

The Synergistic Effects of Service-Learning and Community Co-governance Mechanisms Within the Context of Rural Revitalisation

LI Shuyang, WANG Yirong, LIU Fuyu
Guizhou University of Engineering Science, Bijie City, China

This study explores the synergistic effects between service-learning and community co-governance mechanisms and its support towards rural revitalisation within context of China. By analysing the role in promoting rural development, the study reveals how the synergistic effects of service-learning and community co-governance mechanisms support rural revitalisation, coupled with how to enhance the synergistic effects of service-learning and community co-governance mechanisms referred to rural revitalisation in China. The aim of this study is to provide theoretical support and practical guidance, fostering a deeper integration of higher education and community governance in rural revitalisation.

Keywords: rural revitalisation, service-learning, community co-governance

Introduction

As China's rural revitalisation strategy advances comprehensively, despite the significant roles played by government and market forces in driving this initiative, relying solely on limited external forces often constrains from achieving sustainable development. Remarkably, community co-governance has gradually emerged as a crucial method to strengthen the internal governance capabilities in rural areas (Li, Liu, & Ye, 2022). Moreover, service-learning, which enhances university students' theoretical learning exposed within social practice, is widely accepted with its efficacy. Therefore, these two elements could coherently integrate providing auxiliaries such as intellectual support and human resources for rural revitalisation. However, the synergistic effects of them in rural revitalisation context have not been thoroughly studied. In this juncture, this study aims to explore the connections between service-learning and community co-governance mechanisms, and their effects in favour of sustaining rural development by addressing these three questions: (1) In the context of rural revitalisation, what are the synergistic effects of service-learning and community co-governance mechanisms? (2) How do the synergistic effects of service-learning and community co-governance mechanisms support rural revitalisation in

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LI Shuyang (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0586-3062>), Ph.D., School of Economics & Management, Guizhou University of Engineering Science, Bijie City, China.

WANG Yirong, School of Economics & Management, Guizhou University of Engineering Science, Bijie City, China.

LIU Fuyu, School of Economics & Management, Guizhou University of Engineering Science, Bijie City, China.

China? (3) How to enhance the synergistic effects of service-learning and community co-governance mechanisms referred to rural revitalisation in China?

Literature Review

Within the context of rural revitalisation, service-learning provides technical support and intellectual resources to rural communities by offering knowledgeable students to contribute their learning, while also exposes students into a practical platform to apply their knowledge to real-world problem-solving (Jing, 2021). In recent years, study had shown that approaches driven solely by government or market forces struggle to address the complex issues inherent in rural revitalisation (Guo & Liu, 2021). As a result, community co-governance mechanism, which is vital for enhancing internal governance capabilities and achieving sustainable development in rural areas, has drawn widespread attention. Related studies further indicated that community co-governance not only improves the efficiency of rural governance but also strengthens community members' awareness of participation and sense of responsibility (Abedi Sarvestani & Ingram, 2020). However, studies that integrated service-learning with community co-governance remained relatively scarce. Therefore, this study delves into the synergistic effects of service-learning and community co-governance mechanisms within the context of rural revitalisation.

Methods

A quantitative method was employed in this study and a closed-ended survey questionnaire was designed to address the first question "In the context of rural revitalisation, what are the synergistic effects of service-learning and community co-governance mechanisms?" The main themes in this question enclose awareness and participation in service-learning projects, impact of service-learning on the community, community co-governance mechanisms, synergistic effects between service-learning and co-governance, social capital and trust-building, outcomes and sustainability of projects, perceived barriers and challenges, and overall evaluation. These main themes were divided into some sub-themes, which were addressed with the questions that should be designed to describe respondents' age, role in the community, and level of education (see Table 1).

Table 1

Highest Level of Education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Primary	18	5.1	5.1	5.1
	Secondary	70	19.8	19.8	24.9
	College	182	51.4	51.4	76.3
	Other	84	23.7	23.7	100.0
	Total	354	100.0	100.0	

In addition, questions should be asked about respondents' familiarity with service-learning programmes, level of involvement, frequency of interaction with service-learning participants. As to the impact of service-learning, questions were embedded with information of perception of service-learning's benefits, contribution to community challenges, and satisfaction with service-learning outcomes. Other questions were related to the rest of sub-themes: (1) level of community involvement in governance, effectiveness of community co-governance, and challenges in co-governance; (2) perception of collaboration between students and community, improvement in governance due to service-learning, and contribution to long-term rural development; (3) trust among

community members, relationships with external actors, and social cohesion in the community; (4) long-term sustainability of projects, economic impact on the community, and improvement in local governance capacity; (5) barriers to service-learning success, challenges in community participation, and areas for improvement; and (6) overall impact of combined service-learning and co-governance, willingness to continue participating, and recommendation for future projects (see Table 2).

Table 2

Themes and Question List

Main themes	Sub-themes	Questions
Demographic information	Age	What is your age group?
	Role in the community	What is your role in the community?
	Level of education	What is your highest level of education?
Awareness and participation in service-learning projects	Familiarity with service-learning programmes	Are you familiar with the concept of service-learning?
	Level of involvement	Have you participated in a service-learning project in your community?
	Frequency of interaction with service-learning participants	How frequently do you interact with service-learning participants?
Impact of service-learning on the community	Perception of service-learning's benefits	To what extent do you agree that service-learning has benefited your community?
	Contribution to community challenges	How effective do you think service-learning projects have been in addressing local issues?
	Satisfaction with service-learning outcomes	How satisfied are you with the outcomes of service-learning in your community?
Community co-governance mechanisms	Level of community involvement in governance	How involved are you in decision-making processes within the community?
	Effectiveness of community co-governance	How would you rate the effectiveness of the community's co-governance mechanisms?
	Challenges in co-governance	What are the main challenges you face in participating in community co-governance?
Synergistic effects between service-learning and co-governance	Perception of collaboration between students and community	To what extent do you think service-learning has enhanced collaboration between the community and external actors (e.g., students, universities)?
	Improvement in governance due to service-learning	Do you believe that service-learning has improved the community's co-governance capabilities?
	Contribution to long-term rural development	How has the integration of service-learning impacted the long-term development of your community?
Social capital and trust-building	Trust among community members	To what extent do you agree that service-learning projects have helped build trust within the community?
	Relationships with external actors	How would you rate the quality of relationships between the community and external actors (e.g., students, project coordinators)?
	Social cohesion in the community	Has participation in service-learning projects strengthened social cohesion in your community?
Outcomes and sustainability of projects	Long-term sustainability of projects	How likely do you think it is that the projects initiated through service-learning will continue to be sustained by the community?
	Economic impact on the community	How has service-learning impacted the local economy (e.g., new job opportunities, increased income)?
	Improvement in local governance capacity	Has participation in service-learning improved the community's ability to manage future projects independently?
Perceived barriers and challenges	Barriers to service-learning success	What do you see as the main barriers to successful service-learning projects in your community?
	Challenges in community participation	What are the key challenges in involving community members in co-governance efforts?
	Overall impact of combined service-learning and co-governance	How would you rate the overall impact of service-learning and co-governance on rural revitalisation in your community?
Overall evaluation	Willingness to continue participating	How willing are you to continue participating in future service-learning and co-governance projects?

The questionnaire was randomly sent to collect data from members in communities. There are 354 respondents who participated in data collecting process in total. Hereof, 112 are community leaders, 140 villagers, 35 students, and 67 teachers. In these respondents, it's 51.4%, who graduated from college while only 18% of them had primary level of education.

Besides the abovementioned, this study has further applied descriptive statistics and Crosstabulation on data analysis to address the sub-themes of the first question. For example, for analysis of data to address "What are the key challenges in involving community members in co-governance efforts serving in rural revitalisation?", 156 of respondents who believed that bureaucratic issues were the key challenge, 107 of respondents suggested that lack of interest was the key challenge to constrain from involvement in community projects in rural revitalisation, and only 38 of them assured that time constraints was the key challenge (Table 3).

Table 3

The Key Challenges in Involving Community Members in Co-governance

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Time constraints	38	10.7	10.7	10.7
	Lack of interest	107	30.2	30.2	41.0
	Bureaucratic issues	156	44.1	44.1	85.0
	Other	53	15.0	15.0	100.0
	Total	354	100.0	100.0	

Besides the key challenges in involving community members in co-governance efforts serving in rural revitalisation, what are the main challenges that respondents face in participating in community co-governance? Over 200 respondents assisted that lack of interest was the main challenge, 81 asserted that lack of knowledge, and only 45 believed that lack of time was the main challenge that they have faced (see Table 4).

Table 4

The Main Challenges in Participating in Community Co-governance

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Lack of time	45	12.7	12.7	12.7
	Lack of interest	201	56.8	56.8	69.5
	Lack of knowledge	81	22.9	22.9	92.4
	Other	27	7.6	7.6	100.0
	Total	354	100.0	100.0	

Furthermore, so what do respondents see as the main barriers to successful service-learning projects in their communities, particularly referred to rural revitalisation? 155 of them believed that lack of funding was the main barrier, and only 54 respondents suggested that lack of awareness was the main barrier (see Table 5).

Table 5

The Main Barriers to Successful Service-Learning Projects in Your Community

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Lack of funding	155	43.8	43.8	43.8
	Lack of participation	90	25.4	25.4	69.2
	Lack of awareness	54	15.3	15.3	84.5
	Other	55	15.5	15.5	100.0
	Total	354	100.0	100.0	

Moreover, Crosstabulation was conducted to view the role of respondents and their interactions with service-learning participants. It shows that either community leaders, villagers, students, or teachers who are in number of 260, “never” interact with service-learning participants, and only 11 interact “frequently”. Interestingly, the number of villagers is the largest group, standing at 104, “never” interact (see Table 6).

Table 6

Roles and Frequency

Count		How frequently do you interact with service-learning participants?				Total
		Once	Occasionally	Frequently	Never	
What is your role in the community?	Community leader	10	16	4	82	112
	Villager	13	20	3	104	140
	Student	6	5	2	22	35
	Teacher	4	9	2	52	67
Total		33	50	11	260	354

Relating to the frequency of interaction, to what extent do respondents agree that service-learning has benefited their communities? 200 of respondents agree with the benefits of service-learning provided to sustain their communities, and only 66 do not agree with this point. Remarkably, respondents who never interact with service-learning participants are the biggest number of 260; in this category, 139 respondents stand on “agree” while 53 “disagree”. Moreover, there is a smallest number of “frequently”; only 11 respondents “disagree”, “neutral”, and “agree” that service-learning has benefited their communities (see Table 7).

Table 7

Frequency and Extent

Count		To what extent do you agree that service-learning has benefited your community?			Total
		Disagree	Neutral	Agree	
How frequently do you interact with service-learning participants?	Once	6	6	21	33
	Occasionally	7	11	32	50
	Frequently	0	3	8	11
	Never	53	68	139	260
Total		66	88	200	354

Rather than that, Crosstabulation was applied to interpret the data between “To what extent do you agree that service-learning has benefited your community?” and “How satisfied are you with the outcomes of service-learning in your community?” There were more than 180 respondents not satisfied with the outcomes of service-learning and 45 were satisfied. In “not satisfied” group, the biggest portion of respondents, account for 123, who agree with the benefits of service-learning in communities, while in “satisfied” group, there are only 23 “agree” and 11 “disagree” (see Table 8).

Table 8

Extent and Satisfaction

Count		How satisfied are you with the outcomes of service-learning in your community?			Total
		Not satisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	
To what extent do you agree that service-learning has benefited your community?	Disagree	33	22	11	66
	Neutral	33	44	11	88
	Agree	123	54	23	200
Total		189	120	45	354

Based on the abovementioned, how willing are respondents participating in future service-learning and co-governance projects in rural revitalisation? As it shows in Crosstabulation, 239 respondents are “willing” to participate while 17 are “not willing”. In the group of “willing”, 129 respondents are not satisfied with the outcomes of service-learning in communities, whereas, there are 11 respondents not satisfied and “not willing” to participate, referred to the Table 9 below.

Table 9

Satisfaction and Willingness

Count		How willing are you participating in future service-learning and co-governance projects in rural revitalisation?			Total
		Not willing	Neutral	Willing	
How satisfied are you with the outcomes of service-learning in your community?	Not satisfied	11	49	129	189
	Neutral	4	31	85	120
	Satisfied	2	18	25	45
Total		17	98	239	354

It is crucial to explore the main challenges in participating in community co-governance and how the respondents rate the overall impact of service-learning and co-governance on rural revitalisation. More than 200 respondents positively believed “lack of interest” whereas 45 respondents only thought “lack of time” was the main challenge. Whatever the main challenges are, respondents assist “positive” upon the overall impact of service-learning and co-governance on rural revitalisation in communities is the biggest proportion (see Table 10).

Table 10

Assessment and the Main Challenges

Count		What are the main challenges you face in participating in community co-governance?				Total
		Lack of time	Lack of interest	Lack of knowledge	Other	
How would you rate the overall impact of service-learning and co-governance on rural revitalisation in your community?	Negative	2	7	4	0	13
	Neutral	19	66	24	7	116
	Positive	24	128	53	20	225
Total		45	201	81	27	354

Besides that, respondents stand on “positive” upon “What do you see as the main barriers to successful service-learning projects in your community, particularly referred to rural revitalisation?” which is also the biggest number. In addition, the largest number of respondents, 155 out of 354, who assert “lack of funding” while only 36 respondents emphasise on “lack of awareness”, is the main barrier (see Table 11).

Table 11

Assessment and the Main Barriers

Count		What do you see as the main barriers to successful service-learning projects in your community, particularly referred to rural revitalisation?				Total
		Lack of funding	Lack of participation	Lack of awareness	Other	
How would you rate the overall impact of service-learning and co-governance on rural revitalisation in your community?	Negative	7	4	2	0	13
	Neutral	42	32	16	26	116
	Positive	106	54	36	29	225
	Total	155	90	54	55	354

Additionally, respondents suggested that “bureaucratic issues” was the key challenges in involving community members in co-governance efforts serving in rural revitalisation, more than “time constraints”, assumed as key challenges; however, it was a smallest group of 38 respondents. Moreover, to whom rate the overall impact of “negative”, it was neglected that these challenges impact on community members and their co-governance efforts serving in rural revitalisation (see Table 12).

Table 12

Assessment and the Key Challenges

Count		What are the key challenges in involving community members in co-governance efforts serving in rural revitalisation?				Total
		Time constraints	Lack of interest	Bureaucratic issues	Other	
How would you rate the overall impact of service-learning and co-governance on rural revitalisation in your community?	Negative	2	3	7	1	13
	Neutral	8	38	49	21	116
	Positive	28	66	100	31	225
	Total	38	107	156	53	354

Results and Discussion

In the quest for effective rural revitalisation, the synergistic relationship between service-learning and community co-governance mechanisms emerges as a transformative approach, offering numerous benefits that can enhance the sustainability and vibrancy of rural communities. Service-learning, which integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection, serves as a powerful vehicle for fostering active engagement among participants, while community co-governance facilitates the involvement of members in decision-making processes that shape their lives. Together, these two elements create a dynamic environment that promotes not only individual development but also collective empowerment, leading to holistic community advancement. Service-learning programmes encourage participants (students or volunteers) to immerse themselves in local challenges (lack of funding), providing them with a firsthand understanding of the needs and aspirations of the

community. This direct engagement fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility, motivating individuals to contribute positively to their surroundings. When service-learning initiatives are linked with community co-governance structures, they encourage a participatory culture where members are not mere beneficiaries of development efforts but active contributors to the decision-making processes that govern their communities. This transformation of roles cultivates a deeper investment in local initiatives, as community members feel empowered to influence the outcomes that affect their daily lives.

Moreover, the integration of service-learning with community co-governance significantly contributes to skill development and capacity building within rural areas. Service-learning experiences often equip participants with practical skills and knowledge that are directly applicable to local governance issues. For instance, individuals engaged in service-learning may develop project management, communication, and leadership skills through their involvement in community projects. When these newly acquired skills are harnessed in the context of co-governance, they enhance the overall capacity of the community to address challenges effectively. This dual approach creates a virtuous cycle of empowerment, where community members are not only prepared to tackle current issues but also become equipped to lead future initiatives. As members gain confidence and competence, they are more likely to take on leadership roles within their communities, contributing to a more resilient and self-sustaining rural environment.

The sustainability of solutions generated through the combined efforts of service-learning and community governance is another critical aspect of this synergistic relationship. When community members actively participate in the design and implementation of projects, they are more likely to create initiatives that genuinely address the needs and priorities of the local population. This participatory approach contrasts sharply with top-down development strategies that often overlook the unique context of rural areas. By embedding the voices and perspectives of community members into the decision-making process, service-learning programmes can help identify solutions that are culturally appropriate and contextually relevant. Furthermore, because these initiatives arise from within the community, they tend to foster a greater sense of pride and ownership among members, leading to more sustainable outcomes that endure over time. The collaborative nature of this approach also encourages local buy-in, as members see their contributions reflected in the results of community projects, reinforcing their commitment to ongoing participation and support.

Trust and collaboration play pivotal roles in the successful implementation of service-learning and community co-governance initiatives in China. As service-learning projects foster relationships between participants and community members in relation to rural management and development, they build a foundation of trust that is essential for effective co-governance. This trust facilitates open communication and collaborative problem-solving, allowing community members to express their needs and concerns without fear of dismissal. In environments where trust is established, members are more likely to engage in dialogue, share ideas, and work together to address shared challenges. This collaborative spirit is crucial for the development of innovative solutions, as diverse perspectives and experiences come together to inform decision-making. The interaction between service-learning participants and community members often leads to creative ideas that might not have emerged within a traditional governance framework, sparking new initiatives that align with the community's vision for its future.

Furthermore, the integration of service-learning with community governance creates essential feedback loops that can inform and enhance local governance practices. Service-learning projects typically incorporate

reflection components, allowing participants to evaluate their experiences and share insights with community leaders and governance structures. This feedback can be invaluable for identifying areas for improvement, recognising successes, and adapting strategies to better meet the evolving needs of the community. By fostering a culture of continuous learning and adaptation, this feedback loop contributes to the resilience of both service-learning initiatives and community governance mechanisms. As communities navigate complex challenges, the ability to learn from past experiences and adjust approaches accordingly becomes a vital asset in the pursuit of sustainable rural revitalisation.

The synergistic effects of service-learning and community co-governance mechanisms can lead to a more holistic approach to rural development that considers the intricate interplay of social, economic, and environmental factors, which enables communities to address their unique challenges in a manner that promotes not only economic growth but also social cohesion and environmental stewardship. By recognising the interconnectedness of these dimensions, service-learning and co-governance initiatives can foster integrated strategies that enhance the overall quality of life in rural areas. Such strategies might include promoting local entrepreneurship, enhancing access to education and funding, and preserving cultural heritage, all of which contribute to the resilience and sustainability of rural communities.

The synergistic relationship between service-learning and community co-governance represents a promising pathway for achieving the goals of rural revitalisation. By enhancing community engagement, developing skills, fostering trust and collaboration, and creating sustainable solutions, this integrated approach empowers rural members to take an active role in shaping their futures. As communities embrace the transformative potential of service-learning and co-governance, they can build a more vibrant, inclusive, and resilient rural landscape, ensuring that the benefits of revitalisation are shared equitably among all members of the communities. This collaborative endeavor not only strengthens the social fabric of rural areas but also lays the foundation for enduring prosperity and well-being in the face of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

The outcomes of analysis of first question logistically support in addressing “how” embedded within the second and third questions of this study. In the context of China, the synergistic effects of service-learning and community co-governance mechanisms provide a unique pathway to achieve the country’s ambitious rural revitalisation goals. Rural revitalisation in China aims not only to stimulate economic growth but also to enhance social cohesion, improve local governance, and foster sustainable development. By blending service-learning and community co-governance, these objectives can be met in a way that is both inclusive and sustainable, effectively addressing the distinct challenges that China’s rural areas face.

Service-learning programmes offer a practical avenue for enhancing community engagement in China’s rural areas. University students, particularly those in fields related to agriculture, social work, and public administration, are increasingly participating in service-learning initiatives that allow them to work directly with rural communities. This approach cultivates a deeper understanding of rural issues and encourages students to use their knowledge to address local needs. When these service-learning activities are integrated with community co-governance mechanisms, such as local councils or village committees, rural members are encouraged to actively engage in local development initiatives. This interaction between students and community members fosters a sense of shared responsibility and collective ownership, which is essential for long-term community participation. In a society where hierarchical structures are common, these collaborative experiences empower rural members to view themselves as active participants in the revitalisation process rather than passive recipients.

Another important benefit of combining service-learning and co-governance is the capacity-building effect it has on local communities. Many rural areas in China struggle with a lack of skilled personnel to implement and sustain development projects. Through service-learning, students and volunteers bring valuable skills, such as project management, financial literacy, and technical knowledge in agriculture or renewable energy, directly to rural areas. By working alongside local governance bodies, these participants help equip members with the skills needed to take on leadership roles within their communities. This shared learning process not only strengthens the immediate capacity of rural communities to manage projects but also cultivates a foundation for long-term self-reliance. As local members gain confidence in their abilities, they are better prepared to sustain development efforts after service-learning participants leave, ensuring that the positive impacts of these projects endure over time in sustainability.

Furthermore, the combination of service-learning and community co-governance mechanisms enables more sustainable and contextually appropriate solutions to rural challenges. For example, traditional top-down approaches to rural development often fail to capture the unique cultural, social, and environmental aspects of each rural area. However, implementation with service-learning and community involvement, development initiatives are tailored and matched the specific needs and values of each community. Projects such as involving agricultural innovations are more likely to succeed in businesses when they incorporate local farming practices and knowledge. This approach further aligns with China's broader policy goals of building an "ecological civilisation" by emphasising environmental sustainability in rural revitalisation; it becomes a vital role and empower rural reform and its values is widely recognised. As community members play an active role in shaping these initiatives, they are more likely to feel invested in maintaining them, resulting in solutions that have a greater likelihood of lasting success.

Besides the combination of service-learning and community co-governance mechanisms, the integration of service-learning and community co-governance fosters a culture of trust and collaboration, which is crucial for effective rural revitalisation in China. Service-learning experiences often involve reflection sessions that provide valuable feedback for local leaders, enabling them to adapt strategies in real-time. By fostering open communication between students, local governance bodies, and rural members, these programmes build trust, making members more willing to engage in collaborative problem-solving and innovative thinking. This culture of trust and openness is essential for addressing complex rural issues and enhances the resilience of rural communities in the face of challenges such as population decline and environmental degradation.

Enhancing the synergistic effects of service-learning and community co-governance mechanisms in China's rural revitalisation efforts requires targeted strategies that strengthen the relationship between these two approaches, address local needs effectively, and build sustainable, community-driven models for long-term impact. Meanwhile, to foster institutional support and policy alignment is essential for scaling the synergistic impact of service-learning and community co-governance in rural areas. Local governments, universities, and community organizations can play pivotal roles in providing financial, logistical, and organizational support for service-learning programmes that align with community co-governance structures. Policies that incentivize universities to send students into rural areas or that reward local governments for partnering with educational institutions can encourage more extensive and consistent collaboration. By establishing frameworks that embed service-learning within the rural revitalisation agenda, both service-learning and co-governance become integral components of community development efforts. This alignment ensures that both higher education students and

community members are working toward shared goals that have institutional backing, increasing the likelihood of achieving sustainable outcomes in rural atmosphere.

Another way to enhance synergy is to focus on skills training and knowledge transfer between service-learning participants and community members. Apparently, one of the major advantages of service-learning is its ability to bring specialised skills, such as agricultural technology, digital literacy, or health knowledge, to rural areas. Additionally, training programmes that allow students to work closely with local leaders and members can facilitate skills transfer, ensuring that community members can continue to benefit from these skills after the service-learning participants have departed. Additionally, involving local leaders in the planning and implementation of service-learning initiatives allows for more effective knowledge sharing and empowers them to carry forward these projects independently. By creating opportunities and network for mentorship and co-training sessions, communities become less dependent on external assistance and more capable of sustaining development efforts over time.

In addition, enhancing communication channels between service-learning programmes and local governance bodies is crucial. Communication structures that facilitate the exchange of ideas, experiences, and resources between universities, local governments, and community organizations can create a more cohesive approach to rural revitalisation. Regular meetings or digital platforms for sharing progress, challenges, and successes can help sustain momentum and align goals across all participants. By establishing these channels, stakeholders can ensure that efforts are not duplicated, resources are used efficiently, and new ideas can be quickly exchanged and implemented. Effective communication also helps build trust between community members, service-learning participants, and local officials, which is essential for long-term collaboration and sustainable rural development.

Furthermore, fostering a long-term commitment to rural revitalisation through service-learning and co-governance can deepen the impact of these mechanisms. Short-term service-learning initiatives, while beneficial, often fail to create lasting change. Establishing multi-year partnerships between universities and rural communities can ensure that service-learning projects are part of an ongoing, comprehensive development plan. This long-term commitment allows for the implementation of projects that may require extended timelines to see results, such as improving local education systems, enhancing healthcare access, or developing eco-friendly agricultural practices. By focusing on long-term goals and partnerships, service-learning and co-governance can evolve in tandem with the community's progress, adapting to new challenges and needs as they arise and fostering a sustainable model for rural development. Therefore, enhancing the synergistic effects of service-learning and community co-governance in China's rural revitalisation requires institutional support, effective skills transfer, reflective practices, improved communication, and a commitment to long-term engagement. By implementing these strategies, China can leverage these mechanisms to empower rural communities, address local challenges, and create self-sustaining models of development that align with the country's broader vision for rural revitalisation.

Overall, this study provides a deep understanding of the synergistic effects between service-learning and community co-governance mechanisms through the combination of quantitative study methods, case studies, and comprehensive data analysis. However, the limitations regarding samples and data necessitate further refinement and exploration in future study.

Conclusions

The synergistic effects of service-learning and community co-governance mechanisms hold substantial promise for advancing rural revitalisation in China. By fostering active community engagement, skill development, sustainable solutions, and a culture of collaboration, these approaches empower rural communities to take ownership of their development. Service-learning brings fresh perspectives, practical skills, and a strong sense of social responsibility among students, while community co-governance enables local members to directly contribute to and shape initiatives, reinforcing a sense of local agency and involvement. This integration creates a dual empowerment effect, where both students and community members are more engaged, prepared, and motivated to address the complex challenges rural communities face, from economic growth to social cohesion and environmental sustainability.

Enhancing the synergy between service-learning and community co-governance for rural revitalisation in China requires a multifaceted approach. Institutional support and policy alignment are crucial first steps. By encouraging partnerships between universities, local governments, and rural organizations, these initiatives gain the structural support and resources they need to scale effectively and become embedded in the national rural revitalisation strategy. This backing helps align the efforts of service-learning participants with local goals, facilitating a cohesive approach that maximizes the impact of each project and supports long-term development goals.

A focus on skills transfer and capacity-building is another key factor in strengthening this synergy. Service-learning can bring specialized knowledge and skills to rural areas, but for these efforts to be sustainable, they must be paired with effective training programmes that empower local members to carry these projects forward independently. Collaborative training and mentorship opportunities between students and local leaders ensure that community members can continue to benefit from these skills, allowing them to sustain development efforts and reduce reliance on external support. This approach not only addresses immediate needs but also builds the long-term resilience and capacity of rural communities.

Reflective practices, enhanced communication channels, and long-term commitments are additional strategies that can deepen the impact of service-learning and co-governance on rural revitalisation in China. Structured reflection sessions provide valuable feedback for all participants, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and ensuring that projects remain relevant to local needs. Enhanced communication channels among universities, local governments, and rural organizations create a foundation for ongoing collaboration, allowing ideas, resources, and experiences to be shared efficiently. This improves project coordination, reduces duplication, and builds trust among all stakeholders. Additionally, a long-term commitment to partnerships between educational institutions and rural communities can lead to more profound and sustainable changes. Multi-year engagements provide the necessary time to address complex, deep-rooted challenges like healthcare, education, and sustainable agriculture, ensuring these initiatives are adaptable to evolving community needs.

To sum up, service-learning and community co-governance offer a powerful, complementary approach to rural revitalisation in China. By embedding these mechanisms within a supportive, skill-building, and reflective framework, rural communities can realize self-sustaining, locally driven development. The coordinated involvement of institutions, local governance, and community members ensures that revitalisation efforts align closely with China's vision for its rural future, creating vibrant, resilient, and self-reliant rural communities poised to thrive in the face of future challenges.

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