

City University of Hong Kong

Department of Public Policy

Research Student Seminar

Effective Accountability and Bureaucratic Shirking

by

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Date:	27 Sep 2018
Time:	10:30 -12:00
Venue:	POL's Multi-purpose Room (B7516), Yeung Kin Man Acad Building City University of Hong Kong
Language:	English

Abstract:

Bureaucratic shirking (懶政) refers to the phenomenon that bureaucrats minimize the efforts of carrying out their responsibilities. Its form varies including, but is not limited to, no implementation, low efficiency, loaf on job, buck-passing, and perfunctory performance. The current literature has not paid sufficient attention to the patterns, causes, and consequences of bureaucratic shirking. This research uses China as a case to study the problem of bureaucratic shirking which has been a hot topic after the 18th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). It tries to shed light on the following questions: what kinds of behavior are considered as bureaucratic shirking? What are the patterns and characteristics of bureaucratic shirking? What cause bureaucratic shirking and what institutional mechanisms are appropriate to tackle the shirking problem? This study will address these questions from the perspective of accountability. Specifically, it will explore the relationship between the effectiveness of accountability and bureaucratic shirking. Different from the established literature which normally

connects accountability to positive resonance, this study regards accountability as a multifaceted and complex mechanism and argues that “bad” accountability may lead to unintended consequences. This study will explore how bureaucrats respond to accountability pressures and why some shirk but others do not. In doing so, it will take into consideration the human agency, a “missing link” in the existing research, to try to connect accountability institutions and bureaucratic behaviors. It considers human agency, manifested in an individual’s public service motivation, as a moderating variable between the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms and bureaucratic shirking. By doing so, this study will show how bureaucrats with different public service motivation react to the internal accountability pressure, what strategies they may adopt when the accountability system is flawed, and why this leads to bureaucratic shirking.

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(Free admission)

All are welcome!