

## Research on Development Trends of China's Public Cultural Service Policies Based on Content Analysis (Postprint)

**Authors:** Wang Ping, Hong Jin

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### Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] Analysis of development trends in public cultural service policies can provide insights for the planning, formulation, and adjustment of future policies concerning public cultural service construction. [Method/Process] Employing content analysis, this study examines 90 national-level policy texts related to public cultural services issued between 1982 and 2017 (a 36-year span) as the research corpus, analyzing them across seven dimensions: annual policy issuance volume, policy stakeholders, policy implementers, policy beneficiaries, policy instruments, policy resources, and policy objectives, thereby forming a preliminary assessment of China's public cultural service policy development trends. [Results/Conclusions] The volume of public cultural service policies will exhibit a fluctuating upward trend; the government will continue to exercise comprehensive leadership; participation in public cultural services will become increasingly diversified; public cultural services will trend toward greater equity; institutional, economic, and legal instruments will remain the primary policy tools for China's public cultural services; cultural resources, financial resources, and other assets will continue to constitute the main policy resources; in the near term, the objectives of China's public cultural service policies will maintain a macro-level orientation.

### Full Text

## Research on Policy Trends of Chinese Public Cultural Service Based on Content Analysis

**Wang Ping, Hong Jin**

School of Information Management, Zhengzhou University, Zhengzhou 450001

## Abstract

**[Purpose/Significance]** Analyzing the development trends of public cultural service policies can provide insights for future policy planning, formulation, and adjustment in public cultural service construction. **[Method/Process]** Using content analysis, this study examines 90 national-level policy texts related to public cultural services issued between 1982 and 2017. The analysis covers seven dimensions: annual policy output, policy makers, policy implementers, policy beneficiaries, policy instruments, policy resources, and policy objectives, forming a preliminary judgment on the development trends of China's public cultural service policies. **[Result/Conclusion]** The number of public cultural service policies will show a fluctuating upward trend; the government will continue to play a comprehensive leading role; participants in public cultural services will become diversified; public cultural services will become more equitable; institutional, economic, and legal means will remain the primary policy instruments; cultural resources and funding will continue to be the main policy resources; and in the short term, the objectives of China's public cultural service policies will remain macroscopic.

**Keywords:** public cultural service; policy text; content analysis

**Classification Number:** G251

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## 1. Introduction

On September 13, 2006, the “National ‘Eleventh Five-Year’ Cultural Development Plan Outline” issued by the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council identified strengthening “public cultural service” as an important component of future cultural construction, marking the first time the concept of “public cultural service” was formally proposed at the national level. The “Outline of the 13th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development (2016-2020)” passed on March 16, 2016, explicitly set forth the specific task of “building a modern public cultural service system and promoting the standardization and equalization of basic public cultural services.” The report of the 19th CPC National Congress on October 18, 2017, once again emphasized improving the public cultural service system. These developments demonstrate the Party and state's increasing attention to public cultural services and the rising importance of public cultural service's role and status in the public service domain.

Domestic research has largely focused on public cultural services themselves, while studies on public cultural service policies remain limited. Existing research on public cultural service policies has concentrated primarily on policy development history, problems and countermeasures [4-6], policy orientation and path studies [7-11], policy construction functions [12], and comparative studies of domestic and foreign public cultural service policies [13-14]. While these studies provide theoretical guidance for policy formulation and adjust-

ment and lay a foundation for research in this field, certain shortcomings exist. Overall, the volume of domestic research is insufficient, with policy studies particularly scarce compared to general public cultural service research. Most existing studies remain at the macro level with insufficient in-depth analysis. Although research has examined policy development, orientation, paths, construction functions, and international comparisons, the number of relevant papers remains limited and research perspectives need further expansion. Some articles on policy orientation, path studies, and construction functions represent experienced researchers' understandings, which have reference value but also reflect the need for more data- and theory-supported research on public cultural service policies. This paper approaches the issue from a policy content analysis perspective, conducting content coding and qualitative analysis of national-level policy texts to examine the composition of China's public cultural service policy content system and predict future development trends, thereby providing insights for future policy planning, formulation, and adjustment.

## 2. Methodology

**2.1 Concept Definition** The primary concept in this study is public cultural service, under which national-level relevant policy texts were collected. Regarding the definition of public cultural service, no consensus has been reached in domestic and international academic circles due to different disciplines and research perspectives. Some scholars have noted that public cultural services in the broad sense include cultural management services provided by the government in the cultural field (including cultural policies, laws, regulations, etc.) and cultural market supervision services; in the narrow sense, public cultural services refer to public cultural products and services distinct from cultural commodities (products and services) provided through general market mechanisms [15]. The concept used in this study is mainly the narrow one. The "Implementation Outline for Public Cultural Service System Construction during the 12th Five-Year Plan Period" defines public cultural service as: led by the government, participated in by social forces, supported by public finance, with public welfare cultural institutions as the backbone, serving all people, aiming to meet the basic cultural needs of the people and safeguard their basic cultural rights and interests, with public departments mainly consisting of government departments providing public cultural products and services to society [16].

**2.2 Research Questions** This study is based on the understanding that policies have functions of guidance, control, coordination, management, allocation, regulation, mediation, supervision, regeneration, and motivation [17]. Similarly, public cultural service policies play a significant role in public cultural service construction, with national-level policies being particularly representative. Based on 90 national-level policy texts on public cultural services issued between 1982 and 2017 (including two laws: the "Public Cultural Service Guarantee Law of the People's Republic of China" and the "Public Library Law of the People's Republic of China"), this study analyzes the content system

of China's public cultural service policies to further predict their development direction.

**2.3 Research Operation** Content analysis specifically refers to a systematic quantitative and qualitative language analysis method for document content, aiming to analyze or measure the essential facts and related development trends concerning themes in the literature [18]. The specific research steps are as follows: Based on the research questions, content analysis was selected as the research method. Public cultural service policy texts relevant to the research theme were collected to determine the content analysis corpus, ultimately identifying 90 national-level policies as the textual materials for analysis. The collected policy texts were preliminarily analyzed and categorized, including both overall significance and categorical significance levels, with the overall level referring to public cultural service and the categorical level mainly including specific aspects such as public libraries, museums, art galleries, cultural centers (stations), public electronic reading rooms, public digital culture, public cultural service system demonstration zones, cultural information resource sharing, cultural volunteer services, cultural system reform, aging services, traditional opera, grassroots levels, migrant workers, the masses, sports facilities, cultural inheritance, supply-side structural reform, cultural heritage protection, comprehensive cultural market law enforcement capabilities, nationwide reading, etc. Simultaneously, public cultural service policies were analyzed from a temporal dimension, with policy quantities counted by time periods. Based on initial analysis, content analysis corpus coding was conducted. Based on the content analysis corpus coding, analytical subjects and logical relationships were further extracted and classified from the policy texts to develop a content analysis coding catalog. Results were analyzed and interpreted, with statistics compiled on the frequency of first-level and second-level categories in the coding catalog to explore development trends in China's public cultural service policies.

### 3. Data Collection

**3.1 Selection of Content Analysis Corpus** This study selected the aforementioned 90 policy texts on public cultural services as the content analysis corpus and coded them sequentially, as shown in Table 1 through Table 3 .

**Table 1** presents statistics on public cultural service policies from 1982-1999, **Table 2** covers 2000-2010, and **Table 3** covers 2011-2017. (Note: Policies marked with \* were not found in their original text and thus excluded from the analysis corpus.)

**3.2 Development of Coding Catalog** Based on fundamental public policy theories and principles, Chen Zhenming defines policy subjects as "individuals, groups, or organizations that directly or indirectly participate in policy formulation, implementation, evaluation, and monitoring" [19]. Therefore, "policy makers," "policy implementers," and "policy beneficiaries" were selected as an-

alytical units. Easton (D. Easton) defines public policy as “the authoritative allocation of values for the whole society” [20], highlighting public policy’s role in resource value distribution, which led to the selection of “policy instruments” and “policy resources” as analytical units. To analyze policy direction horizontally, “policy objectives” was also selected as an analytical unit.

Based on the above theories and research questions, this study developed a coding catalog containing six first-level categories and 48 second-level categories: policy makers, policy implementers, policy beneficiaries, policy instruments, policy resources, and policy objectives (see Table 4 ), and a policy objectives coding catalog extending from second-level to third-level categories (see Table 5 ).

#### 4. Data Analysis

Based on corpus coding and the coding catalog, this study conducted detailed statistics across seven aspects: annual policy output, policy makers, policy implementers, policy beneficiaries, policy instruments, policy resources, and policy objectives, and analyzed and predicted the future development direction of China’s public cultural service policies in combination with China’s current situation.

**4.1 Statistical Analysis of Annual Policy Output** Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper] shows the annual number of public cultural service policies issued between 1982 and 2017, with the vertical axis representing policy quantity and the horizontal axis representing years. As shown in Figure 1, since the 21st century, the number of China’s public cultural service policies has grown significantly compared to earlier periods, continuously developing and improving with characteristics of staged fluctuating growth. Among the 90 policy texts, 7 were issued from 1982-1999, 30 from 2001-2010, and 53 from 2011-2017. In 2017 alone, 20 policies were issued, accounting for 22.22% of the total, showing explosive growth. This is closely related to the promulgation of the “Public Cultural Service Guarantee Law of the People’s Republic of China” in 2016 and the Party and state’s high attention to people’s spiritual and cultural needs in recent years. Moreover, policies concerning public cultural services have become increasingly extensive and detailed, providing guidance at both macro and micro levels, with specific policies issued in areas such as public digital culture, traditional opera, and ancient books, which helps concretize public cultural service content and accelerate construction progress.

**4.2 Statistical Analysis of Policy Makers** Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper] presents statistics on various types of policy makers, with the vertical axis showing policy maker types and the horizontal axis showing their frequency. Policy makers refer to institutions directly responsible for policy formulation, issuance, supervision, and evaluation. Data show that various ministries under the State Council appear most frequently, reaching 68 times (77.27% of

the total), among which the Ministry of Culture appears 62 times (91.18% of all ministries). The State Council as a whole appears 14 times (15.91%), followed by local governments with 22 appearances (25%). The National People's Congress appears least frequently, only 6 times, mainly responsible for reviewing and approving laws and five-year plans. Overall, policy makers are relatively concentrated, with the Ministry of Culture under the State Council being the primary responsible entity and main leader for public cultural service policies. However, this also demonstrates the singularity of policy-making subjects, which can make it difficult for people's differentiated needs for public cultural services to be reflected in policies and may affect subsequent policy implementation to some extent—a point worth our attention and reflection.

**4.3 Statistical Analysis of Policy Implementers** Figure 3 [Figure 3: see original paper] shows statistics and comparisons of various implementers in the policies. Policy implementers refer to various entities that will execute, implement, evaluate, and further adjust policies, concretizing abstract policies and ensuring their implementation, playing a decisive role in achieving established policy objectives. As shown in Figure 3, among all 88 valid policy texts, the most frequently mentioned implementer is the government, appearing 79 times (89.77% of the total), fully indicating high expectations for government implementation. In their view, China's public cultural service policies will be primarily executed by the government. This perspective is inseparable from government functions. As an important component of public services, public cultural services represent a clear manifestation of public service functions in the cultural domain, and providing social public service functions is one of the government's important responsibilities. Therefore, the government is regarded as the main implementer of public cultural service policies.

What deserves reflection is that the government's proportion among all policy implementers is too large, which can lead to overemphasis on the government's role in public cultural services while neglecting other implementation subjects, negatively affecting policy implementation effectiveness. Given this phenomenon, some experts have proposed that developing public cultural services requires breaking the notion that "government is the only provider of public cultural services," further exploring the socialization and marketization of public cultural services, and allowing social forces to participate in building the public cultural service system [21].

Second are public cultural institutions as public institutions, mentioned 43 times (48.86% of the total), mainly including public libraries, cultural centers, museums, art galleries, science and technology museums, stadiums, youth palaces, workers' cultural palaces, rural book houses, community book houses, township cultural stations, and grassroots comprehensive cultural service centers. This indicates that public cultural services largely rely on these institutions to provide specific service content. Notably, the state has issued 9 policies specifically targeting public libraries as public cultural institutions, accounting for 10.23%

of all valid public cultural service policies collected in this study, while fewer policies target other institutions (5 for cultural centers/stations, 2 for museums, 2 for art galleries), with no targeted policies for other cultural institutions, mostly mentioning their implementation functions in various policies. Additionally, with the “Public Library Law of the People’s Republic of China” officially implemented on January 1, 2018, China’s public library system construction has gained policy and legal basis, providing new momentum and fundamental guarantee for sustainable development [22]. This shows that public libraries play an important role in policy implementation, and the state has high expectations for them in public cultural service construction.

Third are enterprises, appearing 35 times (39.77% of the total). Recent policies focus on encouraging private capital to participate in public cultural service system construction, encouraging various cultural enterprises to participate in public cultural services, and actively promoting government purchase of public cultural services from social forces, indicating that policy implementation requires participation from different roles to jointly promote system construction. The lowest share is the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, mentioned only twice (2.27%), both concerning providing public cultural services for migrant workers.

**4.4 Statistical Analysis of Policy Beneficiaries** Figure 4 [Figure 4: see original paper] shows the distribution of beneficiaries in public cultural service policies. Based on specific policy content, beneficiaries are divided into nine categories: the general public/social citizens, grassroots masses, farmer groups, herders, vulnerable groups, disabled persons, military personnel, and people in financial difficulty/low-income groups. The highest proportion is the general public/social citizens, accounting for 73.86% of the total, indicating that as a public policy, public cultural service policies centrally reflect public interests from a strategic and overall perspective. Second are grassroots masses, mentioned 50 times (56.82%), showing that policymakers recognize grassroots levels as the focus and weak link of public cultural services, shifting the work 重心 downward to revitalize grassroots cultural construction, which helps accelerate public cultural service construction.

Data show that vulnerable groups appear 46 times (52.27%), and people in underdeveloped areas appear 45 times (51.14%), with 35.23% of policies specifically mentioning disabled persons, indicating that policies have begun to notice disadvantaged groups in society. By comparison, vulnerable groups such as the elderly, minors, disabled persons, migrant workers, left-behind women and children in rural areas, unemployed persons, retirees, people in financial difficulty, and people in “old, minority, border, and poor” areas have relatively limited access to public cultural services—a phenomenon deserving policymakers’ attention. Other beneficiaries, in descending order of frequency, are farmer groups, people in financial difficulty/low-income groups, military personnel, and herders.

**4.5 Statistical Analysis of Policy Instruments** Figure 5 [Figure 5: see original paper] shows the frequency statistics of various policy instruments mentioned in public cultural service policy texts. The most frequently mentioned instrument is institutional means, appearing 71 times (80.68% of the total). Institutional normative systems and standard construction have clear regulatory functions. Since not all policy implementers have high consciousness, institutional means help internalize policies and coordinate implementation processes, thereby strengthening policy effects and are considered the most conventional and effective instrument by policymakers. Second is economic means, with financial support mentioned 62 times (70.45%), including specific instruments such as government purchase, project subsidies, targeted funding, loan interest discounts, financial support (appropriate central financial subsidies), tax incentives, financial services, and special funds, which embodies the description that public cultural services are supported by public finance. Legal means appear in 48.86% of policies. As law represents the concentrated will of most people and has coercive effects, formulating and improving laws and regulations helps ensure effective policy implementation, making it a common instrument in public policy. Clarifying specific implementation instruments helps reduce implementation costs, enhance policy operability and feasibility, strengthen policy guarantees, and improve service effectiveness.

Notably, within legal means, 69.7% of policy statements involve “strengthening research on relevant laws and regulations concerning policy subjects and establishing and improving relevant laws and regulations.” The “Public Cultural Service Guarantee Law of the People’s Republic of China,” implemented on March 1, 2017, as China’s first national law on public cultural services, has greatly promoted the legalization of the public cultural service system. However, this is a macro-level law for public cultural services, and specific relevant laws and regulations remain to be improved.

**4.6 Statistical Analysis of Policy Resources** Figure 6 [Figure 6: see original paper] shows the statistics of policy resource types mentioned in these policies. Policy resources refer to various policy value elements that affect policy stakeholders, especially beneficiaries. First, cultural resources are mentioned most frequently, appearing 83 times (94.32% of the total), indicating that cultural resources are the main resource guarantee for public cultural service policy implementation. Second is funding, mentioned 62 times (70.45%). Since public cultural services serve all people and need to meet their basic cultural needs and safeguard their basic cultural rights and interests, strong financial support is essential. Other policy resources, in descending order, are facilities and equipment, technological resources, talent teams, policy guarantees (such as preferential policies), organizational resources, and land resources.

**4.7 Statistical Analysis of Policy Objectives** Figure 7 [Figure 7: see original paper] shows the statistical results of different policy objectives in public cultural service policies. The most frequently mentioned objective is promoting

public cultural institution construction, appearing 43 times (48.86% of the total). Beyond strengthening infrastructure and talent teams in public libraries, cultural centers, museums, and other institutions, promoting corporate governance structure reform in public cultural institutions has emerged as a novel and important content. Among these, promoting corporate governance structures appears 18 times (41.86% of the objectives related to promoting public cultural institutions). Before 2010, the state emphasized accelerating corporate restructuring of state-owned cultural enterprises and improving corporate governance, but rarely mentioned this in the public cultural service domain. Subsequently, during the creation of national public cultural service system demonstration zones, key creation contents explicitly included forming a public cultural service organizational system combining government macro-management with corporate governance structures in public cultural institutions. By the issuance of the “Implementation Plan for Deepening Corporate Governance Structure Reform in Public Cultural Institutions” (2017), promoting corporate governance structures was formally established as policy.

Second is promoting cultural development in underdeveloped areas, appearing 37 times (42.05%), showing that policymakers consider promoting equalization of public cultural services important. The least mentioned objective is inheriting and developing excellent traditional Chinese culture, appearing only 10 times (11.36%). Apart from the overall policy “Opinions on Implementing the Project for Inheriting and Developing Excellent Traditional Chinese Culture,” the “Public Cultural Service Guarantee Law of the People’s Republic of China” also mentions inheriting and developing excellent traditional Chinese culture. Additionally, six specific policies have been issued concerning aspects such as traditional opera, ancient books, and cultural heritage, striving to promote excellent traditional Chinese culture through public cultural services.

Notably, most current public cultural service policy objectives remain macroscopic, with specific, easily evaluable objectives needing strengthening. This phenomenon deserves attention from researchers, policymakers, and evaluators.

## 5. Conclusion and Discussion

The above data analysis reveals the composition of China’s public cultural service policy content system: the Ministry of Culture under the State Council is the primary policy maker; governments and public cultural institutions play major roles in policy implementation; policy beneficiaries are not limited to certain classes but target the general public to safeguard public interests, with attention to vulnerable groups; institutional, economic, and legal means constitute the main policy instruments; cultural resources and funding serve as the primary policy resources; and policy objectives focus on promoting public cultural institution construction, advancing cultural development in underdeveloped areas to promote equalization, inheriting excellent traditional Chinese culture, and establishing a sound public cultural service system to enrich people’s spiritual and cultural life and build a socialist cultural powerhouse.

If influencing factors in policy formulation are controlled, China's future public cultural service policies will show the following trends: The number of public cultural service policies will show a fluctuating upward trend. Given that China's public cultural service system construction remains in its initial stage and people's basic cultural needs and rights require policy protection, and with deepening construction, corresponding policies will be issued at more specific levels to improve the system, it can be predicted that policy numbers will increase wave-like according to actual construction conditions. The government will continue to play a comprehensive leading role. The government will maintain dominant discourse in public cultural service policy formulation, with the Ministry of Culture under the State Council continuing to play a leading role. Regarding the singularity of policy-making subjects, policymakers need to expand channels for social participation in policy formulation, listen to opinions from all social sectors, and formulate policies oriented toward people's real needs. Participants in public cultural services will become diversified. To avoid overemphasizing the government's role while neglecting other implementation subjects, public cultural service policies will encourage multi-subject participation while maintaining government leadership, striving to form a new pattern of government, market, and society jointly participating in public cultural service system construction. The existing problem is that while encouraging various social subjects to participate, specific policy guidance, support, evaluation, and supervision systems are lacking, resulting in poor operational feasibility—a problem that should attract policymakers' attention. Meanwhile, self-construction of key institutions like libraries will be gradually strengthened to further enhance their autonomy and increase public participation and sense of gain. Public cultural services will become more equalized. Although current policies have begun to address people in underdeveloped areas and vulnerable groups, the phenomenon of unequal public cultural services remains serious. Therefore, macro-level beneficiaries will still be all people, with policies appropriately tilting toward minorities and vulnerable groups to safeguard their most basic cultural rights. Simultaneously, specific policies will further refine target beneficiary groups, combining macro and micro levels to better promote equalization. Institutional, economic, and legal means will continue as primary policy instruments. It can be predicted that policy instruments will become more diversified to enhance policy effectiveness. Addressing deficiencies in legal means, more specific laws and regulations for public cultural services will be established to ensure lawful governance and promote more standardized construction. Cultural resources and funding will remain main policy resources. These resources play a guiding role in policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation and will become essential elements for future policy development, implementation, and assessment. Additionally, as problems such as narrow resource channels become apparent (e.g., funding mainly relying on central and local government finances), future policies will increase efforts to attract social forces' participation and investment. In the short term, policy objectives will remain macroscopic. Addressing this phenomenon, we recommend setting specific, feasible, and easily evaluable micro-level objectives based on macro-level goals, implementing them

through specific tasks and derivative regulations to clarify and specify macro objectives, thereby improving policy operability and achieving macro objectives step by step.

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### Author Contributions

**Wang Ping:** Responsible for proposing the research topic and framework, and for paper revision and finalization.

**Hong Jin:** Responsible for data collection, processing, and paper writing.

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### A Content Analysis on Policy Trends of Chinese Public Cultural Service

**Wang ping, Hong jin**

Information Management School of Zhengzhou University, Zhengzhou 450001

**Abstract:** [Purpose/significance] The analysis about policy trends of public cultural service attempts to provide enlightenment for the policy planning and making of public cultural service in the future. [Method/process] Based on 90 policy texts on public cultural services at the national level from 1982 to 2017, the article carried out analysis from seven perspectives, including annual policies quantitative statistics, policy makers, policy enforcers, policy beneficiaries, policy instruments, policy resources and policy objectives, and formed a preliminary judgment on the policy trends on public cultural service in China. [Result/conclusion] The number of policies on public cultural service will show an increasing trend; the government will continue to play a leading role fully; the participants in public cultural services are diversified; public cultural services will tend to be more equal; institutionalized means, economic means and legal means will continue to be the main policy instruments; cultural resources and capital remain the main policy resources; and the policy objectives of public

cultural services in China will be macroscopic in the short term.

**Keywords:** public cultural service; policy text; content analysis

*Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.*

*Source: ChinaXiv — Machine translation. Verify with original.*