

# Analysis of the Integration of Community Education in the Rural Community Governance System of Xiaoshan from the Perspective of Nurturing New Farmers

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## Abstract

Community education includes a variety of educational activities that are open for all residents and rely on the educational resources of the community. Its main purposes are to promote the development of residents, keep the community safe, and maintain its social harmony (Yang, 2019, pp.5-8). Community education makes full use of the available educational resources in order to improve the overall manner and quality of life of residents and promote regional economy and social development. It is inherently compatible with the rural community governance system in terms of participants and pursuits. Xiaoshan is a district where the urbanization of rural areas is progressing rapidly with fast social and economic development under the jurisdiction of Hangzhou, Zhejiang. The community education has started early and contributed to local economy and rural governing much.

**Key words:** Community Education; Nurturing New Farmers

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## 1. LOCAL GOVERNANCE OF XIAOSHAN DISTRICT

### 1.1 Effect of Urbanization

In 1988, Xiaoshan changed from a county to a city with

the approval of the State Council, and later to a district of Hangzhou in 2001. The urbanization level of Xiaoshan district has increased a lot over the past decade. A large portion of urban populations still lives in rural areas or small towns despite the increased urban population of 68% through “rural to urban conversion”. Administrative villages still dominate the primary organizations in Xiaoshan District. There were 519 primary administrations including towns and villages (residential) by 2015. Among them, 412 are administrative villages and 170 are urban communities. The percentage of villages had reached 71%. With an accelerating globalization and marketization of agricultural economics in China, rural areas are facing the challenge of transformation. New issues and situations continue to rise, and crisis of China’s governance has undergone new changes, which brings more challenges. During the age of urbanization, improving rural governance becomes a prominent issue in social governance in China.

#### 1.1.1 The Non-Traditional Farmers

Farmers are the main subject of rural governance. Farmers in Xiaoshan District are not the traditional kind any more. Even in traditional rural communities, employments of farmers in Xiaoshan are quite diverse. Residents are both workers and farmers, in business and in agriculture. They are not traditional farmers, nor are they traditional workers. While their awareness of civil, democracy, and organization far exceed those of traditional farmers, some of the traditional farmers’ awareness and beliefs, such as clan, selfishness, and superstition are still strong. These awareness have an effect on the rural governance system. On the other hand, their education level and willingness to participate in public services are completely different (much higher and better) from those of traditional farmers.

#### 1.1.2 Economy is Near Urban Level

Economic basis determines the superstructure. As part of the superstructure, the governance system is naturally affected by the local economics. Xiaoshan District is

known for its prosperity and well-developed economy. The income of farmers in Xiaoshan was as high as 34,588 yuan in 2017, and the average fiscal revenue of town exceeded 500 million yuan. Its strong economy has provided a solid basis for the rural governance: the rural infrastructure has been significantly improved, farmers' social security has been fully protected, the livelihood projects have been effectively implemented, and rural society has developed rapidly.

### 1.1.3 Influence of Urban Governance

Due to the rapid advancement of new-type urbanization and the ever expanding of cities, urban civilization has gradually affected the vast rural areas of Xiaoshan. This clearly shows that the rural governance system is very similar to that of cities in the levels of legalization and socialization.

### 1.1.4 Cultural Shock

As an economically developed coastal area, Xiaoshan District has attracted a large population of migrants. The registered migrants population alone was 1.239 million in 2017, exceeded the registered residents population of 1.1417 million. The large population of migrants has also brought cultures from all over the nation to Xiaoshan. Cultures from the central area, area close to rivers, the basin area, and others meet with the local (Yangtze delta) culture, creating conflicts and integrations. It causes the local culture to undergo subtle changes, which has a great impact on the local governance system.

It is obvious that the rural governance in Xiaoshan District is more integrated with urban governance than other areas.

## 1.2 Issues of Rural Governance in Xiaoshan

The urbanization of rural areas and the social and economic development of Xiaoshan have considerable impacts and brought challenges to its rural governances. Many issues have emerged:

### 1.2.1 Emergence of Rural Idlers

With the urbanization of Xiaoshan District, many villagers received hundreds of thousands or even millions of yuan for requisition of land and houses in rural areas and got lost after getting rich overnight. The local traditional farmers used to hardworking. They would not left land unused or abandoned; however, after losing their land, farmers began to work for companies or start their own businesses, allowing them to have more leisure time than before. In the meanwhile, as their jobs changed, the structure of their income has also undergone unprecedented changes. According to a survey on urban and rural households in Xiaoshan District, the proportions of transfer and property income of farmers' income has increased every year. The main source of this income is from rents, which allows farmers to live a comfortable live without working, especially for the young generations

who lack the spirit of hardworking. They have become the "leisure class" who live off rents or interests. These people don't work and indulge in eating and drinking and pass the nights in gambling. The emergence of this population has seriously affected the safety and stability of the local society and become a problem for the rural governance.

### 1.2.2 Revival of Clan Power

In rural areas, clan used to the main force of rural governance in the traditional society of China. Locals of Xiaoshan value kinship and blood linkage greatly, which make clans particularly powerful. For example, the population with the surname of Zhang accounted for a large proportion in Loutaguan village, and most of the villagers in Li's village has the surname of Li. People from these clans share a common ancestor and later divided into factions by blood linkage. Clans often interfere with village committee elections and make elections battles between different surnames or clans. How to make clans play a positive role in rural governance is the question we are facing.

### 1.2.3 Selfishness Inherited From Traditional Farmers

Thoughts and believes of farmers refer to a backward, conservative, feudal, and traditional social awareness and psychology inherited from the ancient feudalism of China. It represents the typical ideology and lifestyle in an agrarian society. In 2015, rural residents in Xiaoshan had the highest per capita income in the province. Public services in rural areas were gradually integrated with urban areas, and the rate of urban-rural integration was accelerating. However, the traditional awareness still existed in some rural areas in Xiaoshan. The idea of settling for less is still popular in the rural areas. Local government has organized many skill and entrepreneurship training classes, of which many residents refuse to attend if they are free.

Farmers' income has increased with improving local living standards, but their lives are empty and lonely, lacking the pursuit of faith and ideas. A considerable number of rural residents now have the ability and time to engage in superstition activities, which are very popular in the rural areas. They hope to solve their problems by praying to the ancestors. These activities are full of selfishness and lack in-depth religious meaning.

### 1.2.4 Migrants

Rural communities are culturally very conservative due to their geographical location and agricultural background. Presence of migrants adds to the complexity of local social relations, activities, and awareness. Different social and cultural background of the migrants make it difficult for them to adjust to the local cultural in Xiaoshan. The resulted cultural conflicts prevent migrants to have a sense of belonging in the community and inevitably lead to conflicts with the locals, which has become a challenge to the rural governance.

## 2. COMMUNITY EDUCATION IN XIAOSHAN

Community education in Xiaoshan District has been a pioneer in China since the establishment of the community college in 2004, and it was one of the community education pilot areas in China. Guided by General Secretary Xi Jinping's requirement to "develop education for all and for life and build a learning society", and with the goal of economic and social transformation, community education in Xiaoshan takes new residents as its main subject. It uses "10 minutes learning circle" to help new residents integrate into the local life. It has played an indispensable role in building a learning society and promoting the urbanization of Xiaoshan District.

## 3. INTEGRATION OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION IN RURAL GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Community education in suburbs of big cities like Xiaoshan aims at improving the manner of farmers and helping them become the new-type farmers that are literate, skillful, and understanding business. It aims to increase farmers' citizen quality, legal awareness, awareness of democracy, and knowledge of science so that they can better adapt to modern culture and urbanization. At the same time, community education will promote the sustainable development of local economy and society and help achieve modernization of its regional governance system.

### 3.1 Improve Farmers' Manner

Community Education Center in Ningwei, Xiaoshan implemented the project of "putting 10,000 farmers in classroom". Since its beginning in 2006, it has helped accelerate the rural-to-urban residents process. Over 30,000 farmers had participated at least 5 sessions of trainings. Its main subject is to organize more than 10,000 farmers to take at least 5 2-3 hours long classes in community schools every year and to create a strong atmosphere of learning for all and for life. Ningwei is a sub-district located in the economic emerging area of Xiaoshan. The Community Education Center in Ningwei has demonstrated the advantages and importance of community education in economic development and rural governance. The center has hold a variety of community education and cultural activities in local schools and auditoriums, tried and succeeded in "putting 10,000 farmers in classroom" project. In more than a decade, it has helped farmers experience the charm of modern civilization and made them change their traditional views and values imperceptibly. It helped farmers to become more open and rational and have a positive attitude about life. Farmers took lessons in civic ethics, etiquette,

awareness, environmental protection, health care, and fire safety, which greatly influence their values, behaviors, and even daily habits. These projects not only achieved the goal of "rich and smart" but also improved the manner of farmers and promoted improvement of rural governance. Over the past decade, more than 100,000 farmers in Ningwei had trained twice on average. The courses involve civic etiquette, skill improvement, financial management, and health care. These are equivalent to the "general education" for the new-type residents. The project of "putting 10,000 farmers in classroom" has shown to be an effective strategy for rural-to-urban transformation.

### 3.2 Integration of Community Education in Rural Governance

The set of rules of "Five Harmony in Zhonglian" proposed in Zhonglian village, Heshang town, Xiaoshan District, which is known as China's first rural "Nuisance Law", has received much attention from experts, scholars, professors, and experts and leaders from the civil affairs departments. Zhonglian village was once weak in economy and in governance. In 2015, the third committee took office. The director Ma Yongjiang borrowed the idea of "Nuisance Law" from American community management and formulated the "General rule of 'Five Harmony in Zhonglian'", which is consist of ten general rules, thirty point-gaining objectives, and twenty point-deducting objectives. The general rule involves improving of manners, volunteering in public service, assisting charities, education of children, participation of village meetings, environmental protection and so on. Xiaoshan Community College, together with Zhejiang Radio&TV University in Xiaoshan, took full advantages of intellects and resources, actively participated in the rural revitalization project, and helped villagers in Zhonglian improve their manners, optimize its governance system, improve the environment, and promote the realization of "Five Harmony in Zhonglian" by sending teachers and instruments into the village. By participating in this project, the quality of teachers from the two colleges were also enhanced, which promoted the transformation and development of Zhejiang Radio&TV University. Currently, the "Five Harmony in Zhonglian" project has stimulated enthusiasm of the party organization, the villagers, and social organizations, and also brought out social vitality. It has become a presentative case of rural governance innovation and has received great attention from mainstream media and the society.

## 4. PATH TO INTEGRATION OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION IN RURAL GOVERNANCE

During the process of improving rural governance in Xiaoshan District, there is a clear path for integrating

community education into rural governance: new-type farmers with more knowledge on science and literature, higher morality and better manner, and stronger will to participate in public service can be nurtured through community education. This optimization of the environment helps improve the rural governance. The example of Xiaoshan gives us the following enlightenments:

#### 4.1 Using Community Education as A Bridge to Bring up Farmers' Enthusiasm

We should bring up farmers' enthusiasm, enhance their creativity, and bring their subjective role into play. Human subjectivity includes independence, autonomy, initiative, and creativity. Farmers are the most importance subject in the rural governance system. Their innovative spirit, entrepreneurial awareness, and creative labor in rural construction are admirable, and their willingness to continuously improve and achieve their social and internal pursuits are respectful. The local government in Xiaoshan District is responding to this great transformation of local farmers by vigorously developing rural community education, helping farmers accelerate the transformation, and consciously helping farmers establish awareness of law and democracy and inspire their subjectivity in rural governance through education and training.

#### 4.2 Using Community Education As the Mean to Promote Development of Rural Governance

Community education should take advantage of the spreading of learning circles to help villagers find learning opportunities through a variety of activities, courses, and collaborative teams and help individual villagers who shared similar interests form groups. Effective social organizations and groups can be formed through community education activities, which not only enhance communication and understanding among villagers but also increase villagers' enthusiasm for participating in autonomy. The formation of groups and organizations increase villagers' sense and awareness of self-government, thereby promoting the formation and development of shared, autonomous, and good rural governance.

Community education should play a role in rural governance through the following types of organizations: social organizations such as "Five Harmony in Lianzhong", economic organizations (i.e. industry associations) such as Flower and Tree Association in Xinjie and B&B Industry Association in Dai Village, and cultural organizations such as village sage associations and "peacemaker" councils in towns and streets. Community education should assist rural governance by providing the necessary educational resources, places, teachers, intellects, and equipment.

#### 4.3 Bring Community Education In Cultural Auditoriums

New-type rural areas are based on new-type farmers, and the nurturing of new-type farmers need a new-type rural culture. The construction of the new-type rural culture in Xiaoshan needs to be based on an understanding of the rural areas and respect of farmers. It is the soul of future development or rural areas and provides intellectual and spiritual support for rural development (Xie, 2016, pp.38-40). It will not only improve the civilized level of rural society but also provide a good cultural environment for nurturing new-type farmers (Lü and Yuan, 2016). The construction of new-type rural culture needs to meet the spiritual and cultural needs of local farmers. A healthy and civilized rural culture is an important mean for socialist values in contemporary rural areas, and it enriches the cultural life of farmers. Farmers' awareness and manner can only improved when they are under subtle influence for a long time. In the process of new-type rural culture construction in Xiaoshan District, rural culture is the most important subject. The construction is used as a mean to cultivate excellent rural culture. Construction of rural cultural auditorium was first proposed by the Zhejiang Provincial Party Committee and Provincial Government in 2013. The provincial government was committed to create a "spiritual home" for local farmers. The construction started in 2013, and currently, there are 325 cultural auditoriums in Xiaoshan District. The local government actively brought community education in rural cultural auditoriums. In addition to the establishment of Five Harmony lecture hall in rural cultural auditorium of Zhonglian Village, the local government carried out "Four Entering" activities (core values of socialism, spirit of the 19<sup>th</sup> CPC National Congress, knowledge of garbage classification, and civilized etiquette) through Xiaoshan Community College and schools in 21 towns and streets. In addition to exhibition of traditional culture and organizing activities for the locals, the rural cultural auditorium in Xiaoshan has become the place for activities of farmers' organizations and village sage associations to hold moral lectures, mediate disputes, and evaluate village affairs. Justice is being served in the cultural auditoriums, which has become the center of excellent rural culture and positive energy in the society.

**Table 1**  
Progress of community education in cultural auditoriums in Zhejiang Province in 2019 (10)

|   | District | Xiaoshan |
|---|----------|----------|
| Total number of cultural auditoriums in the region                  |          | 325      |
| Total number of 'community education in rural cultural auditoriums' |          | 325      |
| Coverage of 'community education in rural cultural auditoriums'     |          | 100%     |
| Number of studies in rural cultural auditoriums                     |          | 76       |
| Number of courses of characteristics of construction                |          | 67       |

To be continued

Continued

|   | District  | Xiaoshan |
|---|---|----------|
| New-type farmers training progress                              | Number of new-type farmers training sessions                                      | 747      |
|   | Number of participants of new-type farmers training                               | 105506   |
|   | Number of optimized digital study resource for new-type farmers training          | 65       |
| Progress of after-school teen education in cultural auditoriums | Number of after-school teen study sessions  | 432      |
|   | Number of students in after-school teen study activities                          | 62094    |
|   | Number of schools that have parenting-school for left-behind children             | 171      |
| Progress of elder education in cultural auditoriums             | Number of participants that help with after-school studies and parenting of teens | 14483    |
|   | Number of study and activity sessions that meet elders' needs                     | 1208     |
|   | Number of elders who participant in studies and activities                        | 71869    |
| Progress of family education in cultural auditoriums            | Number of shows that demonstrate the results of elder education                   | 91       |
|   | Number of volunteer teams for family education                                    | 142      |
|   | Number of family education study sessions   | 219      |
|   | Number of family education programs   | 99       |

Remarks:

The total number of cultural auditoriums in the region is identical to the number that was constructed by the Publicity Department of Provincial Party Committee.

Coverage of 'community education in rural cultural auditoriums' = total number of 'community education in rural cultural auditoriums' / total number of cultural auditoriums in the region.

A complete report is sent to the Department of Education of Zhejiang Province before December 25<sup>th</sup> of every year.

Although paths of integrating community education in rural governance taken in different regions are not quite the same, they all focus on their own development characteristics in order to find the best starting point for community education and achieve unity of government, social organization, and farmers during the process of integration. They also try to keep a balance the three entities in this integration process, which will not only

demonstrate the success of integration of community education in rural governance but also reflect the characteristics and advantages of community education.

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