



SWOT Analysis and Strategies of Constructing Rural Farmers' Spiritual and Cultural Education System

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Abstract

Opportunities and challenges coexist in constructing rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system. Conducting SWOT analysis to analyze various factors from a holistic perspective will facilitate grasping advantages and opportunities, recognizing weaknesses and threats, and seeking a path suitable for local realities. Finally, the author proposes specific policy suggestions regarding awareness improvement, policy improvement, economic development and educational resource integration and so on.

Key words: SWOT analysis; Rural farmers; Spiritual and cultural education; Integrated

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INTRODUCTION

The proposal of rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education is benefited by the high-speed development of technology and economy. Now, rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education has not only become a generally recognized and accepted concept and principle in educational circle, but also become an educational

practice and a social activity in real life. As an ideological form, rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education is a concept and a principle, which should be followed when we construct a system, and it runs through the entire system construction process. As a practical form, rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education is an educational system and a goal that the whole world is struggling for. China now is practicing rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system within the scope of the whole society, but the educational supply capacity is limited. Educational resources are unable to support the whole rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education and external support and assistance is hard to meet its needs. How to grasp the educational needs, to understand the internal and external factors in constructing rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system, to mine the strengths and weaknesses of constructing rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system, and to scientifically analyze and match various factors, so as to avoid risks at the greatest extent and co-ordinate and integrate educational resources, are inevitably involved problems in the process of constructing rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system within limited educational resources.

In 1980s, Professor Heinz Wehrich, a scholar from University of San Francisco in the United States, proposed SWOT analysis, which was originally used in management, and it is also called trend analysis. SWOT analysis focuses on analyzing various internal and external factors of individuals or organizations, and systematically and comprehensively evaluates these factors, so as to choose the optimal development strategy. In SWOT, S refers to strengths, W refers to weaknesses, O refers to opportunities, and T refers to threats. SWOT analysis is an important decision-making tool in strategic planning. Using this analysis method to analyze the construction of rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system will be good to scientifically understand the disadvantageous factors and seek practical approaches for its own development.

1. SWOT ANALYSIS OF CONSTRUCTING RURAL FARMERS' SPIRITUAL AND CULTURAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

Rural farmers' spiritual culture is an objective reality, and it doesn't naturally produce. It has its own unique expressive forms. The formation of rural farmers' spiritual culture needs the guide of educational activities with a conscious purpose to promote its rapid growth. Through a government-led, school-channeled, family-supported and society-based form, shaping rural farmer's dreams and beliefs, sublimating their moral characters, condensing their values, optimizing their ways of thinking, cultivating their aesthetic taste, establishing professional ethics, and establishing a spiritual and cultural atmosphere are the best ways to cultivate rural farmers' behavior, values and ideologies. Different types of education or different levels of the same type of education constituting rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education should be arranged according to a certain order. Rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education of different areas has non-conformity. The construction of rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system is influenced by factors such as social environment, political system, economic development, education level, people's educational needs and awareness and so on. These factors are influenced by the local community, thus, the construction of rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system should be harmonious but different and keep their own characteristics. SWOT analysis focuses on analysis from an overall perspective, advocating a macro point of view of rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system's whole view and consistency and also considering regional differences and the educational practice of all levels and all types of education.

1.1 Strengths

1.1.1 The Relevant Legal Policy Foundation

In the December of 1950, in "with regards to instructions on conducting farmers' amateur education" issued by the CPC Central Committee, there were provisions that "farmers' amateur education should generally focus on literacy and learn knowledge, combining with education on current affairs and policies as well as education on production and health. However, each regional situation is different and there are differences in the degree of farmers' awareness, therefore the education should be based on the specific conditions and requirements to fit the local needs." In the May of 1983, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council issued "with regards to notice on strengthening and reforming several problems in rural school education" and proposed that "the task of rural school education is mainly to improve the cultural and scientific level of the new generation and the majority of rural workers and to promote socialist countryside construction; it must adapt to farmers' requirements

of developing production, working for wealth and desiring for talents; it must guide the students to love the countryside and working and learn knowledge and skills". In 1995, the National People's Congress passed the People's Republic of China Education Law. The Education Law stipulates that the country encourages the development of various forms of adult education so that citizens receive appropriate forms of political, economic, cultural, scientific, technical and business education. This is a pioneering work and the status and role of rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education have been established in our education system.

1.1.2 Economic Development Promotes the Development of Education

The rapid development of science and technology and the rise of knowledge economy have transferred the human society from an industrial society into an information society. The advent of the information society further accelerates the pace of economic development. Economic development has laid the foundation for the development of rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education such as the provision of infrastructure, equipment, and office suppliers and so on; meanwhile it has promotes the sustainable development of rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education. For example, education provides talents for economic development, while economic development, in turn, encourages people to continue their education. With the development of new urbanization, economic level gradually increases; people's living standards are improving; and material resources available continuously enrich. They all are the economic foundation of constructing rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system.

1.1.3 Existing Educational Resources

Rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system is an educational system and it is bound to consist of education of all levels and all types. Hao Keming thinks "the construction of rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system includes the development of post-school training and continuous education. It needs that all types of schools fully play their role, rather than leaving these resources to re-build a new system." The existing educational resources are the foundation of constructing rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system and it is also a part of rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system. Besides, the thought of rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education and the practice of rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education in developed areas provides support and experience for constructing rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system.

1.1.4 Social Security Conditions Continuously Improve

Building a new socialist countryside improves people's living environment and also brings convenience to people's access to education. The constant improvement of community service improves its educational service

capacity. The division of social production brings increasing leisure time and all these provide possibilities for people to continue their education.

1.1.5 People's Awareness of Receiving Rural Farmers' Spiritual and Cultural Education Improves

The mutually reinforcing relationship between education and politics and economy has become more and more familiar to people with the development of the society. People's desire of receiving education constantly increases. Education is no longer young people's patent, nor the patent of a certain part of people. It has become education for all the people. As long as people have the wish to receive education, they should obtain educational resources anytime and anywhere. The propaganda and introduction of online media further strengthen people's awareness of rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education.

1.2 Weaknesses

1.2.1 Legislation on Rural Farmers' Spiritual and Cultural Education Is Imperfect

So far, in addition to few provinces, most areas still lack specific regulations for rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education, and the lag of rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education legislation has almost become the biggest obstacle of the construction of rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system. The imperfect legislation of rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education has increased the support load (including capital investment insecurity) of educational system and the difficulty of the implementation of rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education.

1.2.2 Economic Development Lags Behind

From a vertical perspective, the rapid economic development can provide a foundation for constructing rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system. However, from a lateral perspective, the difference between the western regions and the eastern and middle regions remains large. Within the western regions, the income gap between urban and rural areas is further widening. The consumption focus in rural areas is still food consumption and the economic foundation is relatively fragile. Their educational supply capacity is limited, and it is especially difficult for them to support the construction of rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system at a wide range.

1.2.3 The Constraint of Geographical Environment

Most of the western regions are plateau, extremely cold and high-altitude areas. Seven provinces' mountainous areas and half mountainous areas are more than 50% and five provinces' pastoral and mountainous areas account for over 70%. Although their ecological resources are rich, the eco-environment is fragile in these areas, which limits their development. The distribution is scattered, which makes it hard to conduct large-scale rural farmers' spiritual and cultural educational activities.

1.3 Opportunities

New rural construction is continuously going forward and new urbanization is unceasingly pushed forward. In a global economy, surplus labor is gradually transferred from primary to secondary and tertiary industries. Both the needs of those receiving education and the possibility of access to educational resources are growing. In the government development strategies, it is proposed to promote the coordinated development of regional economy and to direct to rural areas in industrial development, cultural construction, allocation of educational resources and some other aspects.

Economic development promotes educational needs. High level of education can achieve sustained high returns, can promote GDP growth, and can bring higher yields. The value of education in human capital production is much likely to be improved because of technological advances, thus, with the gradual development of science and technology and the transfer of focus, the importance of rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education will be further highlighted. People's enthusiasm in constructing rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system will continuously increase.

Educational equality continues to deepen. Educational equality is the basis of social justice. To achieve educational equality relies on rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education, i.e. "only when education experiences rapid changes in its action essence and in the aspects of space and time, briefly, only when the thought of rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education is adopted, it can become an effective, equitable and humane cause." In recent years, China's protection of equality in educational opportunity has been deepened, but equality in educational opportunity is only one aspect of educational equality. The equality of educational process and the equality of educational results still need to be improved. Equal allocation of public educational resources also needs to be pushed forward. Weak links and key fields still need more support. Regional difference and the gap between urban and rural educational development need to be shrink.

1.4 Threats

Lifestyle changes. Social and economic development brings convenience to people's lives, but also changes people's way of living. As less developed areas, the lifestyle is intertwined with traditional and modern lifestyles. The lifestyle of working at the sunrise and resting at the sunset is challenged. People are not completely transferred from the traditional lifestyle, and still passively accept the impact from alien lifestyles with a slow pace.

Production way converts. Although the proportion of primary industry in large cities declines, the proportions of secondary and tertiary industry have increased year by year, yet this is limited to eastern and middle regions as well as capital cities and some economically

developed cities in western regions. The wide rural areas still emphasize on the primary industry and the tertiary industry in these areas is all traditional service industries. Its development level is low and it is less competitive in the market.

Impacts of values. With the increasing openness of society, the gradual penetration of the network and other information technology and the constant immersion of foreign cultures impact the original local values. The impact of values brings cultural rupture between generations. How does rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system link the gap due to foreign cultural impacts? How does it coordinate the relationship between traditional culture and foreign cultures?

Education and teaching reform. Since the founding of new China, China has carried out 8 new curriculum reforms. Every reform is accompanied with changes. Education itself has a weak supply capacity and a poor adaptability to changes. Existing educational resources is firstly to meet the needs of school-age youth and it has a limited supply of adult education.

2. SWOT MATRIX ANALYSIS OF CONSTRUCTING RURAL FARMERS' SPIRITUAL AND CULTURAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

The composition of rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system is complex. Various factors are intertwined. A certain factor can be both an advantage and a weakness because of its inadequacy; therefore we need to straighten out the relations and mutual influences among different factors. Under the background of the continuously pushing forward of national reform and development and western development strategy, the opportunities and challenges of constructing rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system coexist. According to the SWOT matrix analysis model, the construction of rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system has four models (see figure 1).

Strengths and opportunities are positive factors in the process of constructing rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system and they involve in national policies, social environment, economic development, educational development, the level of awareness and social security conditions and so on. Threats and weaknesses negative factors, and they involve in national policies, economic level, current educational conditions, ideology, production ways and lifestyles and so on. ST strategy focuses on processing the relationship between strengths and threats. WO strategy focuses on processing the relationship of opportunities and weaknesses. The two strategies simultaneously see both the positive and negative factors, but still not comprehensive enough. WT strategy emphasizes on avoiding the influence from

disadvantageous factors and ignores the exploration and utilization of strengths and opportunities. SO strategy emphasizes the use of strengths and opportunities, but it doesn't pay enough attention to weaknesses and threats. That is to say, though SO strategy is the best strategy, in reality there cannot be only strengths and opportunities. Handling weaknesses and threats is also very important in strategic decision-making planning.

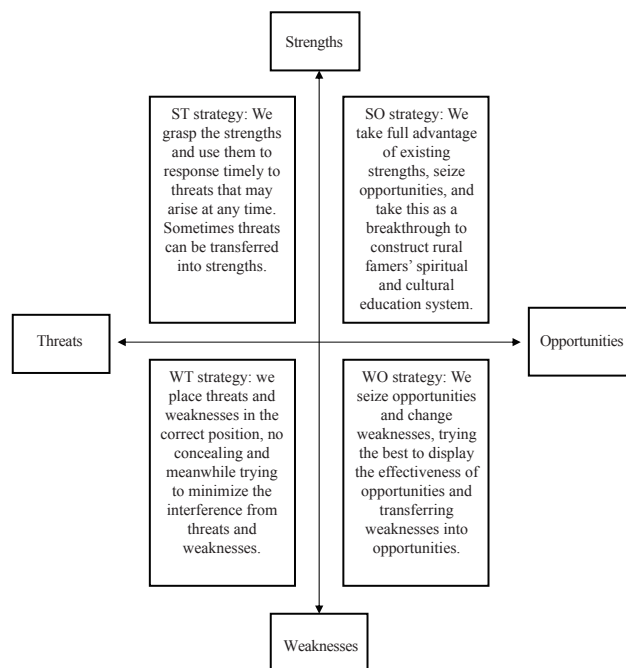


Figure 1
SWOT Matrix Analysis of Constructing Rural Farmers' Spiritual and Cultural Education System

In summary, we can summarize the factors influencing the construction of rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system under the SWOT matrix analysis as four aspects: policy, economy, education and awareness. The rest factors exist as the extension of the four factors. Therefore, improving awareness, perfecting policies, developing economy and integrating educational resources should become the primary considerations in constructing rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system.

3. STRATEGIES ON CONSTRUCTING RURAL FARMERS' SPIRITUAL AND CULTURAL EDUCATION SYSTEM BASED ON SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are flooded in rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system, in which some aspects are both strengths and weaknesses. Based on the results of SWOT analysis, to construct rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system, we can avoid the disadvantageous factors from the following aspects and display the role of advantageous factors.

3.1 Improving Awareness

Perfecting education is the dream that we struggle for; however, the dream is always full of uncertainties and there is a gap between the dream and the reality. "It makes the possibility to realize the dream that education changes human reality constrained at a larger degree and it also makes the constant exposition of the limitations of human educability." Rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system is born out in such a condition and currently it only exists in the future. "Future is not a place we are going, but a place we are creating. The road to future is not found, but explored. The process of exploring changes the explorers as well as our destinations." To explore the future and transfer the dream into reality needs correct awareness of support from the whole society. Meanwhile, we need to face our own educational needs and reality and put the construction of rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system into development plan. Educated individuals should actively change their own concepts and behavior, taking rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education as an opportunity to improve their own quality, and actively adapt to changes in the social development.

Education is a quasi-public product and it can bring positive external effects. To ensure adequate supply of education, the government should be the subject of education supply. For the government, improving awareness includes three aspects: the first one is to improve the awareness to rural farmers' cultural education; the second one is to improve the awareness of the government's role and status in constructing rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system; the third one is to improve the awareness of the policy decisions and implementation on rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education. In a word, the government of all levels should put the construction of rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system into their functional areas, correctly understand the important effects of rural farmers' cultural education in rural social development, actively promote the grassroots to construct farmers' cultural education system, establish a complete supervision system, and provide timely help and support for the construction of rural farmers' cultural education system.

3.2 Improving Policies

Objectively speaking, although China is now gradually establishing and perfecting market economic system, the administrative guidance still plays an important role in the development of all fields. The specification of administrative guidance is the policy. The policy is the legal foundation in constructing rural farmers' spiritual and cultural education system. Specifically, the policy protection needed for constructing rural farmers' cultural education system can be divided into two perspectives: the vertical and the horizontal. From the vertical perspective, it includes national policies and local policies; from

the horizontal perspective, it involves in investments of education and resources of all levels and all types, management mechanism and protection measures and so on. To construct rural farmers' cultural education system, we should consider things in an overall view and from the view of all people and from a three-dimensional perspective. First, we should actively use the existing relevant legal basis, such as the relevant provisions from the "Compulsory Education Law" and the "Labor Law", to promote the construction of rural farmers' cultural education system. Second, we should improve our nation's rural farmers' cultural education law and relevant policies and systems as soon as possible. We can upgrade effective policies and systems into laws and enrich and improve all kinds of educational laws. Third, we should sieve the development opportunity of rural farmers' cultural education and encourage local government to make farmers' educational laws. Fourth, we should have a clear understanding of the relationship between various educational laws, policies, regulations, provisions and measures and clarify the implementation of various policies and regulations in the form of legal provisions to ensure the effectiveness of policy implementation. Fifth, we should promote rural farmers' cultural education policies and decisions and their implementation by perfecting social security system to form influence and improve the efficiency of policy implementation.

3.3 Developing Economy

Developing socialist market economy is an important strategy widely conducted from the central to local government. Economic development on the one hand creates necessary hardware resources for farmers' cultural education, and on the other hand it also provides powerful software security for farmers' cultural education. Rural economic development and improvement of living standards promote people's ability to pay for education to enhance constantly and their leisure time continuously increases. However, compared with cities, rural economic level is still lagging behind. First, we should seek new economic production models by the assistance of the background of the country's economic development, display regional strengths, introduce market mechanism, further widen the financial channel for constructing rural cultural facilities, and use social forces to promote culture to provide security platform for farmers' cultural education. Second, we should encourage farmers to promote culture. They can carry out various cultural activities in the way of market operation. We support farmers to finance by themselves, to organize by themselves, to take full responsibilities of their own profits and losses, and to manage by themselves. We also encourage them to conduct farmers' book clubs and organize group or individual film teams. Third, we should rely on local industry to achieve economic development, enhance farmers' awareness of cultural education in

the process on economic development, and promote sustainable development.

3.4 Integrating Educational Resources

To analyze from the perspective of human history process, we find that education is the “perpetual motion” of people’s development and prosperity. According to philosophical point of view, everything in the world is mutually related rather than in isolation. So does general education. So does farmers’ cultural education. Therefore, to develop rural farmers’ cultural education, we should integrate resources from different dimensions and different levels. First, regarding the allocation of educational resources, the government should increase investment in education and decline to middle and western areas, countryside, remote and ethnic areas and urban weak schools. Second, regarding the allocation of public resources, the government should ensure educational equality by support and management, widen the beneficial level of farmers’ cultural education, and improve the allocative efficiency of educational resources. Third, regarding attracting social resources, the government should regulate market access mechanism through policy measures, fully mobilize social forces, actively attract various educational resources, display the utilization efficiency of social resources, mobilize the enthusiasm of the whole society, and form a government-led, multi-provided, management-regulated, and development-coordinated pattern. In addition, education providers and education-receivers should integrate resources and use them. Educational resources of different times, different regions, and different providers should be fully integrated and used.

CONCLUSION

In short, the government, as the main responsible body, should be in positive leading position to form a good situation in which the government pays attention to rural farmers’ cultural education and everyone involves in rural farmers’ cultural education. From the macro level, to

construct rural farmers’ cultural education system needs to find the way in institutional mechanisms. It should be based on the countryside, start from rural farmers’ reality, and find specific solutions which fits China’s needs and farmers’ needs, making rural cultural development follow the pace of economic and social development. From the micro level, educational practice is the basis and source of education theories. In the practice of rural farmers’ cultural education, we should take lifelong education as the goal, change the traditional education model, and let farmers become active and positive participants in the process of education.

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