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Localization of Chinese Administration: Problems Analysis, Development Prospect and Path Selection

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Abstract

In the 30 years since its reconstruction, Chinese administration has experienced an exploration process from translation learning, transplantation and replication to independent construction, and the localization consciousness has become increasingly prominent. However, on the whole, there are still many problems in the study of administration in China, such as the tendency of following the direction of western theories and the vagueness of theories, and there is still a long way to go to construct the discourse system with Chinese characteristics. This is not only because of the short history of the discipline, but also because of the lack of theoretical confidence in domestic administration. The development of the localization of Chinese administration needs to clarify the premise of localization, promote the unification of theoretical research and practice, dig out the local administrative experience and integrate the theoretical system on the basis of continuous and selective learning of western administration theory. In the process of continuous development and construction, Chinese administration should gradually establish theoretical confidence and break through the shackles of western thought and framework. Chinese administration should also start from the perspective of political philosophy, pay attention to various value relations in public administration, respond to the demand for publicity in the political and social transformation, and return to the study of "big problems" in public administration.

Keywords

Localization, Problem Analysis, Path Selection

1. Introduction

As a new comprehensive subject, public management has developed vigorously after reconstruction. In the past 30 years, Chinese administration has accumulated much in the process of study, but it has also entered the wrong path such as self-colonization of knowledge and superficial research content. At the same time, under the background of the transformation of China's economic structure and government functions, the administration science, which was born in the industrial society, faces the possibility of the coupling deviation between the theoretical system and the real society. This paper reviews the course of the localization of Chinese administration and the problems arising from it, makes a forward-looking thinking on its future development and problem solving, and explores the possible path in the development process of Chinese administration, which has a certain practical significance for the study of the theory and practice of the localization of administration.

2. Exploration on the Localization of Chinese Administration Science

Since its birth, administration is to solve various problems arising in the specific operation of the government, so it is endowed with the application orientation naturally. As a practical subject, its purport and theoretical research must be based on the specific characteristics of the research object and the overall factors of the external environment, so as to maintain and promote the operation of the real society. This innate condition determines the particularity and correspondence of the study of public administration itself, and also makes the trend of the localization of the study of public administration in China seem logical. Based on the heterogeneity of western administration and the complexity of Chinese political society, there is still a deviation between western concept and practical application of public administration. Only by changing the localization of the theory of administration can the theory of public administration originating from the west effectively serve the administrative process of China. Domestic administrative scholars have interpreted the concept of localization. That is to say, "localization does not mean that it is stuck in a rut, blindly shielding external information and conducting research and practice in isolation. Instead, it means that generalization comes first and localization comes later. First, there is a relatively formed universal theoretical framework in a certain field, and then it is absorbed according to the local reality, and finally the theoretical interpretation and conceptual guidance of the local situation is obtained so as to make a substantial contribution to the field with the concrete results formed in the localization process" (Lou Chengwu & Dong Peng, 2021). The localization of public administration means that it must start from the reality of China's social ecology and build a discipline system rooted in and applied to China according to the actual cases generated in the transformation and development. However, we should also realize that this is a gradual process. We should not rush to eliminate western discourse in administrative theory without a theoretical basis, but form a basic theoretical framework first, and then fill it with the connotation and views with Chinese characteristics.

3. Problem Analysis and Development Prospect of the Localization of Chinese Administration Science

3.1 Analysis of difficulties and Problems in the Localization of Chinese Administration Science

The development of a discipline results from the constant discovery of problems and the adoption of solutions. After the reference and integration of the literature related to the localization of administration in recent five years, it can be found that the existing problems about the localization of Administration in China can be divided into several aspects. First, the disciplinary research stays in the vague theoretical research; the researchers lack the awareness of problems; and the theory and practice are disconnected. "After more than 30 years of development, Chinese administration has made great progress, but it has not yet formed an independent knowledge and theoretical system due to the lack of effective connection between theory and practice. In addition, the lack of explanatory power and applicability, over-reliance on observational experience, and separation of theory and practice are very prominent problems" (Luo Liangbo & Yan Changwu, 2019), which lead to some practical local administrative problems that have not been solved. Second, researchers are used to following the mainstream western research theories without thinking about the local application significance, and there are still some blind following from the macro perspective. "In the field of administration, it is very common to catch up with the western trend and pursue the 'modernization' (the essence of modernization in the western sense is westernization) of administration theory as the research goal" (Wang Shengping, 2015). This also reflects a kind of "academic inertia" in the academic field of public administration in China. From the transplantation and replication of western administrative theories to the misuse of research methods, all of them show many scholars apply mechanically without truly understanding. Although some scholars pointed out that "the academic circles have made a lot of efforts to introduce Western ideas and experience, and many of them have been combined with Chinese management practices to promote China's reform" (Lan Zhiyong, 2017). However, from the perspective of the overall academic research situation, the public administration in China is still deeply influenced and fettered by the West, and the domestic research direction and research field are easy to change with the choice of western scholars. After the introduction of the new public management theory into China, a wave of research has been set off in China. Although we can follow the principle of 'Chinese learning for essence (ti), Western learning for utility (yong)', there are also cases that we introduce the theory into research without thinking about the degree of fit between the theory and reality, without assessing the social development's demand for the theory in advance. In the 1990s, China followed the example of the West and carried out privatization reform. Although the overall efficiency was improved and the industrial structure was op-

timized, a large number of people lost their jobs, which affected the overall national income and social order. Third, the localization of Chinese administration lacks theoretical confidence. “Due to the hegemony of the ‘cultural imperialism’ of western administration, the localization of Chinese administration has more or less a meaning of ‘transcending English and catching up with the United States’, retrieving oneself and revealing oneself (Yan Changwu, 2019)”. The anti-knowledge self-colonization consciousness is strong and thus falls into the context of dual opposition between China and the West. This leads to deliberately avoiding the coincidence with the mainstream western research direction or deliberately striving for the right to speak in western theories. Fourth, there is a single defect in the study of local administration. At present, the mainstream of the subject research in China is government management, but administration itself is a highly comprehensive subject, and its research object should cover all fields involving government relations. The lack of extensive attention to the administrative field often leads to the narrowness of local administration in the development process. The concentrated discussion of government management can make the theory of administration develop in depth in this field for a period of time, but it is a defect in the research breadth.

3.2 Development Prospect of the Localization of Chinese Administration

According to the above analysis of the localization of Chinese administration, we can try to put forward a revised plan and forecast its development trend. The basis of localization is to draw lessons from and introduce western theories to complete the construction of its own theoretical framework. This process speeds up the construction of administrative science in China, but it may also lead to the dependence and follow of theoretical research, and then lead into the wrong way of supporting western theories with local experience, resulting in the loss of original theories. In order to avoid the related risks, public administration scholars must realize the heterogeneity of Chinese and Western cultural backgrounds, and the differences of national system, theoretical soil and the requirements of the times before making efforts for the development of localization. Scholars of public administration should also selectively conduct theoretical research and dissemination according to local characteristics in the future development, and draw heavily on the American study of European administration.

At present, the development of Chinese administration science is very different from that of western administration science, and it will show a greater divergence in the future with the pace of social transformation and upgrading. This also means that we cannot continue to rely on western theories to develop the discipline system in the future, but must carry on the independent construction and path exploration of the localization theory of Chinese administration. At present, it is common to see the phenomenon of “speaking in general terms” in the overall study of administration in China, and lack of the analysis of specific cases and the collection and mastery of first-hand data, which leads to the lack of practical significance of theoretical achievements. The future development of local administration requires refinement of research direction and deepening of practice.

At the same time, we should also have a certain ideological premise. At present, we still have the situation of cultural self-colonization. It is difficult to break free from the shackle of the western theoretical framework. If we want to promote the localization of Chinese administration and carry out the independent construction of the discourse system of Chinese administration, we must establish theoretical confidence. Early Chinese administration was developed under the influence of the West. In the development stage of administration, most Chinese scholars act as the “translators” of western theories, take western research fields and research objects as the guidance, and set western administrative thoughts in our country. This is a period of lack of self-awareness and confidence. Later, we realized that simply copying foreign methods and theories could not reflect and govern the problems existing in Chinese society, so we began to pursue the localization of Chinese administration. However, we put ourselves in the context of the dualistic opposition between China and the West. In fact, this is still a reflection of the lack of confidence in our own theory. Therefore, the establishment of theoretical confidence, the transfer of research focus from western academic circles to local issues, from the consciousness of comparison and transcendence to the concept of central construction, will be the important ideological premise of the development of the localization of Chinese administration.

However, no matter how the theory develops, it should be applied around reality. Due to the complex social conditions and special political structure in China, the current study of administration avoids the mainstream political issues and lacks the discussion of national public issues, but focuses more on the technical level or the reform of a single concept. But the discipline responsibility and characteristic of public administration includes “publicness”. This means that Chinese administration in the future localization process must maintain a high degree of sensitivity

to the development and reform of political system and ideology, pay attention to the "big problems" in the development of public administration, in order to form a disciplinary system that fits the orientation of national political development and matches the needs of national practice.

4. Path Selection of Localization Development: Political Philosophy

In the history of the development of public administration, there has been a famous "Simon Waldo debate" because of whether it should be positioned as "political philosophy" or "administrative science", which will be a long-term problem in the future development of the discipline and difficult to get specific results. As a young subject, Chinese administration science still lacks enough perfect knowledge system and theoretical ability to perfectly balance the relationship between instrumental rationality and value rationality. The relationship between politics and society is in a state of dynamic development and constant change, so in the process of continuous development and localization, it will inevitably be biased to one side of instrumental rationality or value rationality. In other words, it is necessary to choose between administrative science and political philosophy, to choose the path most in line with the current national conditions and the development of the discipline according to the actual situation, and to guide the development direction and research methods of the localization of Chinese public administration by virtue of the efficiency and value orientation respectively implied behind the two. At present, the Chinese society in the stage of economic and political transformation has caused the complication of administrative soil, and put forward new requirements for the exercise of administrative power and the quality of public service. However, managerialism has no ability to respond to the value problems in administrative practice, and its instrumental rationality is actually a digestion of the political nature as the core of national governance.

With the continuous development of Chinese society and the deepening of political system reform, the future road of administrative development will surely face more challenges. Whether these challenges can be properly dealt with will determine whether the reform of Chinese administrative system can be successful. As the main role of guiding practice, theory's path choice not only determines the development direction of the discipline, but also affects the development and reform of the real society. According to Waldo, political philosophy takes value as its orientation, focuses on the relationship between social sciences and human beings, and builds public administration on a broad historical and cultural foundation. The only way for the localization of Chinese administration is to combine the selected Western theories with Chinese traditional culture, customs and thinking mode, and reverse the output of local theoretical characteristics and culture through administration, so as to solve the specific problems in Chinese administration and society. Therefore, the value orientation and humanistic care of political philosophy coincide with the current development path of Chinese localization. Taking political philosophy as the main path of localization development is helpful to fill the theoretical experience with Chinese characteristics within the framework of administration science and enrich the humanistic feelings of local administration so as to ensure that the development direction of administration research is always consistent with the actual situation of Chinese society, and promote the return of Chinese administration research to the mainstream of the "big problems" in national society. Therefore, the practice and process of the localization of Chinese administration will tend to be the political philosophy path with value rationality as the core, which can give feedback to social fairness and democratic mechanism.

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