The Overview of China’s Association Standardization Development

Qing Xu

ABSTRACT

Since March 2015, the State Council has made it clear for the first time in its “The Plan for Furthering the Standardization Reforms” that since the development of Association standards, China’s Association standards have developed more than three years. Cultivating development Association standards is also the highlight and important content of the current round of deepening China’s reform of the standardization mechanism. This article summarizes the development of Association standardization in China from the perspective of the background, current status of policy, and development status of Association standards to provide reference and assistance for standardization workers.

INTRODUCTION

With the further advancement of the reform of China’s standardization work, the Association standards have developed rapidly and have been highly valued by the Chinese government and all walks of life. Compared to China’s Association standards which are developed in the early stages, foreign voluntary standards systems have a long history of development. For example, the US voluntary standard system has a history of more than 100 years. This article summarizes the development of Association standardization in China from the perspective of the background, current status of policy, and development status of group standards to provide reference and assistance for standardization workers.

1Qing Xu, China National Institute of Standardization, No. 4 Zhichun Road, Haidian District, Beijing, China, 100191
BACKGROUND OF THE ASSOCIATION STANDARDS’ GENERATION

After the founding of New China, the party and government attached great importance to the construction and development of the standardization cause. In October 1949, the Central Technology Administration Bureau in which set up a standardized specifications office to be responsible for the standardization of industrial production and engineering construction was established. In 1962, the State Council has promulgated the “Administrative Measures on Technical Standards for the Construction of Industrial and Agricultural Products and Engineering”. At the same time a standardized management system in which the central government unified leadership and various departments and localities cooperated with each other has been established[1].

After the founding of New China, especially since the reform and opening up, China’s standard system and management system have undergone three major changes. The first major change was in 1979. The State Council promulgated the Regulations of the People’s Republic of China on Standardization Management, which stipulated that our national standards should be divided into three levels: national Standards, ministry (professional) standards and enterprise standards. At the same time, once standards are issued, they are technical regulations and must be strictly enforced. Standards of this period, in addition to corporate standards implemented within the company, mainly reflects two characteristics: First, all are government standards; Second, all are mandatory standards. The standards of this period belong to the state's mandatory administrative actions and are completely run by government. Judging from the form of publication, the State Council's administrative measures have risen into regulations, which are obviously more solemn, stricter, and more powerful. The second major reform was the issuance and implementation of the People's Republic of China Standardization Law in December 1988. For a long time, China's original standards system and management system had emerged from the planned economy, which forming a framework that mainly relies on the government's single supply standard. In December 1988, the People's Republic of China Standardization Law was promulgated, making sure that China's standard system is divided into four levels which are consisting of national standards, industry standards, local standards, and corporate standards. The first three levels are all government standards, and the government standards are divided into mandatory standards and recommended standards. Although corporate standards are set by enterprises, they need to be filed with government agencies and applied within the company. Whether the first change or the second change, it has not changed the structure that our standards are mainly supplied by the government. The social organizations that are the main players in the market do not have the right to formulate standards. Association standards do not have legal status in China. The market-oriented voluntary standard system is basically blank. The structure of this single supply standard, which is mainly based on government supply standards, has indeed played an important role in the history, especially during the planned
economy period. However, with the development of the market economy, especially with the rapid advancement of science and technology, the single standard system that the government has taken large packages and monologues can no longer meet the needs of technological innovation and market development. How to play the role of various industry associations, academic groups, and scientific research institutes in the revision of standards, how to encourage various market players to participate in the standardization work, has become urgent and important task in China standardization’s third major reform. As a result, in 2015, the State Council issued the Deepening Reform Plan for Standardization Work, proposing to establish a new standard system for the coordinated development and coordinated support of the standards that the government has stipulated. It is against this backdrop that China’s Chinese association standards have begun to develop[2].

At the end of the 1980s, in the planned economic system, the Standardization Law did not determine the legal status of group standards. In light of the needs of market and industrial development, social associations have already established association standards in practice.

Since the end of 1980s, some industry associations, societies, and federations in China have drawn on the standard management models of developed countries, and have begun to independently formulate and publish some association standards, and have already demonstrated fruitful results, such as the China Engineering Construction Standardization Association. It issued nearly 400 engineering construction group standards for design, construction, and testing. More than 10 enterprises in Zhongshan City, Guangdong Province jointly formulated the Redwood Furniture association standards.

In the 1990s, many of China's industry standards were based on industry associations, and some national standards were also based on industry associations. In practice, some industry associations are responsible for the centralized management of industry standards. For example, many industry standards issued by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology are developed and managed by relying on industry associations. For example, eight industries such as packaging, textile, and chemical industry rely on 8 industry associations such as China Packaging Federation, China Textile Industry Association, and China Petroleum and Chemical Industry Federation to formulate [2].

In summary, in practice, since the 1980s, some social associations in China have begun to participate in standardization work. These standardization efforts have also laid a good foundation for these social associations to carry out association standardization work. In order to stimulate the vitality of the market players, the Deepening the Reform Program for Standardization Work proposed raising the standards of development associations and association standards came into being.
POLICY STATUS OF ASSOCIATION STANDARDS

China’s association standards policies and systems mainly include the following aspects: First, in March 2015, the State Council issued the Reform Program for Deepening Standardization Work (hereinafter referred to as the “Reform Plan”) to raise the standard for fostering and developing association, and association standards is considered to be the standardization of our country. The highlights and important contents of the system reforms were defined in the normative documents issued by the State Council at the first time. Second, in February 2016, the AQSIQ and the National Standardization Administration (hereinafter referred to as the National Standards Committee) issued the About the Guiding Opinions on the Development of Community Standards (hereinafter referred to as the Guiding Opinions) put forward the main measures for cultivating and developing group standards work, actively creating a space for association standards to be relaxed, and striving to ensure association standard organize orderly and sustained develop healthy; Third, on April 25, 2016, AQSIQ and the National Standards Commission jointly issued the GB/T 20004.1-2016 Group Standardization Part 1: Guidelines for Good Practices national standard, which aims to guide social organizations to follow certain rules to provide them with a general, principled, and directional guidance when they carry out standardization work. Fourth, on November 4, 2017, the Thirtieth Session of the Standing Committee of the Twelfth National People's Congress revised and passed the People's Republic of China Standardization Law. The new law was implemented on January 1, 2018. The second paragraph of the article 2 of the provisions of the standards include national standards, industry standards, local standards and corporate standards, corporate standards. Article 18 clearly stipulates that the State encourages Learning society, associations, chambers of commerce, federations, industrial technology alliances, and other social organizations to coordinate relevant market entities to jointly formulate group standards that meet the needs of markets and innovations. The members of the group shall agree to adopt or follow the regulations of the association that social can voluntary adoption. The legal status of China's group standards was formally established, providing a strong legal guarantee for the development of development group standards, and it is a landmark in the history. Fifth, the Standardization Law of the People's Republic of China which adopted on the basis of the new revision was passed on December 15, 2017, and reviewed and approved by the Fourth Plenary Meeting of the Inter-ministerial Joint Promotion Meeting of the State Council for Standardization, Coordination and Promotion. The General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine, and the Ministry of Civil Affairs Formulated and issued the Regulations on the Management of Group Standards (Trial). The Group Standards Management Regulations (Trial) is formulated by the China National Institute of Standardization and other units to support the Standardization Law. It puts forward detailed regulations on the Standardization Law from the aspects of the formulation, implementation and
supervision of association standards. The promulgation of the Regulations will promote the implementation of the Standardization Law and provide strong support for standardizing, guiding and supervising the standardization work of our country’s organizations.

In March 2015, the “Reform Plan” issued by the State Council proposed the establishment of a new standard system for coordinated development and coordination of standards established by the government and standards developed by the market. One of the important measures is to foster and develop association standards. This is a major innovation and a major high light in the reform. Cultivating development group standards plays a decisive role in standardizing the allocation of resources in the market, and it is of great significance to promote China’s economy toward the mid- to high-end level. In a sense, they are "minimum standards" that should be followed. However, satisfying only national standards and industry standards is not conducive to improving the quality of products and services and is not conducive to the construction of brands and core competitiveness. The development of market competition requires high standards, and high standards determine high quality. Filling the gaps, strict with national standards and industry standards, and leading in the international are the direction of group standards. At the same time, we encourage the fairness, justice and openness of the premise. Group standards will compete fairly according to market mechanisms, promote competition through market competition, and promote high standards. With high quality group standards, group standards can meet the demand for high standards in the development of industries and services, motivate companies to align with high standards and strict requirements, and tap potentials and efforts in improving the competitiveness of products and services.

In February 2016, the Guidance Opinion focused on “putting, managing, and serving” as the main line, pointing out that nurturing development group standards is an important measure to play a decisive role in the standardization of resource allocation in the market and to speed up the construction of a new national standard system. The Guiding Opinions consisted of four chapters and seventeen articles, which clarified the guiding ideology, basic principles, main objectives, and major measures for cultivating development group standards. From the basic principle, we must adhere to market-led, government-led, innovation-driven, and overall coordination. In order to nurture development association standards, from the guiding ideology, we must follow the decision-making arrangements of the Party Central Committee and the State Council, start with service innovation to drive development and meet market demands, and use “distribution, management, and service” as the main line, inspire social organizations to formulate standards and apply standards. The vitality, standardize group standardization work, increase the effective supply of standards, promote popular entrepreneurship, innovation, and support sustainable economic and social development. From the development goals, by 2020, the association standards developed by the market will be more mature and better meet the needs of market competition and innovation and development. From
the main measures, the Guidance Opinion takes “releasing, managing, and serving” as the main line, and from the three aspects of “liberating market vitality, innovating management methods, and optimizing standard services”, it proposes to clearly define the main body and clarify the scope of development. Four main measures for cultivating and developing group standards work, actively creating a space for group standards to loosen up, and striving to promote the development of group standards and orderly development.

On December 15, 2017, the General Administration of Quality Supervision, the National Standards Committee, and the Ministry of Civil Affairs issued the Regulations on the Management of Group Standards (Trial), which consist of five chapters and thirty-eight articles, clarifying the general requirements of the group standards and the formulation, implementation, and supervision thereof. Specific requirements.

DEVELOPMENT STATUS OF ASSOCIATION STANDARDS

In order to fulfill the requirements of the Reform Plan and Guidance Opinion, the National Standardization Institute organized the China National Institute of Standardization to develop and establish a national association standard information platform (website: www.ttbz.org.cn, the same name as WeChat public number: Tuanbiaopingtai, hereinafter referred to as platform). The platform went online at the end of March 2016. The platform is a unified platform for standardization and development of China's support and service associations. It has important regulations and policies announced, association basic information disclosure, association development dynamic tracking, association standards development and publication, association standard query and access, standard interpretation comparison and recommendation, and good behavior evaluation, education and training resources summary, academic research results discussion, public comment supervision and other functions. Since the launch, many social organizations have actively supported and participated in the construction of the platform. They have actively registered and issued association standards. The platform is also committed to satisfying the diverse needs of users and constantly improving various functions. On September 25, 2017, the platform was upgraded for the first time, adding "standardization activities," "education and training," and "publications." At present, the platform is operating well and all aspects of work are gradually improving.

As of December 31, 2017, 1157 social associations had registered on the platform, and 2159 association standards were announced. It covers 30 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the Central Government. From the geographical distribution, it can be seen that the standardization development of associations in the eastern and southern parts of China started earlier and developed at a faster rate. These are also regions where China’s economic and social development is more prosperous. The development of association standardization in the central and western regions started later and the development
speed was relatively slow. The number of national social associations registered by the Ministry of Civil Affairs accounts for about 31%.

The 2159 association standards announced by the social organizations on the platform are distributed according to the location of the issuance agency of their corporate legal person registration certificate: 752 of the Ministry of Civil Affairs, 306 in Zhejiang Province, 261 in Guangdong Province, 180 in Beijing, and 115 in Liaoning Province. There are 52 Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Regions, 86 in Shandong Province, 83 in Jiangsu Province, 38 in Fujian Province, 39 in Sichuan Province, 56 in Guizhou Province, 30 in Yunnan Province, 12 in Tianjin City, 23 in Hubei Province, and 19 in Jilin Province, 9 in Henan Province, 11 in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, 8 in Heilongjiang Province, 8 in Hebei Province, 10 in Chongqing Municipality, 11 in Shaanxi Province, 5 in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, 12 in Shanghai Municipality, and 6 in Anhui Province, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region There are 11 items in Shanxi Province, 3 in Jiangxi Province, 2 in Gansu Province, 2 in Qinghai Province, and 8 in Hunan Province. Among them, 329 group standards voluntarily published the full text of the standard.

In 2017, there were 779 social organizations on the platform compared to 2016, an increase of 200%. The number of provinces covered by social associations also increased from 26 provinces to 30 provinces. This shows that the awareness of standardization in China’s social organizations has gradually increased and more and more social organizations have begun to carry out standardization work.

The standards announced by the social associations are classified according to the international standard classification number and are mainly distributed in sociology, service, company (enterprise) organization and management, administration, transportation, electrical engineering, information technology, office machinery, video technology, environmental protection and other fields. The standards announced by social organizations are classified according to the industry to which the national economy belongs, mainly in the manufacturing industry, information transmission, software and information technology services, electricity, heat, gas and water production and supply, scientific research and technical services, construction, etc. industry. Of these, 43.1% were distributed in manufacturing.

Since the platform was launched at the end of March 2016, according to the platform data, China’s association standard have flourished. Geographically, social association and association standards cover almost all provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities directly under the central government. In terms of quantity, there has been a significant increase in the number of social groups and group standards. In 2017, the development trend of social associations and association standards is shown in Figure 7. On average, there are 65 newly registered social organizations on the platform, and 142 associations have been newly announced.

In summary, under the cultivation and guidance of national association standard policies, the standard development of China’s associations has gradually become a trend. In the next step, the national association standard information platform will
continue to be perfected to further support the healthy, standardized and sustainable
development of the association standardization work in China.

CONCLUSIONS

In the past three years, the standard of our country's associations has grown
generously. Through the data of the national association standard information
platform, a number of excellent standards development associations have emerged,
and a number of competitive association standards have emerged. In the next step,
with the further improvement of the group's standard policy environment and the
enhancement of the standardization capabilities of social organizations, the
association standardization work in China will surely move to a new level.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This research was financially supported by Standardization Administration of
the People's Republic of China project Research on association standardization
(Project Number: 572018B-6052).

REFERENCES

1. Li Chuntian, Introduction to Standardization (Sixth Edition) [M], 16.
2. Bai Dianyi, Standardization Workbook (third edition) [M], 486-489.