

# Learning Role of Government Connotation and Characteristics of Rigid Governance of Minority Areas

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## Abstract

The Chinese-type modernization advances under the circumstance of “time-space compression”, minority area, that its economy develops slowly, finds it is hard to fully implement superimposed policies in the short term. Also, structural reform of higher education develops slowly. The government pays more attention in the form of local governance than its essence, resulting that the implementation features suspension property, process deviation and rigid execution. Therefore, this article aims to understand the lagging economic development in minority areas leads to rigid higher education. Also explores how talent retention and the quality of talents affect social governance. Through “find problem - present solution - solve problem” mode, the paper reveals cause of suspending policies, process deviation and rigid execution from perspectives of economy, system, society and education, pointing out that governing subject will actively select or will be forced to implement governance because of multiple effects from rigid education, system, stimulus from ambient environment and compound motivation. The problems, factors and recommendation provided in this article it is useful for the researcher and policy maker to resolve the lagging economic development in minority areas.

**Keywords:** Higher Education, Minority Area, Employment, Rigid Governance, Modernization of China’s Capacity for Governance

## Introduction

Entering the new era, the Chinese government, has anchored the overall goal of socialism with Chinese characteristics and is committed to improving the capacity of social governance and the modernization of the governance system, promoting the reform of the higher education system and cultivating modern talents (Xi, 2022). However, there are huge differences in the construction of the governance system and the level of ability in different regions, and there are problems such as employment impartiality in ethnic minority areas. These problems not only affect the economic development, but also severely restrict the reform of education system in minority areas. Education reform is essential to ethnic minority

areas to promote modernization and economic and social development (Shengliang & Shen, 2021; Xi, 2022). The modernization of its governance system and capacity is the core mechanism in transforming China's institutional advantages into grassroots governance efficiency, and it is a weak point that focuses on achieving the goals and tasks of modernization reform (Xi, 2022). However, under the superimposed impact of historical and realistic factors, the development of education is lagging behind, the political pressure is increasing, the economic structure is unbalanced, and the residents' income growth is rather slow (Cheng & Li, 2022; Xi, 2022).

Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the investment in education in minority areas and reform the higher education system, while improving relevant policies and measures to solve the problem of employment (Xi, 2022). Thus, this article aims to explore the connotation of rigid governance in minority areas from both inside and outside. On the basis of pointing out the shortcomings and weaknesses of governance in reality, it is necessary to reveal the causes from multiple perspectives such as economy, institutions, society and education. By strengthening the investment and research in minority areas, it is vital to construct a "circuit breaker-construction" countermeasure under the framework of "system-environment-mechanism", solving the floating deviation and rigid operation dilemma of governance capacity in minority areas, and promoting the modernization process in minority areas (Xi, 2022).

#### *Connotation and Characteristics of Rigid Governance in Minority Areas*

The economic development of minority areas is staggered (Qinghai, 2021; Daily, 2021; Sui, 2021). Consequently, it is arduous to attract talents outside those areas and the employment and people who work in the local government are still local personnel with traditional solidified governance ideas, resulting in the governance of ethnic areas is still a continuation of the same old situation. In the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the establishment of social order in minority areas faced a severe and stable situation. The reform of higher education was stagnated, which brought great obstacles to the balance between talent training and employment (Xi, 2022; Shengliang & Shen, 2021). In order to maintain national security and social stability, central and local government maintained the status quo, resulting in moderate development of welfare policies and the benefit of economic development was shared later than other areas. This also led to stiff economic development, weak economic foundation and fragile chain of economic relations (Xi, 2022). When the economic development policy applied in minority areas, the autonomous government set some overly ambitious and unrealistic goals and plans in the hope of catching up with the overall process, causing some problems such as the reversal of goals and means, the opposition between subject and object, and the imbalance between mechanism and norm. These historical reasons have led to the weak economic foundation of ethnic regions, which cannot provide a reliable foundation for development. At the same time, the lack of preparations also triggered deviant in the governance process. In order to ensure the unrealistic development goals and the process, local governments had to adopt rigid governance and tough measures (Jianjun & Zhang, 2017). On the other hand, the transformation of national policies has made the market more open, companies from other regions have more advantages than local firms in accumulating experience and coping with risks.

The contradiction between the lack of the ability of micro subjects to resist risks and the mutual exclusion of macro markets broke the development balance set by the government

(Xi, 2022). This forced local governments to seek strong support and take tough measures to maintain social governance and market order. Therefore, social governance in minority areas needs to take historical factors and realistic conditions into consideration, and take appropriate measures to promote economic development and talent training (Ferdinand, 2019). Only in this way can minority areas get rid of the fetters of traditional thoughts and achieve modern governance and rapid economic development. On the basis of studying political scientists and economists and taking account of multiple indicators of local social governance comprehensively, the social governance of minority areas is divided into “two types and four models” (see Table 1) By analysing the development environment and governance background of ethnic regions and finding the indicator system, we believe that social governance in minority areas demonstrates as hierarchical governance. Nonetheless, due to the strong unity of politic, decentralized administration and reliability of the central government, the degree of democratization is unstable (Samuel P, 2008). As a result, the governance model changes repeatedly between the compulsory model and the suspension model, and gradually formed a unique governance model in ethnic areas.

Table 1  
*Comparative analysis of the four governance modes*

Type of governance	of governance model	Dependency of nation	Democratization of the governance system	Governance system resilience	Legitimacy of the governance system	Governance of the economic development of the environment
Hierarchical governance	enforcement mode	strong	low	Relatively weak	weak	outdated
	Suspension mode	Relatively strong	Relatively low	Relatively weak	Relatively weak	outdated
Coupled governance	negotiation mode	Relatively weak	Relatively high	strong	strong	developed
	atom mode	weak	high	Relatively weak	Relatively strong	developed

Refer to Table1 above, the rigid governance in minority areas is the result of the combined effect of both internal and external factors. Compared with developed areas, minority areas face greater restraint in the environment of economic development. Therefore, rigid governance is not only caused by the mentality of being eager for quick success and instant benefits (Xi, 2022). As a significant part of the modernization of governance capacity and national security, governments in minority areas are forced to adopt rigid governance, which is mainly manifested in two aspects: on the one hand, the Party committees and governments need to strictly control various red lines and bottom lines and strengthen management to ensure that economic and social development controllable; On the other hand, minority areas were unable to handle risks and make complete respond preparations in the face of emergencies or market turbulence. They were often limited by fixed thinking or political pressure (Samuel P, 2008).

Therefore, the essence of rigid governance in ethnic areas is to maintain the stable process of economic development and social prosperity. In this article, the connotation of rigid governance in minority areas is defined as: the lagging economic and social environment and the broad development impartiality lead to the stagnated reform in education system (Wang, 2006). The policy formulation deviates from the actual development capacity, and the tough measures taken to retain the policy dividend and catch up with the development target is reflected in the backtracking of governance to management (Lei & Qin, 2023).

#### *The Actual Problem of Lagging Minority of Economic Development Areas in China*

##### 1. Realistic representation of rigid governance in minority areas

In the 2021 Central Conference on Ethnic Matters, the General Secretary accurately pointed out the deficiencies in the current social governance of ethnic areas. This thesis summarizes its realistic representation in four aspects (Xi, 2022) .

##### 2. Unilaterally responding to the requests of the document while ignoring the actual demands of the region

As a subordinate administrative unit of the central government and the higher level government, the local government in minority areas is also the main governing body in the administrative region. A mere "response to the documents" is far from enough, a substantive response is required. Social governance in minority areas is faced with multiple problems such as poverty and anti-poverty, development and stability, imperfect market mechanism and extensive regional gap (Lei & Qin, 2023). However, the response of local governments to the national strategy is often limited to the generalized responsibility mechanism, isolated from the actual needs of the region. Such rigid implementation procedures and rigid governance thinking lead to the policies that are only work on the paper instead of meeting the demand of governance. For instance, Qinghai Province supports the agglomeration of high-end R&D (Research and Development) innovation platforms, gives 5 to 3 million RMB scientific research funds to the independent legal person R&D institutions or innovation platforms established by high-quality domestic and foreign enterprises in Qinghai. Rich material reward is given in the policy to actively introduce high-quality talents (Qinghai, 2021). However, it is hard to attract high-quality talents due to the underdeveloped economic environment, uncertain development prospects and the crowded market. The talent gap still exists, and the implementation of the introduction policy is not ideal (Wang, 2006).

##### 3. Impulsively transplanting ideal experiences while ignoring regional needs

Local governments in minority areas enjoy greater autonomy in governance in order to better meet the needs of the public (Jianjun & Zhang, 2017). Considering the complexity of economic environment and cultural system, the grass-root governance capacity is insufficient. Therefore, the phenomenon of "value document and ignore service, value the result and ignore the process" exists. Some government officials impulsively transfer mature experience and ideal practices, which is difficult to meet the local needs (Cheng & Li, 2022). For example, Erhai, Yunnan province has formed a sophisticated mechanism for ecological restoration, which is "seal the lake and ban fishing, block and control the pollution". On the contrary, in some pastoral areas of Qinghai, officials blindly carried out the existing governance policies and promoted "zoning protection, returning grazing land to grassland." Although it was effective for a short period of time, it will destroy the land and cause irreversible damage to the "three-life system" in the long run (Zizhuang et al., 2011).

#### 4. Carrying out governance actions in a procedural manner while ignoring regional scientific coordination

The core of local government governance in minority areas is to promote comprehensive governance, but this will be an arduous journey. On the one hand, high governance costs and time costs will bring pressure to the backward ethnic areas (Xi, 2022). In a long run, the dependence on government financial will lead to alienation of social development; On the other hand, leadership and business management positions are mostly held by officials from other places, and the short tenure leads to inconsistent governance policies (Guangqing & Cai, 2022). To solve such problems, the central government has strengthened top-level design and formulated long-term plans such as the western development. However, the constant change and replacement of local chief officials lead to the deviation of governance actions, the lack of government cohesion, the weakening of grass-roots governance capacity, and seriously undermine the scientific development and overall planning of the region.

#### 5. Pursuit of political achievements while ignoring regional sustainable development

Carrying out "label governance" and the values of "governance for the sake of political achievements" seriously weakens the image of the government and hinders the sustainable development of minority regions (Cheng & Li, 2022). In the name of governance, local governments in minority areas take advantage of the ambiguity of the policy to carry out "label governance" to pursue short-term political achievements and attention. As a matter of fact, they deviate from the governance objectives, reduce the credibility of the government, and aggravate the contradiction between the government and the public. Take Qinghai Province as an example, it wants to build an export location for green and organic agricultural and livestock products (Qinghai, 2021). In 2021, the output of meat and dairy products in Qinghai province increased by 8.10% and decreased by 3.23% respectively from the previous month. Few local dairy products occupy the market share of the province, and most of them are products of well-known dairy enterprises from other places (Daily, 2021). In the market outside the province, the share of Qinghai dairy products is even lower, and green organic products have almost no share at all. At present, the main producing areas of green organic dairy products in China are organic pastures with large-scale grasslands in Inner Mongolia, Heilongjiang and Xinjiang (Guangqing & Cai, 2022).

### *The Factors of Lagging Economic Development of Minority Areas in China*

#### 1. The Causes of Rigid Governance in Minority Areas

As a fundamental part of local governance, social governance in minority areas is crucial (Cheng & Li, 2022). However, the rigid reform of higher education in minority areas has become a tricky part that restricts talent training and employment, economic development and talent introducing, which obstructs the process of governance modernization. The economic and social development model of minority areas is transforming from the "originally compound, balanced and reciprocal allocation mode of local community, to the practice of highly centralized control of resources under the control of the nation, and then to the contemporary basic mode based on the principle of capital and dominated by the market" (Xiaoping & Wu, 2021). Social governance changes bring capital liberation and market uncertainty, resulting in economic and social fragility and the need for rigid management to maintain governance. Local social governance is a dynamic process, including nodes such as finding problems, proposing solutions and solving problems (Jianjun & Zhang, 2017).

2. The relationship between the confusion of governance situation and the identification conditions of governance situation: the logical starting point of the rigid governance in minority areas

The governance situation is the embodiment of the purpose and mode in the governance process. The identification works as the standard to examine the achievement of the purpose and the application mode. Confusing the two leads to norm deviation and deviant behaviour (Xiaoping & Wu, 2021). The development of minority areas is faced with a mixture of old and new, limited governance diversification, and special political tasks restricting market development. The recognition conditions need to be updated, and the traditional value of political achievements conflicts with modern identification objects. Education reform has long troubled the development of ethnic areas (Liu, 2021). The underdeveloped economy and higher education resources weaken the higher education system and make it hard to maintain teaching quality. At the same time, there is also an imbalance in the job market. Due to the prominent contradiction between supply and demand in the labor market, it is challenging for graduates to find a job (Yaofei & Hu, 2023). This not only affects the economic and social development of ethnic minority areas, but also restricts the improvement of governance capacity. Confusion of governance subject can also lead to deviation from rescue actions.

3. The difference between ambiguous problem solving and problem solving: the structural causes of the rigid governance in minority areas

The term of "solve problem" and "problem-solving" are two key words in basic mathematics teaching. The former emphasizes the ability of problem-solving, while the latter focuses on discovering problems. This conceptual can also be applied into local governance, where solve problem is passive governance and problem solving is active governance (Cheng & Li, 2022). Confusing the two can lead to the bias of governance structure. In minority areas, the fixed governance mode has fostered an inert mentality and limited the ability to discover and solve problems. Under such environment, problems such as higher education reform and employment imbalance in ethnic minority areas have become increasingly prominent (Liu, 2021). To improve economic development and social stability, it is necessary to jump out of the "comfort circle" of governance, strengthen the reform of higher education and solve the problem of employment imbalance, and at the same time innovate the governance mode to better adapt to the change (Yaofei & Hu, 2023).

4. Weakening the local characteristics and pertinence of the definition of governance problems: the interactive causes of rigid governance in minority areas

In the 2021 Central Conference on Ethnic Matters, the General Secretary stressed that it is necessary to formulate and implement differentiated regional supportive policies for different areas and ethnic groups in accordance with the realities with the principles of fairness and justice, targeting at specific regions, special problems and special matter (Xi, 2022). After a long process of development and integration, China's ethnic minorities have gradually formed a diversified ethnic structure (Ferdinand, 2019). Different ethnic groups and regions differ in governance models, development degree and cultural practices (Lei & Qin, 2023). Therefore, there are unique designs of governance in solving specific problems, such as the systems of "Zhailao", "Shipai" and "Tusi". Although these institutions are limited to specific regions, they are very effective for their own governance problems. Accordingly, local cultural practical and governance needs should be considered when solving problems. The long-standing philosophy of governance in China is from top-level to the grass-root, "govern"

means control (Lei & Qin, 2023). Although it has changed somewhat since the concept of “modernization of national governance system and governance capacity” was brought up, minority areas are still affected by traditional thinking and the idea of power concentration. Social governance in ethnic areas demonstrates the interaction between local features and targeted policies, while the rigid governance stems from the ambiguity of problem definition and the fracture of interaction process.

5. The potential risk of ignoring the linkage of policy promotion: the psychological cause of the rigid governance in minority areas

The rapid change of society in minority areas has brought development, but it has also exposed problems such as weak foundation and complex governance. Problems such as economic backwardness, lack of education, religious conflicts, ecological destruction coexist. The low-quality of education, insufficient education investment, high drop-out ratings make it hard to educate talents of their own, thus hindering social development (Sui, 2021). The unskilled personnel with weak professional quality in social governance leads to the connection between various fields in the process, which may increase the possibility of the outbreak of potential risks. The emergence of governance policy deviation or linkage effect greatly increases the outbreak rate of potential governance risks and leads to governance crises in many fields (Jianjun & Zhang, 2017). Therefore, the governing bodies of ethnic areas have to adopt rigid operations to ensure successful governance and avoid additional problems. This is the initial psychological default choice.

6. The internal relationship between fragmented administrative promotion and development interests: the one-way cause of rigid governance in minority areas

There is a clear causality between administrative promotion and development interests, which are manifestations and orientations in the local governance process (Samuel P, 2008). Administrative promotion is one of the vital measures of social governance in ethnic minority areas, aiming at upgrading the governance model and promoting social progress and economic development (Yunwu & Wang, 2015). Nonetheless, the deviations in social economy and people's rights and interest will happen when the government just promoting administration while ignoring macro interests and overall development orientation. The governing body should ensure that administrative promotion is closely related to development interests, and avoid separating the internal correlation with development interests, including politic, economy, culture and ecology. Additionally, the unfair distribution of higher education resources leads to the lagging development of higher education in minority areas, which cannot meet the needs of local economic and social development (Liu, 2021). The migration of talents to other places resulted in severe imbalance in the employment market. If the brain drain and employment problem in minority areas cannot be fundamentally solved for a long time, they can not only restrict the economic and social development of ethnic minority areas, but also affects the quality of life and the protection of rights and interests of local residents.

*The Recommendations of Lagging Economic Development of Minority Areas in China*

1. Transformation of Rigid Governance "Circuit Breaker - Construction" Mechanism in Minority Areas

The governance capacity of minority areas needs to be improved to cope with the risks and challenges of modern society (Yuan, 2023). We must enhance the modernization of

governance systems and capabilities to consolidate the foundation for social risk management. The main goal is to improve the public service system and increase efficiency (Lei & Qin, 2023). It is necessary to overcome the limitations of mismatch of power and responsibility, rigid governance environment and imperfect fault-tolerant mechanism, and transform the way of social governance. We will optimize institutional adjustments and establish a fault-tolerant and error-correcting mechanism. We will strengthen the reform of higher education and personnel training, attract talents, and promote the modernization of the governance system in minority areas (Zizhuang et al., 2011).

2. Eliminate the discrepancy between power and responsibility, improve the adjustment of community-level governance system

The key is to eliminate the discrepancy between power and responsibility and to improve the adjustment of grass-roots governance system (Guangqing & Cai, 2022). The traditional mode of local governance in ethnic minority areas is based on management instead of governance, which leads to powerless local governments, shying away from responsibilities and the difficulty of transforming rigid governance into resilient governance (Wu, 2014). Therefore, higher-level governments should streamline administration and delegate power, guide local governments to clarify the relationship between governance and promotion conditions, innovate governance systems, and realize the transformation of resilient governance. Under the guidance of the higher government, local governments should distinguish the way of governance and administrative responsibilities, absorb and delegate power, solve the problem of power and responsibility asymmetry, consolidate the economic foundation, and strengthen the chain of economic relations. Next, by establishing a governance system that matches power and responsibility, innovating a resilient governance model, we can provide a good social environment for minority areas (Shengliang & Shen, 2021).

3. Clarify the relationship between governance and its promotion conditions

The key points to clarify the relationship between governance and promotion conditions are as follows: in the traditional rigid governance model, governance determines the promotion conditions; Under the innovative and resilient governance model, conditional and standardized governance is promoted. The key to the transformation from rigid governance to resilient governance is to improve the governance capacity of grassroots governments and realize the active selection of governance promotion conditions (Hu & Wang, 2016). In order to clarify the relationship between governance and promotion conditions, it is necessary to improve the quality and ability of governance subjects, give full play to the role of grassroots party organizations, strengthen the participation of multiple subjects, and stimulate the public awareness of governance. Multiple participants involve multiple fields, and governance deviations can be corrected in a timely manner (Ferdinand, 2019).

4. Distinguish between different ways of governance and administrative duties

The key points in distinguishing the different approaches to governance and administrative responsibilities are as follows: In ethnic regions, local governments, after absorbing delegated powers, often mistakenly focus on weakening administrative forces due to the difficulty of governance innovation, and overlook the fact that modern resilient governance relies on administrative strength (Guangqing & Cai, 2022). To differentiate between governance and administrative duties, it's essential to clarify that governance is a continuous process involving multiple domains, while administrative responsibilities are one-time political actions. Since



local governance bodies resemble administrative bodies, their actions can easily mislead the public (Yunwu & Wang, 2015). To achieve the transformation towards modern resilient governance, it's necessary to comprehensively consider the involved domains, the duration of continuity, and the level of connection with the local population.

5. Strengthen coordination and interaction, improve the ecological environment at the community level

The optimization of governance ecological environment focuses on enhancing the collaborative interaction between different organizational departments and between the government and society, so as to reduce the sunk costs in social governance and provide a good governance environment (Daily, 2021). A favourable ecological environment represents that the soil of better regional development can boost the modernization and progress of political, economic, cultural, medical and old-age care (Lei & Qin, 2023). On the one hand, through the construction of multi-subject co-governance organizational structure, the relationship between multi-interest subjects is alleviated, local characteristics are highlighted and the consistency of governance is guaranteed to optimize the organizational environment. On the other hand, the betterment of governance environment should be completed by improving governance level and governance capacity, reducing governance costs, standardizing governance methods and explaining rules, replacing governance tools and upgrading governance technologies (Xiong, 2021).

6. Highlight local characteristics and ensure the continuity of governance

The key to highlight local characteristics and ensure the stability of governance is national autonomy. To achieve the modernization of local government autonomy, including improving regulations and governance policies, scientific division of government powers, responsibilities and interests, and promote the transformation of autonomous legislative procedures (Yunwu & Wang, 2015). Meanwhile, it is of great importance to consolidate local characteristics, establish the relationship between supporting and assisting the government, promote the vitality of social organizations, respect local folk customs, and encourage the development of ethnic communities (Shengliang & Shen, 2021). These measures will help optimize the organizational environment and ensure the continuous improvement of local governance in minority areas.

7. Standardize governance methods and interpretation rules

The transformation from "rigid" to "resilient" governance mode should ensure the effectiveness of standardized governance methods and interpretation rules. The first is to replace governance tools and upgrade governance technologies (Jianjun & Zhang, 2017). The overlapping governance tools include the transformation from coercive rule to incentive and guidance tools, and gradually form consensus through reward and punishment mechanisms and policy publicity to achieve local social equity and justice. The second is to upgrade governance technology, including the use of digital governance and online public opinion emergency systems, improve the ability of government staff, strengthen mutual communication between the government and the public, release government information timely, respond to social hot topics, and better serve the public (Zizhuang et al., 2011). Through these measures, local social fairness and justice can be achieved, and the scientific and effective governance is enhanced.

8. Promote incentives and constraints, build fault tolerance and error correction mechanism for grass-roots governance

In order to ensure the stability of the governance model, the focus should be placed on solving the concerns of the local governance subjects and establishing a fault tolerance and correction mechanism instead of just streamlining administration and delegating power (Wu, 2014). For one thing, we should unshackle the burdens of grassroots officials expand the scope of fault tolerance, encourage them to actively take actions and do not afraid of making mistakes. For another, a fair, effective and timely error correction mechanism should be established to reduce the handling of responsibility, so that the officials can get rid of the confusion of thinking, have the courage to take responsibility, and dare to govern. Only in this way can officials in minority areas erase concerns and establish governance thinking that dares to take responsibility and innovate (Yaofei & Hu, 2023).

### Conclusion

In conclusion, this article discusses all dimensions of lagging economic development of minority areas in China. Based on discussion, found that the promoting fault tolerance mechanism aims at eliminating the ideological concerns and stimulating active actions. The purpose of the accountability system is to prevent abuse of power. The two need to connect and support each other. When constructing the mechanism, the following aspects should be focused: clarify the implementation subject and set up the corresponding level and also encourage innovation and support practical work, set boundaries for fault tolerance; standardize the implementation process, follow democratic decision-making path, reject arbitrary accountability, blame the wrong one to hold responsibility, wrongful responsibility to maintain the authority and seriousness of the accountability system.

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