still a big gap in the complete understanding, accurate interpretation and accurate implementation of superior policies, which correspondingly limits the villagers’ knowledge and cognition of specific policies.

As a result, township governments attach too much importance to short-term results when completing the policy objectives of higher governments, and township cadres tend to be “matter-oriented” in their cognition, taking short-term goals as the basis, simply completing tasks, and eager to achieve ideas and cognition, which often lead to non-compliance or even illegal coping behaviors, making it an influential factor in formalistic behaviors.

4. The Governance Strategy of Digital Formalism of Township Government

4.1 Optimize the Policy Implementation Structure and Mechanism Building of Township Governments

4.1.1 Reform the Pressure-based System Model

First, establish a bottom-up information feedback mechanism among government departments. Under the pressure type system, the information communication between the upper and lower levels of government is not two-way, but often is imperative, one-way from the upper-level government to the lower-level government. Different levels of government and different departments of the same level of government face very different policy implementation environments. The difficulties faced by grass-roots governments in the process of policy implementation cannot be timely and effectively reported to the policy-making departments of the higher levels of government. Without a real understanding of the difficulties of grass-roots governments, the higher levels of government tend to irrationalize policies and implement deviations. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a bottom-up information feedback mechanism between the upper and lower governments, especially the information communication channel for the township government to reflect the real situation to the higher government. The central government departments should actively pay attention to the policy increase behavior of provincial and municipal governments, pay attention to the feedback of county and township governments after implementing policies, adjust policy objectives, policy implementation standards and other policy contents timely according to the feedback of lower-level governments, reduce the occurrence of irrational policy increase, timely correct the implementation deviation caused by irrational policy increase, and reduce the harm caused by it. Avoid spreading negative influences.

Second, we need to clarify accountability mechanisms at all levels of government. In the environment of downward transmission of administrative pressure, the township government, as the actual executor of the policy of the higher government, is the main body responsible for the smooth implementation of the policy. However, the increased behavior of some higher-level governments in the process of policy implementation is transmitted to township governments through governments, so that the responsibility of policy implementation is fully placed on township governments. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify the policy implementation responsibilities of governments at different levels, establish a list of responsibilities, clarify the responsibilities of governments at different levels when policy imposition and formalism occur in government departments, and specify the responsibility subject to a government department or a department leader.

The third is to give the grassroots government a certain degree of discretion. In terms of empowerment, the higher-level government moderately devolved the governance power to the grass-roots government, giving it a certain degree of discretion. The grass-roots government can flexibly determine the application degree of the policy according to the actual situation of policy implementation, without being uniform, so as to avoid larger losses caused by the decision-making mistakes of the higher level.

4.1.2 We Will Improve the Competition Mechanism among Governments

General Secretary Xi Jinping clearly pointed out that the essence of formalism is subjectivism and utilitarianism when he investigated and guided the party's mass line education practice in Hebei. Subjectivism

means that individual leading cadres ignore the objective reality and pursue surface projects. Utilitarianism refers to that some leading cadres start from their own interests, by all means to achieve their identified goals, resulting in the phenomenon of concealing and cheating. The root cause behind it is that some leading cadres have misplaced views on achievements and lack of responsibility.

Correct ideology is the basis of effective action, and correct performance view and competition view is the guiding standard of grass-roots cadres' behavior, which can promote the healthy growth of cadres. The problem of digital formalism in the context of big data is closely related to the concept of personal performance. The dissimilation of the concept of political performance will transform normal government behaviors, thus inducing the problem of formalism.

In order to break the digital formalism in policy implementation and optimize the inter-governmental competition mechanism, we must first guide and educate leading cadres to establish a correct concept of achievement and competition, enhance the sense of responsibility of public officials, adhere to the "people-centered" work orientation, and overcome the value orientation of subjectivism and utilitarianism. In the process of implementing policies, public officials in government departments should always focus on solving problems related to the fundamental interests of the people, abandon the number orientation, and accurately identify false figures.

Secondly, under the guidance of correct thinking, by weakening the incentive of inter-governmental ranking, the impact of rigid assessment system on government departments at the same level is weakened, and more emphasis is placed on strengthening cooperation between government departments and cooperating to achieve the policy objectives of the higher government.

4.1.3 Improve the Public Feedback and Multi-party Supervision Mechanism

Township governments connect the country and society, in a special position of "a thousand threads above and a needle below", in addition to conveying and implementing the policies of the higher government, more importantly, it is to connect with the masses. Therefore, for the problems existing in the policy implementation process of government departments, the supervision and feedback of the people are needed, the online and offline feedback and supervision paths of the masses are optimized, the online and offline interaction between the government and the masses is realized, and the role of supervision by public opinion and public supervision is fully brought into play.

First of all, it is necessary to improve the combination of online and offline public feedback channels. For the reflection channels of public problems, in addition to optimizing the traditional offline petition system, government departments need to pay more attention to the ways of online public feedback. During the implementation of a certain policy by local governments, special policy feedback services can be added to the "12345" citizen hotline. Record people's problems efficiently and timely and convey them to relevant government departments. In addition, actively improve the construction of government affairs websites at all levels, so that the people have channels to directly feedback their problems to government departments and avoid various negative remarks criticizing government departments and distorting government policies on the we-media platform because the people have no channels to feedback to government departments.

Second, we need to improve the mechanism for social organizations, deputies to the People's Congress, members of the CPPCC, and the media to supervise the implementation of government policies. For the implementation of major policies, higher level government departments should actively invite NPC deputies, CPPCC members, non-governmental organizations, democratic parties, media, etc. to supervise and report on the implementation of local government policies. Where there are problems in government departments, problems should be found and solved in a timely manner to ensure the orderly and efficient implementation of higher-level policies.

4.2 Improve the Environmental Support for the Implementation of Policies by Township Governments

4.2.1 Improve the Scientific Assessment System

Formalism in the context of digital governance requires breaking away from numerical and outcome-oriented theories and establishing a scientific comprehensive evaluation mechanism and fault-tolerant mechanism. The formation of a scientific assessment system is a necessary condition for policy implementation, and timely adjustments should be made according to the changes in the environment during the implementation of policies by township governments.

Grassroots government civil servants take illegal or irregular means to evade the assessment of discipline inspection and supervision departments, partly because the current assessment mechanism of discipline inspection departments is not perfect. The ununified assessment and accountability standards for grass-roots staff and the imperfect assessment and accountability system are another institutional incentive for the formation of grass-roots government formalism under the background of big data.

Therefore, for the assessment of grass-roots public officials, the discipline inspection department should first clarify the assessment standards for governments at all levels, establish the assessment indicators of digital formalism of governance and increase its weight. The significance of supervision lies in better governance, which should be tailored to local conditions. Grass-roots civil servants need to keep in touch with the people all the time. When implementing the policies of the higher government, they will encounter all kinds of unexpected situations and difficulties that the policies are divorced from reality. Therefore, for the grass-roots government in the data submission, audit and other aspects can set loose time requirements, in the premise of ensuring the realization of the overall policy objectives, the appropriate flexibility and partial completion of the implementation. In terms of assessment and accountability, the higher-level government actively listens to the opinions of the masses, establishes the necessary fault tolerance mechanism, and carries out accountability and punishment in light of the actual situation.

4.2.2 Improve the Dual Track Governance Environment that Combines Rule of Law and Moral Governance

Rural society is a complex society of acquaintances. In China's grass-roots political power, especially in township governments and village organizations, there is a strong blood relationship and other social relationship network. As a result, township leaders are inevitably sympathetic when implementing superior policies and cannot really deal with problems and disputes according to law. Therefore, the rule of law education should be strengthened for township public officials and village committee members, and the rule of law awareness of grass-roots staff should be enhanced through irregular thematic education and training, so

that they can abide by the bottom line of the law in their work and avoid problems such as abuse of power for personal gain and corruption.

In addition, rural society is deeply influenced by thousands of years of non-litigation culture, and people have low legal awareness. Because of the difference between regions, local folk customs vary greatly, if forced to promote modern legal governance in rural areas, it may impact the original stable order of rural society. Therefore, in the process of implementing government policies, it is necessary to give play to the propaganda and guidance role of the village committees, and more importantly, to give play to the leading role of the new villagers. In essence, the new township sages are the elite class in the countryside and play a role in educating the rural people. Therefore, it is necessary to make full use of the resources of the new township sages and make them the propagandists and promoters of government policies and disseminators of legal concepts.

Therefore, in the process of policy implementation of township governments, first, it is necessary to ensure that the policy implementers effectively exercise their power within the track of rule of law; second, it is necessary to play the role of village “leaders” and solve conflicts among villagers through the leading role of new villagers. In rural areas where the concept of rule by law is relatively weak, “rule by virtue” can sometimes reduce the obstacles in government work better than the compulsory and merciless “rule by law” and avoid the formalism phenomenon that grassroots governments have no way to start when implementing policies.

4.3 Enhance the Digital Literacy of Policy Subjects

In the digital era of big data and artificial intelligence, government departments often adopt digital technologies in the implementation process and result evaluation of policies. In order to better fulfill the policy objectives of the higher-level government, the staff of the lower-level government, especially the township government, should have certain digital literacy to improve the efficiency of their work. To improve the digital literacy of grass-roots government civil servants is not only to train them to master the information technology needed for work, but more importantly, to train them to establish a correct digital concept and sense of responsibility. In addition, the grass-roots government also needs to introduce new blood, through the introduction of high-quality talents skilled in information technology, to make up for the shortcomings of the grass-roots government in the work.

First of all, strengthen the training of grass-roots government civil servants, through the organization of ideological ideology and information technology training, so that civil servants can keep their minds clear, but also let civil servants master basic information technology knowledge. In addition, we should guide leading cadres to establish a correct concept of numbers, make it clear that numbers are only auxiliary tools to supervise the implementation of policies, and are not decisive conditions, and scientifically understand, obtain and use numbers to get out of the digital trap.

Secondly, the grass-roots governments, especially the township governments, due to the different cultural levels of civil servants, lead to the lack of professional personnel in dealing with the problems related to information technology, and have no choice but to deal with digital formalism. Therefore, it should be appropriate to introduce specialized information technology talents into the civil service team, combined with

the mode of cooperation between the government and third-party institutions, to avoid the digital formalism caused by the lack of technical personnel in the township government at the technical level.

The members of township government and village committee should take the responsibility of publicizing the policy cognition deviation of ordinary people. For major or special policies, township cadres and village committee members set up joint propaganda teams to actively publicize the pros and cons of the policies to the masses, actively respond to the interests of the masses, and formulate targeted plans to solve the problems of the masses.

5. Conclusion

The rapid development of digital technology has made it not only an important force to promote social development, but also an important means to accelerate the modernization of government governance. However, while promoting the reform of grassroots governance, digital technology also brings new digital formalism to grassroots governments. In the process of the government's digital transformation, digital coping behavior, digital tournament and other phenomena continue to emerge, and the underlying reason behind these formalistic behaviors is the deviation of the grass-roots government's policy implementation. We should be aware of the limitations of the application of digital technology in the implementation of policies by grass-roots governments, and fully consider the impact of the environment of policy implementation on digital technology. For grass-roots public officials, they are not only required to master the basic operation of using digital tools, but also to establish a correct concept of numbers, and to scientifically understand, acquire and use numbers. Measures such as optimizing organizational structure, improving system construction, and enhancing digital literacy should be taken to prevent the emergence of digital formalism in the process of policy implementation by grass-roots governments.

In short, this paper studies the manifestations of digital formalism and the causes behind it in the process of policy implementation by grass-roots governments, and puts forward targeted suggestions to correct the deviations in the process of policy implementation by grass-roots governments, and provides experience for them to improve the effectiveness of policy implementation.

References

- Dong, S. T., & Dong, X. F. (2022). The patchwork response to technology execution bias: A logical analysis of the occurrence of digital governance formalism. *Chinese Public Administration*, 2022(6), 66-73.
- Liu, T. Y., & Tian, B. H. (2022). The realistic dilemma and optimization path of digital village construction from the perspective of governance modernization. *Jiangnan Tribune*, 2022(3), 116-123.
- Miao, X. M., & Luo, L. (2020). Research on implementation deviation of targeted poverty alleviation policy-The policy implementation process is the framework. *Journal of Shanxi University (Philosophy and Social Science Edition)*, 43(1), 93-100.

- Qiu, S. Y., & Ran, H. (2022). Problems and countermeasures of digital governance formalism. *Unity*, 2022(6), 26-28.
- Tong, L. J., & Zhang, M. X. (2022). The generative logic, institutional dilemma and resolution strategy of digital formalism. *Journal of Socialist Theory Guide*, 2022(4), 65-71+92.
- Yang, W. M. (2022). Prevention and treatment strategies of grassroots formalism from the perspective of governance efficiency improvement. *Leadership Science*, 2022(11), 97-100.
- Zhao, Y. (2022). Research on rural legalization--Based on the perspective of acquaintance society. *Rural Economy and Science-Technology*, 33(9), 164-167.
- Zheng, Y. M. (2018). Formalism stems from a misplaced view of political achievement. *People's Tribune*, 2018(1), 26-27.