

Return to Value Rationality, Focusing on The Reform of the Household Registration System under the Regulation of Local Government: Based on Chengdu's "Dual-Track and Parallel" Settlement Policy

Yi-jie Wang*

Advanced Institute of Political Science, Central China Normal University, Wuhan 430079, China

*Corresponding author: Yi-jie Wang, m15882167389@163.com

Abstract: This study believes that effective local government regulation is the key to achieving successful household registration governance, that is, in the system creation and policy formulation, tool rationality returns to value rationality. The characteristics of "political people" and "economic people" in local governments encourage them to make rational decisions in the reform of the household registration system, resulting in household registration policies that are often highly directional and purposeful, making it difficult to consider development efficiency and social fairness. Chengdu's "dual-track parallel" settlement strategy is a behavior choice for local governments to return to value rationality, reflecting Chengdu municipal government's "social people" feature. It achieves a balance between meeting the needs of talents and building a healthy household registration proportion by correlating "conditional entry" and "integral entry." This not only realizes the absorption of high-quality talents, but also provides settlement channels for outsiders with limited conditions.

Keywords: Household registration system; Chengdu talent settlement; Government behavior; Rational value; Rational tools; Institutional change

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1. Introduction

With the development of China's economy and society, population flow is becoming more frequent, showing scale, cross-regional and urban-rural characteristics. Under the influence of the urban-rural dual structure, the population is more and more inclined to flow into the cities, and the local governments thus face the management dilemma of the urban population with dual household registration. In 2014, The State Council of China issued the Opinions on Further Promoting the Reform of the Household Registration System, and all localities responded positively to deepen the reform of the new household registration system^[1]. At the same time, due to the needs of urban development, all places are absorbing high-quality talents as far as possible. The pursuit of the number of talents and the control of the quality of urban population inflow population have become an important goal of the current settlement policy formulation. The study shows that the current urban population flow shows regional differences. For example, among the five urban agglomerations, the preferences of the urban agglomeration of the inflow population from different sources are different, especially the central cities as the most^[2]. At the same time, the urban level is also an important factor affecting the population flow, which is manifested as the differentiated settlement

of different talent gradients. Some local governments are using the differentiated settlement policies to realize the reverse resource allocation ^[3]. China's talent introduction is closely related to the household registration system, and the implementation of the talent settlement policy directly depends on the effectiveness of the household registration system reform. Some scholars have put forward the potential risks of urban talent introduction policies based on the talent introduction of various local governments in China, and have given corresponding strategies ^[4]. It can be said that the academic community may control the overall situation of China's household registration system reform from a macro perspective, and conduct a comparative analysis of different regions; or regard the market orientation as the main influencing factor of the current Chinese urban population inflow, or provide reference for the follow-up policy formulation from the institutional level. As a large population inflow city in southwest China, Chengdu, similar to Guangdong Province, has earlier carried out the national household registration system reform, and is somewhat representative among the big cities with low national urbanization rate ^[5]. Take Chengdu as an example, peep at local government behavior from a micro perspective, discuss the policy influence of value consideration on rational government selection, and provide effective reference for household registration governance.

2. Tool rationality led: the source and flow of household registration system reform

China's current household registration has evolved from the modern household registration system established since the founding of the People's Republic of China, and has undergone the adjustment and norms in different historical periods. Therefore, the reform of the household registration system in Chengdu is not groundless, but based on the reality of the rational leading tools of China's current household registration system.

2.1. The evolution of modern household registration system

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the planned economic system was adopted. The government adopted the long-standing household registration system in the traditional Chinese period, in order to achieve the role of maintaining production and maintaining social order and stability through the reasonable distribution of extremely limited resources. Due to the weak industrial foundation and the urgent need of developing heavy industry, the state has adopted the development strategy of giving top priority to urban areas, putting urban household registration management ahead of rural areas, forming a relatively complete urban household registration management system, and creating conditions for the development of urban industry and promoting social development. However, this also separates cities and rural areas, virtually further increases the gap between urban and rural areas, and gives birth to the formation of an urban-rural dual pattern. Due to the difference of urban and rural development level, a large number of rural population began to gather into cities, making the government formulate the rural household registration system and the separation of urban and rural household registration. At that time, this was a necessary means to stabilize social order, but in the long term, the urban and rural dual structure undoubtedly made the circulation of talent difficult. With the stability and development of society, the government directly connects urban and rural household registration with resource allocation, which further causes the influx of rural population into cities, alleviates the pressure caused by population flow on national control to a certain extent, but it strengthens the urban and rural dual structure and does not really solve the dilemma associated by the household registration system. After the reform and opening up, the market-oriented regional labor force once became an important driving force for national economic development. The migrant workers gradually grew, and the boundary between urban and rural areas gradually blurred. The country's attention to rural areas is also increasing, and the household registration reform from rural areas to small towns has opened the prelude to breaking down the urban-rural dual structure. State power began to be delegated by

the central government to local governments. Local governments have launched innovative practices such as residence permits, temporary residence permits and point-point settlement policies.

2.2. Turn in the reform of China's household registration system

Evidently, no system is not perfect but there are still obvious spatial and temporal differences in local settlement policies, which seriously restricts the fairness and justice of the household registration system. The original intention of the household registration system is to stabilize social order, and whether the people's rights and interests are guaranteed is directly related to the stability of social order. If the attention to the fairness and justice of the household registration system is ignored, the legitimacy of the government will also be challenged. Therefore, local governments, as the makers and managers of the household registration system, need to respond to the problems emerging in the reform of the household registration system. For a long time, the high marketization of the economy has made China's population flow more dominated by the labor market, and the government has not regulated too much. On one hand, this makes the gap between urban and rural areas continue to increase, the substantial increase of urban population has increased the local financial burden, and it is difficult to respond to the public service needs of the migrant population. At the same time, the degree of rural hollowing out has intensified, the countryside has increasingly become an urban vassal, and the supply pressure of rural surplus products also increases. On the other hand, the government causes the government to follow instrumental rationality and pursue local economic development and official performance appraisal, that is, it attaches importance to short-term benefits and too utilitarian, showing the characteristics of "economic people" and "political people." In the early stage of reform and opening up, due to the needs of economic development and the high rise of economic indicators, this disadvantage has not received too much attention. As the reform and opening up step into the deep-water zone, it is particularly necessary for the government to adjust the current household registration system. Reform will focus on the choice of government behavior, increase the value rationality of the household registration system, reduce the rationality of tools, help to promote the efficient use of resources, and achieve social fairness and justice while ensuring development benefits. Evidently, fairness and justice is based on certain historical conditions, and cannot be divorced from reality to talk about fairness ^[6]. Only by combining the local financial strength and the household registration status quo, the fairness and justice pursued by local governments is meaningful and in line with the needs of the current household registration system reform.

3. Local government regulations: Chengdu's "dual-track and parallel" settlement policy

Chengdu municipal government of "dual track parallel" household registration system reform mainly includes the target level of total control and talent priority structure optimization in parallel and measures at the level of household and residence permit integral household policy in parallel, the former emphasizes the structural optimization of urban population management, the latter pays attention to the equalization of individual opportunities and rights and interests.

3.1. Total amount control is in parallel with the talent-priority structure optimization

According to the Implementation Opinions of Chengdu on Promoting the Reform of Household Registration System, the reform of Chengdu household registration system adheres to the principle of giving top priority to talents, controls the total household population based on the overall urban development, and highlights the proportion of talents, so as to realize the structural optimization of the city's household population. The total amount of the household population will be controlled, and by replacing most of the past conditions into the integral household policy, the dynamic balance of the city's population scale will be realized. This replacement puts all the people to be admitted at the same level, and

ranks them on points through the point entry policy, which not only controls the total population, but also ensures fairness and justice. At the same time, Chengdu has relaxed the threshold for talent introduction and set up a talent settlement policy. As of May 2019, the number of migrants who have settled in Chengdu through the talent settlement policy has reached 282,600, including 280,700 young talents and 1,900 skilled talents. By the introduction of a large number of high-quality talents, we can achieve the double advantages of increasing the proportion of young population and improving the average cultural level of the city, to achieve the purpose of structural optimization. In July 2017, the Chengdu Municipal Government issued the Strategic Action Plan for Chengdu to Implement the Priority Development of Talents, which relaxed the standards and simplified the handling procedures, and lowered the threshold for talents to a certain extent. A large number of young talents have flocked to Chengdu to settle down and move to certain areas under the guidance of the government. According to the division of administrative areas and industrial functional areas, the Chengdu Municipal government sets the corresponding points indicators according to several circles, so as to encourage foreign talents to enter the designated areas ^[7]. It can be seen that the score of the guidance index in household areas is relatively high. Chengdu through gradient and differentiated integral points of different regions, to achieve the purpose of encouraging and attracting population transfer to different regions, so as to promote the reasonable distribution of urban population.

3.2. Conditional household entry policy and residence permit points are in parallel

On November 30, 2017, Chengdu issued the Implementation Opinions of Chengdu on Promoting the Reform of the Household Registration System, which on the basis of the original conditional household registration policy, the Chengdu municipal government was adjusted and improved. According to the guideline, starting from 2018, the city will implement the policy of both household conditions and points. In 2020, the Chengdu Municipal Government issued the Measures for the Management of Chengdu Residence Permit Points, aiming to further adjust the previous trial plan after the expiration of the trial management measures for integrating points into households. Conditional household entry policy is the reference index of the traditional cities settled in China. In contrast, residence permit points is an innovation in the model. By introducing the introduction of points, the number of potential household objects is increased, making up for the disadvantages of lack of conditional household fairness and lack of universality, and helping to increase the opportunity of settlement of vulnerable groups. The point-based entry policy is based on the residence permit system. Even if foreign talents cannot enter the household temporarily, they can also enjoy the corresponding rights and interests with the residence permit. The floating population who has applied for the residence permit can enjoy the same rights and interests as the local population, including inauguration, medical treatment and children's schooling with the local population. As the residence permit is directly linked to welfare, the holders have broken through the limit of household registration and can move relatively freely. At the same time, the holders of the residence permit must register with the public security organs and declare the information of foreign talents, which will help the government to carry out unified and centralized management and effectively regulate the city's limited resources. It can be seen that the residence permit system provides a transitional area for foreign talents, protects the rights and interests of the corresponding population, alleviates the potential social contradictions caused by the limited number of points, and also promotes the quality improvement and equalization of public services in Chengdu.

4. Return to value rationality: Chengdu settlement policy is discussed again

Chengdu municipal government has returned to value rationality in the settlement policy formulation, achieving governance goals and social public benefits while also taking into account social efficiency and fairness. Based on the present, to ensure the collection of urban talents and social order stability; but also

look to the future, will help to promote the urban and rural integration and equalization of public services. Some scholars believe that behind the reform of the household registration system is the game between different stakeholders, or simply put, the cost and income measurement of different interest entities before and after the reform^[8]. As the promoters of reform, local governments are naturally the most important subjects of interests, manifested as political interests, economic profits and social public benefits. On the one hand, the “political person” attribute of local governments determines that policy formulation is restricted by the higher government, leading to household registration policies that are more inclined to obey the preferences of the higher government and obtain political interests. On the other hand, the “economic person” attribute of the local governments determines that the policy formulation is subject to the marginal cost estimation of the local governments, leading to the fact that the household registration policy is more inclined to obtain economic profits. It is worth mentioning that the “political tournament” also reflects the “political people” and “economic people” attributes of local governments, and the completion of task indicators and better economic performance have become the governance goals of local governments. In the reform of household registration system, tool-oriented policy formulation overstrengthens the “political person” and “economic person” attributes of local governments, but ignores the attribute of “social person.” The lack of attention to social value leads to the weak promotion and numerous disadvantages of the reform of the household registration system.

The reform of Chengdu’s household registration system confirms the transformation of policy formulation through the active regulation of local governments, and the pursuit of social public benefits governance and fairness can be realized. In the short term, the “dual-track parallel” settlement policy can solve the problem of some people living and working in Chengdu being difficult to obtain urban household registration, considering free migration and talent introduction. In the long term, this measure also lays the foundation for the formulation of a more complete household registration system. After all, institutional reform is not accomplished overnight. Relatively easing and gradual reform following the reality will be more conducive to the stability of social order.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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