

## Positioning and Operating Mechanism of Service-Oriented Township Government Construction: The Perspective of Transformation of Government Functions

TAN Sui<sup>[a],\*</sup>; WU Jiang<sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>[a]</sup>Postgraduate, Department of Public Administration, College of Political Science and Public Management, Southwest University, Chongqing, China.

<sup>[b]</sup>Ph.D., Professor, Department of Public Administration, College of Political Science and Public Management, Southwest University, Chongqing, China.

\*Corresponding author.

**Supported by** the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities of 2015 “Positioning and Realization Way of the Service-Oriented Township Government From The Perspective of Transformation of Government Functions” (SWU1509304).

Received 6 December 2014; accepted 10 February 2015  
Published online 26 March 2015

### Abstract

With the development of economic globalization and the constant progress of China’s reform and opening up, traditional government administrative system cannot meet the needs of our current economic and social development, so the construction of service-oriented government is not only an irresistible trend of building China’s harmonious society, but also an inevitable direction of China’s long-term development. Township government, as grass-root government, has become the foothold of China’s service-oriented government construction, and decides the success or failure of China’s service-oriented government construction.

In this paper, with the background of the Third Plenary Session of the Eighteenth Central Committee, the positioning of township government is carried out from four dimensions by the analysis on the status, problems and reasons of service-oriented town government, and then the operating mechanism of service-oriented government from the perspective of transformation of government functions is built, in order to achieve the service-oriented township government.

**Key words:** The transformation of government functions; Service-oriented township government; positioning; Operating mechanism

Tan, S., & Wu, J. (2015). Positioning and Operating Mechanism of Service-Oriented Township Government Construction: The Perspective of Transformation of Government Functions. *Canadian Social Science*, 11(3), 298-303. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/css/article/view/6703>  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/6703>

### INTRODUCTION

From the point of view of historical development, the development of a country’s administrative system inevitably goes through three stages, namely, “autocratic government – control-oriented government – service-oriented government”, and the highly centralized administrative system implemented at planned economy period is the typical representative of the administrative model of control-oriented government. It can be seen from the establishment of law-based and service-oriented government proposed in the 18<sup>th</sup> CPC National Congress that the administrative model of control-oriented government has already been unable to meet the current economic and social development.

In terms of domestic situation, from China’s reform and opening up to now, there are totally seven large-scale reforms in government administrative organization, and the service-oriented government has been proposed for more than ten years. In 2013, the CCP Third Plenary Session of the Eighteenth Central Committee emphasizes when deploying the comprehensive and deep reform that we must effectively transform government functions, accelerate the construction of service-oriented government, and improve the government’s ability and skills to serve the economic and social development as well as the people. Thus, for the transformation of government functions, China has taken an important step/ therefore, the study on the positioning and realization way of the service-oriented township government from the

perspective of transformation of government functions has important theoretical significance and practical value.

## **1. THE CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF TRANSFORMATION OF GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONS AND SERVICE-ORIENTED TOWNSHIP GOVERNMENT CONSTRUCTION**

Any thing interacts with each other. The transformation of government functions requires the implementation of service-oriented township government construction, and the service-oriented township government can effectively promote the transformation of government functions. Now the correlation analysis will be carried out.

### **1.1 The Transformation of Government Functions Requires the Service-Oriented Township Government Construction**

How national government functions transform has the direct bearing on whether the service-oriented township government (grass-root government) can be built successfully and whether citizens satisfy. With the development of economy and society, government functions have been changing constantly from the previous focus on the economy to the final highlight of social functions. The Third Plenary Session of the Eighteenth Central Committee emphasizes that the transformation of government functions requires the government to fully and properly perform its duties with the decisive role of the market instead of intervening economic activities through powerful administrative means in the past. Thus, it can be seen that the transformation of government functions require the construction of service-oriented township government in China.

### **1.2 The Acceleration of Service-Oriented Township Government Construction Can Effectively Promote the Transformation of Government Functions**

#### **1.2.1 The Transformation of Government Functions Can Be Effectively Promoted Through Strengthening the Service Concept**

Ideas and concepts are the precursor of all acts, and the construction of service-oriented township government means the transformation of political ideas. To construct the service-oriented township government, we first need to distinguish the public domain, change the old management philosophy and establish a new service concept. And the construction of service-oriented township government depends largely on whether the township government and staff can be reformed successfully.

Strengthening the service concept refers to the coordination between the government and market with the government playing the role of regulation and the market

playing the leading role in the allocation of resources on the one hand; and on the other hand, refers to the coordination between the government and society where the government needs to further “decentralize” and hand over works that shouldn’t be managed by the government to social organizations.

#### **1.2.2 The Transformation of Government Functions Can Be Effectively Promoted Through the Adjustment of Service Role**

The construction of service-oriented township government requires repositioning the role of government, and the government should step down from its leader role in economic construction and social development to become the “guider” of economic construction and social development and the “provider” of public services, and be the “loyal servant”, which is not only the inherent requirement of the transformation of government functions, but also the foundation of service-oriented township government construction. First, the government should act as a “faithful guider” to guide the direction of economic and social development, build an effective government service institution and system and guarantee the stable and coordinated development of economy and society; secondly, the government should be a “impartial judge” to properly handle disputes and conflicts in the market and society; and finally, the government should serve as “loyal servant” to focus on the supply of public goods and services, and as the progress of society causes further requirement for public services, in order to make up for the failure of market supply, the supply of public products and services should be increased through the construction of state-owned enterprises or non-profit organization and other various ways, so as to achieve the purpose of serving citizens.

## **2. PROBLEM ANALYSIS OF CHINA’S SERVICE-ORIENTED TOWNSHIP GOVERNMENT CONSTRUCTION**

There are a total of 45,000 township governments. As they are grass-root governments, the construction of service-oriented township government becomes the foothold of China’s reform in administrative system. In this chapter, the problems and reasons during its construction are analyzed, paving the way for later positioning of service-oriented township government.

### **2.1 Main Problems Existing in Service-Oriented Township Government Construction**

According to the status of service-oriented township government, the main problems existing in the service-oriented township government construction are briefly analyzed combined with the “trinity” model of service-oriented government role on the basis of correlation analysis of the transformation of government functions

and the service-oriented township government construction.

### **2.1.1 Blurry Definition of Township Government Functions**

The key of service-oriented township government construction lies in its job duties and focus. Along with the deepening economic globalization and reform & opening up, as grass-root government, township government's important functions should be public service and social management.

In the past, there were phenomena of blurry definition of township government functions, such as the existence of "absence" and "ultra vires" phenomenon. (a) in terms of "absence": Due to the special nature of public goods and public services, they must be provided by the township government, however, a series of problems emerge when providing these products and services, which mainly manifested in the following areas: first, it's difficult to put relevant policies and measures introduced by the country in place in township government; secondly, the implementation of national policies is not in place, the township government is unable to be solely responsible for the social security because of weak financial fund of township government, poor quality of staff and so forth; the powerlessness of the development of educational business is caused by farmers' backward thinking of farmers and less importance to the education. (b) In terms of "ultra vires", there are mixed functions of government and market, and no separation between the government and civil society, as well as between the government and public institutions and other phenomena, and the excessive administrative approval authority and direct involvement in various associations and other civil society organizations often happen, which are all the presentation of blurry definition of government functions.

### **2.1.2 Low Efficiency of Township Government Services**

The township government, as grass-root government, has been unable to come out from the "simplification – expansion – simplification – expansion", and there are a large number of complex organizations, no separation between the Party work and the government work, serious bureaucracy and other phenomena, resulting in bloated staff, huge number of staff, low government efficiency and other problems, which are mainly manifested in the following aspects. First, the procedure of township government is too complicated, for example, a local enterprise takes nine months to apply for the project approval; secondly, the staff in township government are used to "start work at sunrise and stop work at sunset", and hold the attitude of dawdling away their time with the secure job, resulting in the lost of talents and waste of time. The township government is the grass-root government with most contact with citizens, and its level of efficiency is directly related to the vital interests

of citizens, so the problem urgent to be solved is the enhancement of work efficiency of service-oriented township government.

### **2.1.3 Too Single Subject of Township Public Services**

One of the important functions of township government is to provide public services, which do not mean that the market cannot provide public services. But the problem that the government does not play the role of market power and civil organizations from financing to provide services, accordingly leading to "failure of government" is prevalent in the society. The Third Plenary Session of the Eighteenth Central Committee proposed that the core problem of comprehensively deepening reform is how to deal with the relationship between the government and market, so that the market can play a decisive role in the allocation of resources and better play the role of government. Thus it can be seen that conforming to the Third Plenary Session of the Eighteenth Central Committee and handing over a lot of work that the government should not do and is unable to do to the market and society is an important step of the service-oriented government construction.

## **2.2 Cause Analysis on Problems Existing in the Service-Oriented Township Government Construction**

The causes of problems existing in the service-oriented township government construction are explored and analyzed combine with China's historical background and social culture, which will be analyzed from three dimensions in this section.

### **Serious Official Position Thinking of Township Government**

The thinking of official standard is deeply rooted, which is not only reflected in the government officials themselves, but also exists in the hearts of every citizen. Township government, as grass-root government, should be the government serving the people wholeheartedly. But due to the profound impact of the planned economy system, the thinking of almighty government and officials higher than the people is still prevalent. Such a phenomenon exists in officials, and they will make "important speech" like focusing on thinking and implementing seriously to make concerted efforts, but rarely would like to or absolutely never lean down to listen to what the masses want they to do and see what they can do for the masses. Thus, the thinking of official standard seriously cause the blurry positioning of township government functions.

### **2.2.1 Town Government's Excessive Pursuit of Achievements**

Due to the influence of evaluation, promotion and appointment mechanism, the civil servants of town government blindly pursue personal achievements, eager for success, do things by norms and make decisions by administrative decree, it's hard for them to realize people's sufferings; furthermore, they do not have comprehensive

understanding of the theory of focusing on economic construction but only pay attention to the reconstruction of factories, business investments, they take these as the “growth” of their achievement. Therefore, further development of GDP becomes a vicious cycle, which makes town government only emphasizes on economic construction instead of improving people’s livelihood.

### **2.2.2 Town Government’s Excessive “Responsibility for Higher-Level”**

The tradition of administrative system in our country is to be responsible for the higher-level but not the lower. Throughout history, it is perfectly justified that the lower-level government’s obligation is to implement the measures of the higher-level. For example, at the request of the government at a higher level, the town government needs to gather man power, material resources and finances to operate according to the unified standards of the government at a higher level; they have no time to consider the livelihood issues of their area. Lack of work autonomy and too much temporary work from high-lever government make a single service body and place the function of market and citizens outside.

## **3. THE POSITIONING OF TOWNS’ CONSTRUCTION OF SERVICE-ORIENTED GOVERNMENT UNDER THE PERSPECTIVE OF GOVERNMENT FUNCTION TRANSITION**

New situation requires new positioning. In the process of construction of service-oriented government, government positioning plays an extremely important guiding role. This chapter integrates the current situation, problem and cause of the town’s construction of service-oriented government, complies with the requirements of the Third Plenary Session of the Eighteenth Central Committee and positions the towns’ construction of service-oriented government under the perspective of government function transition through four dimensions.

### **3.1 Legal administration: The Fundamental Premise of Establishing Town’s Service-Oriented Government**

As the saying goes: “The rule of law is greater than man”, this is a timeless truth. Legal administration, as the characteristic of national management modernization, is an irresistible trend of market economy development and the inevitable demand at a certain stage of social development. It is the feature of national management modernization and the requirement for government under the condition of market economy. From the perspective of historical development, Our country successively passed “The Program for Comprehensively Implementing Government Administration in Accordance with the

Law”, “On Strengthening The Rules Of The Cities And Counties In The Government Administration According To Law” and “Promote Administration According To Law and Carry Forward Spirit Of Socialist Rule Of Law” and tried to advance the local government’s realization of law-based government. However, due to the inadequate support and weak sustainability, it is hard to achieve long term Legal administration in local governments.

As the tail of administration system and forefront of administration management, the legal administration of town government has great significance to the construction of service-oriented government. According to the report of rule of law concept of the 18<sup>th</sup> CPC National Congress, taking the opportunity of the government’s function transition to establish the town government of legal administration is the key link in the construction of service-oriented town government. It not only resolves the difficulty in the process of streamlining governmental functionaries, but also deepens the macroscopic legal supervision on administrative examination.

### **3.2 People-oriented: The Core Concept of Construction of Service-Oriented Town Government**

In the Third Plenary Session of the Eighteenth Central Committee, it emphasizes “People-oriented”, we must focus on citizens’ happiness and improve their life quality. The old GDP-based government assessment mechanism obviously cannot adapt to the development of current government and society. To comply with the reform, the officers of town government should establish the concept of “People-oriented”, respect their dominant position, protect their rights and interests, get over the “Official Standard” idea, maintain close ties with the masses, know their needs and keep the right performance concept; they should understand that they are servant but not master.

### **3.3 Streamline Government Organs – Establish the Organization Form of Service-Oriented Town Government**

To improve the redundancy of institutions, our country carries out many reforms to streamline government organs.

From the perspective of management science, government bodies must be established according to their function and adapt to the current political system. Therefore, the way out and key of streamlining government organs are to deepen the reform of political system and expedite the transition of government function.

There are mainly two aspects to accelerate the transition of government function:

First, manage the relationship between government and market. In the development of market economy, there is inevitable phenomenon like government “overrun” and “absence”, they cannot point out what should do and what should not, thus macroscopic and microcosmic control strategies must be combined to standardize the

relationship between government and market; at macro level, legal and economic means and government's supervision and service function must be used in the self-discipline between government and market; the legal means will be further discussed in the legal administration section; at micro level, specific to the aspects of enterprises in the market, we should do what we need to do and leave the rest to the market control.

Second, straighten out the relationship of governments. The appearance of vicious cycle in streamlining government organs is because that they cannot deal with the overlapping function among governments. Therefore, only by expediting the transition of government function, straightening out the relationship between higher level government and local government and the relationship of town governments, the service-oriented town government can be truly realized.

### 3.4 E-Government: An Important Mean to Establish Service-Oriented Town Government

E-government is to use the means of modern information technology: computer, internet and communication and so on, optimize and reorganize government organization structure and work flow regardless of time and space limit so as to establish a highly efficient, simplified and fair government operating system, and provide transparent, high quality management that is in line with international standards. E-government has many advantages and is mainly divided into below dimensions.

#### 3.4.1 Ensure Fairness

Use E-government to change the technology lag, improve the government information transparency, ensure the non-excludability of government information service, promote the realization of sunshine government administration and ensure the fairness of public service. By E-government, we can use electronic poll and emails to communicate with government, which can increase the interests in politics and make an objective and fair expressing of public opinions.

#### 3.4.2 Improve Efficiency

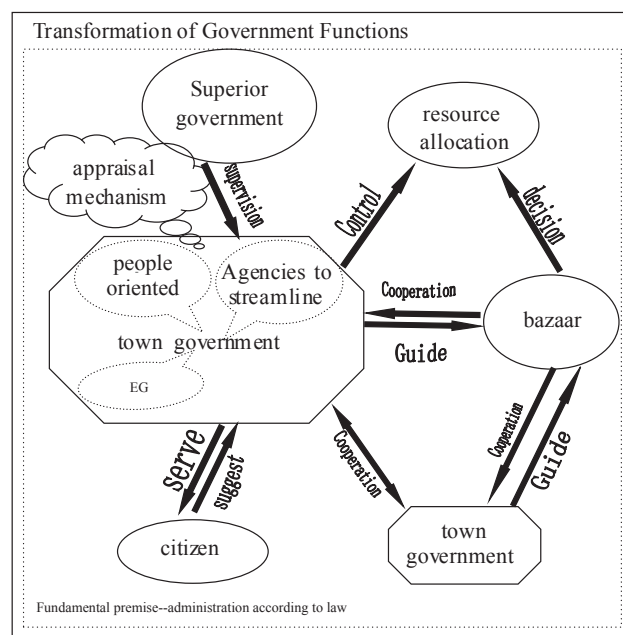
E-government can achieve true, comprehensive and timely social information, plays a part in decision-making and passing on government mandates; through the internationalization of government procurement, E-government not only saves time, money and energy and put more energy on people's service, but also reduces unnecessary middle stages.

#### 3.4.3 People-Oriented

E-government can simplify the work flow of town government and make it truly realize "streamline organs". It makes the leaders of town government consider more of people's demands and makes the operational mechanism more transparent so as to realize sunshine government administration, and achieve the transition of town government management from subject to people.

## 4. THE OPERATING MECHANISM OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF SERVICE-ORIENTED TOWN GOVERNMENT UNDER THE PERSPECTIVE OF GOVERNMENT FUNCTION TRANSITION

Base on the perspective of changing government function, combines strengthening the service role of "trinity" model and rely on the four aspects positioning of establishing service-oriented town government to build its operating mechanism. Figure 1 shows the operating mechanism of service-oriented town government.



**Figure 1**  
Operating Mechanism of the Construction of Service-Oriented Town Government Under the Perspective of Government Function Transition

Under the framework of government function transition, legal administration is the fundamental premise to establish service-oriented town government. To build the coordination mechanism of government, enterprise and citizens, town government takes streamlined organization as main content, use E-government, deal with the relationship between town government and higher level, town governments, town government and market, town government and citizens to build "People-oriented" evaluation mechanism and realize the construction of service-oriented town government.

The positioning of the construction of service-oriented town government under the perspective of government function transition is a complex process interacted by multiple dimensions. It is a system engineering that needs analysis from every angle based on the fundamental premise of legal administration.

Under the perspective of government function transition, the positioning of the service-oriented town government mainly includes the dimensions of legal administration, people-oriented, streamlining government organs and E-government. The construction of service-oriented town government under the perspective of government function transition should establish a systematic operating system which includes town government, higher level government, enterprise and citizens so as to realize the vision of service-oriented town government in time.

## CONCLUSION

The positioning of the construction of service-oriented town government under the perspective of government function transition is a complex process interacted by multiple dimensions. It is a system engineering that needs analysis from every angle based on the fundamental premise of legal administration. Under the perspective of government function transition, the positioning of the service-oriented town government mainly includes the dimensions of legal administration, people-oriented, streamlining government organs and E-government. The construction of service-oriented town government under the perspective of government function transition should establish a systematic operating system which includes town government, higher level government, enterprise and citizens so as to realize the vision of service-oriented town government in time.

## REFERENCES

- Ding, H. (2005). *The essence of western public administration theory*. China Renmin University Press.
- Hu, J. T. (2012). Report on the 18<sup>th</sup> CPC national congress. *Xinhua Online*.
- Hughes, O. (2001). *Introduction of public management*. China Renmin University Press.
- Kong, J. (2010). Based on the electronic government affairs of government function transformation. *Journal of Liaoning Administration College*, (6).
- Li, K. Q. (2014). Government work report. *Xinhua Online*.
- Wang, L. J., & Wang, L. L. (2008). Explore new breakthrough to speed up change of government function. *The Reform and Management of Central Government Institution*,
- Wu, L. (2011). *Service-oriented government construction research on county district*. Central China Normal University.
- Xi, J. P. (2013). Third plenary session of the eighteenth central committee bulletin. *Xinhua Online*.
- Xu, M. M., & Xu, J. X. (2009). Promote construction of a service-oriented local government and establish service-oriented local government. *Legal System and Society*, (08), 195
- Zhang, T. S. (2007). *The path of the service-oriented government construction under the background of a harmonious society*. Southwestern University of Finance.
- Zhang, A. N. (2008). *Local service-oriented government performance evaluation research in China*. Zhejiang University.
- Zhu, Y. G. (2012). *The government information disclosure research under the perspective of a service-oriented government*. Shandong University.