

# *Research on Building a Public Service System for Labour Relations after the Epidemic*

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**Abstract:** Practice first' is the main feature of the construction of China's labour relations public service system, and a number of vivid and distinctive local practices have emerged since the epidemic. However, there is no uniform and clear policy guideline on 'what is labour relations public service' and 'what is labour relations public service', and there are different ideas in practice. Under the current double-overlapping background of the switching of new and old economic dynamics and changes in the way labour is employed, the difficulty of coordinating the interests of both parties in labour relations has increased, giving the governance of labour relations a more multidimensional value to pursue, requiring the strengthening of governance at the source and the rule of law, and overcoming the downturn of the economic cycle by reshaping the foundation of harmony and mutual trust through the two-way empowerment of both parties in labour relations, creating full employment opportunities and accumulating high-quality human capital.

## **1. Introduction**

Public services are related to people's livelihoods and connect people's hearts, and are not only the main responsibility of Governments at all levels, but also an important vehicle and support for the governance of modern countries. Employment is the foundation of people's livelihoods, and labour relations are one of the most basic and important social relations, with public services for labour relations being an important part of 'getting what you pay for'. At present, the switching of economic development momentum and changes in production organization, the pressure of economic development continues to labour relations, labour relations contradictions are more complex and severe, and it is more difficult to protect enterprises, stabilize employment and promote harmony, so it is more and more urgent to explore the construction of a public service system for labour relations under the new situation. This paper takes the concept of 'big labour relations' as its overarching principle, and, based on the principle of adapting to local conditions and living within one's means, gradually explores the construction of a hierarchical and diversified public service system for labour relations, so as to provide guarantee support for the construction of harmony, the promotion of the accumulation of human capital, and the facilitation of high-quality economic development.

## **2. The connotation and hierarchy of labour relations public service**

The exploration of the public service system of labour relations is an important means of promoting the main contradiction of labour relations in China after the epidemic, promoting the harmony of labour relations, and realizing common prosperity. In 2018, Yantian District of Shenzhen City, Guangdong Province, took the lead in the country to creatively put forward the concept of ‘public service of labour relations’[1], and then set off a wave of exploration and innovation of public service of labour relations in the country. Subsequently, a wave of exploration and innovation of labour relations public services has started in the country, with Chengdu, Chongqing, Ningxia, Hainan and other places starting the local exploration of the construction of labour relations public service system.

### **2.1 Connotation of public services in labour relations**

In China, the social field of public service refers to the ‘eight’ people's livelihood protection objectives of ‘early childhood, education, labour, medical care, old age, housing, support for the weak and help for the poor’, which constitutes a government-led, social participation. This constitutes a government-led, social-participation, market-driven, diversified public service provision pattern. Labour relations public services refer to public services led by the government with the participation of social organisations, focusing on the needs of enterprises and workers, taking into account the characteristics of the region, and committed to promoting the standardisation of labour relations, their orderly operation, reasonable adjustments and the resolution of conflicts. The scope of labour relations public services includes labour relations public services, employment and entrepreneurship public services, personnel and talent public services, social insurance public services and other public services related to labour relations [2].

### **2.2 Hierarchical division of public services for labour relations**

There is a representative ‘2123’ standard system for constructing harmonious labour relations public services - ‘two main bodies, one demand, two plates and three levels’. There are two main bodies: enterprises and workers; the design, development and provision of public service products are guided by the actual demand for building harmonious labour relations; two major segments are formed for the main and related public service products directly and indirectly related to labour relations; and three levels are set up for basic, high-end and characteristic public service products. Basic refers to regular labour relations public services that can be provided everywhere, high-end refers to services that are different from regular services and have higher-end service contents than basic services, and special features refer to labour relations public services that are provided according to the unique industrial, economic and regional characteristics of each place.

## **3. Era background and value pursuit of labour relations public service system**

### **3.1 Reducing internal conflict on both sides of the labour relationship**

Three years after the epidemic, it takes time for the economy to fully recover, and restarting the economy is most critical. However, in reality, enterprises do not dare to easily increase their staff and expand their jobs, and they generally cancel pay rise plans, reduce employee benefits and extend working hours for in-service workers. In addition, workers are afraid to jump ship or leave their jobs lightly, and the quality of their employment has generally declined. When workers' dissatisfaction or “sense of deprivation” accumulates to a certain level and becomes unbearable,

they claim benefits from enterprises or even apply for labour arbitration, resulting in a high incidence of labour disputes. Enterprises invest a lot of energy in order to prove the settlement of lawsuits and the aftermath of the incident, which is a kind of meaningless internal consumption for both sides of the labour relationship.

Currently, the construction of public services for labour relations should pay more attention to the two-way empowerment of market entities and workers, bridging the consensus between the two sides of the labour relationship with an effective consultation and coordination mechanism, guaranteeing the sound development of enterprises with professional and appropriate guidance on labour compliance, and helping workers to improve their career development ability and employment quality.

### **3.2 Compensating for Market Failures with the Government's Hand**

After three years of epidemic impact, the economic recovery is facing multiple pressures, with the digital economy and urban industries continuing to contribute growth momentum in the recovery process, while other sectors are recovering more slowly. In particular, we need to focus on industries affected by national policies such as real estate and fuel vehicles, traditional wholesale and retail industries affected by e-commerce, and lifestyle services such as catering and retail, which are susceptible to replacement by service robots. A large number of displaced workers, low-skilled labourers and older workers in the above transition industries are vulnerable to infringement of their labour rights and interests in the process of transferring to other jobs, or are directly excluded from the formal labour market.

In addition, attention must be paid to the problem of ‘de-labourisation’ as a result of the diversification of employment methods. In order to save on labour costs, enterprises have increased their use of labour dispatch, labour contracting and business outsourcing, and the labour-employment relationship has tended to become shorter-term. New forms of employment and the number of flexibly employed persons are increasing, now accounting for 21 per cent of all employment, posing a major risk to the social security system. Therefore, the construction of a public service system for labour relations should make up for the ‘market failure’ with the help of an active government, so as to build a solid foundation for workers' rights and interests.

### **3.3 Accumulating high-quality human capital**

In order to shift economic development from ‘investment-driven’ to ‘innovation-driven’, a more highly skilled and educated labour force is needed. At the same time, it is important to protect the rights and interests of workers in vocational skills training, and to continue to raise the level of their human capital, so as to achieve higher-quality full employment and prevent workers from falling into unemployment on a large scale. However, not enough attention has been paid to this issue in the field of labour relations.

American economist Theodore Schultz proposed that the contribution of human capital to economic growth is far more important than the increase in physical capital and the number of labourers, and that human capital is expressed in the knowledge, skills, experience and health that people possess [3]. Knowledge accumulation, technological innovation and specialised human capital are the driving forces of long-term economic growth [4]. In the field of labor relations, enterprises need to establish a mechanism to stimulate growth in wage distribution, strive to increase the proportion of labor compensation in the initial distribution, focus on increasing labor income, and let workers share the fruits of development. Enterprises should improve the staff training system, implement a lifelong vocational skills training system for workers, and comprehensively enhance the vocational skills level of enterprise workers. Enterprises have

reasonably set labor quotas and working hour systems to allow workers to have more leisure time for rest and study, and to protect the right to rest and health. Relevant organizations have developed human resources consulting services to enhance the ability of enterprises to coordinate labor relations and human resources management.

### **3.4 Deepening the concept of labour relations under the rule of law**

In the construction of the public service system, the government is the core body of service provision, and the quality of the construction of the rule of law government largely affects the quality of public service provision. The construction of the public service system of labour relations should firmly grasp the political direction of the high-quality development of the rule of law, and adhere to the people-centred thinking into concrete practice. First, we must clarify the relationship between the government and the market, the government and society, and promote a better combination of an effective market and a competent government. Service-oriented government, in-depth promotion of the ‘release of services’ reform, promote the deep integration of online and offline, sorting out administrative business processes to implement the ‘one thing at a time’, comprehensively enhance the level of government services, improve the effectiveness of government services.

Secondly, the government should, in accordance with the concept of administration according to law and law enforcement for the people, increase the enforcement of labour laws and regulations, open up channels for complaints and reports of violations, safeguard social fairness and justice and the dignity of the legal system, and create a good soil of the rule of law for the governance of labour relations. Thirdly, the Government combines prevention at the source with positive incentives to strengthen the publicity and demonstration of typical positive and negative cases and the role of deterrence and warning, so as to enhance the belief in the rule of law in labour throughout society. Emphasis has been placed on the concept of preventive juridical governance, on the internal employment management of employers, and on the organic integration of the relevant requirements of the labour rule of law and human resources management, so as to maximize the ability of human resources management to stand up to the test of the labour rule of law. At the same time, the government needs to focus on the concept of incentive jurisprudence governance, pay attention to harmonious labour relations enterprises, ‘excellent employer brand’ and other typical experience cases of publicity and demonstration, to promote entrepreneurship and positive incentives to effectively combine, enhance the whole society's belief in the rule of law, and strive to form a good social culture [5].

## **4. Strategies for building a public service system for labour relations**

The labour relations public service system is an organic operation system formed around the provision of labour relations public services, which contains all the elements involved in the entire operation process of labour relations public services from generation, supply, evaluation and optimization, such as the delineation of service objects and service scope, service product design, service standard setting, service supply mechanism and evaluation and feedback mechanism.

### **4.1 Strengthening organisational leadership and orderly construction**

Organisational leadership is the core and key to promoting the implementation of all work. First, the Party has taken the lead in party building, incorporating labour relations public services into the standardized construction of party organizations, party activities and the construction of labour relations vanguard stations, and actively building a labour relations public service pattern led by the

Party committee, with the Government taking responsibility, social coordination, participation by enterprises and workers, and safeguarded by the rule of law. The second government plans and promotes at a high level, including the construction of harmonious labour relations in regional economic and social development planning or key reform projects, setting up a leading working group, with regional leaders personally taking charge of the promotion to ensure that the work of public services for labour relations is put into practice. Third, we need to realize the joint efforts of government departments, optimize the departmental collaboration mechanism for the provision of public services in labor relations, and enhance the endogenous motivation of enterprises to participate in the construction of harmonious labor relations. The fourth is to improve the mechanisms of work supervision, regular work meetings and performance evaluation, so as to fully grasp the progress of the work at all stages, study and solve relevant problems in a timely manner, continue to promote the implementation of the work, and enhance the capacity and effectiveness of public services in labour relations.

#### **4.2 Clear demand-driven service research and development**

The needs of the subject of labour relations are the starting point for the design of labour relations public service products, and only by clarifying the actual needs of the service recipients can we design public service products that can meet their needs. Firstly, we determine the actual needs of the service subjects through research and experience summary by combining the regional economic development situation and industrial characteristics, and form a list of needs. Secondly, the government mobilizes the power of colleges and universities and wisdom pools to participate in the design of labor relations public service products, and establishes a mechanism for product research and development that involves manpower, enterprises, laborers and trade unions, so as to fully ensure the professionalism and pertinence of the service products. Thirdly, a sound mechanism has been established for optimizing labour relations public service products, so that they can be continually adjusted and improved through service satisfaction evaluations and periodic demand surveys, so that they can respond to the needs of service recipients to the fullest extent possible.

#### **4.3 Sound platform carrier to guarantee service supply**

The service supply platform is an important carrier for the provision of labour relations public services, which can be carried out through the construction of both online and offline service platforms. The mainstream direction of the offline platform is to build a physical platform for labour relations public services at the district, town and community (industrial park) levels, so as to form a public service network and enable the extension of all labour relations services to the grassroots level. The online platform mainly relies on the government service system, WeChat public number, WeChat group and other channels to provide labour relations public services. By linking the Government, trade unions and enterprises, the intelligent platform has broken down the barriers between the various links in the governance of labour relations, integrating a number of services such as management evaluation of employers, workers' rights protection and the signing of electronic contracts, and realizing the functions of risk early warning, labour rights and interests protection, and the rapid disposal of conflicts and disputes, thus making a useful exploration of the digital governance of labour relations.

#### **4.4 Encouraging pluralistic participation to stimulate service effectiveness**

With regard to public services for labour relations, a mechanism for the diversified provision of public services for labour relations has been constructed through the combination of



government-led and social participation and other diversified main forces, so as to promote collaborative social governance. According to the actual situation of localities, social organizations, consulting companies, human resources companies, law firms, experts from universities, professional mediators, labour relations coordinators, volunteers and other co-constructive forces will be integrated to participate in the operation of labour relations public service stations, the provision of various types of professional services, and theoretical research, so that the total quantity of supply, the quality of supply, and the efficiency of supply of labour relations public services will be adequately safeguarded. Ensuring that the total quantity, quality and efficiency of labour relations services are fully guaranteed. Secondly, the Government's traditional practice of 'taking care of everything' should be changed, and the mechanisms and channels for the participation of multiple actors in the provision of labour relations public services should be continuously innovated and optimised. On the premise of ensuring public welfare, market mechanisms should be introduced to mobilise the enthusiasm of multiple social forces to participate through the purchase of services by the government, so as to optimise the allocation of resources and achieve orderly participation. Thirdly, on the basis of the purchase of services by the Government, government supervision and guidance should be continuously strengthened, and a mechanism for positive interaction among multiple actors should be formed through government supervision, organizational self-regulation and social supervision, so as to ensure the healthy operation of the public service system for labour relations.

#### 4.5 Strengthening theory to guide practical development

First, it cooperates with universities and other scientific research institutions to build post-doctoral innovation and practice bases, labour research and innovation bases, teaching practice bases and other scientific research and practice platforms, so as to create a good environment for theoretical research, and to cultivate the soil for the integration of industry-university-research innovation. Secondly, it cooperates with universities and think tanks to conduct research on topics, conduct in-depth investigation and analysis of the basic situation in the field of labour relations, the structure of supply and demand of public services in labour relations, and the system of public services in labour relations, and then form research reports. Thirdly, through empirical research, the theoretical and practical results will be summarized and refined, so as to form replicable and popularized regional experiences and promote the development of labour relations public services in multiple regions.

### 5. Conclusion

To build a public service system for post-epidemic labor relations, it is necessary to be based on development needs, local realities and problem orientation, to clarify the overall idea of building a service system for labor relations, to define the content and boundaries of public services for labor relations, to focus on the provision of direct public services during the whole cycle of the establishment, survival and termination of labor relations, and to provide service interfaces for high-frequency extension of service needs after the termination of labor relations. Taking the concept of "Great Labor Relations" as the overarching principle, and adhering to the principle of adapting to local conditions and living within one's means, the services are centered on basic protection, development and enhancement, environment creation, and special branding. We are gradually exploring the construction of a hierarchical and diversified public service system for labor relations, to realize a wide coverage of the service network system, to protect labor rights and interests, to improve the quality of employment, and to empower the high-quality development of the enterprise economy.

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