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Design Creates Employment---Exploration on the Poverty Alleviation by Employment in Poverty-stricken Areas of Ethnic Minorities

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Abstract. It is purposed in 2019 Central Document No.1 that we should adhere to the general policy of giving priority to the development of agriculture and rural areas, and it is stressed in the chapter of “developing rural industries and expanding the channels of farmers’ income” that we should “innovate and develop the rural handicraft industries with national and regional characteristics”. Taking the comprehensive development and utilization of intangible cultural resource of Jianghua Yao autonomous county as the direction of targeted poverty alleviation, Central South University implemented the design, development and production of creative cultural products of Yao national group in Jianghua and transferred the right of commercial development to local enterprises, increasing the ability of producing by training the local residents’ working skills. Through these methods, we can use economic confidence to drive the cultural confidence, ensure the steady employment, increase people’s income and help the local ethnic groups find jobs in their hometown.

1. Introduction

Jianghua Yao autonomous county, the only autonomous county of Yao group as well as the autonomous county with the largest population of Yao group in China, is known as “the capital of Yao”. It is pointed in the report of the 19th CPC National Congress that we should implement the strategy of revitalizing rural areas, promote the development of primary, secondary and tertiary industries in rural areas, support and encourage farmers to find jobs and start their own business, and expand the channels of increasing income. However, due to the overall low cultural quality of the population in ethnic minority areas, large regional differences in traditional ethnic culture and customs, and poor transportation in remote areas, ethnic minority areas are facing greater difficulties in the process of alleviating poverty and urbanizing. As a result, poverty alleviation in ethnic minority areas is far from enough on their own, requiring more effective cooperation and support from the government, society and relevant organizations.



2. New connotation of employment and poverty alleviation in poverty-stricken ethnic minority areas

Located in the southernmost part of Hunan province and bordering on Guangdong and Guangxi, Jianghua Yao autonomous county is a typical “deficient, remote and poor” area with a impoverished population of 103,477. How to promote the large number of rural surplus labor to achieve employment, which is to help the employment of poor households, is an important topic. At present, due to the lack of employment opportunities, employability, initiative and adaptability of the labor force, the region's ability to absorb employment is not strong, and the economic structure conducive to increasing employment has not been established, which restricts the improvement of the livelihood of the minority areas along with the economic development.

In September 2018, the Strategy of Rejuvenating the Country Planning (2018-2022) issued by the Central Committee of the CPC and State Council proposed “the development of rural cultural industry”, pointing out that “we should strengthen planning guide, typical demonstration, discover local talent and cultivating local culture, construct a batch of exhibit of farming culture and industry with characteristic and prominent advantage, build a batch of township village and group with characteristic culture industry”. As a result, the crucial way of alleviating poverty in poverty-stricken area is to support the local workers to participate in developing and producing and to reasonably incline the working positions with effective organization through the design and production of creative cultural products of Jianghua Yao ethnic group and the transfer of the commercial rights from government to enterprises, hence to give a full play to the advantage of the local human resource. To carry out the poverty alleviation work from the CPC central, we must make effort on promoting the employment of surplus labor force in Jianghua Yao autonomous county, so that the people from ethnic group can feel the party's care and the warmth of the big family of the motherland, continue to consolidate the great situation of ethnic unity, and ensure the realization of the overall goal of social stability and long-term peace and stability.

3. “Culture”: Inherent dynamic to drive the poverty alleviation in poverty-stricken areas with ethnic groups

The most direct manifestation of poverty is material poverty. People's long-term poverty and lack of material often lead to the bondage and depression in spiritual level, resulting in spiritual poverty. For the poor, lack of material is the external manifestation, and the restraint of thought is the internal source. To get rid of poverty, first of all, we should use the advantage of “culture” to change the old ideas, and then establish the sense of self-reliance and confidence of the people of ethnic minorities in poverty-stricken areas, firmly build the faith of poverty alleviation, and set up the confidence to shake off poverty from the mind-set, so as to stimulate their inherent dynamic to shake off poverty and get rich, and play the role of “assisting aspiration”. Secondly, the employment platform is used to provide professional skills and employment opportunities so as to increase the income of the poor and cut the poverty root from the cultural source of poverty.

The 18th National Congress of the CPC proposed “cultural confidence”, which enabled China's cultural industry to obtain an unprecedented opportunity for development. According to the survey, 70% of the creative cultural resources based on intangible heritage are concentrated in “old, deficient, remote and poor” areas. However, due to the unreasonable use of folk cultural resources and the weak local folk traditions, the Yao ethnic culture in Jianghua county has a low cognition of its own culture. Both the inheritors of intangible cultural heritage and local experts of Yao ethnic group are over 70 years old and have no successors. When our team visited Mr. Li Yibiao, the inheritor of long drum making, we found that Mr. Li lived in a shanty and had a poor life. It was difficult to make a living by making the long drum by hand. It can be seen from this that the excellent traditional national culture here cannot be transformed into material wealth, and people's main income depends on the income and expenditure of planting, forestry, animal husbandry and other first industries. Therefore, it is a practical way to protect the excellent traditional culture of Jianghua and increase people's spiritual confidence to explore and promote the national culture in the area of Jianghua Yao autonomous

county. Taking Jianghua county as the research object, our team visited Jianghua for more than 10 times. We sought and searched the Yao brocade “Babao quilt”, discussed the local culture and gathered the relevant material with the inheritors of Jianghua Yao’s long drum dance such as Zhao Minghua, Pan Shangke, Pan Xiong, Pan Ying and Li Yibiao. Therefore, relying on the cultural resources of Yao minority in Jianghua, we design and produce creative cultural products with creativity as the core. The final design products will be incubated in Jianghua, and then to achieve the goal of increasing employment in Jianghua area, to alleviate poverty through employment.

Due to the long-term poverty, the subject of poverty has negative adaptation to the status quo and forms the ideology such as dependency psychology and subservience consciousness, which is the root of poverty culture and the internal cause of poverty. Its exterior characteristic is reflected in lacking courage, volition and confidence of shaking off poverty and becoming rich. From the perspective of poverty alleviation, this reveals the importance of endogenous poverty alleviation. Only with a strong will and enough internal motivation can external wisdom really come into play.

4. “Design” : Realistic effect to expand of poverty alleviation in poverty-stricken minority areas

Due to the low overall cultural quality of the farmers and the insufficient means of getting rich, to obtain practical skills to promote employment and solve the immediate livelihood problem is the realistic way to achieve poverty alleviation. For the poverty-stricken areas of ethnic minorities, “design” focuses on the production of designing products and vocational skills training to meet their needs of poverty alleviation, improve their economic income status, and thus realize the practical purpose of “poverty alleviation by employment”. For example, the long drum dance of the Yao minority in Jianghua is the most unique and representative dance art form among the Yao minority in China. It is one of the national intangible cultural heritage projects.

The decorative elements involved in the existing culture of ethnic minorities can be used in modern design, such as the product design in which the patterns of ethnic characteristics are introduced into the creative life. The active use of traditional elements in contemporary folk has completed the preliminary extraction and transformation from tradition to modernity, so it can be conveniently combined with modern art design. It can be said that there is a great space to develop the derivative cultural and creative design of ethnic minorities. Poverty alleviation not only means to support the material but also the spirit and culture. Many ethnic minority areas in China have outstanding cultural resources of intangible cultural heritage with characteristics and large numbers, but they are little known or even gradually disappear because no one cares about them. As the old saying goes, “It is better to teach a person to fish than to give a person a fish.” By tapping excellent cultural resources in ethnic minority areas, designing creative cultural products and training poor farmers to master relevant production and vocational skills, it plays a role of “fostering wisdom”. We will strengthen the “blood-making” function of poor farmers, provide guarantees for expanding the scope of employment and shift the focus of poverty alleviation from merely focusing on material and capital input to equally emphasizing the improvement of individual capabilities. It can be said that “poverty alleviation by design” promotes the overall quality and sustainable development ability of poor farmers, and drives them onto the road of making employment by skill and increasing income by skill.

5. “Transformation”: To form new opportunity of minority people’s local employment

Since 2016, Central South University has taken the comprehensive development and utilization of intangible cultural heritage resources in Jianghua Yao autonomous county as the direction of targeted poverty alleviation, developing tertiary industries such as culture and tourism, working hard to provide more jobs for people of all ethnic groups in poor areas, and implementing the design and production of creative and cultural products. Culture originates from life, then returns to life and decorates life. It completes this regurgitation process in the form of simple craft works.

Through the creative design, the products can be more widely introduced into modern life. For example, the long drum dance experience workshop construction organize and carry out long drum

production and long drum dance on-site teaching experience. We invite the inheritors who adopt the ancient method of making long drum and folk artists to teach us how to carry out practical activities and make creative long drum by DIY (see figure 1). In modern design, ethnic patterns are more and more favored by young people and designers, and the design works applied in them are more and more popular in the market. The characteristic and ethnic style are increasingly popular among consumers. However, with the continuous development of design works with minority's pattern, there is also the situation of single pattern application, confusion and lack of cultural sources. At the present stage, the combination of ethnic cultural products and modern consumers' aesthetic vision is not enough, so that ethnic design is still only for minority consumers. Therefore, the professional members of our team designed the craft drum, and its pattern was extracted from the original Yao's pattern. While popularizing intangible cultural heritage, traditional folk culture is transformed into material wealth (see figure 2). In addition, the creative products are designed with workshop activities, and the commercial development right obtained from the design will be transferred to the enterprise in Jianghua county, so as to improve the production capacity by cultivating the labor skills of local people. We will use economic confidence to boost cultural confidence, ensure steady employment, increase people's income, and help local ethnic minorities find jobs.



Figure 1 Daily activities in long drum workshop



Figure 2 Craft long drum design

In this process of transformation, not only the government and relevant organizations need to play a leading role, but also the rural poor labor force to actively cooperate. To be specific, we need the correct guidance from the government first. The government occupies a leading position in the whole strategy of poverty alleviation by employment. In terms of policy formulation, the government should establish and improve the policy system for poverty alleviation by employment as soon as possible, and encourage more resources to be channeled into the work of poverty alleviation by employment. From the investment in the early stage of design to the tax preference in the later stage of commodity production, certain financial subsidies will be given to the poor labors to start their own businesses. At the same time, financial funds can be used to create more jobs for the poor labors. Second, strengthen both the horizontal and vertical supporting policies, give corresponding preferential loans to the enterprises and organizations that invest in the poor areas, and give discount loans or even interest-free loans to the poor labor force who actively start their own businesses. Therefore, enterprises should combine the actual situation of rural areas, choose the most suitable resources and industries for local resource endowment to invest, and create more jobs for the poor labor force. Finally, the poor households should cooperate and join in. The poverty-stricken households should abandon their dependence on relief for poverty alleviation, take an active part in employment in posts provided by the government and organizations, take the initiative to participate in various skills training and improve their own quality.

In the activities of mass entrepreneurship and innovation, the poverty-stricken labor force can actively participate in entrepreneurship activities of poverty alleviation according to their own advantages and resources, and carry out various forms of entrepreneurship by taking advantage of the Internet economy and the development of local tourism industry. Self-employment can not only help people find jobs and get rid of poverty, but also bring into full play the advantages of entrepreneurship

in driving employment and lifting a number of poor households out of poverty. Income from hard work has proved to be the most effective way out of poverty.

6. Conclusion

Poverty alleviation by employment is an important way to build a moderately prosperous society in ethnic minority areas, an important measure to give full play to the rich advantages of local labor force, and a fundamental measure to achieve social stability and long-term peace and stability. Therefore, the government should let the poor people take the initiative to participate in the implementation and management of poverty alleviation projects, stimulate their initiative and enthusiasm for entrepreneurship and employment, help the poor people get rid of the narrow natural economic consciousness and the influence of poverty culture, and enable the poor people to explore the excellent traditional culture of ethnic minorities while getting economic benefits. In addition, the government should let the impoverished minority population build up “cultural confidence” and make it boost the “economic confidence”. Thus to provide more employment opportunities and improve the production capacity of the job skills of the labor force, so that we can get poor labour more secure job, and guaranteed to work not only makes the poor income increased, but also extended the income stability, which help people thoroughly shake off poverty and eliminate the model of relief poverty alleviation existed in poverty-stricken ethnic minority areas for years.

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