Cross-departmental Collaboration in Government One-Stop Center: Factors and Performance

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, cross-departmental collaboration has been proved to be an important means for government, which has been widely used in political issues. In this paper, taking a One-Stop Center case, I study the government cross-departmental collaboration during the one-stop center's founding process and its working procedures by focusing on the influencing factors, possible reasons for collaboration, collaboration dynamics, and the performance of one-stop center. This research finds that, besides those factors like leadership, funding, environmental factors, resources which have been proved in Western studies for years, cross-departmental collaboration in China relies more on the organizational culture, the relationship between officials (*Guanxi*), the political support, as well as the government' macro-plan and strategies for development. The role of one-stop center in China is more on Coordination but not facilitating governmental departmental collaboration.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

K.6.1 [**Management of Computing Information Systems**]: Project and People Management: *Management Techniques*

General Terms

Management, Measurement, Performance

Keywords

One-stop Center; Cross-departmental Collaboration; Drivers; Obstacles; Public Service Delivery; Performance

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, in some functional areas like transportation, housing, or environmental protection, or complex production (e.g., aerospace industries), research and development (e.g., semiconductors), or major construction in the private sector, interaction between organizations to address problems of common concern is widespread. Such issues have been addressed as "policy issue network" which challenges existing patterns of organizations and management, and needs the cross-organizational cooperation [12] [4]. Meanwhile, besides these "wicked problems", the dispersed knowledge and resources, first- and second- order effects, and intergovernmental overlays guarantee that managers must engage other governments or organizations [1]. Moreover, debates from both the academic area

and the public management practice are currently emphasizing the benefits from collaboration, or those inter-agency partnerships which can offer as a means of achieving public policy goals [36].

This phenomenon is widespread around the world, as known as a globalized issue. Governments from almost all the countries around the world are trying their best to improve the existing efficiency, and try to attempt various methods or innovations to fulfill it. Western scholars have begun a lot of deep studies on this issue theoretically. However, very few studies could be found in Chinese focusing on China's case, except some opinion pieces. Therefore, to study this global issue in the context of China is very meaningful.

In practice, even within one specific level of government, different departments had no better choice but to work together to face the same public service delivery process. To promote this boundary-spanning management, government officials should find a way to integrate or coordinate between departments. However, every department has their own interests that cannot be easily balanced. Therefore, this paper tries to apply theories and studies developed in the western world to a different context, China, and provides a case study to analyze cross-departmental collaboration process in public service delivery in China. Collaboration has lots of aspects. This paper mainly focuses on the collaboration process, and the research questions are as follows: What are the internal and external factors that influence cross-departmental collaboration? How do these factors influence collaboration? What are the advantages and disadvantages of such collaboration for the public service delivery in China?

2. Literature Review and Mode of Analysis

Government cross-departmental collaboration has been studied for some decades, especially in the western academic world. Those existing relative literatures provides the disagreement on the definition of "collaboration", the various forms of it, the reasons for collaborating, and the possible factors.

2.1 Definition of the key terms

In the organizational literature, there are some variant names of collaboration, like inter-organizational relations, interagency coordination, network governance, inter-sectoral cooperation, strategic alliances of organizations, and so on. Ernst Alexander finds that there seem to be too many varying definitions with little agreement about the meaning of such terms [3]. They varied from each other though they have the same characteristics by working across boundaries.

As for the differences between collaboration and other terms, Bryson and Crosby has done a comparison between them and defined cross-sector collaboration as the liking or sharing of information, goodwill, and good intentions; resources; activities; and power or capabilities by organizations in two or more sectors

to achieve jointly what could not be achieved by organizations in one sector separately [9]. Moreover, Cicin-Sain and Knecht have refined this distinction into a spectrum or "Continuum of Policy Integration", which moves from a state of less integration to a state of more integration[11]. Kuska adopted Cicin-Sain and Knecht's framework, and added cooperation into the continuum[33].

In this paper, I will deal with coordination, integration and other relevant terms like cooperation and 'working together' as a subset of collaboration. Government agencies may use collaboration to share public authorities and information or resources, to enhance capabilities, or to solve large-scale problems by making and implementing public policies together in the form of collaboration, coordination or integration.

2.2 Motivations or Reasons for Cross-departmental Collaboration in the West Studies

A need for collaboration arises as a result of the interconnectedness between government agencies [3]. Alexander reviewed the existing theories related to collaboration and found that exchange theory, contingency theory and organizational ecology, and transaction-cost theory have provided an answer as to why collaborating, and he argued that organizations work together to survive [3]. Collaboration occurs as organizations try to adapt to their environment or to maximize their own goal attainment. It is also the implicit or explicit goal of most social policy makers [23], and to improve public effectiveness and efficiency in service delivery [7].

Hill & Lynn explain this with rational choice theories, in which actors seek production strategies to achieve pre-existing goals[23]. Lowndes & Skelcher argued that there are four motivations for governmental departments to work together, including resource dependency, the emergence of the new orthodoxy of partnerships, the complexity and intransigence of the "wicked issues", and the opened up local decision-making processes [36]. Weiss thought that reasons for collaboration could be made of financial benefit, shared professional values, political advantage, problem solving, reduction of uncertainty, and legal mandates [44]. Moreover, the societal level changes, the increasingly wicked problems with no solutions but temporary and imperfect resolutions, and the shift in the types of acceptable policy instruments, are also leading public agencies to work together for better governance [1].

Therefore, organizations collaborate with other organizations in response of the challenges posed by the interdependencies that shaper their common environment in order to manage uncertain environments and to satisfy their resource needs [22]. Also, during the last two decades, there has been an increasing specialization and professionalization of roles that has led to an increasing functional differentiation, and also to an increasing structural differentiation of organizations. Otherwise there will be a fragmentation of responsibilities among the different organizations. Moreover, the involvement of different sectors and the willingness to collaborate has extent the scope of collaboration [34][6].

2.3 Influencing Factors of Collaboration in the West

Before the collaboration begins, there are some issues or factors that promote the attempts of this initiative, as well as some factors that hinder it. Also, even as the collaboration begins, there are still some factors that facilitate the process of collaboration, and also some factors that can slow down the process.

2.3.1 Key Factors that Promote Collaboration

Many scholars in this area have tried to figure out what factors are the main driven forces for collaboration. According to Agranoff & McGuire's study [2], trust, a shared belief or common purpose, mutual dependency, leadership and guidance ability within self-managing systems are the main cohesion factors in networks. Also, besides those four factors above, initial dispositions toward cooperation/collaboration, issues and incentives, number and variety of groups, and leadership- which have been identified as both explaining the success of collaborative systems and also why collaborative systems are so difficulty to develop and maintain [16]. From Faerman's study [16], leadership has been proved to be the most important one.

Moreover, the creation of inter-organizational alliances in multiple contexts (e.g., coordinating councils and interagency teams) and at multiple levels (e.g., leader and direct care provider levels) may be a promising venue for facilitating inter-organizational exchanges to promote service delivery integration and improve inter-organizational collaboration [17].

Great environment uncertainty promoted organizational administrators to seek out inter-organizational partners whole executives has similar backgrounds to theirs [18]. Therefore, the policy makers and those practitioners should understand the realities of what can be expected from these network structures in order to maximize the benefits of this mechanism [30].

Among the dynamic process, cross-boundary information sharing and integration has long been recognized as a critical enabler for enhancing organizational effectiveness and efficiency while better strategic decisions and problem solving can be achieved with aggregated information and knowledge [15][31]. Integrating and sharing information can lead to significant cost savings and data reuse without duplicated data collections [13][20][21][46].

Rogers & Whetten [41] adapt Gans and Horton's studies [19], and recognize that integrating linkages, including administrative and direct service linkage, are mechanisms that maintain coordination by linking various functions of the participating organizations. In Axelrod's studies, he argues that friendship and trust are not necessary elements for collaboration to occur, but the time factor is more important [4].

2.3.2 Challenges or Obstacles for Cross-departmental Collaboration

Although those factors above could promote cross-departmental collaboration, they also could prevent it sometimes. Mayne & Rieper pointed out that increased collaboration in no way guarantees better quality services, and it may create a variety of problems, like diffuse accountability, unintended competition for consumer, clientele not wanting to be treated the same, private sector efficiency not always appreciated, determining success more of a challenge, and so on [37]. Jupp also considered that imposing standard models of partnerships could run into problems[29].

Christensen and Lægreid address the relevant problems by taking on the Norwegian case and find that there are more problems with horizontal coordination than with vertical coordination; that coordination problems are bigger in central agencies than in ministries; and that a low level of mutual trust tends to aggravate coordination problems [10]. Inter-organizational alliances often have difficulty recruiting critical stakeholders, maintaining active member involvement, promoting a collaborative work culture, and

achieving collaborative outcomes; in other words, these could be transferred to challenges for the developing of inter-organizational collaboration [17].

Although coordination and an exchange of loyalties among political executives are essential in cross-departmental collaboration, if it doesn't work well, lower officials could become confused about what the important decisions are and who makes them. At worst, one uncoordinated appointee undercuts another and gives bureaucratic opponents ample opportunity to subvert leadership by shopping for someone to obey [24].

Axelsson also mentioned that most of the difficulties are structural barriers, which related to the existence of different administrative boundaries, different laws, rules and regulations, different budgets and financial streams, and different information systems and databases; and there are also some barriers from organizational cultures, different values and interests, and differences in the commitment of individuals and the organizations involved [6].

Some of the obstacles to collaboration include that each agency seeks to preserve its autonomy and independence (defending its 'turf'); organizational routines often are difficult to synchronize; goals of different agencies often overlap, but are not identical; and constituents often bring different pressures and expectations to bear on each of the different agencies [44].

2.3.3 Conclusion of the Key Factors in Two Dimensions

Among all the possible factors, some of them are static factors while some of them are dynamic. In order to have a bird view of these factors easily, this paper will further distinguish these factors based on two dimensions: static or dynamic, and external or internal (in other words, environmental or inner-structural), as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Summarizing the factors that influence cross-department collaboration in the Western studies

	Static factors	Dynamic factors
External factors	• Political or economic contexts [30] • Social development level / Humanistic quality / social learning, adaptability [37] • Environmental complexity [6] • Development level of ICTs [39]	• Wicked issues [12] • Functional integration [17] • Resource dependency [23] [27] • Avoiding uncertainty [18]
Internal factors	• Authority and fragmentation in political structures [6][22][30] • Organizational and working culture [22] [37] • Funding [19][41] • Number Variety of groups [16] • Accountability [6] [37]	• Communications/ exchange of loyalties among executives [24] • Trust [2][5][10][40] • Leadership [2][16] • A shared belief or common/collaborative purpose/outcomes [2][17] • Mutual dependency on resources and information [2][22][39] • Guidance ability within self-managing system [2][5] • Network Power [2] • Time [5]

2.4 Conceptual Model of Analysis

Cross-departmental collaboration is an organizational form, which is influenced by external environment and internal organizational arrangements. These two factors affect the organizational effectiveness, which forms the whole operational structure [43]. Although those researchers mentioned in previous review have concluded the possible influencing factors in collaboration process, they haven't pay much attention to how to integrate these factors together, in other words, how these factors influence collaboration programmes. However, in Veliyath & Srinivasan's study [43], they develop Gestalts of strategic coalignment framework o explain the relations between those factors and organizational effectiveness. Therefore, this paper will rely on Veliyath & Srinivasan's study and discuss the logics of cross-department collaboration and explore the external and internal factors that facilitate and restrict cross-departmental collaboration by conducting a case study.

According to Veliyath & Srinivasan's study, strategic coalignment involves a configuration comprising the external environment, internal organizational arrangements and organizational effectiveness. These elements are constrained, quasi-deterministic and multi-dimensional [43].

Based on the literature review and Veliyath & Srinivasan's framework above, the conceptual framework would be like Figure 1. Within this framework, the external factors include factors like functional integration, resource dependency, wicked issues, avoiding uncertainty, developing of new ICTs, while the organizational internal strategic orientations refers to strategic resource allocations, organizational arrangements, organizational culture, leadership.

Figure 1. The Conceptual Framework

3. METHODOLOGY

A case study design is employed to answer how and why questions and it involves detailed, rich and intensive analysis of a

case or phenomena [45]. It is concerned with the complexity and particular nature of the case in question. By applying the case study method, we can use inductive approach to figure out the nature of this phenomenon. Since studies on cross-departmental collaboration are rather rare in China, a typical case study and an inductive approach should be significant in examining the nature of collaboration in China's context.

3.1 Selection of the Case

A case is chosen either because it is critical, unique, revelatory, or exemplifying in that it will provide a suitable context for the research questions to be answered and allow the researcher to examine key social processes [45].

In this paper, I selected city Xintai's administrative service center as an example. There are two reasons. For one thing, grass-root government is the main public service deliverer, and plays a very important role in public service delivery. Therefore, I choose a county level example to study its public service delivery. For another, although many other counties have already started this kind of attempts, Xintai's history of cross-departmental collaboration is relatively longer and Xintai has also developed its own collaborative mechanisms, which would be useful for other collaborative initiatives. This kind of collaboration is not new, but it turned out to be useful in promoting governmental effectiveness in public service delivery.

The PASC in city Xintai created in June 2003, is a municipal institution led and managed directly by the municipal government. With the development of New Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs), Xintai explored a way of developing e-government with informatization and standardization, and developed PASC as a one-stop service system. Every department sent several staff to PASC, and provided services there. Once citizens need administrative services from the government, they come to PASC. This platform makes public services much more effective and more efficiency.

Since 2005, within the existing platform of PASC, Xintai government has creatively brought standardization into administrative services, created standardized implementation rules of administrative service, built an e-government service hall, and established the e-government website of the whole city. Xintai has done a great deal of pioneering work in the implementation of administrative service standardization. According to their standardization principles "simplified, unified, coordinated and optimized", Xintai revised some of the rules, which have been traditionally used in ordinary work and promoted them. Xintai has built four main standard systems scientifically (service fundamental standards, service quality standards, service administrative standards and service working standards), 17 subsystems and 551 standards, which together constitute an administrative service system featuring "clarified responsibility, smooth implementation, connected process, and continuous improvement". Thus, it achieves the goals that "each work has a procedure, each procedure is under control, each control has a rule, and each standard is under supervision.".

3.2 Data Collection

Data was collected from in-depth interviews, random interviews, and government documents on this topic. I conducted in-depth interviews with leaders of each department who are responsible for this collaboration. To sample the interviewees, a snowballing method is needed to identify and select individuals to interview based on their role and participation in this program. All the possible interviewees consist of public-sector officials and staffs

including mayor, governmental officials at municipal level, including vice mayor, Municipal Committee, Municipal Commission for Discipline Inspection, City optimization Office, leaders and workers of PASC, and officials from the Provincial Level who are in charge of this program. Random interviewees consist of departmental staff who are appointed by their original department to work in PASC, and some citizens who come to PASC for services

To examine the effectiveness of this platform, I also interviewed twenty citizens randomly. Government documents reviewed in this study included yearly government reports, statistics records, official PASC documents and PASC's management documents.

4. CROSS-DEPARTMENTAL COLLABORATION IN THE CITY OF XINTAI, CHINA: A CASE STUDY

Based on Veliyath & Srinivasan's framework [43], this section will examine the external environmental profiles, organizational internal strategic orientations/competencies and its collaborative strategies separately by analyzing Xintai case.

4.1 Introduction of China's political system

Since the late 1970s the Chinese Communist Party has gradually changed from an ideology-driven party to a pragmatic party, adopting the East Asia Developmental State Model[28]. With the decentralization of economic areas, the political decision making powers also need to be decentralized to local government in order to establish the conditions necessary for markets to take root [38].

4.1.1 The "Super-department reform" since 2008

China's administrative reform has been driven by various demands on efficiency, coordination, accountability and governmental effectiveness. Till now, China has undergone six waves of administrative reforms since 1978, which happened 1982, 1988, 1993, 1998, 2003 and 2008. The major characteristic of these reforms is "downsizing-expansion-redownsizing-reexpansion" and this vicious cycle has not been fully overcome. With all these reforms, China is still a highly top-down and centralized system. The problems and challenges are obvious that overlapping functions of government departments, disparities between power and responsibility, and low efficiency are preventing the government effectiveness.

The Chinese government began the "super-department reform" from March 2008, which was aiming at avoiding "overlapping responsibilities" and "power not being matched by responsibilities" in fields such as macroeconomic regulation, industrial management, and public service provision [14]. After over five years' implementation, this "super-department" to a certain extent solves some coordinating problems but still not enough to change the whole nature of coordination status.

4.1.2 Regional Power in China: Tiao/kuai Authority Relations

In order to regulate and discipline local government in their management of the economy and the implementation of public policy generally, central governments has the partial centralization of a number of key bureaucracies, named "centralized government" *(Chuizhi Guanli)* system. Officials within these bureaucracies are no longer beholden to superiors within local governments (which means *"Kuai"* or "piece"), but directly controlled by their functional administrative superiors (which means *"tiao"* or "line") and have only a consultative relationship with their former local government bosses [38]. *"Tiao"* or "line"

administration could brings better control to local government while *"kuai"* or "piece" help local government to get independence from external influence and enhance sensitivity to local conditions in the policy process.

Moreover, in China's largely decentralized political system, leadership relations are often not with administrative supervisors ("*tiao shang ling dao*" which means "leadership along a 'line'"), but with local governments at the same administrative level (or "kuai shang ling dao" which means "leadership across a 'piece'") [38]. Therefore, the Tiao/Kuai relations could bring much effectiveness to central control as well as some troubles in the collaborations between different public agencies.

4.2 External Environmental Profiles from Xintai Case study

In this section, I first examine one by one the factors present in Veliyath & Srinivasan's framework [43]. As I will demonstrate, those factors also exist in China's context, and some new factors are also found.

4.2.1 Functional Integration and Resources Dependence

Before the integration of the approval procedures in PASC, people had to hand in required materials and register their information to each respective departments for proceeding with approval process. In this way, departments worked separately and the process was not integrated. Citizens or companies needed to transfer between different bureaus, and they had to hand in basic information repeatedly. Sometimes, they even need to find "Guanxi" (means "interpersonal relationships" or "connections", is supposed to be one of the major dynamics of China's society) to overcome the problems they faced.

In addition, even for ordinary public services delivery, there is always a need of more than one department participation in one particular public services delivery or one approval process, which requires the integration or collaboration of different departments. For example, during the interviews, leaders from PASC mentioned that, if people applied for permission of building a house, they needed to apply to departments like "Land and Resources Bureau, the City Planning Bureau, the Construction Bureau , and the Civil Administration Bureau" one after another, this maybe takes quite a long time. With the help of this platform, every department work together, and this improves working efficiency a lot.

4.2.2 Demand of Dealing with the "Wicked Issues"

Xintai is going through urbanization process, and different issues require the collaboration of different departments. Also, the high amount of citizens is pressing the government to provide efficiency public services effectively. In the trend of building a service-orientation government, Xintai is trying to do better in dealing with the traditional wicked issues, like business regulatory, environmental protection.

Another important issue is emergency management. Xintai is famous for coal mining, but coal mining could be risky without strict management. For example, on Aug 17th, 2007, a mine accident happened at Xinwen Mining Bureau which is located at Xintai. During the emergency management, coalmine safety supervision bureau, together with other departments like the Commission for Discipline Inspection, Industry and Commerce Administration Bureau, worked together to handle this issue.

4.2.3 Avoiding Uncertainty and Reducing Risk

Among all the uncertainty factors, environmental uncertainty would be the most popular one, which refers to the inability of an individual or organization to predict future events. In real-time world, environments rarely are stable and predictable and these uncertainty factors triggers adaptation, which is the core problem of organizations. Coordination is no more than a systematic relationship, which include positive outcomes to the participants and avoidance of negative consequences [35].

PASC provides other department a platform to work together. They worked in a whole process and would be mutually double-checked on the work of each other. Therefore, this could be used to avoid uncertainty and reduce relative risks in the work. Moreover, during the interview, it is easily to find that this reform could also protect their leaders, too.

4.2.4 Development of New ICTs and the Public Awareness of e-Government

The development and effectiveness of PASC has been greatly driven by the development of new ICTs, which provides possibilities for the development of software. Moreover, with the help of new ICTs, PASC could develop new platform, which could improve their working efficiency. Also, the public awareness is also a big driven force. With the spread of Internet and computers, more and more citizens, even those from the countryside, could get government information online. E-government has been accepted as "a common occurrence".

4.2.5 The Administrative Reform at the Country Level

In this case, there is one more important factor, the institutional reform as a political factor, was also found and seems very important during the collaboration process. For example, officials from Xintai city reflects that the management mechanism that "counties that have been supervised directly by provincial governments" (*Sheng Guan Xian*) could improve the financial situation of counties, and increase the communications between the upper and lower level.

In addition, during this construction of PASC, the central government of China starts its institutional reform in the year 2008, named "Super-Department Reform" (*Da Bu Zhi Gai Ge*). This has promoted the local initiatives in coordinating departments, and can further promote the horizontal integration between the departments.

4.3 Organizational Internal Strategic Orientations in Xintai case

4.3.1 Strategic Resource Allocations: Sufficient Funding and Political Support

As mentioned in Benson's study [8], (policy) networks are "a cluster or complex of organizations connected to each other by resource dependencies and distinguished from other clusters or complexes by breaks in the structure of resource dependencies".

Xintai used PASC as a platform to reform the administrative evaluation. It was the support of the municipal government and committee, especially the sufficient political support and funding aid of them, which made it possible that great achievement was gained in just few years. According to the interview, almost every department praised the PASC's infrastructure, saying the equipment is new and the system is smoothly.

4.3.2 Organizational Arrangements

4.3.2.1 The Heading Department of PASC

PASC in Xintai is a municipal institution led and managed directly by the municipal government. Having considered a variety of alternatives to the heading department taking charge of the PASC's formation, the municipal committee finally decided to choose the Municipal Commission for Discipline. The decision was made mainly because the Municipal Commission for Discipline, especially the Office of Supervision and the Office of Administrative Effective Evaluation in it, have the right to evaluate the work of every municipal bureau, and could directly dismiss the leading cadres of those non-vertical administrative departments if they have ranked the worst three for three consecutive years in the evaluation. As to the leading cadres of those vertical administrative departments, the Municipal Commission for Discipline can put forward suggestions to their superior departments about their evaluation method.

4.3.2.2 The Conflicts between PASC and the Bureaus

During the initial period, conflicts of interest existing between PASC and the bureaus are mainly in three aspects: the department leaders' level, between different departments and between staffs. At the leaders' level, in the process of reforming the administrative approval system in city Xintai, some department leaders feel that their power was "taken over" by letting them work in PASC. At the department level, interests of some bureaus were infringed in the initial period. When their business moved to PASC, every bureau began to worry about whether their bureaus were going to be removed or dismissed, and this has touched on their core interests. Moreover, at the staff level, their workload and working pressure increase a lot because they have to coordinate and interact with their home departments.

With the support of the Municipal Commission, PASC mainly used the following methods to conciliating the conflicts between PASC and each bureau. First of all, they encourage each bureau leader to participate. With the political support from the municipal government, they finally find a way of collaboration. Secondly, propaganda and education to each bureau's leader and staff was also very significant during collaboration process. Thirdly, strengthening the communication. The mutual communication between PASC and each bureau should be strengthened in order to inform the home bureau of their staffs' performance and achievement in PASC and to be familiar with the recent requirements of PASC as well. Fourthly, every department and staffs began to adjust the new work style slowly.

4.3.2.3 Legitimating Existing Management Rules

With all the factors concerned, the Municipal Government and Commission issue more than twenty rules and regulations, such as "the management rules for PASC", and "The regulations for responsibilities of administrative examination and approval".

Also, "the Assessment Measures of PASC's Window Services" was also drafted and put into effect, linking the assessment results of PASC up with the evaluation of the evaluation and development of the whole city. The Municipal Government and Commission would honor those bureaus ranking high in the annual evaluation as the "excellent bureau" with high-qualified services. The principal of those bureaus would be honored as the "advanced individuals".

4.3.2.4 Ensuring Data Security

The application system of PASC was developed by outsourcing to companies and did reserve access channel for those up-coming bureaus. Each bureau could use PASC's system and their home departments' at the same time. Physical separation, such as separated cards, was used to ensure security while some bureaus said that the switching of internal and external network was inconvenient.

4.3.3 Leadership: The Close Attention of the Municipal Leaders

Besides those two factors above, leadership seemed to be the most significant factor in this case. However, its significance hasn't been pointed out in western studies. The interview showed that the successful development of PASC in Xintai and the implementation of standardized administrative service are closely related to the attention of the municipal leaders. With their attention, disagreement between different departments was solved easily, and necessary funds could be served timely. City Xintai used PASC as a platform to reform the administrative evaluation. It was the support of the municipal government and committee, especially the sufficient political support and funding aid of them that made it possible that great achievement was gained in just few years.

4.3.4 The Role of Coordinator/ Mediator

The role of the manager in PASC is very important, too and should be a big driving force. They are system controllers, as well as mediators and process managers. They have a role of "shaping and changing conditions for successful interaction between actors" [32]. They work for seeking agreement between actors and selecting other actors to work together. During the interview, both of the former director of PASC and the present director showed great enthusiasm of their work, and they worked together with their staff, to solve the problems they met together.

Also, many interviewees from other departments as well as those from window service units mentioned that the Leaders in PASC even care about their staff's personal life a lot. Therefore, the staffs in PASC are encouraged as well as schooled by their leaders to work hard for the development of PASC. Therefore, after they come to PASC, they also work very hard.

4.3.5 The Formal and Informal Coordination System

The interview showed that PASC improved the formal and informal coordination and interaction of every bureau.

First of all, the formal horizontal coordination between bureaus. There were probably three main kinds of coordination, including superior coordination, direct horizontal coordination and PASC's indirect coordination. For supervisor coordination, it means coordination was fulfilled inside the government by their joint superior. For example, one interviewee from the Construction Bureau mentioned that it was easy to coordinate with the Office of Housing Management and the Office of Parks, because both of them are subordinate to the Construction Bureau. Superior coordination was of great importance especially when emergency occurred, such as earthquake, flood, fire, air-attack, contagion, and visiting issue, etc.

Moreover, for direct horizontal coordination, it is carried out smoothly because those bureaus, which were subordinate to the same political and administrative system, have already built routinized working relationship. One leader from the Office of Housing Management said that, "we (the Office of Housing Management), together with the Planning Bureau, the Construction Bureau were subordinate to the same system, so the

coordination was easy". Also, for important issues, PASC will have a meeting on coordination to inform every relevant bureau of what they should do. One interviewee from the random interview mentioned that, "once we enter in PASC, we follow the instruction and rules of it, as well as coordinate with other horizontal bureaus". One department leader also said that, "coordination was needed because of system problems. Since PASC has compelling power, it was easy to coordinate. Coordination relies much on PASC."

Secondly, the informal coordination between horizontal bureaus. PASC assembled the staff from every bureau work together, which objectively improves the interaction of the window staff to coordinate across their home departments. Besides formal working relationship, informal interpersonal relationship was established as well. The positive relationship among window staffs helps to promote better multi-department cooperation. However, on the other hand, there is still some potential risk that as a result of the mutual condition, the surveillance between bureaus might be weakened because of the positive relationship.

4.4 Strategies of Cross-Departmental Collaboration in the Case of Xintai: System Standardization

Strategies for collaboration are also very important. Herranz [25] has done a critical review of the literature on public network performance and provided a way to conceptualize how different strategic orientations in network coordination may be related to different network objectives. As mentioned in Selden, Sowa, and Sandfort's study [42] that, "some collaborative efforts are focused on systems change, such as working to alter the existing structure, create new linkages, and decrease service fragmentation", the PASC's case is focusing on system change, which means to let other organizations work together to alter the existing structure of service delivery.

In PASC's case, they choose "system standardization" the main strategy, because the system standardization of PASC provides an important platform for the regulation and integration of multi-department collaboration process. When PASC drafted the standardization process, they adopted many possible methods in order to be accepted by all the bureaus, like strategic balancing, overall situation consideration, and negotiation. While the specific supervision and approval procedure was made, the specific applying qualifications, materials for submitting, the total approval process, the deadline have been all discussed and coordinated as perfectly as possible so as to form a smooth procedures for each approval process, just as the ex-leader of PASC said during the interview, "...all relevant bureaus should hold a meeting, do some research and solve every single problem once found. Success requires coordination".

PASC has re-organized the approval process with the negotiation of each department. For PASC, it was important to strengthen the combination and integration of departments. But before this, the progress relationship between each department should be first defined. For example, two pre-posed situations should be distinguished according to the specific business character. Taking the establishment of a restaurant as an example, when the owner go do the Industrial and Commercial bureau to open their tax account, they will be asked for the "food service license" (*Can Yin Fu Wu Xu Ke Zheng*), so they should first get the "food service license" before they go to the Industrial and Commercial bureau. But the "food service license" is issued by the Health Bureau. Therefore, the Health Bureau is in the most basic and pre-position

in this case. But for another case like the establishment of public facilities, the process is as follows: the Culture Bureau → the Health Bureau → the Environmental Bureau. In this case, the Health Bureau is in a middle position, belonging to the relevant pre-position. The department order is defined by the business nature. With the system standardization, they reorganized the approval process, from "none connection" to "series connection" and updated to "parallel connection".

4.5 Existing Problems and Obstacles during Collaboration in our Chinese Case Study

As mentioned above, this kind of collaboration is changing working sites, and built a new information sharing platform. But every bureau is under the supervisor of high-level bureaus. Although these bureaus at the municipal level have been integrated, their relations with their leading department in high level (like the Provincial level) is still a big problem for the development of PASC.

Meanwhile, the management reasons caused inefficient of PASC. The parallel connection approval process in this case has not been the most effective. It is mainly because the horizontal integration of window units was far from enough. As to the approval process involving more than one bureau, such as the Bureau of Homeland, Construction, Environment, Development and Reform, etc., the system still could not provide seamless connection, thus the applicant could not completely hand in the materials for one-time during the whole process. The reasons for this situation are mainly laid on: firstly, during the interview, one leader from the Construction Bureau said that, "the approval process was too complicated to combine. The latter department couldn't start to work unless the former department finished its business procedure... They (those materials) might meet the requirements of my departments, but the requirements from different departments are not the same." Secondly, paper-based communication made the approval business fragmented. It was better to be replaced by an internet-based one. Applicants had to hand in paper materials to respective service window. In addition, because of the limited working area and other reasons, some bureaus still hadn't entered PASC, which restrained bigger integration of business progress.

Thirdly, some political and administrative reasons restrict the improve of cross-departmental collaboration. One of the major jobs of PASC was to provide window services units with technical and managing support to strengthen the horizontal management. The horizontal integration of window services units and the information sharing. PASC specially developed a platform for promoting the integration of window services units, trying to break the wall between departments to combine the progress. However, the system could still be improved. It was showed in two aspects. Firstly, the horizontal managing platform should be combined with vertical business system. Secondly, information should be shared among departments. Each window services unit relied much on others' information, but the horizontal information exchange between bureaus has not been realized.

It was quite difficult to integrate the vertical department horizontally because of the influence of the administrative managing system of the superior government, and this is also a result of the management mechanism of the central government. One interviewee mentioned one solution from other cities for this situation. For example, in cities like Shanghai and Wuhan, the Housing management Bureau and the Bureau of Land and

Resources belong to the same department, therefore, the housing estate permission and the land using permission is integrated. In this case, the housing management and the land management could be integrated better, thus they could get better collaboration or even coordination once them form a one-stop center like PASC. Therefore, one leader mentioned that, functional integration, such as big department reform, would be an effective way for improving the platform integration and improve the possible integration.

Last but not least, members are interdependent. In a network structure, members are not just interconnected; they are interdependent, which means that members begin to see himself or herself as one piece of a larger picture. Therefore, when they come together, they do not necessarily see themselves as a whole [30]. During the interview, one leader mentioned that, "we cannot trust the other organizations. Also, we worry about our data security. If we share our data with other department, how to control data misuse? How can we control misuse of data?"

4.6 Summary

After six rounds of administrative reform, the "Tiao/kuai relations" is still a great challenge to government cross-agency collaboration. In this Section, I mainly relying on Veliyath & Srinivasan's framework [43] and examine those external environmental factors, organizational internal strategic orientations/competencies and its collaborative strategies. Most of those factors in Veliyath & Srinivasan's framework also exist in China's context and there is one new but probably the most determinant factor, namely administrative reform at the country level was found. Moreover, strategies selecting is very significant in the process of cross-departmental collaboration to integrate those factors together and improve organizational effectiveness.

5. SUMMARIZING CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATION FOR GOVERNANCE

Generally speaking, cross-departmental collaboration has proved to be an efficient way of dealing with the existing complex or even "wicked" problems and improve governmental service efficiency by bringing about systemic change or structure modified both in China and in the West.

5.1 Discussion about Collaboration in China

As mentioned in Section one that the purpose of this research is to figure out those internal and external factors that influence cross-departmental collaboration and how these factors influence collaboration and then influence public service delivery. From the Xintai case study, I find that all those external factors mentioned in Veliyath & Srinivasan's framework, i.e. functional integration, resources dependency, wicked issues, avoiding uncertainty, developing of new ICTs, has also been found in China's case, and a new factor is found, named the administrative reform factor which may be the determinant one. Also, the internal factors like strategic resources Strategic resource allocations, the organizational arrangements are also important in China's collaborative programmes. By taking the suitable strategies, government agencies could facilitate their collaboration effectively.

   Actually, the main characteristics of collaboration in China could be summarized as "vertical (line) integration stronger than horizontal (piece) integration". In other words, generally speaking, integration was vertically strong while horizontally weak. "Vertically strong" means the extent of integration of window services unit and its superior department is really high, while

"horizontally weak" refers to the integration between each window services unit and the integration between their home bureaus.

Vertical integration stands for the logic of specialization division, and horizontal integration stands for the logic of seamless management. The former emphasizes the top-down authority, while the latter means parallel synergy and information sharing. It was shown in PASC's case that the vertical integration exists in the window service units and their home bureaus, which restricts the seamless cooperation between each window service unit to some extent. However, in general, the vertical information flow is better than the horizontal one between each window services unit. The seamless integration of horizontal management was still not realized.

Despite PASC's strategy in Xintai, the standardization has achieved some effects, and some bureaus have begun to work together and collaborate more during their daily work, but they still lack of coordination. The vertical management style in China's administrative system could not be changed or even be integrated at the county level easily. The integration of different departments needs different integration process.

In conclusion, the horizontal information sharing and integration was far behind the vertical information communication. With the application of information technology in government operation process, it would be possible that the horizontal information sharing and integration would become more and more frequent and easier. Some department leaders have pointed out that the next reforming goal was to achieve united approval process after they fulfill greater integration. Application would be automatically transferred from one department to another, turning "one-stop services" to "seamless one-window services".

"Political reform" is a big problem factor in cross-sectoral collaboration. Political reforms at the central level promote the administrative reform in local governments. However, sometimes, political reasons also could be an obstacle because it is quite difficult to integrate the vertical department horizontally because of the influence of the administrative managing system of the superior government. In other words, because of the "Tiao/Kuai Relations", it is hard to coordinate centralized departments and other departments.

Also, in order to improve the efficiency of public service delivery, cross-departmental collaborations alone are not enough. In some area, maybe the specific service integration should focus on more effective methods, rather than simply deliver services separately in traditional ways.

5.2 A possible Modification of Velitath and Srinivasan's/ Western framework

Veliyath & Srinivasan's conceptual framework [43] was an explanatory framework, which was based on the Western world and needed to be revised when it was used to China's context. In this part, I will try to revise Veliyath & Srinivasan explanatory framework after the analysis of the China's case.

According to the analysis above, in the Chinese context, those environmental factors, like functional integration, resources dependency, wicked issues, avoiding uncertainty and developing of ICTs, which are mentioned by Veliyath & Srinivasan's framework, have been proved to be much important, while institutional reform at the county level is a new factor too. For the organizational internal factors, the first two organizational factors

in Veliyath & Srinivasan 's framework - i.e. strategic resources allocations and organizational arrangements- could be found while new factors emerged as well. Moreover, this study has shown that the same factors have different weight and significance for collaboration in China. First of all, leadership has been proved to be one of the most important factors. In China's political and organizational culture, official rank is considered to be the sole criterion of one's worth. Leadership can bring about resources, authorities, and willingness of collaboration of different departments. It can be seen as a political support to maintain the collaboration culture and work efforts. Meanwhile, leaders' support can ensure sufficient funding for collaboration initiatives. Second, organizational arrangements are also very important. During the first stage of collaboration, there must be a leading department and a heading office for the collaboration units, which is taking charge of the whole formation of collaboration structure. Third, there is another important character in the China's case, namely, relationship (*guanxi*). *Guanxi,*is a complex factor embedded in China's culture. When the leaders between those collaboration departments have better relationship, collaboration becomes much easier. There is informal communications during the whole collaboration process, which sometimes are even more important in building trust and finally facilitate the whole projects.

Technical factors can be the fundamental factor in this case. With the development of new ICTs, the public can get lots of information, which push the government to be as open as possible. Government is still not the owner of information at all, but to get better use of the existing information and release it as much as they can. To provide responsive service, government departments have to work together with sharing and integrating information.

From the previous case study, I have mentioned some new factors that have not embedded into Veliyath & Srinivasan's framework, like administrative reform at the country level, leadership, *guanxi*, and the coordination system. Some of those factors have already mentioned by other scholars like leadership while the other three are especially important in China. So one possible modification of Velitath and Srinivasan's framework is to add political factors to external profile, and add leadership to its organizational /internal strategic orientations. Also, Veliyath & Srinivasan's framework is used to get an overview of the collaboration, so it is hard to explain the collaboration process with it because in different collaboration stage, the influencing factors might be distinguished.

5.3 Future Studies
Finally, there are a series of issues on collaboration. This paper only focuses on the factors facilitating and limiting is just focus on the drives and obstacles of collaboration. Therefore, for future studies, there are some possible research questions, which are also meaningful for collaboration. As a result of collaboration, boundaries between departments are weakened; therefore, future studies should focus more on how to fulfill accountabilities. Also, those factors mentioned in this paper may have different weights in the whole collaboration process, so figure out their role in collaboration might brings more successful collaboration initiatives.

In addition, this paper is based on Xintai's case, a town level government in East China, the result I found in this paper cannot be easily applied to other areas of China. Therefore, in the future, we should do more case studies from other level of government as well as other areas of China, and summarize the characteristics of collaboration in China.

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