

Original Paper

Problems and Countermeasures in Rural Talent Recruitment and Development

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Abstract

Rural revitalization fundamentally depends on human capital development and deployment. Although China's efforts in recruiting and developing rural talent have achieved certain progress in recent years, significant challenges persist that require urgent attention. These challenges include inefficient talent attraction channels, incomplete training mechanisms, unfavorable retention environments, and inadequate utilization platforms. Based on a systematic and comprehensive review of the current state of rural talent recruitment and development in China, this paper provides an in-depth analysis of the primary problems and their underlying causes from multiple perspectives. Furthermore, it proposes targeted policy recommendations from four interconnected dimensions: improving talent attraction mechanisms, strengthening training systems, optimizing retention environments, and building utilization platforms. This research aims to provide theoretical references and practical guidance for comprehensively promoting rural talent revitalization and supporting the broader rural revitalization strategy.

Keywords

Rural Revitalization, Talent Recruitment and Development, Problems, Countermeasures

1. Introduction

According to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, there was an explicit focus on overall development of rural revitalization in the national strategy, giving priority to the agricultural and rural sectors in terms of plan formulation, as well as speeding up the process of creating a strong agricultural nation. As the major component and also the most important element of rural revitalization, the recruitment and nurture of talents are inherently tied to the general performance and accomplishment of rural revitalization policies. Over the past few years, the Chinese central

government has successively released numerous policy documents exclusively to provide rural talent revitalization measures; on the other side, other governments of different levels have enthusiastically sought out more advanced methods through pilot experiments. Those combined activities brought considerable advances into rural talent development throughout the country. Nonetheless, in comparison with the exigent nature and increasing needs of overall rural revitalization, the problem of rural talent development still shows great gaps and structure gaps. There are still constant problems to bring down qualified people into rural areas, having them to work in rural areas over long periods and using their skills and expertise efficiently known as the “three difficulties” dilemma that is urgently required to be taken care of. Hence, research on the multifarious issues in the recruitment and development of rural talent, as well as the development of effective responses to these challenges, that reflect the context, is highly valuable both theoretically and practically to the sustainable future of China.

2. Current State and Problems of Rural Talent Recruitment and Development

2.1 Current State of Rural Talent Recruitment and Development

The central government has since the formal adoption of rural revitalization strategies at the national level, progressively developed and constantly refined a rather diversified policy package to specifically address the issue of the development of rural talent. A policy document known as Opinions on Accelerating Rural Talent Revitalization published by the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council is a breakthrough in Chinese policy history because it divides rural talent into five different types, namely agricultural production and management talent, development of secondary and tertiary industries in rural areas, rural public service talent, rural governance talent and agricultural science and technology talent. This categorization system has offered a well-defined strategic direction and direction to systematic rural talent development throughout the country. With the close influence and assistance of such central policies, local authorities of all provinces, municipalities, and counties have been able to experiment with various innovative methods and modify the central policies to the needs of various regions creating the variety of effective recruitment practices and development models that are suitable to their particular regions. Directly following such joint efforts, the total volume of the rural talent pool has kept growing consistently, and the overall quality and competence of professionals working in the rural setting have been improving in a steady manner throughout the years.

2.2 Primary Problems in Rural Talent Recruitment and Development

2.2.1 Inefficient Talent Attraction Channels

At this moment, rural and urban are different in terms of geographic and climatic conditions, availability of natural resources, and infrastructure growth. The traditional full-time recruitment schemes can be quite inefficient to address the core shortcomings in aggregation and concentration of talents in rural communities. There is a highly developed industrial environment, an unfavorable

environment of doing business in terms of investments and entrepreneurship, as well as a considerable backlog of infrastructure, including transport systems, online connectivity, and government amenities within rural zones that have led to a severe deterioration of their overall attractiveness to skilled workers. Certain areas still use old-fashioned and inflexible ways to attract talent and do not have modern and flexible forms like the flexible mechanisms such as migratory expert programs, weekend farmers programs, and other non-conventional ways of engagement. Moreover, these regions have also been unable to create talent clusters or innovation hubs by using agricultural industrial parks, technology incubators, and rural revitalization research institutes as talent aggregation platforms in an efficient manner. Also, there is a large amount of information asymmetry between the supply and demand of talent in rural areas, which presents considerable obstacles to finding exact matches between available talent and current organizational demands.

2.2.2 Incomplete Talent Training Mechanisms

The current state of the rural talent training structure is still very poorly developed and has a weak structure, with training activities frequently turning out to be superficial and formalized instead of substantive and efficient. The contents of training and its forms of delivery are not aligned with the variety of needs of various target groups and the theoretical instruction is given too much importance and there is too little attention to practice and the practical skills acquired through it. Such imbalance results in non-optimal training results and low knowledge transfer. At the same time, numerous governmental departments and agencies operate separately to manage education and training services which cause the duplication of functions and efforts as well as their dispersion, which decrease the overall efficiency. Moreover, the approach to training is also somewhat boring and old-fashioned; the standard classroom-based training models have proven ineffective when it comes to working with adults, demotivating the participants and lowering their enthusiasm, and greatly complicating the application and implementation of the received information in real-life situations in agriculture and rural development.

2.2.3 Unfavorable Talent Retention Environments

The rural talent has always found their promotional pathways blocked and their future careers uncertain, which largely discourages them from making a long term commitment to rural service. There is a continued underutilization of township-level civil service roles and staffing of government institutions, and professional as well as technical expertise are hindered in terms of entering the public sector. This current labor force shows high levels of structural imbalance which are marked by having too many administrative and managerial employees and a severe lack of technical specialists and skilled workers. Rural employees have extremely high workloads and duties but earn relatively low pay and benefits and enjoy low levels of social status recognition and poor incentive and social security systems. All these factors lead to poor professional pride and low job satisfaction of rural talent. Large and long-lasting disparities between rural and urban areas can be observed in the quality of infrastructure and access to public services; the availability of education, medical care and geriatric care cannot be

considered sufficient nor equitable, rendering it virtually impossible to create permanent ties and family life in the rural community for talented individuals.

2.2.4 Inadequate Talent Utilization Platforms

There are some regional authorities with negative attitudes towards talent utilization, including the emphasis on recruitment but not the utilization itself and the preference of academic qualifications over proven competence and practical skills. Those regions have not created robust and organized systems of talent utilization that utilize the potential of human capital. It is particularly important to note that comprehensive databases of talent information continue to lag behind the current standards in terms of their development and support, which makes it hard to offer any accurate and timely information that could be used as a foundation of precise talent deployment and matching. The development of rural innovation and entrepreneurship incubation centers and practical training facilities is also poorly developed along with the fact that financing challenges, prohibitive costs and other factors persist as significant barriers to the comeback of entrepreneurs and local innovators. The total volume of rural industrial development is still quite low, and the industrial chains are too small and immature, with low value-added capabilities, so it is hard to create enough employment opportunities and entrepreneurial opportunities. Also, other rural industries have extreme homogenization and the absence of differentiation that do not allow them to build specific competitive positions and regional peculiarities.

2.2.5 Inadequate Policy Implementation

The large part of rural talent is still not informed about the appropriate supportive policies, which leads to unsatisfactory low levels of policy awareness and utilization. Other areas experience chronic issues with the last mile of implementation of policies, where well-meant policies are only partially implemented, inconsistent, or actively evaded on the local level. Such failures in implementation keep talented people out of the real access and advantages of policy support measures. Policy fragmentation that is problematic due to ineffective coordination, absence of unified strategic planning, and lack of integrated implementation frameworks among the talent policies provided by various government agencies is quite common and makes it almost impossible to come up with meaningful policy synergy and cumulative effect. Lack of connections and synchronization of policies at various phases of talent growth: attracting, training, using, and motivating people will have a very negative effect on the total value and consistency of talent development efforts.

3. Underlying Causes of Problems in Rural Talent Recruitment and Development

The existence and the continuation of issues in rural talent recruitment and development are due to the underlying structural limitations inherent in the urban-rural dual system as well as operational challenges presented by institutional and mechanistic factors. Over a long history, the urban-rural dual structure of China has established and maintained considerable differences between urban and rural areas in various aspects, such as the level of economic development, infrastructure, and the quality and availability of public services. The differences are clear and expanding in terms of the level of income

of the residents, the number of work places available, the condition of environmental sanitation, and quality of education and health care services. Such differences have always pushed the migration of the talented and educated rural dwellers into the cities in order to find more lucrative opportunities. This trend has been hastened by the swift pace of industrialization and urbanization in the last several decades that has seen many rural workers, including the best educated and skilled ones, move to urban areas looking for development chances. The continuous depletion of young and middle-aged population, which is considered as the most productive and creative part of rural community, has put the rural talent resources in a long-term state of blood loss and demographic decrease.

At the same time, the poor and undeveloped industrial base of rural regions is also a very critical aspect of the situation as it restricts and impedes the process of recruiting and developing talents. Agricultural practices in China are still mainly of small scales and fragmented and agricultural technologies and mechanical equipment are relatively backward. These structural features lead to intensive labor consumption, and the productivity of agricultural production processes is consistently low. Industrial chains in rural areas are also short and underdeveloped with few added value at each step of the chain and coordinated development of primary, secondary, and tertiary industries in rural areas is still inadequate and poorly coordinated. Such constraints render it exceptionally challenging to offer sufficient employment options and promising business opportunities to educated and qualified talent. The existing talent management framework and operation mechanisms have not been sufficiently adjusted to the changing demands of rural talent revitalization in the modern era. The mechanisms of assessing talents are too unscientific and subjective and have negative tendencies of being obsessed with credentials, publications, and titles that do not sufficiently acknowledge practical contributions and their influence on the world. The mechanisms of talent mobility between urban and rural areas are not yet properly smooth and flexible and the mechanisms of incentives to rural services are not complete and effective.

Moreover, the total amount of rural human capital investment as well as its quality are extremely low in comparison to the requirements. Vocational education and skills training of farmers has not been integrated into the national vocational education system in an organized way and there is not enough special funding on rural talent development efforts. Specialized financial support systems to specifically address the issue of rural talent development are also immature and insufficient. In some areas, regional authorities and local governments do not recognize and appreciate the importance of rural talent rejuvenation in the overall development process, and they have unhealthy inclinations towards prioritizing investment in physical infrastructure over human capital investment and focusing on the construction of physically visible projects rather than those that may be less visible yet just as significant in terms of talent development. The agricultural sector, rural areas as a place of residence, and farmers as a profession still have traditional and outdated attitudes and stereotypes in society as a whole. The fact that going back to rural areas to start business and services is viewed as being either overqualified or wasting your talents is greatly discouraging and negatively influences the willingness

of educated rural talent that has left their villages to think about returning.

4. Policy Recommendations for Improving Rural Talent Recruitment and Development

4.1 Improving Talent Attraction Mechanisms

Firstly, put into practice accurate and focused talent attraction techniques that would be directly related to the real circumstances, resource availability and development priorities of particular rural industries and regions. Take an active approach to get rid of rigid and outdated demands like “credentialism” and “title worship” that can exclude competent applicants, and properly create successful connections between existing people and real rural demands and opportunities. Plan and organize recruitment events that are directed at certain industry needs and regional needs systematically. Adopt innovative order-based mechanisms of talent attraction whereby learning institutions and training centers agree to develop skilled talent that will address the exact demands of the locality. Create detailed databases of information on hometown talent to determine, follow, and nurture connections with talented young people in the area who have a sincere enthusiasm and dedication to agriculture, rural life, and farmers, so they will eventually come back and help the region develop.

Secondly, come up with dynamic and responsive methods of attracting talent that take into account the varied requirements and conditions of contemporary workers. Create and support the flexible model of engagement like the concept of the migratory expert, the weekend farmer, or project-based consulting. Set up talent enclaves and innovation hubs by using the agricultural industrial parks, rural revitalization research institutes, and similar appropriate channels. Bring urban talent to rural areas by means of a variety of engagement schemes that include joint research projects, technical consultancy services, and occasional on-site involvement. Have a well-established record of service of urban talent who have helped in rural development and make it official through inclusion of their efficacy and impact in the assessment of professional titles and career progression. Adopt the Returning Wild Geese Program, which uses hometown connections, family relationships, and regional loyalty to lure successful entrepreneurs, fresh university graduates, and military veterans to return to rural areas to engage in entrepreneurship and stay there for an extended period.

Thirdly, develop comprehensive platforms of talent matching and support that will ensure effective interaction between talent and opportunities. Enhance the methodical construction of physical infrastructure such as talent stations, service centers, expert service hubs, and incubators of innovations. Give integrated service packages that involve consultations on policymaking, help in applying professional titles, financing matchmaking as well as constant career assistance to rural talent. Implement refined big data systems to assess rural talent demand and supply, which can accurately match the particular industry requirements and accessible professional skills. Be proactive in directing universities and research institutions to collectively create “industry-education-research-application” partnership centres with rural companies and agricultural bodies so that they can nurture a technical personnel population that is permanently anchored and dedicated to rural life.

4.2 Strengthening Talent Training Systems

To begin with, develop hierarchically and well-organized training systems that respond to the various requirements of the population based on their different levels of skills and professions. Utilize reputable vocational schools, agricultural technology outreach centres, and similar quality training organizations to offer both “order-based” and “targeted” training courses. Adapt training curricula and materials based on the changing, unique requirements of rural industrial development in various regions. Set up effective field classroom and on-the-job training centers with the participation of the experienced agricultural specialists as well as successful practitioners providing hands-on instruction right in the agricultural production environment. Develop new generations of professionals in agriculture in an organized way that will truly comprehend the latest technology, will be able to handle agricultural activities successfully, and have high business literacy. Adopt full-fledged academic credential enhancement programs that will promote and facilitate rural talent in the quest of formal on-the-job academic education and professional qualifications.

Secondly, combine and optimize the training resources available at different institutions and training programs so as to enhance their efficiency and effectiveness. Unify diverse training resources into a common strategy, remove undesirable duplicates of functions and overlap, and achieve a huge improvement in efficiency when using training resources. Constantly update training materials and method of delivery through the continuous assessment of results and feedback. Make training more pragmatic and applicable to the real world and add much of the operational element and real life case studies to the training courses, which makes the training more relevant and practical to the participants and makes the training more immediately applicable to their lives. Use all possible existing infrastructure and experience of training institutions like agricultural radio and television schools to enhance the systematic training of high quality farmers and skilled artisans who could be role models and trainers to others.

Furthermore, develop innovative approaches with respect to talent development model and implementation tools in order to enhance the level of engagement and its effects. Consider developing such institutions as farmers credit banks and other similar institutions to officially identify and register knowledge performance of individuals thereby promoting effective connectivity of ways and avenues of informal farmer teaching and training systems that are not linked into organized vocational education systems. Actively assist rural businesses in setting up realistic training centers and equipment and facilitate the emergence of rural talent incubation centers that offer a full range of support to new business owners. Develop cooperative training tendencies based on active governmental steering, large corporate involvement, varied investing by several stakeholders, including government grants, commercial investments, and civil capital.

4.3 Optimizing Talent Retention Environments

To begin with, enhance the overall incentive and assurance systems that can prove real value and encouragement to the rural service. Significantly raise the amount of financial and policy aid to rural

talent by creating special funds aimed at the development of rural talent with predictable and sustainable resources. Make sure that talented people have significant platforms in their careers and clear pathways to professional advancement. Create and apply effective incentive mechanisms of talent which offer adequate material rewards and public acknowledgment to talent who have made remarkable contributions to the rural revitalization initiatives. Provide a preferential treatment and support in professional title assessment, job upgrading and leadership. Create advanced classified and ranked service systems of various kinds of rural talent that would thoroughly upgrade supporting regulations in such important areas as family relocation, schooling of kids, healthcare and housing safety.

Second, ensure to significantly enhance living standards and working conditions such that rural areas become more appealing as a place to live over long periods. Actively develop modern transportation infrastructure and communications networks and logistic systems that integrate rural areas into wider markets and opportunities. Carefully refine the “soft environment” of service offering by creating and constantly upgrading well-developed “whole lifecycle” service systems that cover requirements throughout initial entry and extended duration of residence. Adopt systematic service delivery models like the implementation of the one-stop online service platform and proactive policy finding people outreach programs to alleviate bureaucracy. The correct treatment and solution to the so-called key small issues that have significant implications on the quality of life in general should be adequately addressed, such as talent household registration processes, housing security measures, and educational opportunities of children. Improve the social security transfer and continuation systems in an all-encompassing manner by making it easy, streamlined services accessible to the outgoing or incoming people.

Thirdly, the promotion of a positive and supportive social environment that is appreciative and respectful of the contributions made by rural talent should be actively encouraged. The systematic detection and public acknowledgement of models of outstanding rural talent can be done by using the existing mechanisms of outstanding talent choice, innovation and entrepreneurial competitions, and talent demonstration events. Recognized persons need to have meaningful recognition, proper policy support, and exposure to the public. Extensively promote the success stories and best practices in rural talents, and promote the model worker spirit and the professional spirit through numerous channels of news media. Nurture a social climate that honors talent and uses a wide variety of abilities effectively, and actively recruits talent to rejuvenate the countryside. Raise the share of the rural talent population in the different advanced selection and recognition procedures on all levels.

4.4 Building Talent Utilization Platforms

Start by creating innovative mechanisms of utilizing talents that are most effective in maximizing potentials of individuals and the organization. Create and sustain integrated databases of information about talents so that it can allow advanced categorization management and timely dynamic information updates about different kinds of rural talents. Present factual and up-to-date information as a sound

source of making exact talent placement and best-matching decisions. Implement the model of operation known as the “talent plus project”, which involves forming multidisciplinary teams of talent services focused on strategically significant projects of rural industrial development and other priority areas. Keep developing the systems of talent evaluation in an organized manner by setting hierarchical and properly classified assessment structures with the ability to acknowledge different types of contributions.

Finally, build powerful entrepreneurship and employment systems which facilitate innovation and economic growth. Implement and extend rural innovation and entrepreneurship leader development programs with a focus on identifying, training and supporting prospective entrepreneurs in depth. Actively direct financing institutions to create tailor-made financial products and services that meet the demand of rural innovation and entrepreneurship. Increase the pace of construction and operation of rural innovation and entrepreneurship incubation centers and practical training bases that offer full support services. Develop and increase systematically the number of young people in the countryside as rural entrepreneurs by providing them extensive training activities and practical work experience, as well as the continuous mentor-mentee interactions. Optimize the training systems and incentives particularly aimed at rural entrepreneurs. Enhance the production and efficient performance of the contemporary agriculture-based industrial parks, agricultural science and technology parks and so forth, which are capable of consolidating resources and talent.

Furthermore, it is necessary to actively promote integration processes in industry that are both profound and create mutual benefit. Develop county-level leading industries on a systematic basis, and build upon their economies and sources of jobs. Create new kinds of agricultural business entities in the form of family farms, farmer cooperatives, as well as agriculture enterprises within the framework of certain support programs aimed at them. Conduct complete farm production programs in the form of family farms (with the participation of farmers) or cooperatives in order to improve quality. Ensure active involvement in the creation of interest linkage arrangements to be implemented between big business entities with low-income farmers that bring some mutual advantage to the parties. Enhance and expand tested schemes of guaranteed minimum dividends, cooperatively owned shareholdings, and other shared forms that will help farmers increase their access to benefits accrued by industry value-added activities.

4.5 Strengthening Policy Coordination and Integration

To begin with, make strong efforts to promote policies and implement them properly on the ground. The investment in publicity and outreach of rural talent policies must be significantly increased so that the level of awareness of the targets can be drastically improved. Put in place regular mechanisms of tracking the implementation of policies systematically and assessing their effectiveness by noting how they develop and what challenges exist. Make sure that the different policy measures are truly and consistently applied within the locality as provided. Keep enhancing the process of rural talent identification and classification systems. Enhance information technology structure and digital abilities

in rural talent management jobs. Implement and keep multi-level networks of rural talent management between county-township-village in order to have a coordinated action.

Next, enhance greatly coordination tools of policies between various sectors and governmental levels. Enhance organized system of inter-departmental coordination and communication in order to provide significant synergies within the sphere of talent work. Create official joint meeting systems related to rural talent revitalization that are clearly defined and follow regular patterns. Provide adequate leadership of Party committees, efficient direction of organizational departments and adequate distribution of functions among relevant functional departments. Rural talent revitalization objectives and results should be given formal status as part of assessing the targets and responsibilities on the subject of talent work and evaluating the overall achievement of rural revitalization activities at each level of administration.

Thirdly, invest significantly more time and effort into investment and resource assurance to ensure that there is a long-term support system. Ensure the specific contribution of investments and resources towards the rejuvenation of the rural talent, which implies providing reliable channels of financing through predictability. Proactively assist agriculture-linked companies with increasing their expenditure on developing the rural population of human capital. Encourage innovation in financial services of rural areas and ways of delivering such services systematically. Motivate and advise financial establishments to create relevant financial facilities to meet the requirements of revitalizing the countryside. Create sustainable government-managed, multiple-party-based investments systems where various channels to contribute are available. Register the farmer education and training money as ordinary budgets in every administration in accordance with official rules and evaluations of the necessity to invest the sums.

5. Conclusion

The revitalization of rural talents is an important strategic element and an important enabling factor in the overall rural revitalization policy. In the face of the complicated and interdependent issues regarding the recruitment and talent development efforts in the rural areas today, both policymakers and practitioners are to remain consistent with the problem-orientation strategy that tackles the source of the problems in a systematic manner. There is a need to apply concerted action on various interconnected aspects at the same time such as improving the methods of attracting talents, enhancing training systems, enhancing the conditions of retention, and developing the utilization platforms. It is only through these well-rounded and unified solutions that the entire process of the “recruitment training retention utilization” mechanism can be put together and sustained in its entirety.

Every stakeholder needs to utilize all the available capabilities and comparative advantages of various actors such as government bodies at all levels, market organizations and financial bodies, and various types of social organizations. It is necessary to purposefully create and sustain meaningful synergies that will give rise to collaborative networks that magnify individual contributions. The long-term

provision of strong talent guarantees and continuous intellectual support should be ensured in order to ensure the complete revival of rural areas. At the same time, all the participants should really adhere to the basic principles regulating the rural development processes and natural tendencies of talent development and career advancement. Category-specific, locally appropriate policies need to be formulated and implemented through a thorough examination of particular situations instead of a universal policy.

Various forms of recruitment and development of rural talent should be actively sought through pilot programs and regular assessment because they can apply to various regional realities. People with talent must really be given the chance and motivated to show all their variety of talents and abilities in the wide and full of opportunities rural area. With such concerted efforts, it is possible to achieve the strategic national goal of accelerating the development of a robust and modern agricultural sector that is capable of supporting national development objectives as well as enhancing the quality of life of the rural people.

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