Collaborative Governance: A New Approach To Good Society

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Since 1990’s, there has emerged a shift from government to social governance in many countries. Some scholar argues that we are in “the age of networks, partnerships and jointed up services” (Concidine 2002: 21). Some scholar emphasizes that governance implies that the capacity to get things done does not rest only on the power of governance to command or use its authority (Stoker 1998: 18). The core of a concept of governance is collaborative governance or joint-up governance. This not only implies the collaboration between government, market and CSOs, but also the collaboration between tiers of the state (Geddes, 2005).

As for China in the process social transformation, collaborative governance can be a basis of the reform of social management regime. In such a framework of collaborative governance, government is no longer the sole center of power, and it is no longer the sole provider of public affairs and public service. Collaborative governance is the result of multiple actors’ or stakeholders’ participation and partnership through mutual consultation and corporation between government, business and civil society organizations. In the perspective of reality or experiences of advanced countries, a mature social governance will tries its best to seek a sound social basis of effective management. Effective social governance does not rely on the limitless expansion of state power, but rely on the operation of state power in a reasonable range, the effective functioning of social autonomy, and cooperation, interaction and complementation.

According to our case studies, we found that Nonprofit Service Park is an innovation of social management based on multi-sectorial collaboration. Firstly, it is an innovation of social management regime or mechanism, which breaks up traditional alienation between government and CSOs, and creates a new collaborative mechanism. Secondly, such an innovation based on collaborative governance gives fully play to the relative comparative advantages of government, for-profit organizations and CSOs: government provides public policy and financial support; for-profit organizations give aids in the aspects of money and management experience; and CSOs directly provide for various services, advocates and empowerment to targeted individuals, groups and communities with their professional knowledge and nonmonetary resources (e.g. volunteers). Thirdly, it reflects a social entrepreneurship of public sector. The local government no longer sticks to traditional administrative mode, and has courage to innovate and creates a favorable institutional environment for development of CSOs. Finally, collaborative governance in the Park or beyond integrates multi-sectors’ wisdom, resources and innovational ideas, and creates rich social capital. It solves or releases the challenging social problems, such as population aging, employment of the disabled, social inclusion of the disadvantaged groups, polarization between the rich and the poor, environment protect, and diversified needs of community residents.
Reference