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THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FUNCTIONS OF CHINESE RURAL SCHOOLS IN THE NEW ERA

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ABSTRACT

Chinese society is rural; rural education is an important part of China. The development of rural schools is not only a problem of China's basic education political revolution but also a problem directly related to the sustainable development of Chinese society. This paper is a literature review of rural schools' social and cultural functions from the Chinese documentary and literature. Multiple definitions of the term rural are provided. The findings are represented via different overarching themes. The findings reveal that rural schools can perform social and cultural functions if they are developed as an important component of rural construction in the new era, enhancing the cultivation and inheritance of rural culture, extensively carrying out vocational education to serve the rural revitalization strategy directly, and vigorously cultivating all-subject teachers with a local flavor.

Keywords: Social Functions; Cultural Functions; Rural Schools; the Cultivation and Inheritance of Rural Culture

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Clear comprehension and accurate characterization of the context in which rural schools operate are prerequisites for analyzing rural education. While no two rural locations are exactly alike, the following characteristics characterize rural areas in varying degrees. Therefore, they should be considered when developing strategies for rural education (Villa & Knutas, 2020):

- 1. Geographical distance: Rural areas are typically far from other densely inhabited areas. Rural areas' ability to recruit, retain, and develop professionals, citizens' capability to interact, socialize and work outside their immediate neighborhoods, and their willingness to forego local services are all influenced by their isolation and accessibility.
- 2. Tiny population and sparse population: Rural areas are naturally sparsely populated. Few, expensive, or insufficient services are provided in sparsely populated regions because attaining a critical mass and taking advantage of economies of scale is challenging. In the case of education, this means that rural schools are typically smaller than schools in other contexts.

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- 3. Low socioeconomic status: rural communities tend to be poorer than urban areas, especially in developing countries, but also elsewhere.
- 4. Ethnically homogeneous and socially cohesive communities: Rural areas are believed to be mostly peaceful and friendly environments where residents form close, stable and largely ethnically homogeneous relationships.

Despite the fact that the modernization of Chinese society is accelerating, the "local society" nature of Chinese society remains strong. To study Chinese society, it is necessary to study China's rural areas, to promote the development of Chinese society, and to promote China's rural development. The development of rural schools is not only an issue of China's basic education reform but also an issue directly related to the sustainable development of Chinese society.

Rural decline is a problem that human society must deal with as it moves from an agricultural civilization to an industrial civilization. Solving the problem of rural decline is the key to making rural revitalization work as a strategy. After the People's Republic of China was formed, the state took the lead in developing heavy industry and quickly promoting industrialization. This was done to quickly change the country's "one poor and two white" image. Since the reform and opening up, a lot of rural people have moved to cities, which has led to rapid urbanization. As a result, the development of rural society has been slow, the number of school-age children in rural areas has gone down, and rural decline has been clear. The Opinions of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council on Comprehensively Promoting Rural Revitalization and Accelerating the Modernization of Agriculture and Rural Areas (hereafter called the Opinions) said: "To comprehensively build a modern socialist country and realize (Guan Qian, 2021) the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, the most arduous and arduous task still lies in the rural areas, and the broadest and deepest foundation still lies in the rural areas. To solve the problem of unbalanced and insufficient development, the focus and difficulty are on the "three rural areas." Build a new development pattern, and the potential stamina lies in the "three rural areas." To cope with various risks and challenges at home and abroad, the foundation's support lies in the "three rural areas." The "Opinions" also pointed out that rural revitalization includes the comprehensive revitalization of rural industry, talents, culture, ecology, organization, and other five aspects, and rural revitalization should take the road of socialist rural revitalization with Chinese characteristics, providing strong support for the comprehensive construction of a modern socialist country (Wang et al., 2022).

A high proportion of the world's children live in rural areas and attend rural schools, even in highly developed Western nation-states. Despite this, educational and social welfare provision in rural areas often remains a low national priority. In this issue, we analyze and review research on rural schools and their communities in China. This review aims to review published/unpublished literature or documents about rural education in China. The research question which focuses this inquiry is:

"What issues, topics, and theoretical perspectives are missing regarding rural schools' social and cultural functions?

2.0 RESEARCH DESIGN

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This paper represents a document analysis of schools' social and cultural functions. Document analysis is compiling and analyzing published data on a particular topic, research question, or specific issue to uncover and understand patterns and thematic consistencies (Preston & Barnes, 2018). The researchers define document analysis as a review of a topical body of published or publicly accessible research, which is analyzed into major themes and sub-themes.

3.0 FINDINGS

Three themes have been emerged from the literature. The researchers present the themes and subthemes in the following section.

First, the Multi-purpose Centers function of rural schools

Building a multi-purpose center is one strategy used by many rural communities to build an active community. Buildings that serve many purposes are known as multi-purpose centers, and they may enhance the local economy, education, health, society and culture, and technology. These centers can be anything from a community, conference, or civic centre to an arena, pavilion, or fairground, depending on the demands of the locality.

(1) Rural schools are modern educational centers in rural society:

Social capital refers to informal and formal social bonds and networks between people within personal and/or professional communities (Preston & Barnes, 2018). Village schools are schools for this special social organization in the countryside. The specific form of this particular social space "Education" is the ontological function of schools. Man is both a natural entity and a social entity, and a natural person can only become a social person through socialization. Education is the basic way for people to socialize. In a sense, school is a social organization created to meet the needs of people's socialization. From the day it was born, the school has made it its mission to educate people and aim to realize their socialization and individualization.

In a broad sense, education can be divided into family education, school education, and social education. The influence and role of school education on human development are the most comprehensive and systematic, and it is difficult to compare with social education and family education. Schools are social organizations that specialize in educating people, and teachers are specialized educators who have undergone special training and strict selection. Teachers not only have profound professional knowledge and high moral character in personal cultivation but also understand the laws of education, master educational methods after special training, and are specialized talents in educating people. School education is also a special place for educating people, with special education equipment, special education methods, and a special education system.

The most striking feature of schooling is its purposeful, organized, planned, and systematic impact on thousands of people. It is the unique responsibility of school education to cultivate and shape comprehensive and complete social beings. As a specific form of school, rural schools have the general and ontological functions of schools. Cultivating people who meet the requirements of rural society is the ontological function of rural schools, and in this sense, rural schools are first and foremost the modern educational centers of rural society.

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(2) Rural schools are rural cultural centers.

On the one hand, the education of any society always develops in a certain cultural environment, and the educational purpose, educational content, educational methods, educational means, etc. are manifestations of a certain social culture, and education all reflects the cultural spirit of a specific era and a specific country. On the other hand, culture always promotes the participation of individuals in cultural practice and cultural innovation through the inheritance of education, to preserve and develop culture. Without education, there can be no continuation and development of culture. Education not only has the function of transmitting the inherent culture of mankind but also innovates human culture with the changes of the times and the development of society to adapt it to the new requirements of social development. Without the renewal and creation of culture, there can be no real development of culture. The purpose of education is to foster cultural exchange and integration by cultivating individuals with an innovative spirit and creative ability, as well as to fulfil their function of cultural creation. Education has the functions of cultural transmission, cultural selection, cultural renewal, and cultural creation. The renewal of education and the creation of human culture are mainly manifested in two aspects: First, education builds a new cultural system through cultural selection, criticism, and integration so that culture has new characteristics and realizes cultural renewal and development. Second, education realizes cultural creation by cultivating creative talents and directly producing a new culture.

From the perspective of cultural studies, the countryside is a cultural concept, and its core is the rural culture that has accumulated and formed over a long period of time. Rural culture is a relatively stable way of survival gradually formed by villagers in long-term rural production and life, covering all aspects of rural life (LIU Mingming, 2015). Rural culture and urban culture together constitute the modern culture of mankind. The inheritance and development of rural culture is an important topic in human society, and rural schools are the local social centers for the inheritance and development of rural culture (Hong et al., 2021).

China's rural society has a low overall level of development, particularly at the economic and cultural levels, which are far below those of cities. As an important cultural organization, schools should assume the function of promoting social and cultural development and use the power of education to arouse the people to promote the development of various rural construction undertakings. The ideal village school is not only a specialized educational institution but also a place for public cultural activities and a place for the natural spiritual life of villagers. In addition to school-age children receiving formal education there, villagers can freely exchange ideas, seek help, and play freely. Through long-term cultural nourishment, infiltration, and influence, rural schools inherit and purify the rural social atmosphere and become an important content for promoting the construction of rural grassroots organizations, the transformation of rural society, and the common prosperity of villagers' spiritual lives. Village schools are public utilities in rural society and nourishment centers for the spiritual life of villagers.

Second, the rural culture of rural schools is missing.

Rural schools have been identified as arenas where social capital and community engagement, cooperation, and reconstruction of local his-tory and culture are managed. Rural communities and their schools differ from one to the other and might be affected differently by national

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education policies (Villa & Knutas, 2020). In this section we outline some overall perspectives on rural and school policy and explain how a school in rural areas links with wider rural-urban discourses.

(1) The subject orientation of the educational functions of rural schools.

In a modern society dominated by industrialization, the transformation and development of rural schools all show the imprint of urban modernization, and their cultural genes have a strong ecological foundation like that of modern schools marked by subject knowledge orientation. From the perspective of school organization and management, rural schools are becoming more and more distant from rural society, and the "state" function in their villages is gradually weakened, evolving into a social island immersed in the "ocean of knowledge." Although rural schools are still established in rural areas, teaching management, personnel appointment and dismissal of schools, and so on are no longer the responsibility of the villages, and the school system, curriculum, and teaching materials are uniformly stipulated; rural areas are merely a geographical space in which they exist. (Li Zhichao, 2016; Wu Yuqi, 1991) The curriculum of rural schools and the curriculum of urban schools are completely the same; the subject matter, course content, and evaluation standards are completely the "modern scientific" knowledge system born from an industrialized society, and rural culture has almost no room for development in rural schools.

Curriculum is the direct carrier of school education; school curriculum reflects the value trade-off, goal orientation, and choice of different cultures in school education; and the three-level curriculum system is the basic design of the construction of China's school curriculum system. From the national level, although local education administrative departments and schools have been encouraged to form a multi-level and three-dimensional curriculum system through the development of local curriculum and school-based curriculum, due to the general lack of sufficient cultural consciousness and curriculum development ability of rural schools, their curriculum construction goals have not been truly realized in the practice of rural curriculum development, and rural schools have never been able to truly carry the inheritance and development functions of rural culture and can only be invited to swim in the "ocean of scientific knowledge."(Li Zhichao, 2016; Wu Yuqi, 1991) Rural schools are "in the countryside and the heart is in the city" and do not contribute much to the development of rural society.

(2) Rural teachers lack awareness of rural society.

In the twenties and thirties of the 20th century, the China Vocational Education Society launched experiments on rural improvement in Xugongqiao, a suburb of Shanghai, and other areas, accumulating valuable experience for comprehensively promoting rural improvement through the development of education. The rural improvement experiment focuses on the service and contribution of education to the local economy and society and pays attention to the participation and guidance of teachers in rural social life. They believe that rural teachers are the backbone of rural improvement, and on the basis of summarizing the experimental results, they systematically put forward 20 ideal standards for rural improvement talents, covering educational feelings, educational literacy, educational ability, subject knowledge, educational behavior, educational standards, etc. Among them, the importance of rural teachers' determination and interest in serving the countryside, enthusiasm for thousands of farmers, perseverance and perseverance that will not return, courage to sacrifice voluntarily,

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understanding local needs, cooperating with local elders, and guiding farmers are particularly emphasized (Wang Daofu, 2013; Wu & Ye, 2018).

Rural teachers are rare intellectuals in rural society, the main inheritors of rural culture, and the leaders of a new rural culture. However, with the acceleration of industrialization and the intensification of the tendency of school education to take examinations, rural teachers' sense of social service has become more and more indifferent, and today's rural teachers are completely outside the thousands of members of rural society, from their thinking to their behavior. First of all, Chinese society is a more typical dualistic society; different social identities have different social service consciousnesses, and the change in the identity of rural teachers has caused the role of rural teachers to be lost. In the past, most of the rural teachers were substitute teachers or private teachers who lived in rural areas, grew up in rural areas, and lived in rural areas, and although they were engaged in education, their status was still that of farmers. They live in thousands of villages, maintain a complete "peasant" nature, are familiar with the countryside, love the countryside, and integrate with rural culture. Currently, the vast majority of rural teachers are "non-farmer" identities, professionals, and professional educators; they do not master agricultural production skills, do not care about agricultural production, and do not understand rural life; they still work in rural schools, but they no longer belong to thousands of villages and lack their own "village" identity. Second, rural teachers lack local feelings in the depths of their minds. Rural teachers are mainly composed of two parts: Some teachers are urban young people who grew up in cities and towns, and their experience growing up determines that their rural experience is quite limited. The other half of the teachers are rural youth who have grown up in the countryside and worked hard to get to the city to study. They have learned to see everything around them through the eyes, thinking, and value orientation of urban people. Although they are in the countryside, they are always thinking about city life, and many times, they work hard to create an opportunity to leave the countryside and return to the city. These teachers who are "in the countryside and in the city" often lack the awareness of actively participating in the construction of rural society, and their education and teaching only focus on thousands of books and teaching materials, their selfisolation outside of rural society, and ignore the important task of inheriting excellent rural culture and promoting rural social development (Shuwen, 2019). Third, post-service training lacks a rural complex. Post-service training is an important part of teachers' professional development, and the new teacher education system emphasizes the integration of pre-service training, induction education, and post-service training. However, the training of rural teachers is convergent, the training form is single, many trainers do not understand the countryside and the specific problems of rural schools, the training content has no "local flavor," lacks pertinence and operability, and it is difficult to create an excellent rural teacher team (LIU Tiefang, 2001).

(3) Rural students lack the nourishment of rural culture.

The basic concept of rural education development is the habitual orientation of "leaving the peasants," and the number of "departing from peasants" is often an important indicator for measuring the quality of education in a rural school. "While we let the countryside accept the educational model we designed and they have little choice," a scholar once stated bluntly, "we also infiltrate the value presupposition of urban orientation into it, making it the leading value orientation and value goal of rural education." (Yue et al., 2018) Rural students have long been

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immersed in the impact of the strong values of thousands of urban cultures and are in a state of artificial isolation from the rural value system, but they cannot touch the real countryside and cannot get the natural nourishment of local values, resulting in a lack of self-confidence in rural culture.

On the one hand, the implementation of a uniform urban education model in the learning process has made rural education evolve into an adaptation to urban culture. "Forgetting the basics" education scientific knowledge with urban culture as the core is the core element of school education, and local cultural knowledge and culture are difficult to integrate, making rural students easy to produce. Rural culture is "backward culture," and local knowledge is a cumbersome misunderstanding of scientific and cultural knowledge learning. On the other hand, boarding life dilutes the rural experience of rural students. Although the large-scale relocation and consolidation of schools and rural boarding schools led by "efficiency" have alleviated to a certain extent the social problems such as the small scale of rural schools, the distance of children going to school, and the lack of effective learning guidance for left-behind children, However, because rural students enter boarding school too early, most of their daily lives are spent in the small world of school, where life is completely "learning" and "curriculum," and their living space is isolated from the village, so they lose the opportunity to deeply contact the countryside (Dhar & Mutalib, n.d.; Lv Wei, 2019).

Third, the basic way for rural schools to realize the function of "cultural center."

Rural revitalization is a way of positively transforming rural areas for present and future generation. Examining the history of rural education highlights the importance of cultural competence in suggesting and implementing rural education reform and understanding the various functions of education in rural communities (Devynn C. Campbell-Halfaker & Margo A. Gregor, 2021).

(1) Take the development of rural schools as an important part of rural construction in the new era

Rural revitalization and effective governance are the foundation. Effectively giving voice to the social governance function of rural schools is an indispensable part of the construction of a new rural governance system and the modernization of rural governance capabilities. Rural schools are not only rural education centers but also rural cultural centers, which have the functions of inheriting excellent traditional culture, disseminating advanced modern culture, educating villagers, and governing villages. They are important platforms for knowledge dissemination, talent training, cultural exchanges, and the maintenance of good rural social order. Establish a regular contact mechanism between school and village party organizations and broaden the scope of grassroots party organizations' work to include all aspects and links to rural work. Organize Party members and teachers to study the principles and policies of rural education and rural development in a planned and systematic manner, guide rural teachers to take the initiative to play to their own strengths, and provide knowledge, guidance, and services for rural development. Strengthen the ties between rural schools and territorial rural autonomous organizations and mass organizations; encourage village party organizations, village committees, and villagers to participate in school management in an orderly manner; and encourage rural schools to participate in territorial rural affairs.

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In rural construction, actively promote the construction of cultural service complexes and comprehensively improve the level of rural social public services and basic service capabilities. With rural schools as the center, synchronous planning and centralized construction of village medical rooms, cultural facilities, sports facilities, etc. According to the actual situation of rural talents, village doctors and school doctors, village science and technology counsellors and quality teachers, village cultural officers, literary and art teachers, etc. are integrated, constructed, and used part-time. Logistics service support resources are allocated centrally, and post-support services such as food and lodging for complex staff and school staff can be constructed, managed, and used in a unified manner.

(2) Strengthen the cultivation and inheritance of rural culture

The construction of rural culture is the key to rural revitalization, and inheriting local culture is the basic responsibility of rural schools as rural cultural centers. The comprehensive practical activities and research-based learning advocated by the new curriculum reform have expanded the space and means for rural schools to effectively inherit rural culture. Innovate the curriculum system of rural schools; take the school-based curriculum as the carrier; excavate local history and characteristic culture; systematically sort out the natural style resources, excellent traditional cultural resources, and folk customs and etiquette resources of the area where the rural school is located; guide and organize the production talents, folk artists, village sages, etc. to enter the campus to realize the curriculum of rural culture. Pay attention to the design of innovative comprehensive practice courses, encourage rural schools, especially small-scale rural schools, to open labor courses related to daily production and life, and summaries and promote the effective practices and experiences of rural schools in using social resources to innovate education and teaching.

Social progress is essentially social and cultural progress, and rural revitalization is, in the final analysis, also the process of erasing rural culture. The construction of rural culture should pay attention not only to the inheritance of excellent traditional culture but also to the dissemination of advanced modern culture. Rural schools not only carry a heavy and excellent rural traditional culture but also bring together a wealth of advanced modern culture and are a high-quality distribution place for advanced ideas and culture in the countryside. Rural schools have the conditions, possibilities, and obligations to integrate excellent traditional culture and advanced modern culture, form a new rural culture with the characteristics of the times, and then lead the development of rural society.

(1) Widely carry out occupations to serve the rural revitalization strategy educate.

Vocational education is an important way for rural young people to become talented and succeed in their careers, and the development of vocational education is an effective measure to improve the overall development level of rural areas. Socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era, and the main contradiction in our society has been transformed into a contradiction between the people's growing need for a better life and unbalanced and inadequate development, and the problem of unbalanced and insufficient development is most prominent in the countryside. Through rural vocational education, cultivate the diversified talents necessary for rural revitalization, teach and popularize modern agricultural vocational and technical skills, organize effective vocational skills special training, and ensure "prosperous industry, ecological livability, civilized rural customs, effective governance, and

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a rich life" with rural talents and vocational skills. (Wang et al., 2022) are the best organizational carrier for rural society to carry out vocational education. Therefore, an important measure to implement the rural revitalization strategy in the context of the new era is to expand the functions of rural schools, vigorously develop rural vocational education, actively integrate into rural modern agricultural production, and take pragmatic and effective measures to stimulate the vitality of vocational education and empower rural revitalization according to the actual needs of industrial development in different regions.

(3) Vigorously cultivate all-subject teachers with a local flavor

For rural revitalization, talent is the foundation. Talent training and teachers are essential. Due to the generally small size and small number of students in rural schools, it is extremely common for one teacher to undertake the teaching tasks of multiple courses, and almost all teachers of Chinese, mathematics, and English in rural schools are also responsible for teaching music, art, physical education, and other courses. After China's basic education fully realized the universal nine-year compulsory education, high-quality education equity is the main task of the development of basic education at this stage. (China, 2018; Yiu & Adams, 2013) The Ministry of Education, in its "Opinions on the Implementation of the Excellent Teacher Training Plan" and "Guangian Implementation of the Outstanding Teacher Training Plan 2.0," has always emphasized that the focus of excellent teacher training in primary school is to combine the international all-subject teacher training experience with China's cultivation education tradition and explore the all-subject teacher training model with Chinese characteristics. This is the basic path to meet the needs of the new development of rural education in the new era. This training model requires rural all-subject teachers to have a deep educational feeling of loving primary education, form an intelligent structure with comprehensive literacy, extensive knowledge, and excellent professionalism, uphold the firm belief of taking root in the countryside and revitalizing it, and highlight the professional characteristics of comprehensive development and multi-ability. In a practical sense, rural allsubject teachers should not only have a comprehensive knowledge system and educational skills but also have a strong local atmosphere, have a comprehensive understanding of Chinese rural society, be familiar with local rural culture, actively participate in rural social governance, be the organizer and leader of rural cultural inheritance, innovation, and development, be an important participant in rural social governance, and be the radiator of rural modern civilization.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this paper we have attempted to explain why research on rural schools and their communities is worth reviewing and collecting into an issue such as this. We have discussed various interpretations of the concept 'rural' as applied to rural schools, and of the relationship between rural schools and their communities. These interpretations have implications for the foci and conduct of research on rural schools and their communities. Finally, we have introduced the reviews themselves. Major literatures are concern on the relationship between rural schools and their communities. As we shall see in the reviews, The findings reveal that rural schools can perform social and cultural functions if they are developed as an important component of rural construction in the new era, enhancing the cultivation and inheritance of rural culture.

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