

Original Research Article

Research on Governance Strategies for New Public Cultural Spaces in the Countryside——Based on field research in Chunhua County, Shaanxi Province

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Abstract: In the context of China's rural revitalisation strategy, the high-quality development of rural public cultural services has received increasing attention as a key element in promoting comprehensive rural revitalisation, urban-rural integration and cultural confidence. This paper focuses on the construction and governance of new public cultural spaces in villages, and selects Chunhua County in Shaanxi Province as a research case. Through field research, we summarise its successful experiences and problems, aiming to provide practical references for the construction and governance path of new public cultural spaces in villages.

Keywords: rural public cultural space; new public cultural space; governance; Chunhua County

1. Introduction

Since the introduction of China's rural revitalisation strategy, the high-quality development of rural public cultural services, as an important part of rural revitalisation, is not only related to the overall revitalisation of rural society, but also a key part of promoting urban-rural integration and cultural confidence. 2021-2025 is China's "14th Five-Year" development period, and the construction of new public cultural spaces has become a new policy guideline. The period of 2021-2025 is China's "14th Five-Year Plan", and the construction of new public cultural spaces has become a new policy guideline.

Under the current reality that the construction of rural public culture has gradually fallen into the dilemma of diminishing marginal benefits, there is an urgent need to study and optimise the new public cultural space in the countryside.

2. Current Status of Relevant Research

In China, with the in-depth implementation of the rural revitalisation strategy, the construction of public cultural spaces in villages has made remarkable progress under the leadership of the government, achieving extensive coverage in terms of quantity. However, scholars such as Liu Yang (2021) have pointed out that along with the acceleration of urbanisation, rural population loss has been serious, leading to the low usage rate of public cultural spaces, and their development is facing serious challenges. Yang Yongheng (2019) further analyses that the current comprehensive coverage of public cultural facilities in the countryside suffers from low level and roughness, and there is a serious imbalance between construction, management and use. Miao Meijuan's (2023) study, on the other hand, reveals the profound impact of multiple factors, such as economic, political, social and villagers' factors, on the weakening of the function of rural public cultural spaces and the dilemma of their effectiveness.

In response to the above problems, Chen (2020) puts forward countermeasure suggestions such as

increasing government investment, guiding the participation of social forces, and innovating the forms of cultural activities. Li Guoxin and Li Si (2023) believe that it is necessary to promote the optimisation of the layout of public cultural facilities through the construction of new spaces; to give equal importance to upgrading the quality of facilities and strengthening service functions; and to improve the participation of social forces in the operation and management mechanism. Nie Ming et al. (2021) put forward development priorities in terms of strengthening cooperation between the government and social forces, integrating local characteristics and diversified modes, enriching reading activities, and expanding multimedia promotion channels.

In the future, research on rural public cultural space should pay more attention to cultural integration and excavation of characteristics, ecological protection and sustainable development, scientific and technological integration, and social participation in building and sharing. On the one hand, it is necessary to draw on the theories and methods of sociology, culture, geography and other multidisciplinary disciplines to explore in depth the construction and governance strategies of new rural public cultural spaces; on the other hand, it is necessary to strengthen field research and case analysis to summarise successful experiences and problems, so as to provide a scientific basis and practical guidance for the construction and development of rural public cultural spaces.

3. Chunhua County Rural Public Cultural Services Development Research

Between June and July 2024, this research team conducted a field survey on the development of rural public cultural services in Chunhua County. Through the comprehensive use of field observation, questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews, the infrastructure of rural public cultural services, the organisation of activities, and the status of service provision were investigated.

3.1. Construction of Public Cultural Spaces in Villages

The results of the research show that Chunhua County has achieved remarkable results in the construction of public cultural space in villages. All 128 administrative villages in the county have been equipped with fitness equipment, achieving full coverage. In addition, eight town-level comprehensive cultural stations, 132 village-level cultural service centres (covering communities), 177 cultural and sports squares, and 90 cultural stages have been successfully constructed, and these initiatives have greatly enhanced the public's satisfaction with cultural and sports facilities, and enriched the spiritual and cultural life of rural areas.

Through our research, we have found that the functional types of cultural spaces are mainly of the "thematic learning type", "cultural and recreational type" and "sports and fitness type". Among them, the "thematic learning" space is represented by the library, party service centre, multi-functional activity room, and some villages have also built village history museums and exhibition halls, which play an important role in the study of party history, policy propaganda, cultural reading and popular science education, etc.; the "cultural and entertainment" space is mainly represented by the grand hall, the "cultural and entertainment" space, and the "cultural and entertainment" space is mainly represented by the grand hall, the "cultural and entertainment" space. The "cultural and recreational" spaces are mainly represented by big stages, central squares and public places in villages, which provide villagers with a variety of cultural activities such as cultural performances, square dances, chess entertainment, community theatre performances, etc. The "sports and fitness" spaces are mainly represented by basketball courts and small plazas, which meet the needs of villagers for daily fitness and

sports competitions. The “sports and fitness” spaces are mainly basketball courts and small squares, meeting the needs of villagers for daily fitness and sports competitions.

We also found a number of problems during the field research. Firstly, the infrastructure of some cultural spaces is insufficient, and the usage rate of equipment and facilities is low, such as the library with a low number of borrowers and a long period of vacancy, and the central plaza with fewer facilities and used for other purposes. Secondly, some facilities and equipment are old and the frequency of updating and maintenance is slow, such as the aging of sports facilities and the early publication of books. Finally, the radius of some cultural spaces is insufficient, causing inconvenience for villagers to participate in cultural activities.

3.2. Public Cultural Activities in Rural Areas

The types of cultural activities in villages are also diversified, in line with the types of functions of cultural spaces. In addition to “thematic learning”, “cultural and recreational” and “sports and fitness” activities, there are a number of other forms of cultural activities.

In terms of the channels through which they are informed about local cultural services, villagers’ access is relatively decentralised, including channels such as radio and television, leaflets or posters, government websites, friends and neighbours, seeing things with their own eyes and bulletin boards. However, new media channels such as WeChat were used relatively little. In terms of frequency of participation in cultural activities, about 40 per cent of survey respondents participate in various cultural activities every month, but about 20 per cent of the population almost never participate in cultural activities. In terms of activities of interest, villagers have the highest percentage of interest in visiting cultural relics, while in terms of participation in cultural activities, reading is the mainstream choice in their free time.

There are also a number of problems with regard to public cultural activities. Firstly, the cultural connotations of public cultural activities in villages are not rich enough, and the phenomenon of homogenisation is relatively obvious. Secondly, the publicity of activities is not in place, and some villagers find it difficult to obtain information on activities in a timely manner. Finally, the activities lack systematic arrangements, do not form a complete system of activities, and the form of activities is relatively single.

4. Strategies for the Governance of New Public Cultural Spaces in The Countryside

4.1. Government-led: Combining Regulation, Management and Services in A Synergistic Manner

The Government should play the role of organiser and coordinator in the construction of public culture in villages, and adhere to the principle of “release, management and service”. First, “release”, that is, release restrictions, encourage diversified participation. Through policy guidance and financial support, to attract social organisations, enterprises, colleges and universities to engage in rural public cultural services, and promote cultural innovation and industrial development. The second is “management”, i.e. strengthening management to ensure service quality. Establish and improve the management mechanism to effectively supervise the participating entities and guarantee the quality and safety of public cultural services. The third is “service”, i.e. optimising services to meet the needs of the public. The construction and maintenance of cultural facilities will be strengthened, cultural activities and programmes will be enriched, and the convenience and quality of services will be enhanced.

3.2. Social Services: Multiple Paths to Development

Social forces are an important supplement to the construction of public culture in villages. At present, external supply type, co-operative supply type and rooted supply type are the three main service paths. The external supply type, such as the PPP model, involves cooperation between the government and social organisations to provide public cultural products for the countryside. The co-operative supply model mobilises rural initiative, stimulates endogenous motivation at a small cost, and provides public cultural products and services that meet rural needs. The rooted supply type is where social enterprises invest directly in the countryside and are committed to the construction and development of public culture, such as the special tourism routes created by Chunhua County.

3.3. University Services: Knowledge Empowerment, Cultural Revitalisation

As an important carrier of knowledge and cultural resources, colleges and universities play a key role in rural cultural revitalisation. College libraries can help build rural bookstores and protect and pass on traditional rural culture. At the same time, colleges and universities can make use of digital technology to help villages build digital libraries and break down cultural barriers. In terms of cultural activities, colleges and universities can cooperate with villages to jointly promote cultural heritage and innovation. In addition, colleges and universities should cooperate with rural schools and communities to carry out education programmes for moral education and promote the development of rural cultural industries.

3.4. Mass Practice: Enriching the Supply, Nurturing the Talent Mass Practice is The Cornerstone of The Governance of Rural Public

cultural spaces. Rural indigenous cultural resources should be effectively utilised to improve cultural infrastructure and enrich public cultural provision. For example, old theatres and halls can be transformed into new rural cultural outreach centres. At the same time, we should explore and cultivate local cultural talents in the countryside, build “grassroots cultural teams”, and let the rural people become the creators, managers, inheritors and disseminators of local culture. In addition, the cultivation of the culture of village sages has helped to build local culture, and village sages, as spiritual pillars and moral models in the countryside, have played an important role in promoting the transformation of rural governance.

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