

# Solutions to prevent poverty-returning in the post-poverty era —— Social entrepreneurship research based on the perspectives of social capital, legitimacy and organizational driving force

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**Abstract.** As the phenomenon of China's out of poverty population falling into poverty again becomes more and more serious, how to fundamentally solve the problem of returning to poverty has received attention increasingly. Based on the perspectives of social capital, legitimacy and organizational driving force, this paper analyzes the high coupling of social entrepreneurship in solving the problem of poverty-returning, and the superiority of social enterprises over commercial enterprises, the governments and non-profit organizations under the issue of eliminating poverty-returning. It is concluded that social enterprise is the main body to solve the problem of returning to poverty, and social entrepreneurship is an effective means to solve the problem of returning to poverty.

**Keywords:** poverty-returning; social entrepreneurship; social enterprise; BOP market.

## 1. Introduction

Poverty-returning, also known as regenerative poverty, refers to the phenomenon of poverty-stricken population returning to poverty after they are lifted out of poverty, restricted by subjective and objective factors (Xiao Mingzheng, 2021). Over the past three decades or so, the Communist Party of China has always led the people of all ethnic groups throughout the country to work together and forge ahead on the road of eradicating poverty. Finally, on the occasion of the centenary of the founding of the Communist Party of China, we have won this arduous and all-round battle against poverty, and completed the set goal of poverty-returning for the rural poor under the current standards in 2020. Although the past achievements are gratifying, the zeroing of the poor population does not mean that the poverty problem has been completely solved, and the villagers above the poverty line do not mean that they are not at risk of falling into poverty again. Comprehensive poverty alleviation is a commitment made by the party and the state to the people, and there is no room for error and sloppiness, so it is urgent to solve the problem of returning to poverty. Since the closing stage of China's "decisive victory of comprehensive poverty alleviation", the problem of the out of poverty population returning to poverty has gradually attracted the attention of the government and academic circles.

## 2. Literature review

Returning to poverty is a universal phenomenon, and from the current academic research results, because the phenomenon of returning to poverty abroad is not as common and prominent as in China, there are not many detailed studies in this field by foreign scholars (Zhang Shiyao, 2020). The research of domestic scholars on this phenomenon mainly focuses on the causes of poverty-returning and the effective mechanism of preventing returning to poverty. The rise of social entrepreneurship offers a new way of thinking about the problem of returning to poverty. The existing research mainly focuses on the concept and theoretical framework of social entrepreneurship.

## **2.1. The status quo of returning to poverty**

### **2.1.1. Reasons for returning to poverty**

The current research has a variety of explanations for the causes of returning to poverty, which can be basically attributed to the internal factors and the external environmental factors of individuals who return to poverty.

#### **(1). Internal Causes**

After studying the internal factors of poverty-returning individuals, the main points presented are: First, that the human capital of poor households is low. The fragility of the economy in poor areas inevitably leads to the low level of income and human capital investment of poor households (Dong Chunyu, Luan Jingdong, Xie Biao, 2008), coupled with the rapid growth of the population in poor areas, which in turn leads to unreasonable population distribution, the quality of the population is not high (Liu Lingqi, 2003), and the low quality of the poverty-returning peasant households in the overall poor areas (Ling Guoshun, 2000; Xia Jing, 1999). The lack of individual ability to work has a negative impact on the realization of sustained poverty alleviation. Second, the cognitive concept of poor households is backward. According to the theory of welfare dependence, the idea of waiting for and begging for something from the party and the government, exists to a certain extent in some out of poverty population ( Gan Canye, 2021), the lack of endogenous power makes it possible for external assistance to return to poverty once it is terminated. Some poor people are accustomed to their long-term poverty, and there is a lazy psychology of "satisfied with the existing state of affairs and reluctant to move forward" (Xiao Mingzheng, 2021), too easy to meet the temporary results of poverty alleviation may lead to their advanced purchases and impulsive consumption behaviors (Hong Jiang, 1999), causing them to return to poverty after running out of resources that provided by the government.

#### **(2). External Causes**

After studying the external environmental factors of individuals returning to poverty, the main views presented are: First, the natural environment is fragile; The harsh natural environment in poor areas is an important external factor leading to poverty-returning (Zhuang Tianhui, 2011). The vast majority of the poor are located in the Dashishan region, alpine mountainous areas, border areas and rocky desertification areas, leading to a relatively scarce resources, therefore difficult to develop breeding industries, as well as consolidate poverty alleviation through industrial drive (Gancanye, 2021). Second, the infrastructure conditions are lagging behind. The fragile natural ecological environment in poor areas makes it difficult and costly to build infrastructure here, and the backwardness of infrastructure will directly affect the education level of poverty-alleviated households, the level of production technology and mental state (Hong Jiang, 1999), has a negative impact on the sustainable and long-term poverty alleviation. Third, returning to poverty due to illness; The backwardness of medical conditions in poor areas has a significant impact on increasing the likelihood of returning to poverty. Fourth, natural disasters have a huge impact on poor areas and poor people, not only directly exacerbating poverty, but also probably making rural families who have been lifted out of poverty and even become rich return to poverty (Zhang Chunyan, Peng Peng, 2013). Jin Xin, 2015).

### **2.1.2. Existing mechanisms to prevent return to poverty**

The current research on the exploration of effective mechanisms to prevent returning to poverty mainly includes administrative poverty alleviation and industrial poverty alleviation. First, from the perspective of administrative poverty alleviation, it includes a top-down administrative overall planning mechanism (Wang Yulei, 2020), a revealing mechanism to prevent returning to poverty, the establishment and improvement of an early warning and monitoring mechanism (Li Shiqiang, 2018), and a mechanism for multi-participation in the governance and so on. Second, from the perspective of industrial poverty alleviation, industrial poverty alleviation is an endogenous and fundamental poverty alleviation path, which uses the natural resources of poor areas for production and development, and pays attention to improving the self-accumulation and self-

development capabilities of poor areas and poor households The transition from "blood transfusion" poverty alleviation to "hematopoietic" poverty alleviation (Li Donghui, 2019).

Basing on previous studies, it is found that the analysis of the causes of returning to poverty has been sufficient in place, but the mechanism to prevent returning to poverty formulated for the above reasons is still insufficient. The existing research mainly focuses on solving the problem of poverty-returning through the administrative means of the government, and giving full play to the advantages of state-owned large and medium-sized enterprises, private enterprises, self-employed households and celebrities in terms of funds, projects, employment and technology, and strengthening the follow-up assistance to poverty alleviation areas. Even in recent years, China has put forward the concept of industrial poverty alleviation, but to a large extent, the key tasks in industrial poverty alleviation, such as: formulating industrial development plans in poverty alleviation areas, doing the continuity of industrial poverty alleviation plans, and deeply promoting the construction of characteristic industrial systems are still completed by the government. Unfortunately, although the work of poverty alleviation led by administrative means has progressed rapidly, in essence, the degree of exogenous assistance is still much higher than that of endogenous development, and it is difficult to achieve the goal of sustainable poverty alleviation. Therefore, how to deal with the balance between internal development and external assistance and find a sustainable way out of poverty is still an unresolved problem.

## **2.2. Research status of social entrepreneurship**

The concept of social entrepreneurship emerge in the 1990s, and as an entrepreneurial way to achieve social value creation by market-oriented means, it is an important emerging issue in the field of entrepreneurship, which has received more and more attention in recent years (Zahra et al., 2009; Gupta et al., 2020). In China, with the implementation of major national strategies such as comprehensive poverty alleviation and rural revitalization, as well as innovation-driven development strategies such as "mass entrepreneurship, mass innovation" and "Internet +", China's social entrepreneurship activities and strategic theories have also been widely used by scholars Follow. The current research mainly focuses on the conceptual analysis of social entrepreneurship and the theoretical framework of social entrepreneurship (Xu Hong, 2020).

### **2.2.1. Concepts related to social entrepreneurship**

#### **(1). Social entrepreneurship**

First, on social entrepreneurship, scholars have had a lot of discussions based on different internal logics, ranging from social mission (Dees, 1998), social value (Austin. et al., 2006), social welfare (Sheng Nan and Wang Chongming, 2008), and social needs (Zahra, 2009) and many other perspectives. On the basis of this elaboration of the concept of social entrepreneurship, scholars have also summarized the three basic attributes of social entrepreneurship, namely social goal orientation, innovation orientation and market orientation ( Liu Yuhuan and Jing Runtian, 2014).

#### **(2). Social enterprises**

Second, with regard to social enterprise, it is generally recognized by academia as a form of enterprise, and as a product of social entrepreneurship (Mair and Martí, 2006). However, due to the existence of different schools in the field, a unified conceptual definition has not yet been formed. Major research schools include: Earned Income School (De fourny and Nyssens, 2010), The Social Enterprise Spectrum School (Dees, 1998), The Social Innovation/Entrepreneur School, European Research Network on Social Enterprise (EMES), and The Zoo Metaphor (Young and Lecy, 2014). The research on social enterprises in China is widely used in The Earned Income School and the Social Enterprise Spectrum School, which defines social enterprises as a form of social organization that is different from traditional commercial enterprises and non-profit organizations, based on the identification, development and realization of social innovation and social opportunities, and relies on the system and culture with Chinese characteristics.

#### **(3). Social entrepreneurs**

Third, with regard to social entrepreneurs, Drayton (2002) summed it up: anyone who driven by social goals, combine forward-looking vision with practical problems, and use a business insight to adopt strategic identification driven by a high sense of social responsibility and mission, deals with and solves social problems can be called a social entrepreneur. Zahra et al. (2009) divided social entrepreneurs into three categories: social repairmen, social constructors, and social engineers, in view of the size of social problems. The core difference between a social entrepreneur and a business entrepreneur is the entrepreneurial mission.

### **2.2.2. Theoretical research framework**

In terms of the theoretical framework of social entrepreneurship, the existing literature is summarized, and the most widely used is the Goal-Framing Theory, which is divided into three goal frameworks, namely hedonistic goals, gain goals and normative goals (Lindenberg and Steg, 2007). First, the theoretical perspectives based on the framework of hedonic goals mainly include: Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Zaremohzzabieh et al., 2019), The Model of Social Entrepreneurial Intention Formation (MSEIF) (Mair and Noboa, 2006) and The Hockerts Extended Model (Hockerts, 2017), et al. Second, the theoretical perspectives based on the gain goals framework mainly include: Social Capital Theory (Wan Qianwen, 2019), Social Network Theory (Shaw and Carter, 2007), Resource Bricolage Theory (RBT) (Desa, 2012) and Upper Echelons Theory (Hambrick and Masson, 1984), et al. Third, the theoretical perspectives based on the normative goal framework mainly include: Institutional Theory (Yang Ying, 2020) and Institutional Logic Theory (Liu Yuhuan, 2020).

Through a review of the field of social entrepreneurship, we find that the existing research mainly focuses on the process and influencing factors of social entrepreneurship, and lacks attention to the results of entrepreneurship, that is, what specific social problems social entrepreneurship can ultimately solve. As far as China is concerned, in theory, domestic research mostly uses Western theoretical models, lack of integration with China's local cultural system. In practice, China's social entrepreneurship started late, the development history is short, and there are only a few truly influential social enterprises. These deficiencies have led to social entrepreneurship activities in China has not played the desired effect. When there is a triple failure of the government, the market and the public good, the social entrepreneurship activities in our country have not been able to make an important contribution to economic growth, employment and poverty eradication. Therefore, starting from the specific Chinese rural situation, based on the three perspectives of social capital theory, legitimacy and organizational driving force, this paper will analyze and verify in detail the adaptability of social entrepreneurship to solve the specific problem of returning to poverty, in order to make up for the lack of social entrepreneurship under China's local cultural system, and put forward the conclusion that social entrepreneurship can be effectively used to solve the problem of returning to poverty.

## **3. The main reasons for returning to poverty**

In recent years, many scholars have made theoretical explorations on the reasons why the people who have been lifted out of poverty have returned to poverty again, and this study will summarize the existing theoretical explanations according to the three perspectives of "nature", "economy" and "society".

### **3.1. Natural causes lead to poverty-returning**

#### **3.1.1. The harsh living environment**

As of November 2020, most of the 832 state-level poverty-stricken counties are distributed in the border areas and desert Gobi areas of China's central and western provinces, and most of them are concentrated in ethnic minority settlements and old revolutionary base areas. The living environment of the poor masses is extremely harsh and the landform is complex. Under such conditions, it is difficult for local residents to develop breeding and planting industry, coupled with the harsh terrain

conditions, it is more difficult for large-scale engineering equipment to build infrastructure here, so it is hard to achieve self-production and self-marketing by establishing an industrial chain with the outside world. After the people living in these areas have been lifted out of poverty, due to the lack of resources, inconvenient transportation, lagging infrastructure conditions and other factors, the objective conditions for sustainable poverty alleviation are insufficient, resulting in a great probability of returning to poverty.

### **3.1.2 Frequent occurrence of natural disasters**

China is an agricultural country, especially in the countryside and some typical poor areas, and the income of residents mainly depends on the sale of agricultural products. However, China is located in the Eurasian continental plate, the terrain of high west and low east and significant continental monsoon climate determine the frequency of catastrophic weather, coupled with the imperfect agricultural infrastructure in underdeveloped areas, as well as the lack of disaster prevention and response capabilities, crops with strong dependence on weather will have a great risk of yield reduction every year. In recent years, the floods in the southern rainy season have been severe, and farmers in some areas have suffered from hard work for a whole year, and finally faced the situation of no harvest.

In addition to causing damage to crops, natural disasters may also directly threaten the safety of people's lives. Taking 2019 as an example, various natural disasters throughout the year caused a total of 130 million people to be affected, 909 people died and disappeared, 126,000 houses collapsed, and direct economic losses of 327.09 billion yuan. If anyone in a poverty-alleviated household is injured or dies as a result of a natural disaster, the risk of returning to poverty is greatly increased.

### **3.2. Economic causes lead to poverty-returning**

A large part of the poverty alleviation of the population in China's poor areas relies on the industrial poverty alleviation strategy proposed by the state in recent years, that is, A process of long-term development of the region, according to the differences in the resource endowments owned by the poor areas, according to local conditions, the development of characteristic industries for poor areas, and relying on excellent management leaders to promote poverty. Although industrial poverty alleviation is a sustainable poverty alleviation method, it often has slow results and requires a certain degree of supporting industrial facilities to support it. However, as analyzed above, the economic conditions in some poor areas are underdeveloped, and with the reduction of exogenous funding after out of poverty, the problems of small industrial scale, short industrial chain, and weak interest linkage mechanism between industries in the region have been exposed. Coupled with the poor geographical conditions and inconvenient transportation in poor areas, the cost of product transportation is high, so that the industrial brand effect is not obvious, which is not enough to attract consumer markets. Such poverty alleviation masses can easily return to poverty again as the dividends of industrial poverty alleviation disappear.

### **3.3. Social causes lead to poverty-returning**

#### **3.3.1. The one-sidedness of the cognition of poverty alleviation cadres**

The Outline of China's Rural Poverty Alleviation and Development (2011-2020) clearly stipulates the criteria for poverty alleviation of poor households: In 2020, the state will comprehensively depict the living standards that the people who should be lifted out of poverty from the perspectives of economy, housing, medical care, education and ecology, which is also the general guideline for the all-round fight against poverty. However, some poverty alleviation cadres did not fully understand the content of the "Poverty Alleviation Program", and in order to pursue high performance in a short term, they made the mistake of relief poverty alleviation twenty years ago, and directly sent money or living security supplies to poor households in the process of poverty alleviation. Although this kind of poverty alleviation seems to be very effective in the short term, in the final analysis, it does not lead the villagers to find a way to get rich, and the villagers' poverty alleviation stamina is seriously

insufficient, and it will also promote the poor households' lazy thinking, laying hidden dangers for truly winning the battle against poverty.

### **3.3.2. The loss of outstanding village cadres is serious**

Since 2008, the Chinese government has decided to spend five years recruiting 100,000 fresh university graduates to take root in the countryside and serve as village officials, so as to lead the villagers out of poverty and achieve prosperity. These college students and village officials have knowledge and skills, and are a group of management talents with high comprehensive quality cultivated in the new era, and have played a role as "fresh troops" in the fight against poverty.

However, in recent years, the turnover rate of college student village officials has continued to rise, mainly for the following reasons: (1) The motivation for joining the job is not pure. The severe employment situation has forced some fresh graduates to choose to go to the countryside to become village officials, and this part of college students do not really like rural work, but blindly follow the trend of choice. (2) Strong frustration at work; Rural areas are a non-standardized social governance structure, in the rural social background, more like an "acquaintance" society, and as an external embedder of rural life, college student village officials are not easy to gain the trust of village cadres and villagers, resulting in a strong sense of frustration in work. (3) The environment for sustainable development of careers is not optimistic. For college student village officials, the state has only formulated a macro policy, and the subsequent supporting systems such as selection, management, and promotion have not yet been perfected, which has affected the career development of college student village officials. As a result, low career loyalty, current embarrassing status, and uncertainty about future careers have led to the loss of a large number of outstanding college student village officials. The lack of excellent and capable rural leaders has led to insufficient continuity and sustainability of rural poverty alleviation work, increasing the risk of returning to poverty.

### **3.3.3. Backward cognitive concepts and human capital levels of poverty-alleviated households**

As mentioned above, if poverty alleviation cadres only use relief poverty alleviation in the process of poverty alleviation, it is likely that the poverty alleviation households will not realize that poverty alleviation needs to be self-reliant, rather than all hope it is pinned on the government and the country. The ideas of "waiting, relying, asking" and "welfare dependence" make these poverty alleviation households not only not become more energetic after getting rid of poverty, but may also promote their profligate consumption behavior, which in turn will lead to a return to poverty.

There are also some poverty alleviation households, although the attitude is positive, there is the momentum of self-reliance to achieve prosperity, but limited by their low education level and poor self-development ability, and the lack of long-term development prospects, leading to a higher risk of returning to poverty.

### **3.3.4. The COVID-19 pandemic has seriously affected poor households**

2020 is the final year of China's decisive battle against poverty, and it is also the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the external impact of the epidemic has increased the possibility of returning to poverty. First of all, at the beginning of the epidemic, China, in line with the attitude of "being responsible to the people", did not hesitate to "press the pause button" of economic development to control the epidemic, which led to a long economic shutdown in China, reduced the level of consumption and production, made some enterprises stop work or went bankrupt, reduced the number of jobs available, and made some villagers who were able and willing to get rid of poverty by participating in work lose their jobs and increase the risk of returning to poverty. Secondly, the emergence of the epidemic added resistance to many industrial poverty alleviation projects and technical poverty alleviation projects, so that a large number of poor areas of supporting infrastructure construction progress stagnated, hindering the overall economic development of the region, and then affecting the economic income level of each relevant poor household, increasing the risk of returning to poverty. Finally, in the case of the national epidemic is basically controlled,

there will still be occasional cases of COVID-19 in various provinces and cities, in some areas with higher degree of prevention efforts, once there is a case in the region, full PCR testing and strict control policy will be carried out, which will greatly affect the local transportation and production efficiency, in particular, can cause a lot of trouble in some areas where tourism is the main source of income.

In summary, the reasons that may lead to poverty-returning in this article are summarized according to the "dimension-reason-performance" level, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Summary of the causes of poverty return

Problem dimensions	Specific reasons	Specific performance
exterior	nature	The living environment is harsh
		Natural disasters are frequent
	economy	Infrastructure conditions are lagging behind
	society	The one-sidedness of the cognition of poverty alleviation cadres
The COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected poor households		
The loss of outstanding village cadres is serious		
interior		The backward cognitive concepts and human capital level of the poverty-alleviated households

#### 4. Proposal of the research framework

The phenomenon of poverty-alleviated households returning to poverty has become a serious social problem facing people. Finding a solution about this problem is not only to create well-being for the people in poor areas, but also determining whether the beginning of China's second centenary goal is smooth. In the case of poor results of government subsidies and private voluntary relief, social entrepreneurship has become an innovative way to solve the problem of returning to poverty.

##### 4.1. The basic concept of social entrepreneurship

The concept of social entrepreneurship began to emerge in the 1990s, and Liu Zhiyang (2015) believes that the emergence of social entrepreneurship comes from the "triple failure" of the government, the market and the public welfare sector, and social entrepreneurs seek social opportunities that are not satisfied by commercial enterprises and traditional government and public welfare means. Social entrepreneurship, also known as "public welfare entrepreneurship", has been studied by many scholars but there is still no clear definition. This paper argues that social entrepreneurship is the process of entrepreneurs with a sense of social responsibility, guided by social mission, driven by economic, social and ecological triple interests, using the means of business operation to innovatively integrate multiple resources, and to meet unmet social needs by providing innovative products and services, and then continuously solve social problems. We can extract some key words from existing research to summarize social entrepreneurship: social, innovative, and economic.

The social nature of social entrepreneurship is reflected in the fact that its goal is not to pursue the maximization of economic benefits, but to take a social problem as the starting point, rely on the social mission and vision of the enterprise, create social value through the means of economic operation, and meet the unmet social needs. Social entrepreneurship is usually concerned with the vital interests of the bottom of the pyramid (BOP), because the BOP group is in an environment where there are almost no potentially profitable business opportunities, but it contains sufficient social opportunities, and only the form of social entrepreneurship is likely to involve this group, at the same

time, provide products and services for BOP groups, create and capture value, and meet the unmet needs of BOP groups, which is also matching the "social" nature of social entrepreneurship.

The innovation of social entrepreneurship is reflected in its use of an innovative means to solve existing social problems, Zahra (2008) believes that social entrepreneurship is based on social innovation, social innovation is different from general business innovation, the key lies in the different directionality of the two, business innovation aims to enlarge private wealth through the integration of resources and information, driven by economic interests. While social innovation is through technological change, as well as social resource integration and other means, to better enhance the ability to solve social problems, driven by social interests. The innovation of social entrepreneurship is also reflected in the empowerment of social entrepreneurs in the process of entrepreneurship for stakeholders outside the boundaries of the organization, especially for the masses in poor areas to carry out "psychological empowerment" and "ability empowerment", enhance their confidence and sense of self-efficacy, that greatly reduce the adverse impact of the lack of technology and transportation resources in poor areas, and better balance the relationship between endogenous development and exogenous subsidies.

The economics of social entrepreneurship are reflected in its use of commercial means to operate and obtain a certain amount of economic income to maintain the sustainable development of the organization. Different from the donation and volunteer service of non-profit organizations, social entrepreneurs must obtain a certain amount of economic income through profit-making activities to maintain the sustainability of the organization's own financial situation while giving priority to meeting social needs. But the acquisition of economic value is only an adjunct to the ultimate mission of social enterprise in order to achieve sustainability. The economic surplus obtained by social enterprises through commercial means, in addition to satisfying the self-sufficiency of the organization, should be used to achieve the social goals of the enterprise and solve social problems.

#### **4.2. Propose a framework from the perspective of triple failure**

Social entrepreneurship can alleviate the triple failure of the government, the market and the public welfare, and the reasons for the problem of returning to poverty can be summarized as such.

First of all, from the perspective of government failure, the history of poverty alleviation in China has been more than thirty years, from the initial donation poverty alleviation, to the later sales and employment poverty alleviation, and then to the current industrial and innovation poverty alleviation, it is undeniable that the government has continuously explored and improved on the battlefield of poverty alleviation, and has achieved outstanding results. However, the success of poverty alleviation is not equivalent to solving the problem of returning to poverty, and what the government can do is only to improve the economic level of poor areas in the short term, rather than continuously driving local poor households out of poverty permanently. Countless historical practices have proved that if only relying on the government's policy care, it will make it difficult to maintain a balance between exogenous assistance and endogenous development in poor areas, and then breed the erroneous ideology in poor households.

Second, from the perspective of market failure, poor areas generally belong to the market of bottom of the pyramid. The lack of business opportunities sought by entrepreneurs, coupled with the high input costs required to develop the BOP market, makes it difficult for most commercial enterprises to enter and drive employment in poor areas through the power of the commercial market. Even in recent years, some enterprises have actively responded to the national policy call of "comprehensive poverty alleviation and revitalization of the countryside", and are willing to give up some of the resources of enterprises for the BOP market, but to a large extent, the behavior of these enterprises is only a "cosmetic measure", in the final analysis, it is more like the scope of fulfilling corporate social responsibility. For example, Ctrip Group's plan to "drive overall rural tourism through high-end accommodation" is only an innovative attempt at business models and has not brought too many practical benefits to local villagers.

Finally, from the perspective of public welfare failure, non-profit organizations inherently lack sustainable sources of funding and naturally lack the possibility of taking root in poor areas for a long time. At the same time, the special nature of non-profit organizations determines that they cannot carry out for-profit business, which restricts them can only from solving the problem of returning to poverty through relief and donations, which is similar to the government's past relief poverty alleviation.

Therefore, the problem of returning to poverty appears in the triple failure of the government, the market and the public welfare, and in order to fundamentally solve the problem of returning to poverty, it is necessary to take the triple failure as the starting point and further dig into the reasons behind it. This paper argues that for market failures, it is possible to base on the theory of social capital, in which social entrepreneurs view poor households in the BOP market as collaborators, i.e., bridged social capital, and work with them together can improve the human capital level of poor households in the process and create the necessary conditions for sustained poverty alleviation. For government failure, can be based on the perspective of legitimacy, social enterprises need to obtain the recognition of the local government and people after entering the BOP market, in the process of building legitimacy, the values and influence of social enterprises will also react to the local poor households, help to improve their ideological concepts, and have great significance for the endogenous development of poor areas. For the failure of public welfare, it can Based on the perspective of organizational driving force, social enterprises are driven by the maximization of social, economic and ecological triple interests, and in the process of driving poor areas to continue to get rid of poverty, they will not drive the economy at the expense of ecological environment and social happiness, which will help alleviate the current situation of the poor external environment in poor areas and provide effective support for solving the problem of returning to poverty. Based on the above analysis, the research analysis framework in this paper is shown in Figure 1.

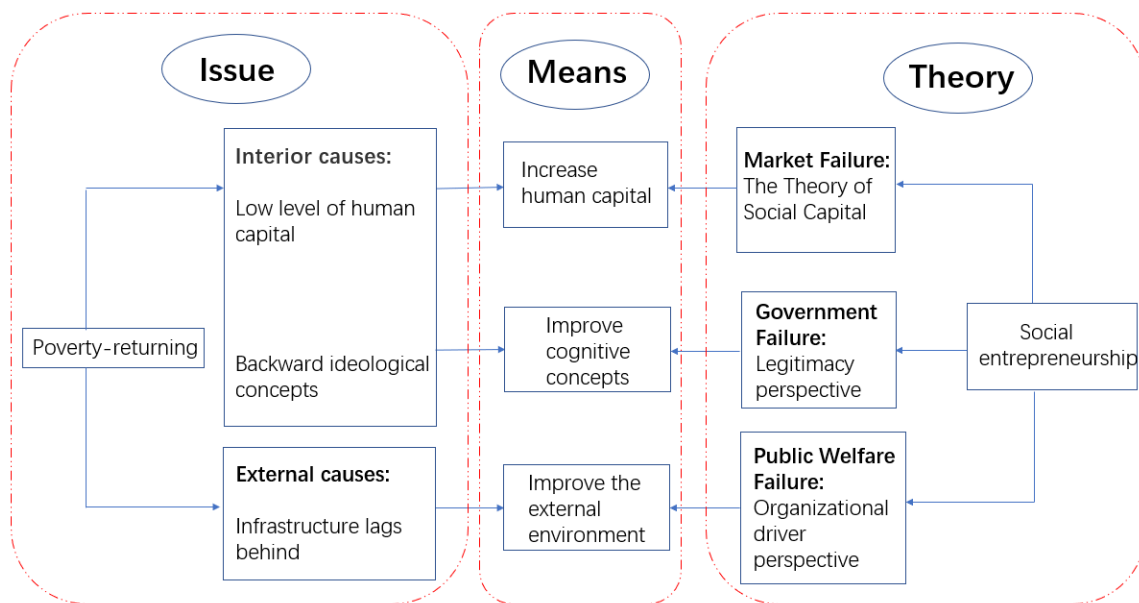


Figure 1. Research framework

## 5. Social entrepreneurship is an effective means to solve the problem of poverty-returning

There are four types of organizations that are thought to be able to participate in the markets of the bottom of the pyramid to solve the problem of poverty return: Social Enterprises, Commercial Enterprises, The Government, and Non-Profit Organizations. This study argues that social enterprise is the main body that solves the problem of returning to poverty, and social enterprise is essentially compatible with the solution of the problem of returning to poverty from the enterprise. Therefore,

there is a high coupling between the social entrepreneurship process with social enterprise as the main body and the solution to the problem of returning to poverty. From the perspective of social capital theory, legitimacy and organizational driving force, the following will show in detail the differences between social enterprises and other three kinds of organizations, analyze how the process of social entrepreneurship compensates for the triple failure, and discuss why social entrepreneurship is an effective way to solve the problem of returning to poverty.

### **5.1. Market failure: Differences in the sources of human capital**

Considering from the current situation in China's rural areas, the core root cause of the problem of poverty alleviation households returning to poverty is still the imbalance between the endogenous motivation of poor households and exogenous assistance, the government helps too much, and the villagers themselves do too little. The traditional relief and blood transfusion poverty alleviation models are now unable to truly mobilize the enthusiasm of the poor and other social entities, which has led to the limited effectiveness of government-led anti-poverty projects. It is difficult to significantly improve the sustained productivity of social agents, including the poor. In order to solve the problem of returning to poverty from the root cause, it is not only by the efforts of the government and poverty alleviation cadres that can be achieved, but also by effectively improving the "hematopoietic ability" of poor areas and helping the poor masses to enhance their ability and ideology.

The primary task in raising the level of endogenous development in a given region is to raise the level of human capital of the people. In general, in a resource allocation scenario dominated by market forces, entrepreneurs will keenly identify some potential business opportunities in the region and complete the investment in there in order to achieve the influx of talents in the region, in this case of continuous input of external talents and funds, the local economic environment and people's living conditions will be greatly improved, and ultimately the overall quality of the people in the region will be improved. However, for the special situation of China's poor rural areas, objectively the lack of business opportunities has made the vast majority of poor areas lack of entrepreneurs' investment, which is also the market failure phenomenon in the poor areas we mentioned above. Social entrepreneurship can go some way to mitigating the impact of market failures on the general low level of human capital in poor areas. According to the theory of social capital, social capital refers to resources embedded in the social network in which individuals and individuals live, and can be classified as Bonding Social Capital (SCBO) and Binding Social Capital (SCBI) two dimensions. The theory of social capital has been shown to have a key contribution to solving the difficult issue of poverty in the BOP market (Xu Hong, 2021). In the process of social entrepreneurship, Binding Social Capital can play an important role. Binding Social Capital is the weakly connected individual who can provide valuable labor, information, and skills to each other. Driven by the mission of social enterprise, social entrepreneurs not only see the poor people in the BOP market as consumers of social enterprises, but also see them as a Binding Social Capital embedded in the middle of the network of social relations, and establish an equal partnership with BOP Group members, that is the social entrepreneur becomes a mentor, leading people in poor areas to learn and work together, emphasizing the power of collective action in social entrepreneurship. In this way, the process of social entrepreneurship can alleviate the drawbacks of market failure and improve the overall human capital level of people in poor areas, that is, to achieve "capacity empowerment". The diversity of an organization's human capital sources can reflect the extent to which an organization is deeply rooted in poor areas and helps poor people achieve "empowerment of capabilities."

The source of human capital for social enterprises is mainly composed of enterprise employees and local people, of which local people occupy a more important position in terms of numbers and value creation. Social entrepreneurs, unlike the business entrepreneur, are mostly made up of village leaders, urban returnees, or professionals in certain fields. Therefore, social entrepreneurs have their own unique feelings for the countryside, and also have a relatively solid rural social network. They

like to not only regard the BOP group as "consumers" in the process of social entrepreneurship, but are more willing to regard them as their "collaborators" and actively drive local villagers to invest in social entrepreneurship. Social enterprises hiring more local people, which can not only help organization itself to obtain benefits in the process of social entrepreneurship, but also contribute to the sustainable poverty alleviation in poor areas. First of all, from the perspective of enterprises, driving local people to participate in social entrepreneurship can be mobilized efficiently with the help of their strong local social relations. The local people that social enterprises most like to attract are rural teachers, doctors or cadres of village committees. These potential social entrepreneurship collaborators have a strong social advantage in the local area, and they can accurately identify what needs to be met most in the region, effectively driving the development of social entrepreneurship in the region. Secondly, from the perspective of the people in poor areas, active participation in the entrepreneurial process of social enterprises helps to enhance their human capital and sustainable ability to alleviate poverty. Social entrepreneurs will impart knowledge and guidance to potential collaborators in order to make them have a better role-perception and effective in their work. Take China's famous "Taobao Village" as an example, the knowledge imparting mainly includes some basic content such as explaining e-commerce knowledge, communication methods and marketing skills. The guidance training mainly includes practical training such as analyzing consumer psychology, answering consumer questions and receiving and delivering orders. These training experiences will give individuals in poor areas the opportunity to access the real entrepreneurial process, enhance their own human capital, and have a positive effect on sustainable poverty alleviation.

The source of human capital for commercial enterprises in solving the problem of returning to poverty is mainly composed of the original employees of the enterprise. For the masses in poor areas, commercial enterprises are external embedders in the full sense. Commercial enterprises rush into the BOP market driven by economic interests, and improperly providing products and services may increase the unnecessary desire of BOP groups, at the same time, the human capital in commercial enterprises almost not comes from the masses in poor areas, that is, the business dominated by commercial enterprises Entrepreneurship cannot drive the active participation of the people in poor areas, and does not enhance the local ability to sustain poverty alleviation and the "hematopoietic ability" of economic development, but it can improve the local economic level in the short term, making the masses dependent on higher levels of products and services, which may make the originally harmonious but fragile BOP market more unstable.

The sources of human capital for government departments in solving the problem of returning to poverty are mainly the country's poverty alleviation cadres and government officials. Such a "project-based" poverty alleviation mode composed entirely of exogenous human capital has the following problems: First, the sustainability is insufficient. First, there is insufficient sustainability. After the completion of a government-led project, the economic promotion of the region will also end, which is lacking of the long-term effect of fundamentally changing the thinking and ability of the people in the region. Second, the fairness of social redistribution is insufficient. The more resources the government invests in the BOP market to solve the problem of poverty return, it means that the more resources are transferred in the traditional market, and the quality of life of people in the traditional market will decline as a result, so the government that rely too much on the traditional market for human capital need to pay more attention to the fairness of social redistribution while transferring payments.

The source of human capital for non-profits organization in addressing the problem of returning to poverty is mainly composed of volunteers. Similar to the problems faced by government departments, NPOs should also consider the problems of insufficient capacity to sustain poverty alleviation and equitable distribution. In addition, since there is no local mass base in NPOs, nor the authority and legitimacy of commercial enterprises and government departments, the work of NPOs in poor areas may not be carried out smoothly, and this frustrated psychology will damage the enthusiasm of members of NPOs.

## 5.2. Government Failure: A Legitimacy Perspective

In order to achieve the goal of sustainable poverty alleviation in the region, in addition to improving the human capital level of the local people, it is also particularly important to improve backward ideological concepts. In recent years, in order to achieve the goal of comprehensive poverty alleviation on schedule, all levels local governments have adopted considerable assistance policies and relief for poor areas, but from the current point of view, the frequent occurrence of the phenomenon of returning to poverty means that the government's exogenous administrative assistance cannot play a long-term poverty alleviation effect, and in a sense, there is a situation of government failure. The reason for this is that the backward ideology of poor households still exists. If we cannot fundamentally change the "welfare dependence" psychology of poor households, it will be difficult to achieve real sustainable poverty alleviation. As an external embedder of a local society, in order to obtain economic benefits in this market and realize the corporate vision, social enterprises must be recognized and accepted by the local people and organizations, and this recognition and acceptance cannot only be superficial, but a sense of identity from intrinsic values to explicit organizational systems. The above-mentioned behavior that enterprises by making a community accept the logic of the enterprise, and then gaining the general approval of members of the community, referred by Scholars as the construction of legitimacy. An organization with legitimacy is often seen as a desirable and appropriate presence within a particular social system (Suchman, 1995).

The process of social entrepreneurship can be divided into three parts: Identification, Development and Realization of social entrepreneurship opportunities, and the local mass base in social enterprises plays an important role in the "legitimacy construction" of social entrepreneurship opportunities. Legitimacy comes from cultural consistency, but social enterprises are faced with a paradox, on the one hand, the purpose of social enterprise is to stimulate existing social values, which trigger progressive and beneficial social change, on the other hand, if they want to effectively change society, they need to work hard to make the work they do resonate with existing social values. How to work with entrenched social values and make them part of creating social change is a puzzle that plagues many social enterprises. In the specific Chinese rural scenario, social entrepreneurs hope that through the process of social entrepreneurship, they can drive people in poor areas to improve their capabilities, achieve intra-regional hematopoietic capacity, and then sustainably get rid of poverty. But at the same time, in order to gain legitimacy, social enterprises also need to guide social change in a way that is acceptable to people in poor areas under the guidance of their current values. Although this is a very esoteric problem, at least in the context of China's rural society based on "acquaintance relationships", social enterprises with a high mass base are indeed easier to obtain the trust and support of villagers than commercial enterprises, and actively involving stakeholders and cross-departmental cooperation will not only help to improve the competitive advantage of the organization, but also enhance the legitimacy of the organization, facilitate the promotion of social entrepreneurship and the solution of the problem of returning to poverty. More importantly, while social enterprises build legitimacy in the BOP community, the mission, values, entrepreneurial spirit of social entrepreneurs, and ideas of the company are also subtly reacting to every member of the BOP community. As mentioned above, the role of social entrepreneurs in a BOP market is more like a mentor. This entrepreneurial model of high-frequency contact with poor people will greatly improve the original lazy thinking of poor households. Poor individuals have the opportunity to learn work skills up close as social enterprise collaborators and experience first-hand what it feels like to be self-sufficient, which helps them to eradicate backward ideas from within. In this process, social enterprises have played a role similar to the government's mobilization and propaganda, to a certain extent, to make up for the government's failure to solve the problem of returning to poverty.

## 5.3. Public welfare failure: Difference in organizational driving force

The main body of social entrepreneurship is social enterprises, and the driving force of social enterprises is the mixed drive of economic, social and ecological interests. Social enterprises start from social problems, provide products or services to the market, create social, economic and

environmental triple values, and then guide social change. In the mind of social entrepreneurs, there are always three bottom lines of social, economic and environmental, and the relationship between the three is mutually reinforcing and coordinated development, and it is not possible to achieve another or two values at the expense of one or two values. According to the analysis of the causes of poverty return in the third part of this paper, it is not difficult to find that in today's Rural Situation in China, the return to poverty is mainly caused by natural, economic and social reasons, and the three value bottom lines advocated by social enterprises are consistent with the three major causes of returning to poverty. The mission and vision of an organization demonstrates their value orientation, unlike commercial enterprises whose sole goal is to pursue economic interests, the mission of social enterprises is to solve social problems, meet social needs, and adhere to the triple bottom line. Such an intrinsic driving force constrains the development direction of social enterprises, greatly reducing the possibility of mission drift. Therefore, social enterprises will not create economic value at the expense of breaking the ecological environment like some commercial enterprises, and will not drive the employment of young and middle-aged people by turning the village into a "village for the elderly", because the ecological status of an area reflects the ecological value of the region, the happiness of villagers reflects the social value of the region, and the ecological and social value must not blindly give way to the economic value. The social entrepreneurship activities carried out in poor areas are basically light industry or handicraft industry, rather than heavy industry with serious environmental pollution, such as some countryside have changed to a place where raw material production and preliminary processing for some big-name luxury goods in recent years. Such social entrepreneurship activities can not only bring a more stable job to the local poor, but also will not further worsen the external environment in poor areas. At the same time, if the local development potential is better, under the dual guidance of long-term economic interests and social enterprise mission, social entrepreneurship activities are likely to bring endogenous sustainable development opportunities to poor areas, such as social enterprises increasing their continuous investment in the region, thereby improving the local infrastructure situation and achieving the goal of maximizing social, economic and ecological triple value. It is the mutual synergy of these three values that can make a region sustainable and healthy development in the long run, otherwise even if the regional economic level is improved in the short term, it is probably that it will return to poverty again due to natural and social reasons in the near future. Therefore, the organizational drivers of social enterprises are highly correlated with the core solution to the problem of returning to poverty.

The driving force of commercial enterprises is driven by economic interests. Commercial enterprises advocate economic benefits by providing products and services to meet market demand, and are accountable to stakeholders. While issues such as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) are also considered in the minds of business entrepreneurs, the ultimate goal of social responsibility is not In order to create social value, it is an external decision made under the guidance of corporate citizenship theory that is conducive to the enterprise to obtain greater benefits in the long run, and social value is only a subsidiary product of the decision. There have been commercial enterprises trying to enter the BOP market, but because most of the opportunities in this market have the following characteristics, commercial enterprises are not able to solve the problem of returning to poverty (Liu Zhiyang, 2018). First, the market threshold is low, almost all manufacturers have the ability to enter the market, close to the perfectly competitive market assumed in Western economics, and then the merchants can only earn income below or equal to the average market in competition. Second, the uncertainty of potential demand in the market is high, the third part of this study has mentioned that most of the natural disasters in poor areas are frequent, which means that the demand behind it also has a large suddenness and volatility, and if you want to meet the needs of the market in a time manner, you will need a highly responsive supply chain, which undoubtedly reduces the efficiency of the supply chain and increases the cost. Third, the development cost is high, the traffic conditions in rural areas are poor, the infrastructure conditions are lagging behind, and the merchants need to embed the market from the outside, which inevitably needs to invest a lot of fixed costs. Fourth, the demand is low. The ability of individuals in poor areas to pay is obviously far inferior to

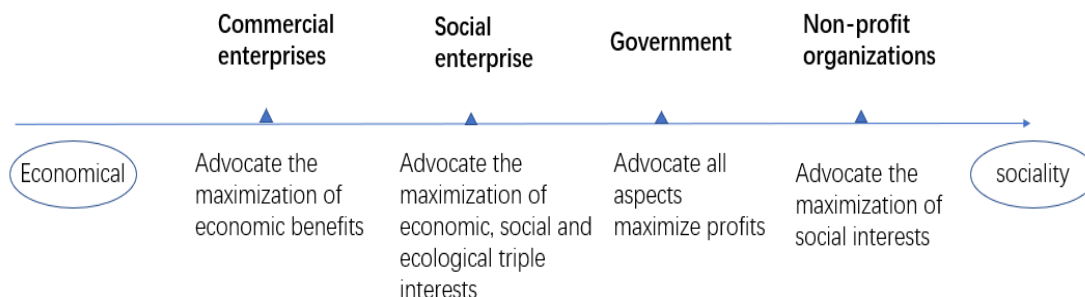
that of urban individuals, and low demand indirectly increases the fixed costs of enterprises. Therefore, commercial enterprises with economic interests as the sole driving force conflict with the cost of solving the social problem of returning to poverty in terms of their core internal driving force, and are not suitable as the main body to solve the problem of returning to poverty.

It is difficult for the government to summarize a specific driving force, because the government must consider all aspects from the perspectives of economy, people's livelihood, ecology, innovation, and social governance. The problem of returning to poverty is a major economic issue at present, and it is also a major livelihood issue, so the government has a strong motivation to solve the problem. But after all, the government, as a state administrative organ, can only take administrative measures to solve the problem, which leads to the government to give a large number of exogenous subsidies to poor areas, but does not effectively improve the endogenous development of local residents. Therefore, the government has a strong driving force to solve the problem of returning to poverty, and is a very powerful leadership and propaganda role, but it is not suitable as an executive body that is on the front line of the problem of returning to poverty.

The driving force behind non-profit organizations is social philanthropy (Liu Zhiyang, 2015). Non-profit organizations advocate giving back to society, using methods such as relief and volunteer service to improve the overall happiness of society. Similar to the government, the intrinsic driving force of NPOs determines that this kind of organization has a strong motivation to solve the current problem of returning to poverty, but due to the special nature of the organization, the NPO adopts pure voluntary help, which is only the process of "give", rather than "teach", so cannot solve the problem of returning to poverty for a long time.

In summary, we can put the internal drive forces of the four types of organization on a spectrum for a more intuitive comparison, as shown in Figure 2. It can be seen that the organizational driving force of the "economy" of commercial enterprises is essentially in conflict with the "sociality" of solving the problem of returning to poverty, and the irreconcilable contradiction of "maximizing economic interests" and "pursuing the maximization of social interests" determines the inevitability of commercial enterprises' failure to solve the problem of returning to poverty, even if commercial enterprises can effectively drive poverty alleviation in the short term, but because they ignore ecological value and social value, in the long run, not only can not solve the problem of returning to poverty sustainably, but also possible to disrupt the harmony of the already fragile BOP group (Wan Qianwen, 2019). However, social enterprises, the government and non-profit organizations all take into account social interests from the perspective of internal driving forces, and have a high degree of match with the essence of effectively solving the social problem of returning to poverty. The difference is that non-profit organizations only consider the maximization of social interests, generally provide social services directly, especially for the needy to provide free or low-paid services, and non-profit organizations generally come from government funding, corporate or personal donations, so it is often difficult to achieve financial balance through the organization's own operations, which intrinsically determines that it is difficult for non-profit organizations to contribute to the solution of the problem of returning to poverty for a long time. The government have to consider far more aspects than the other three kinds of organizations, the government to pursue the all-round maximization of interests, it is impossible to take root in poor areas like social enterprises and non-profit organizations to drive poverty alleviation from scratch, so the government often adopts "project-based" development according to existing social problems, lack of sustainable social networks, it is difficult to fundamentally solve social problems. In addition, the government can generally use administrative means, such as introducing policies and perfect systems, and administrative means cannot really drive the economic development of poor areas. The internal driving force of the government and its own characteristics determine that it can only be a "commander" to solve the problem of poverty-returning, and cannot become a practitioner on the front line. Social enterprises consider the balance of economic, social and ecological triple values in terms of internal driving force, not only to promote the economic development of poor areas, but also to consider the ecological sustainable construction of the region, while using commercial operation

means to maintain the profitability of the organization itself, while ensuring that the organization can take root in the poor area for a long time, it can also improve the level of the local external environment to a certain extent, effectively avoiding the shortcomings of government departments and non-profit organizations in solving the problem of returning to poverty.



**Figure 2.** Organizational driving force spectrum

In summary, the following criteria need to be taken into account to measure whether an organization can effectively address the problem of poverty-returning:

- (1) Driving force: The organization cannot regard profit-seeking as the only driving force
- (2) Organizational sustainability: The organization need to find a balance between "realizing social needs" and "maintaining the needs of the organization itself"
- (3) The source of human capital of the organization: The organization must have the ability to drive the local people to rely on themselves and reach sustained poverty alleviation.
- (4) Mass base: The organization has a certain local mass base in order to conform to the development of local social work.

Based on these four characteristics and the specific analysis of the four organizations above, the summary are as follows as Table 2.

**Table 2.** Comparison of the characteristics of the four organizations

	Social enterprises	Commercial enterprises	Government	Non-profit organizations
Driving force	A hybrid drive of economic, social and ecological interests	Pursue the maximization of economic benefits	Maximize the all-round interests of economy, people's livelihood, ecology, innovation, and social governance	Social philanthropy
Organizational sustainability	The use of commercial means to operate, to maintain the organization's own financial balance	The organization is based on profitability	Extremely high.	The organization lack a source of income and generally rely on government and private donates
Sources of human capital	A large proportion of the collaborators come from poor areas. The	A lower proportion of collaborators are from poor areas. Organizations	No collaborators come from poor areas. The organization adopts a "project-	Almost no collaborators come from poor areas. Organizations that use methods such

	organization actively cooperates with local individuals, effectively improving the human capital of local people	use a "project-based" poverty alleviation model with a low level of contact with local populations	based" poverty alleviation model and the method of allocating poverty alleviation cadres to motivate the people in poor areas	as aid and volunteering to combat poverty can only solve superficial problems and cannot fundamentally change the status quo of the local people
Mass base	The managers of the organization are mostly returnees or village leaders, and there are also a large number of local people within the organization	The organization has less contact and interaction with the local people, but the organization has a certain authority and legitimacy	The organization has less contact and interaction with the local people, but the organization has a certain authority and legitimacy	The organization has a certain degree of contact and interaction with the local people, but the organization lacks authority

It is not difficult to find that in solving the problem of returning to poverty, social enterprises have a higher degree of matching than the other three organizations, whether from the perspective of the internal driving force of the organization or the perspective of driving poor households to get rid of poverty sustainable, which determines the characteristics of social enterprises being more deeply rooted in poor areas than other organizations. Therefore, this study believes that the main body to solve the problem of returning to poverty is social enterprises, and the effective means to solve the problem of returning to poverty is social entrepreneurship.

## 6. Discussion and outlook

The Nineteenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China has clearly defined the three-step goal of realizing the strategy of rural revitalization, and rural revitalization is an important strategic measure in the new era. Now that China has completed the set goal of comprehensive poverty alleviation, it is imperative to solve the problem of poverty alleviation households returning to poverty as soon as possible. Countless practical experiences in poverty alleviation have shown that traditional administrative assistance methods can no longer meet the requirements of rural development, and only when a social problem is turned into a profitable business opportunity can it be fundamentally solved.

Social entrepreneurship has become an emerging and effective means to solve the problem of returning to poverty. On the basis of previous research, this study first sorts out the causes of the phenomenon of returning to poverty in China, and summarizes them according to the internal and external dimensions and the perspective of "nature, economy and society". Secondly, according to the analysis of the causes of the problem of returning to poverty, it is found that the phenomenon of returning to poverty is a problem that appears on the triple failure of the market, the government and public welfare. Finally, According to the nature and characteristics of social entrepreneurship, a detailed analysis is carried out from the perspective of social capital, legality and organizational driving force, and finally according to the four measurement indicators of driving force, organizational continuity, human capital source and mass foundation, the conclusion that social

enterprises are superior to other three types of organizations in solving the problem of returning to poverty is concluded, which confirms that social entrepreneurship and solving the problem of returning to poverty have a high degree of coupling, that is Social entrepreneurship is an effective means to solve the problem of returning to poverty.

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