



Study on the Motivation Mechanism of Rural Sage Governance

Junxiang Miao, Shilong Zhang, Yijing Rao, Xinke Huang

School of Economics and Management, Zhejiang Ocean University, Zhoushan 316022, Zhejiang, P. R. China

ABSTRACT

The continuation of local culture ensures the possibility and value of the continuation of the village sage group. From the ancient "squire" to the new era of "rural sage", although it has changed in various aspects, its role in the modern rural social governance system cannot be ignored. Based on the analysis of the cases of the rural sage governance in two places, this paper clarifies the relevant conceptual relationships about the rural sage governance, and proposes to establish the rural sage governance mechanism from the aspects of reconstructing the authority of rural sage, building an effective platform and strengthening risk control, so as to ensure that rural sage governance can play a greater role.

Keywords: Rural sage; Rural governance; Motivation mechanism

Introduction

China is a big country with traditional agricultural civilization, and the problems of agriculture, villages and farmers have always been a huge stumbling block in the process of urbanization in China. At

present, there are still problems in the governance of rural society, such as the lack of endogenous power of governance, the lack of governance means, and the absence of governance subjects, which seriously hinder the development and progress of rural society. To solve the problems of the current rural social development, it is necessary to base on the current rural localism and combine with the actual situation of the current rural development. At the same time, the village sage group can play an irreplaceable role in rural social governance. Thus, giving full play to the role of rural sage governance is an important way to promote the modernization of rural governance.[1]

Received: 28 April, 2019; Revised: 13 May, 2019; Accepted: 2 June, 2019.

First Author: Junxiang Miao, Master Degree Candidate, Zhejiang Ocean University, research direction: rural development. Corresponding Author: Shilong Zhang (1964-), Zhejiang Ocean University, E-mail: 17858803141@163.com.

In recent years, in the process of actively promoting rural governance in various regions, some outstanding practices that can be copied and popularized in rural sage governance have been accumulated, which provides reference experience for the modernization of rural governance in China.

1. A case study of "the council of rural sages" in Hengdong village, Shicheng town

Since the establishment of the rural sage council in Hengdong village, Shicheng town, in 2011, the council has adhered to the important principles of "Civil affairs by the people, civil administration by the people" and taken villager' autonomy and public service as its main responsibilities. In dealing with important matters in the village, we should resolutely adopt the practice of "one thing, one discussion, no exception", and adhere to the style of "three discussions and three openness" —Council proposals, Council visits and deliberations, household representatives meeting resolutions, bills and resolutions open, implementation process open, results open.[2] In terms of infrastructure and public services in the village, the council extensively mobilized the rural sage groups and other villagers to build a cultural center of merits and virtues buildings in the village through self-funding and "substitute awards for supplements", which not only enriched the villagers' spare time, but also promoted the development of public welfare undertakings in the village. In the aspect of village environmental improvement, the council of rural sage has taken the lead. At present, the village has fully covered the projects of rain and sewage diversion, garbage classification, separation of human and livestock, and other rural environmental optimization, which makes village take on a new look.

From the case of Hengdong village, it can be seen that the rural sage plays a more and more important

role in the modern rural social governance system. At the same time, the areas about rural sage governance are more and more extensive, and its degree is also deepening. It mainly presents the following characteristics and trends:

(a) The rural sage group must come from the local elite groups with high prestige, cultural knowledge base, economic strength, social influence, and hometown construction;

(b) The authority of rural sage comes from the high trust of villagers and the support of the village committees and local governments;

(c) The means of rural sage governance are constantly diversified, and there are new initiatives in solving the problem of insufficient funds;

(d) The coverage and influence of rural sage governance are constantly expanding, which plays an irreplaceable role in rural public supply and public order maintenance, and it has become an inseparable part of rural governance;

(e) The participation of rural sage in rural governance has been gradually recognized and accepted by the masses of modern society;

(f) The rural sage governance can more and more solve the omission of government governance, on the other hand, it also enhances the propaganda effect of the government's public discourse.

2. The relations among several concepts must be clarified in the rural sage governance

2.1 The ancient "squire" and the new "rural sage"

The term "squire" first appeared in song dynasty, but its origin did not start from song dynasty. As early as in Zhou Li already had a record: judicial trial inquires into villagers. Here, the word "villagers" refers to local celebrities, powerful people or those clan rulers, etc. Their typical characteristics are highly respected, appealing, and cohesive, and they can exert

certain influence in the local area. In the following dynasties, the identity connotation of "villager", "government official", "squire" and so on was constantly deepened and the scope of coverage was constantly broadened, which also gradually played an important role in the feudal society ruling system of "no county under imperial power".[3] In a word, the ancient squire has rich cultural knowledge and mature political opinions, and at the same time has great ambition to help the world and save the people. Thus it has gained quite high status and authority in the civil society, and it is self-evident that it is important and complementary to local management and national governance. However, in the modern history, under the background of social unrest, economic depression, and cultural withering, the authority of this special group was constantly attacked. Instead of playing its original role, it was controlled and utilized by some people with other intentions, and the rural sage class gradually faded away. In the modern rural social governance system, the rural sage group is back to the historical stage to play and deepen the effect of the traditional squire. In the final analysis, the new rural sage is the continuation of the traditional squire. Of course, in the process of modern society, the new rural sage group also has the characteristics of the new era: economic strength, literacy, moral pursuit, ambitious, willing to contribute to the development of hometown.

2.2 Rural culture and rural sage culture

With more than two thousand years of agricultural civilization, the rural society has been formed, and the rural culture with the core connotation of respecting ancestors, seeking roots, and relocating to the local land has been accumulated, which makes the talents who are far away from or secure the native land more or less have a certain degree of local complex. The culture of rural sages originates from the rural

society, which is the fertile soil for cultivating the culture of rural sages. It concentrates the essence of the traditional farming civilization of "work with the sun rising and rest after the sun setting". It is the natural connection between the local culture and the local society that provides the foundation for the revival of the modern rural sage groups and creates a good atmosphere for the cultivation of the new rural sage culture. In the process of modern civilization, local society and rural culture have changed to a certain extent, but the localism of the local society is still indelible. Under this background, the new rural sage culture not only absorbs the value essence of the traditional culture, but also blends in the socialist culture with contemporary characteristics, which better provides value guidance for the continuation of the rural sage group and enriches the connotation of Chinese culture.

2.3 Rural sage governance and institutional governance

In the final analysis, it is the governance of people that can effectively play the role of connecting local government with villagers, moral educating, improving public supply, and mediating disputes among villagers. From the perspective of historical experience, it is inevitable that there are loopholes in the governance of villages by competent people, and the solution to rural problems cannot be placed unilaterally in the hands of competent people, but this can not deny the role of the rural sages. Thus, the key is to promote the rural sage governance and institutional governance together, and make the organic unity of the two in the governance. Institutional governance requires that on the basis of following the country's constitution, laws and regulations, the relevant provisions about village regulations and villagers' autonomy should be abided by. At the same time, with the help of folk customs,

morals, habits and traditions of the informal system, a set of institutionalized system of rural governance can be constructed. On the other hand, the rural sage governance is dynamic. The effectiveness and influence of changing individuals or a group of people to participate in village governance are different, which also requires the institutionalization and standardization of effective experience practices in the process of rural sage governance, so as to ensure the effectiveness and continuity of its effect.

3 Promoting the study on the effective mechanism of rural sage governance

The new rural sage group has its unique effects in mediating social differences, promoting positive values, enriching rural social life, and promoting urban-rural integration, but the limitations about itself still exist. The modern rural governance system is not completely free from conflicts with the rural sage governance system. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure that the rural sage governance system exists in a self-consistent mechanism, so as to maximize the value of the rural sage governance system and prevent it from falling into inevitable conflicts.

3.1 Deeply excavating and carrying forward the traditional culture of rural sage, and constructing the mechanism of authoritative identification of rural sage

In the feudal ethical society of the past several thousand years, the politics of the rural sage has been inseparable from the feudal rule, which make up for the defect of "no county under imperial power", and deeply embedded in all aspects of social life. In this process, the rural sage culture was preserved along with other excellent traditional culture. However, with the abolition of the imperial examination system and the end of the feudal monarchy, the system foundation on which the rural sage relied to exist and develop was fundamentally destroyed, which results in the

the rural sage group and culture gradually fading out of public view and even forgotten. But in fact, the rural sage group has not gone far, and its culture has never disappeared. The rural sage culture can endure for thousands of years in the ancient society and be long-lasting in the modern society, for it has its own internal gene as an excellent traditional culture.[4] At present, it is urgent to fully excavate and carry forward the traditional culture of rural sage, to rejuvenate its former elegant demeanour, and to make the rural sage culture deeply rooted in the hearts of the people. The key lies in the reconstruction of the rural society's identification mechanism of the authority of rural sage. In essence, the authority of rural sage is the permission of villagers' right to participate in the governance of rural society, which is a kind of informal permission and requires the villagers to trust and identify with the rural sage highly, especially in the recognition of the authority of returning rural sage. In the past, such groups had little communication with their hometowns and lacked the understanding of the actual situation in their hometowns. In the current complex rural social pattern, they could not bring higher material and spiritual benefits to villagers in a short time. But from the point of view of current situation, the villagers even lack of a long-term perspective and the general situation consciousness, they only look forward to the tangible benefits brought by rural sage groups in a short time, which makes the returning rural sage is in trouble. In the absence of recognition, the rural sage groups have gradually lost confidence, and finally the affairs in the village can only be willing but unable.

3.2 Implementing the relevant system and constructing the safeguard mechanism for the authority of rural sage

On the one hand, the authority of the rural sage groups participating in rural social governance needs the spiritual and cognitive permission of the villagers,

as well as the institutional safeguards. Firstly, it's necessary to establish a system which can encourage, support and guide the returning of rural sages. For rural sage groups without official posts, treatment, and welfare, even if there is the spiritual identity of the masses, there are bound to be a number of obstacles on handling affairs, which requires the county and township governments through a certain form and procedure to return to carry out the honor appointment and the propaganda report to security the rural sage groups' rights of participating rural governance.[5] Secondly, setting up a reward and punishment system, which focuses on the various forms of recognition and reward for the contributions made by the new rural sages, so as to increase their sense of honor and achievement, and enhance their belief in making contributions to rural development. In addition, implementing and promoting the participation of rural sage in the village committee election system, to create better conditions for the return of the rural sage.

3.3 Setting up an effective platform and strengthening the rural sage and multiple means to govern the village mechanism

To build an effective platform for the participation of rural sage groups in rural social governance plays a positive role in promoting village governance with multiple means. Using modern network media, building information communication platform, set up financing platform initiated by the rural sage, cultivate local style civilization platform through the guidance of the rural sage, and set up law and policy publicity platform and entertainment and sports platform. The cultivation and perfection of a series of platforms play a powerful role in promoting the ideological and moral education, cultural and legal literacy of rural villagers, and the cultivation of civilized local customs. It can make the rural sage groups play the roles of teachers of science and technology culture, mediators of

contradictions and disputes, preachers of policies and regulations, and investigators of rural culture better, which can strengthen their multiple means and ways of participating in the governance of village affairs.

3.4 Strengthening education and supervision, perfecting risk control mechanism

The participation of the village sage groups in rural governance has shown its unique effect. While pursuing its benefit and value, we should not ignore the potential risk factors of rural sage governance. And in the process of participating in the rural governance, the rural sages can gain a greater discourse power in the handling of public affairs, especially after gaining the status of the village two committees, which is easy to breed corruption and other problems. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen indoctrination and supervision and improve the risk control mechanism. To strengthen ideological education and restraint, on the one hand, the rural sage groups should conform to the trend of the times and make progress actively. On the other hand, they should have lofty aspirations, establish positive and progressive values, and take the long-term view as their duty to seek the welfare of villagers. Also, social norms are the external guarantee for the rural sage groups to undertake social responsibility consciously. It is precisely because the intrinsic value concept of the rural sages is not mandatory that their original intentions are likely to be blinded by the reality. Therefore, it is necessary to fill in and improve the laws and regulations of the new rural sages in the field of democracy and rule of law, establish relevant restraint system, and effectively avoid the abuse of power. Through the internal ideological education and the external legal regulations to restrict the role of these two insurance, to a certain extent, reduce the risk of rural sage governance.

References

- [1] Xiao T D. Observation and reflection on rural governance in China in recent ten years [J]. Journal of Central China normal University (Humanities and Social Sciences Edition), 2014, 53 (06): 1: 11.
- [2] Xu X Q. The mechanism and practice of new social organizations participating in rural governance [J]. Study of Socialism with Chinese characteristics, 2014 (04): 86 - 89.
- [3] Bai X J, Zhang C L. The political logic and mechanism construction of rural sages' participation in modern rural governance [J]. Nanjing Social Sciences, 2016 (11): 82 - 87.
- [4] Zhang Z C. On the connotation definition and social function of traditional rural sages and modern new rural sages [J]. Journal of Jiangsu normal University (philosophy and Social Sciences Edition), 2016, 42 (04): 154-160.
- [5] Hu P G, Gao Jibo. New rural sage: connotation, function and error avoidance [J]. Journal of Nanjing Agricultural University (Social Science Edition), 2017, 17(01): 20-29+144-145.