

Human Resource Development and Management of Rural Areas of the People's Republic of China

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The people in the People's Republic of China (PRC) are currently working to build a "new socialist countryside."¹ The aim of the movement is to create clean, neat and civilized villages that are more productive, developed, and affluent, while also being under democratic management. Building and developing the new countryside will exalt the quality of the farmers. If the quality and capabilities of the farmers are enhanced, the new countryside building movement will continue. Otherwise, it will leave a heap of poorly developed villages. The exaltation of the farmers' quality and the building of the farmers' capabilities depend on the development of village human resources. Village human resources development and management is the key to the continued development of rural villages in the PRC.²

The State of Country Village Human Resources

To understand the basic circumstances of village human resources in the PRC, we must describe and analyze the village human resources from three aspects, namely the stock of the resources, the structure and function of the resources, and the evolution of the resources.

The stock of human resources. The basic characteristic of the human resources stock is that there is a large quantity of it, but it is of low quality. There is a lot of disguised unemployment³ in the countryside, which basically means that if the farmer leaves the workforce, it has no affect on overall production or output. With the reform and the opening of the PRC to the outside world, farmers have already started moving to the city from the villages. But because of the low quality of the farmer's productive output, his removal from the village workforce does not affect the human resources stock of the village.

The structure and function of the human resources. The new socialist countryside wants to build up the material and spiritual aspects of the rural population. From the perspective of the structure and function of village human resources, we can see that the countryside already has more of the low level material factor than the high level spiritual factor. There is an oversupply of physical labor, but a serious shortage of the technological capabilities and intelligence that come from the spiritual factor. This imbalance has resulted in an unreasonable community human resource structure. Because the countryside consists of small farms and there is a shortage of investment, the development of the community's human resources gets bogged down in the low levels of physical labor. There is little development of technological ability and intelligence. The progress of human social development suggests that first physical labor is replaced by technological ability, and then technology is replaced by intelligence. So developing the human resources of a community is one of the most important symbols of the progress of civilization. Obviously, if the human

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¹ China.org.cn. *Building a New Socialist Countryside*. Available: <http://www.china.org.cn/english/zhuanti/country/159776.htm>

² The essayist referred to the following work in writing his essay: Jian Xiao Ying. 2002. *Human Resource Development and Management in Poor Area Development and Research of Country*. Beijing, China: China Agriculture University Press.

³ Wolf, Charles Jr., K. C. Yeh, Benjamin Zycher, Nicholas Eberstadt, and Sungho Lee. 2003. *Fault Lines in China's Economic Terrain*. Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation. Available: http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1686/MR1686.ch2.pdf

resource structure and function of the village community is not developed, there will not be sustained and stable development of the countryside.

The evolution of the human resources. We can elaborate on the evolution of human resources from two aspects. As the PRC's economy developed, the labor force was bound to move to the cities. The second generation of laborers has already transferred to the cities. In comparison, they are more intellectual than the first generation. On one hand, their migration to the cities causes a high drop out rate in village human resources supplies. On the other hand, if they stay in the rural areas, their higher quality of intelligence may not be acknowledged. Staying in the village, therefore, would result in the waste of social human resources.

As urban society continues to develop, the rural drop out rate will grow. If people are not discouraged from dropping out of rural society, and the villages cannot attract high quality people, the bad rural situation will degenerate.

In summary, we can see that the low quality of human resources and the acute drop out rates affect human resource development. The Government should strengthen village human resources development and management.

The Problems of Human Resource Management of Rural Areas of the PRC

Peasant communities in the PRC have retained their traditional ideas after thousands of years of feudal society. At a micro level, traditional countryside management consists of a strong patriarchal clan system and ancestral ideas, which play a big part in maintaining the stability of the countryside. The leaders of the community who are in charge of accepting technology and innovation are the higher quality village human resources. In order to maintain the stability of community and avoid competition, however, they monopolize the technology and the innovations, which hinders their diffusion. If the community leaders do not sufficiently share the technologies, it is impossible for the human resources of the general peasant household to be developed. While this can benefit the leaders, it excludes the peasants from the outside world. They cannot receive the benefits of human resources development. This traditional management system obstructs the development of human resources and has a negative influence on the sustainable development of the community.

At the macro level, the Government has erred by not taking responsibility for implementing the human resources development policy.

Although leaders at all levels understand that human resources development plays a huge role in the development of the economy and the society, in practice, few leaders grasp it as the center of their work. They are eager to be successful, but only see the immediate advantages. When they carry out economic development programs, they often pay more attention to the material investment and ignore investment in the training of human resources. The disproportions in investment may lead to the failure of the program.

The human resource development and the management of village

The Government should set up the correct human resources development and management concept, enhance investment in human resources, and help farmers establish farming organizations. This would effectively stimulate the system and develop and attract talented persons to guarantee farsighted human resource development.

Government management. First, the Government should shift human resources management from the traditional household method to a new modern model, which directs development and encourages participation. The valid development and management of

community human resources needs to be led by someone familiar with modern management thinking. In the PRC, the villages are managed like households, due to their feudal background. If the leader of the community sets up the right human resources development and management program, and everyone participates in it, then the leader can make the program effective and sustainable. Then the community's human resources can follow the path of previous reasonable development and construction. Under traditional management it will get caught in a vicious circle and fail.

In the meantime, leaders should realize the diversification of the farmers who make up village human resources and give different help according to everybody's condition. This way, the human resources development program will be effective. By building their capabilities and developing their skills, the farmers will gain a social identity and a sense of belonging in the community.

Consequently, this becomes the motivating force of active human resources development. When the mindset and behaviors of farmers are changed, the village human resources will achieve higher quality.

The farmers' organization. Secondly, the Government should actively guide and support the establishment of farmer organizations. After the reform and opening of the PRC to the outside world, a household-based system of contracted responsibility with remuneration linked to output was implemented. It dispersed the development of the countryside and increased the difficulty and cost of effective management of village human resources. The dispersion obstructed the upgrading of rural human resources. By establishing autonomic farmer organizations, the farmers' cohesive force will be strengthened, and the countryside will avoid the inside consumption of human resources. Through such organizations, farmers will also gain stronger feelings of mutual trust. The organizations will pool the wisdom and efforts of everyone, which will be an advantage in further developing human resources.

The stimulation system. Finally, creating an effective stimulation system is critical in human resources development. In the PRC, the total quantity of a country village's human resources is large, but the quality is low. Economic development aggravates the drop out of human resources from the villages. We should not only develop a person's obvious talents, but also work for breakthroughs on their inner abilities. In modern society, it is everyone's duty to work to develop their full potential, and this can often be encouraged by an incentive mechanism. So, we should establish a reward mechanism for talented persons, but it is more important to provide farmers with advantages to help them understand the value of human resource development. While farmers may regard human resource development as a source of "pain and suffering," they inevitably have to engage in it for their own sake and for the sake of posterity. Otherwise they will not move from the low level of physical labor to a higher level of intelligence. Effective human resources development of farmers will become the sustainable motivating power in the development of the new socialist countryside.