Agricultural & Rural Studies

Article

A Study on Startup Policy Toolkit of Off-Farm Workers Returning Hometown in China

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Abstract: The study aims to explore how policies affect the behavior of rural off-farm workers on whether to return hometown to start their own businesses in China. In the trend of "Internet + e-commerce" economy, the supply-oriented policy tools need to be optimized to adapt to economic development, especially the aspects of the entrepreneurial technology and entrepreneurial information, which provide support for off-farm worker entrepreneurs. The formulation of policy tools is scientific and reasonable, but the distribution in each stage of entrepreneurship is slightly unbalanced, especially in the pre-startup stage, policy tools are rarely used, and the importance of this stage has not been paid enough attention. Overall, the policy design for off-farm workers returning hometown to start a business is reasonable, but the details need to be further adjusted. The results of the Policy Modelling Consistency (PMC) policy index evaluation model show that the performance of the overall entrepreneurship policy from 2015 to 2020 is good or excellent, but the characteristics of the primary and secondary indicators show that the use of various policy tools needs to be further strengthened, and the use of policy tools such as government procurement, public-private cooperation, intellectual property rights and overseas institutions should be increased. Based on the above conclusions, it is suggested to further promote the design and foresight of the policies for off-farm workers, to strengthen the use of capacity building policy tools from the pre-startup stage of entrepreneurship, and to carry out the overall evaluation of relevant policies.

Keywords: off-farm workers returning hometown; policy tool; China's rural revitalization policy; PMC model

Citation: Gao, X.; Zhang, R. A Study on Startup Policy Toolkit of Off-Farm Workers Returning Hometown in China. *Agricultural & Rural Studies*, 2023, *1*, 0014. *https://doi.org/10.59978/ ar01030014*

Received: 21 May 2023
Revised: 24 June 2023
Accepted: 11 August 2023
Published: 21 November 2023

1. Literature Review

The Strategic Plan for Rural Revitalization (2018–2022) proposed that the rural area should seek its development mainly through the path of independent entrepreneurship, which provides policy support for Chinese off-farm workers to return to their hometown and start businesses. In 2021, the Central Document No. 1 proposed the launch of rural revitalization, and the Report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China proposed the macro strategy of rural revitalization, stating that the rural area is in the critical stage of "great change and great transformation", and the rural industry should develop vigorously. To this end, the central and local governments have issued a number of documents related to the return of migrant workers to their hometown for entrepreneurship, including the three-year action plan proposed by the General Office of the State Council in 2015, and the optimization of the business environment proposed by the National Development and Reform Commission in 2020. Under the premise of a favorable macroeconomic environment, it can be predicted that more and more entrepreneurial talents will emerge in the wave of returning hometown for entrepreneurship, and off-farm workers will become the backbone and driving force of the rural revitalization strategy (Li & Lin, 2023). The government provides subsidies, tax incentives, land support, and bank loans to off-farm workers returning to their hometown for entrepreneurship, which constantly increases their enthusiasm to return to their hometown to start businesses (Wang & lu, 2022). Therefore, rural off-farm workers welcome a good opportunity to return to their hometown to start businesses. Various policies enable them to catch the "express train" of rural development and quickly receive entrepreneurial support in terms of capital, technology, resources, education and training, which is conducive to the establishment of new enterprises.

At present, the most urgent needs of rural development and revitalization are finance, talent

and technology, which are the biggest bottlenecks of rural revitalization (Bai & Liu, 2019). Attracting off-farm workers to return home is one of the ways to solve the problem of rural talent shortage. Yan and Wang (2010) analyze the role of off-farm workers returning hometown to start businesses in narrowing the urban-rural gap, building a new countryside, combining entrepreneurship with urbanization, and promoting the process of economic urbanization. The process of off-farm workers returning hometown to start a business is a process of knowledge and skills to return home and also a talent revitalization process of promoting rural industry revitalization. Naminse and Zhuang (2018) consider entrepreneurship as an endogenous factor of rural development, and Darmadji (2016) believes that farmers' entrepreneurship will bring about a new way of rural development, and relevant policies will be conducive to turning farmers into entrepreneurs. Off-farm workers who return to their hometown to start businesses can enhance their information gathering advantages through e-commerce and other forms, transfer the experience of urban work and life to rural areas, reduce the cost of entrepreneurship (Nieves et al., 2016), and expand their market- relationship networks (Stam, 2010). In fact, the return of off-farm workers to their hometown is conducive to the aggregation of various resources and plays a leading role in entrepreneurship.

The driving factors and the main obstacles for off-farm workers returning hometown are the key points on which entrepreneurship policy should focus. Entrepreneurship policy can better achieve policy goals by 'actively' guiding off-farm workers to return home to start a business. Li (2020), in her survey of 204 off-farm workers, found that the driving factors for migrant workers to return home included personal achievement motivation, demonstration role of other entrepreneurs', and so on. Luo (2012) argues that the entrepreneurship of off-farm workers returning hometown is influenced by individual characteristics, family resource endowment, employment pressure, macro policies, and is a reasonable choice under the combined effect of multiple factors. Chen et al. (2022) proposed that the entrepreneurship of off-farm workers returning hometown is influenced by both social and economic factors, the former including employment and residential welfare and social integration, and the latter including entrepreneurial environment, capital endowment and family responsibility. Su and Guo (2017) empirically demonstrate the impact of the Belt and Road policy on the entrepreneurship of off-farm workers returning to their hometown in the northwest, while the inhibiting factors include the entrepreneurial environment, access to market information, and their own risk tolerance. Shen (2018) finds that the off-farm workers are mainly the result of triple effects, including 'professional reputation promotion effect', 'family happiness enhancement effect', and 'rural revitalization direction effect'. In view of this, taking quantitative policy analysis as a method and observing whether the policy content helps to solve the practical problems of off-farm workers should be a realistic way of thinking about the effectiveness of national policies.

There are several ways of categorizing entrepreneurship policies. For example, Lundström and Stevenson (2005) divided entrepreneurship policies into areas such as entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurship promotion, entrepreneurship financing, and entrepreneurship support through specific research on 10 countries. Henrekson and Stenkula (2010) categorized entrepreneurship policies into entry controls, capital constraints, labor markets, social guarantees, commercialization of research and development, and tax incentives. In the current entrepreneurship policy research, scholars at home and abroad mostly use content analysis method for text analysis and establish an index system through the econometric model. Content analysis of policy texts provides an effective way for researchers to examine policy content, policy instruments, and policy goal (Gao & Tisdell, 2004). Content analysis method includes a variety of analysis tools, such as the policy tool analysis method, the policy semantic network analysis method, and building policy evaluation model. Taking the policy tool analysis method as an example, policy tools refer to the methods, measures and means that the government can take to achieve its policy goals (Huang et al., 2018), and policy tool theory is based on the 'structural theory' of public policy, which views policies as consisting of 'elements' or 'modules'. Therefore, the analysis of policy tools can be used as one of the paths of policy research to reveal the internal structure of entrepreneurship policies (policy tools). Regarding the classification of policy tools, Lowi (1964) divides them into regulatory and non-regulatory instruments; Rothwell and Zegveld (1985) divide them into supply-side, environmental-side, and demand-side tools; Stigler (1971) divides policy instruments into 2 categories: enabling and inducing. Susan Borrás and Edquist (2013) divide innovation policy tools into 3 categories: mandatory tools, economic transfers, and "soft" tools. Scholars use the above research tools to analyze entrepreneurship policy. For example, from the perspective of policy text analysis, Gao and Peng (2019) conduct policy tool mining on 172 entrepreneurship policies of ministries and commissions and show the evolution trend of hot topics and policy characteristics. From the perspective of econometric model analysis, Dye (1995) proposed three principles for policy models: "should be simple and simplify political life", "should identify the most important aspects of the policy area", and "should be consistent with reality". And the PMC index model is widely used. For example, Zhang and Ying (2018) construct 10 unitary indicators and 44 binary indicators for

the 10 entrepreneurship and innovation policies in 2017 with PMC index model and complete the quantitative evaluation with a curve chart. Sansone et al. (2020) analyzed the impact of three different types of incubators (commercial, hybrid, and social) on enterprises, indicating that policymakers can cultivate social incubators. Nugroho et al. (2015) developed a model framework to compare public data openness policies in different countries through a literature review and case studies, comparing policies in the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and other countries.

Based on the above analysis, this paper constructs a two-dimensional framework of "policy tool-entrepreneurship process", quantifies the policy of off-farm workers returning hometown, explores the path of policy optimization, finds the 'correction' and 'incorrection' of the policy in multidimensional quantitative analysis, and provides the decision-making reference for perfecting and predicting the policy of off-farm workers returning hometown to start entrepreneurship.

2. Analysis Framework and Research Design

2.1. Data Sources

This paper selects eight policies issued by the Central Government, Ministries and Commissions on off-farm workers returning to their hometown to start businesses, including three basic policies issued by the State Council and the General Office (P1, P2, P6) and five targeted policies issued by ministries and commissions at two levels (P3, P4, P5, P7, P8). The policies are searched and sorted through the website of www.pkulaw.cn and the policy column of the official websites of all the ministries and commissions, and the search period is of almost five years. The collection principles are as follows: (1) in addition to the 'Opinions of the State Council on Further Improving Employment and Entrepreneurship in the New Situation' in 2015 as the root policy, there is a category of off-farm workers returning home to start a business in the policy text, other policies are all the text titles, that is, the policy text containing the keywords of "off-farm workers returning home to start a business". (2) The policy selection period is from 2015, when the State Council issued the policy on off-farm workers returning to their hometown to start their own business and conducted a five-year pilot project, to 2020, when the national pilot project on supporting off-farm workers and other people returning to their hometown to start their own business in connection with new urbanization ends, and the policy texts are selected at the central level from 2015 to 2020. The eight selected policy texts are typical and representative, and the textual analysis can reflect the top-level national policy design ideas on off-farm workers returning hometown.

Table 1. A summary of representative policies on off-farm workers returning hometown to start a business.

Serial No.	Policy Code	Policy Names	Issuing Authority	Date of Issue
1	P1	Opinions of the State Council on Further Improving Employment and Entrepreneurship in the New Situation	the State Council	2015
2	P2	Opinions of the General Office of the State Council on Supporting the Returning of Migrant Workers and Other Personnel to Their Hometown and Start Businesses	General Office of the State Council	2015
3	P3	The Notice on Implementing the Pilot Work of Supporting Migrant Workers and Other Personnel Returning Home and Undertaking Entrepreneurship on the base of New Urbanization	National Development and Reform Commission	2015
4	P4	The Notice on Implementing the Action Plan of Developing Agricultural and Rural Resources to Support Migrant Workers and Other Personnel to Return Home and Start a Business	Six ministries including Ministry of Agriculture	2015
5	P5	Notice on Implementing a Five–year Action Plan for the Training of Migrant Workers and Other Personnel Returning Home for Entrepreneurship (2016–2020)	Five ministries including Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security	2016
6	P6	Opinions of the General Office of the State Council on Supporting the Entrepreneurship and Innovation of People Returning Home and to the Countryside to Promote the Integrated Development of Rural Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Industries	General Office of the State Council	2016
7	P7	Opinions on Further Promoting the Work of Returning Home and Starting Businesses	Three ministries including Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security	2019
8	P8	Opinions on Promoting the High–quality Development of Returning Home and to the Countryside for Entrepreneurship	19 departments including National Development and Reform Commission	2020

2.2. Construction of Two-Dimensional Analysis Framework

Policy tools are the 'modules' that make up the entrepreneurship policy, and the content of the policy is a composite system composed of a number of policy tools (Huang, 2016). Therefore, the internal composition of the policy, the proportion of policy tools, the main purpose of the policy and the effectiveness of the policy can be analyzed by decomposing the entrepreneurship policy into policy tools. In the 1950s, Hood proposed the research method of policy tools in Tools of Government. As a component of the policy framework and research tools, policy tools have been widely used in the field of public policy research since then. Since Kirschen (1964) proposed 64 types of policy tools, scholars began to divide policy tools into different categories. For example, Stigler (1971) and Barro (1978) divided policy tools into two types of authorization and induction. The three types of policy tools classified by Rothwell and Zegveld (1985): Supply type, demand type and environmental type, are the most widely used in policy analysis.

The introduction of policy tools into entrepreneurship research by domestic scholars has begun to take shape. Ding et al. (2020) conducts a quantitative analysis on entrepreneurship policies from 1994 to 2017, and explores the policy differences in various regions using demand type, supply type and environment type tools; Yang et al. (2019) conducts a research on the policies of the State Council and 16 ministries to support innovation and entrepreneurship development policies, and finds four basic characteristics, such as the use of policy tools and thematic relevance characteristics. Some scholars have also conducted quantitative research on the farmer entrepreneurship policies. Li and Li (2019) conduct a quantitative analysis on the policy text of farmers' employment and entrepreneurship in 2004–2008 and find out the problems of structural distribution imbalance of policy tools and insufficient departmental coordination. In view of this, taking 8 policies of off-farm workers' return home for entrepreneurship as an example, the paper sets up an analysis framework of policy tool-entrepreneurship process to observe whether the policy tools are reasonably applied in the process of off-farm workers' return hometown for entrepreneurship.

2.2.1. X-dimension: The Perspective of Policy Tools

Based on the three types of supply, demand and environmental policy tools classified by Roy Rothwell and Walter Zegveld and combined with the two-level classification of entrepreneurship policy tools by Bai and Zhang (2016), a second type of analytical tool for the policy tool dimension is merged.

2.2.2. Y-dimension: The Perspective of Entrepreneurial Process

Lundström and Stevenson (2005) divide the entrepreneurial process targeted by entrepreneurial policy into three stages: pre-start, start-up and early-start. Yi and Xia (2008) divide them into two stages: new venture formation and new venture growth. At the stage of new venture formation, the system of entrepreneurial instruments mainly consists of six items: tax policy, incubation service, entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurship skill training, entrepreneurship financing projects, and electronic registration. At the stage of enterprise growth, the system of entrepreneurial policy tool mainly includes venture capital, private fund, growth financing, innovation fund and capital market. Bai et al. (2013) divide it into three supporting stages: seed stage and start-up stage (transformation stage of project achievements to industrialization), development stage and mature stage (rapid development stage of enterprises after industrialization of achievements), and the whole stage. In each stage of entrepreneurship, the key supportive policies needed are different, and the number and frequency of policy instruments used in each stage are also different. Therefore, the entrepreneurial process perspective is introduced into the policy research framework, and the entrepreneurial process of off-farm workers is divided into four stages: pre-start, start-up, development and the whole stage. Together, a two-dimensional analytical framework with X-dimensional entrepreneurship policy tools is built.

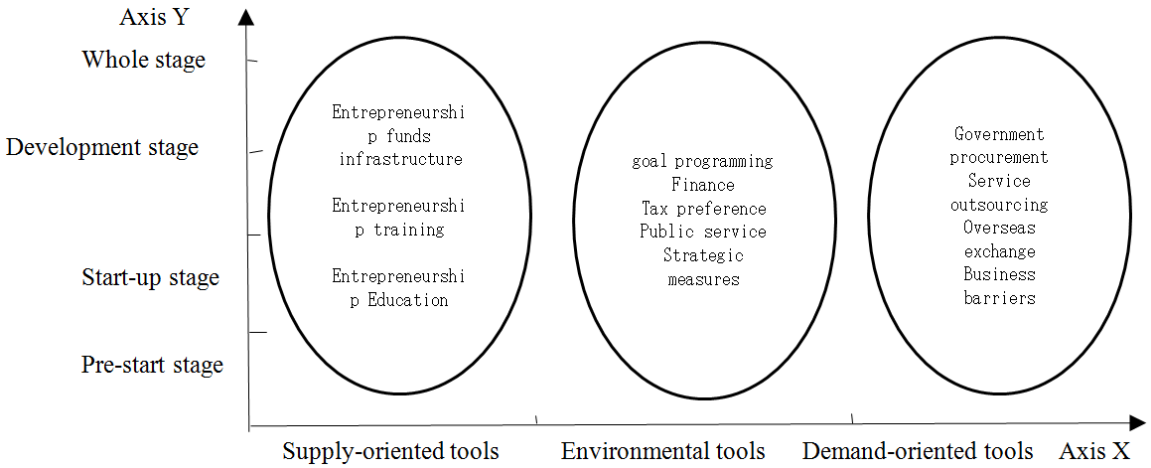

Figure 1. Two-dimensional framework of policy analysis.

2.3. Research Methods

Following the framework of two-dimensional analysis, 118 policy clauses from 8 policy texts are coded. The basic principle of coding is to read the policy clauses one by one, and to consider the order of the policy text as a Level 1 code number; the relevant clauses of the policy texts are considered as basic policy units, and secondary numbering is carried out according to the order. The coder is a research group of three experts who perform independent coding to ensure the coding reliability. The coding results were then reviewed by two industry experts to ensure the reliability of the conclusions. The coding results are processed as '1' (yes) and '0' (no), the coding consistency coefficient of the analysis category is calculated as $\alpha = \left[\sum_{i=1}^{118} \alpha_i\right] / 118$, and the overall consistency coefficient β = (α) is calculated as $\beta = \left(\alpha_1 + \alpha_2 + \ldots + \alpha_n\right) / n$.

After two rounds of adjustment, each round is adjusted according to the coding method with the highest consistency coefficient. The overall consistency coefficient of the final coding is up to 85.1%, the coding reliability passes the test (> 80%), and the coding table of the policy text (Table 2) is produced.

Table 2. Coding table of the content analysis of policy text for off-farm workers returning hometown for entrepreneurship.

Serial No.	Policy Document No.	Policy Text Analysis Unit	Code
1	NDRC[2015]2811	1 To carry out the pilot work of supporting migrant workers and other people to return home for entrepreneurship on the base of new urbanization is to thoroughly implement the national plan of new urbanization... it is an important practice to promote mass entrepreneurship and innovation and is of a very important and positive significance in terms of promoting the construction of new urbanization and supporting the returning home for entrepreneurship.	1–1
		2 (1) To create an environment, stimulate vitality and adhere to market orientation	1–2
		(2) To optimize the layout, start businesses in clusters, adopt measures suiting local conditions, and deeply develop characteristic and advantageous resources	1–3
	…	…	…
2	Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security [2019]129	1 (1) To implement entrepreneurship supporting policies. Individuals returning home for entrepreneurship can enjoy the same entrepreneurship support policies as local workers in terms of tax reduction and exemption, site arrangements and so on…	2–1
		1 (2) To implement the policy of entrepreneurship guarantee loan, and promote the financing mode of 'government + bank + insurance' …	2–2
…	…	…	…
8	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Areas [2015]8	7 (2) To strengthen the implementation of responsibilities... included in the work assessment, to specify the time schedule, formulate detailed implementation rules, implement the division of responsibilities, and ensure work effectiveness.	8–23
		7(3) To strengthen publicity and guidance... constantly stimulate the enthusiasm, initiative and inherent potential of returning home to start a business.	8–24

3. To Analyze the Policy of Off-Farm Workers' Returning Hometown for Entrepreneurship

3.1. Overall Characteristics of the Policy

3.1.1. The Emphasis of Policy Texts Issued by Governments at all Levels Is of Dissimilarity and Similarity

This paper processes and visualizes the policy text using Rostcm6 software: extracting high-frequency characteristic words, observing the high-frequency words in the policy text of off-farm workers' returning hometown for entrepreneurship, eliminating the characteristics of the policy itself, such as the words of 'entrepreneurship', 'returning hometown', 'off-farm workers', and so on, and revealing the policy concerns. The results of the analysis show that the concerns of the State Council are slightly different from those of the ministries and commissions. The former pays more attention to the services and resources provided for returning migrant workers; while the latter pays more attention to the training and employment opportunities provided for off-farm workers. However, according to the overall observation and analysis results, the policy concerns of off-farm workers returning their hometown for entrepreneurship include three aspects: (1) the support provided by the government and society, including services and training. These services include platform services, government services, in-depth services provided by market-oriented intermediary services, financial services, etc. For example, the 'Opinions on Promoting the High-Quality Development of Returning Home or to the Countryside for Entrepreneurship' (NDRC Employment [2020] No. 104) proposes "Internet plus government services", and encourages areas at or above country level to establish a "One-stop service on the Internet", and encourages areas at or above the county levels to establish a "one-stop" comprehensive service platform for returning hometown for entrepreneurship, in order to create a favorable environment for development. The training includes an entrepreneurship training plan, entrepreneurial ability training, etc., and vigorously cultivates high-quality labor talents to meet the needs of the returning hometown. (2) Promoting entrepreneurship and innovation in agriculture. The "Opinions on Supporting the Workers Returning Home for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, and Promoting the Integrated Development of Rural Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Industries" proposes to give priority to the development of characteristic agriculture and facility agriculture by virtue of new technologies, new ideas and new channels; "Opinions on Further Promoting the Workers of Returning Home for Entrepreneurship' (HRSSD [2019] No. 129) encourages "rural talents", "local experts" and "rural entrepreneurs" to attract skilled talents to return hometown for entrepreneurship and innovation; supports innovation in terms of technology, management and business model with policies. (3) Returning to hometown to start a business is to achieve the ultimate goal of development, such as the integrated development of primary,

secondary and tertiary industries.

3.1.2. The Emphasis of the Policy Is Characterized by Phases

In 2015, the State Council issued the 'Opinions on Further Improving Employment and Entrepreneurship in the New Situation' (SC [2015] No. 23), proposing to support rural migrant workers to return home and start businesses, and advocating integration with county economic development and the integration of primary, secondary and tertiary industries. The above idea is the policy embodiment of General Secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee Xi Jinping's thoughts on rural development and rural revitalization. In the five-year period from 2015 to 2020, the policy focus has shifted from specific transactional training and services for returning off-farm workers to development issues.

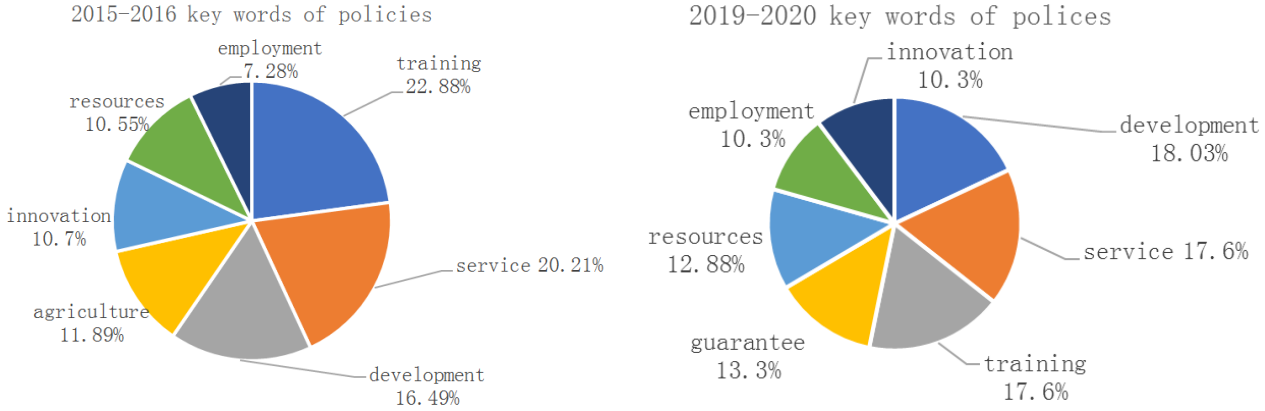

Figure 2. Policy emphasis by phases for off-farm workers returning hometown for entrepreneurship.

3.2. Two-Dimensional Framework Analysis of the Policy for Off-Farm Workers Returning Hometown for Entrepreneurship

3.2.1. Policy Analysis of Off-Farm Workers Returning Hometown for Entrepreneurship from the Perspective of Policy Tools

The policy texts are coded one by one to form a coding table (Table 3) using Roy Rothwell & Walter Zegveld's policy tool analysis framework. The frequency of use of the policy tools were categorized as environmental type (61.1%), supply type (35.7%) and demand type (3.2%). Previous studies have shown that the usage frequency characteristics of off-farm workers' returning hometown for entrepreneurship are in line with those of national entrepreneurship policy tools. This indicates that the state is more inclined to create a good business atmosphere and use policy tools such as regulations and public services to provide more convenience for small and micro enterprises in terms of entrepreneurship policy design. According to the World Bank's Business Environment Report and GEM's Global Entrepreneurship Observation Report 2017/2018, both show the progress and improvement of China's business environment and the effectiveness of the national entrepreneurship policy. The use of supply-side policy instruments plays a direct role in promoting the entrepreneurial activities of off-farm workers returning to their hometown. It provides support directly from the factor market through entrepreneurial technology support, entrepreneurial education and training, entrepreneurial capital support, etc. In China, 35.7% of the policy instruments for off-farm workers returning to hometown for entrepreneurship are supply-oriented.

Table 3. Roy Rothwell & Walter Zegveld coding table of policy tools.

Policy Tools	Policy Unit Code	Frequency	Proportion (%)
Supply-oriented	1–7, 1–11, 2–3, 2–4, 2–9, 2–13, 3–2, 3–3, 3–6, 4–12, 4–13, 4–14, 4–15, 4–16, …, 8–14, 8–15, 8–16, 8–17, 8–18, 8–19, 8–20, 8–21	45	35.7%
Demand-oriented	2–5, 2–10, 3–4, 4–2	4	3.2%
Environment-oriented	1–1, 1–2, 1–3, 1–4, 1–5, 1–6, 1–8, 1–9, 1–10, 1–12, 1–13, 2–1, 2–2, 2–5, 2–6, 2–7, …6–1, 6–2, 6–3, 6–7, 6–9, 6–10, 6–12, 6–13, 6–14, 6–16, 6–19, 7–1, 8–2, 8–3, 8–4, 8–7, 8–8, 8–9, 8–10, 8–11, 8–14, 8–20, 8–21, 8–22, 8–23, 8–24	77	61.1%
Total		126	100%

The first-level policy instrument of dimension X is then divided into two-level policy instruments. It is found that the construction of entrepreneurship infrastructure (40%) and entrepreneurship training (35.6%) account for a relatively high proportion of supply-oriented policy tools. For off-farm workers returning hometown, entrepreneurship technology and entrepreneurship information (13.3%), venture capital investment (6.7%) and entrepreneurship education (4.4%) account for less. This suggests that the off-farm workers are still in the early stages of entrepreneurship. On the whole, the state provides stronger policies to facilitate entrepreneurship in terms of perfecting infrastructure and providing off-farm workers with knowledge and skills training. The key point of the policy is to solve the urgent problems in the initial stage of off-farm workers' entrepreneurship. Among the environmental policy instruments, the improving of public services (39.7%) and the providing financial support (23.1%) have a relatively high share. For off-farm workers returning hometown, target planning (15.4%), strategic measures (11.5%), talent and other regulations (6.5%), and preferential taxation (3.8%) have a lower share. This shows that the government must first provide various services and support measures to create a good business environment for off-farm workers to start their businesses. Second, the government should solve the financial problems of off-farm workers through subsidies, loans and other financial support. In a word, the overall analysis of secondary policy tools shows that the policy of off-farm workers' returning hometown for entrepreneurship in China at present has more of a "help on the horse" element. In the future, the introduction of policy tools into the prospective idea of policy, such as the introduction of entrepreneurship technology, the introduction of talent and other long-term production rates, and the introduction of regulating market behavior should be carried out more. At the same time, more attention should be paid to demand-oriented policy instruments to achieve more policy goals by using diversified policy instruments such as public procurement and foreign exchange.

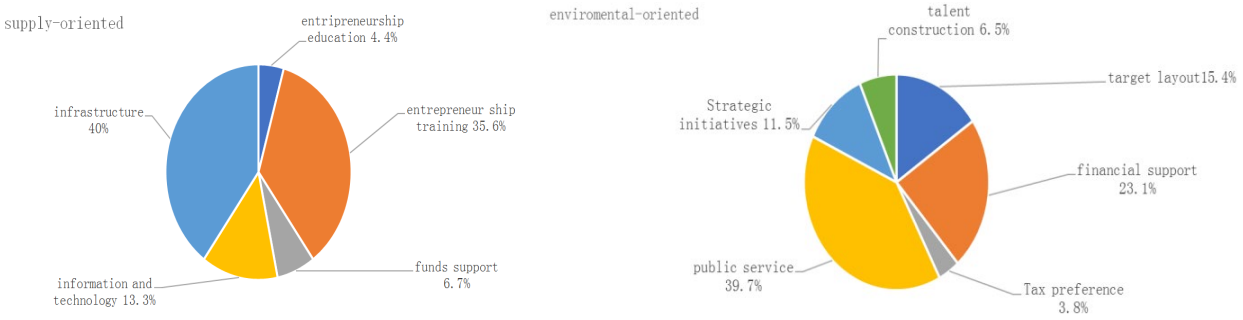

Figure 3. Analysis results of supply-oriented and environment-oriented policy tools.

3.2.2. Y-dimension: Policy Analysis of Off-Farm Workers Returning Hometown for Entrepreneurship from the Perspective of Entrepreneurship Process

As found in the coding analysis of the policy for off-farm workers returning hometown for entrepreneurship, almost half of the policies for off-farm workers returning hometown for entrepreneurship cover the whole stage (48.5%), followed by the coverage of the development stage (22.3%) and of the start-up stage (21.5%). This shows that the policy coverage is broad, not only considering the initial stage of off-farm workers, but also considering the support that should be given to the development of the entrepreneurial enterprises, and there are also policy provisions dealing with the issues of equity of listed enterprises and listed financing of rural off-farm workers. There are also many policy provisions that focus on the development and start-up phases of entrepreneurial enterprises. Policy support and benefits are available to address the particular difficulties faced by entrepreneurs during these two periods. It is worth noting that the policy distribution focused on the pre-start stage of off-farm workers returning hometown for entrepreneurship accounts for a relatively small proportion (7.7%), the pre-start belongs to the early stage of entrepreneurship, which is the process when off-farm workers conceive the awareness of returning hometown for entrepreneurship and consciously search for resources. Special attention should be paid to the policy design at this stage. On the one hand, the policy needs to solve the universal problems of this stage, on the other hand, it is also necessary to make off-farm workers fully aware of the difficulties and challenges they will face after starting their business, make them have a clear and complete understanding of their returning hometown for entrepreneurship, and avoid blindness.

Table 4. Policy code table of entrepreneurship process dimension.

Entrepreneurial Cycle	Policy Unit Code	Frequency	Proportion (%)
Pre-start Stage	1–1, 3–1, 4–2, 4–6, 4–7, 4–17, 5–2, 5–3, 6–1, 8–4,	10	7.7%
Initial Stage	1–6, 1–8, 1–9, 1–10, 1–11, 2–1, 2–2, 2–3, 2–4, 2–5, 2–6, 2–7, 2–9, …, 4–5, 4–8, 4–12, 4–13, 4–14, 4–17, 4–21, 5–10, 6–16,	28	21.5%
Development Stage	1–3, 1–4, 1–12, 1–13, 2–7, 2–9, 2–11, 2–12, 2–14, 3–4, 3–5, 3–8, 3–9, …, 4–14, 4–15, 4–16, 4–18, 4–19, 6–2, 6–10, 6–17,	29	22.3%
Whole Stage	1–2, 1–5, 1–7, 2–8, 2–10, 2–13, 3–6, 3–7, 3–11, 4–1, 4–3, 4–20, 4–21, 4–22, 4–23, 4–24, 5–1, 5–4, 5–5, 5–6, 5–7, 5–8, 5–9, 5–11, 5–12, 5–13, …, 8–12, 8–13, 8–14, 8–15, 8–16, 8–17, 8–18, 8–19, 8–20, 8–21, 8–22, 8–23, 8–24,	63	48.5%
Total		130	100%

3.2.3. Two-Dimensional Framework Analysis of Policies for Off-Farm Workers Returning Hometown for Entrepreneurship

The Analysis at X and Y Dimensions: the Characteristics of Using Policy Tools in Each Entrepreneurial Stage. The cross-analysis of Roy Rothwell & Walter Zegveld's policy tool analysis framework and the entrepreneurial process yields the result that the frequency of use of environmental policy tools is highest in each stage of off-farm workers' returning hometown for entrepreneurship, indicating that the state creates a favorable environment for returning off-farm workers through financial, tax incentives, public services and other policy tools, thus indirectly promoting off-farm workers' entrepreneurial activities. It is worth noting that the supply-oriented policy instruments are used less used by off-farm workers in the pre-start phase (0.8%), i.e., there is a lack of policy support in terms of entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurial skills training, entrepreneurial capital support and entrepreneurial technology support. However, the above-mentioned policy support is very necessary in the start-up phase and the lack of relevant policies is not conducive to entrepreneurial start-up activities. In addition, special attention should be paid to pre-start training and related education of entrepreneurs, which will not only provide them with skills and knowledge capital, but also help them to broaden their entrepreneurial horizons. And it will help the entrepreneurial activity to go well afterwards.

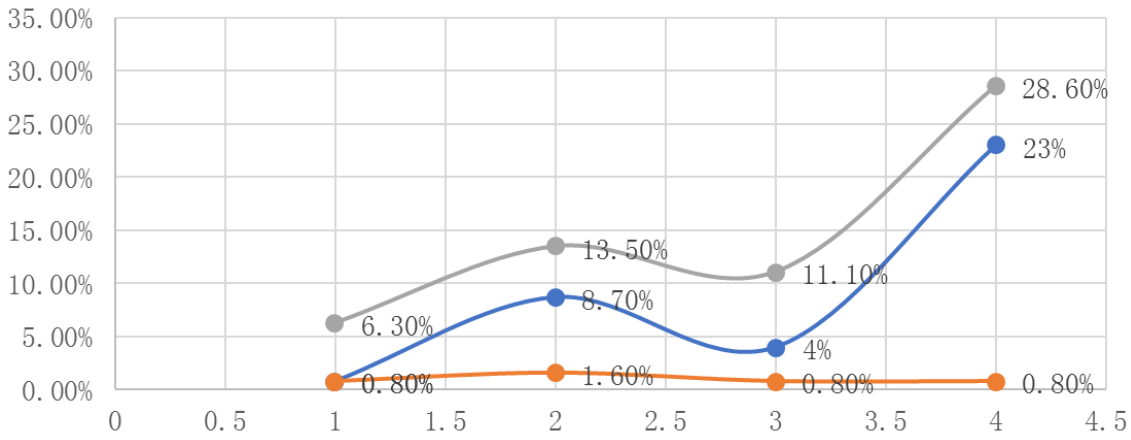

Figure 4. Policy tools two-dimensional distribution statistics of entrepreneurship process.

4. The PMC Model of Policies for Rural Off-Farm Workers Returning Hometown

Based on Ruiz Estrada (2011) policy evaluation study, the Policy Modelling Consistency (PMC) index model is used to measure the excellence of the migrant worker return to hometown entrepreneurship policy. The advantage of the PMC method is that there is no limit to the number of secondary variables and the weights of the variables are the same, thus avoiding subjective weighting (Ruiz Estrada et al., 2007). The rural off-farm worker policies are evaluated using the PMC index model, which includes 9 primary index and 35 secondary indicators. According to the requirements of the theoretical mobility hypothesis, the estimation of the secondary indicators follows the binary [0,1] setting (i.e., 0,1 assignment), and 35 secondary indicators are evaluated for each policy as follows:

Table 5. PMC index for rural off-farm worker policies.

X_1(Nature of Policy)	$X_{1:1}$ Forecast (prospect prediction); $X_{1:2}$ supervision (supervision and management of returning home for entrepreneurship process); $X_{1:3}$ suggestions (Development Countermeasures); $X_{1:4}$ guidance (development-oriented goal); $X_{1:5}$ support (support for returning home and starting a business)
X_2(Policy Prescription)	$X_{2:1}$ long term (policy prescription over 10 years); $X_{2:2}$ Phase 2 (policy prescription: 6–10 years); $X_{2:3}$ short term policy (1–5 years)
X_3(Policy Level)	$X_{3:1}$ The State Council (issuing agency); $X_{3:2}$ ministries and commissions of the State Council (issuing agency)
X_4(Policy Function)	$X_{4:1}$ Government procurement (political procurement); $X_{4:2}$ guidance (guidance); $X_{4:3}$ institutional constraints (regulatory constraints); $X_{4:4}$ technological innovation (technological innovation)
X_5(Action Level)	$X_{5:1}$ industry (industry aspect); $X_{5:2}$ support platform (platform aspect); $X_{5:3}$ enterprises (enterprise aspect); $X_{5:4}$ universities and scientific research institutes (research aspect); $X_{5:5}$ maker group (individual aspect)
X_6(Policy Tools)	$X_{6:1}$ technology R&D (technology, R&D Research); $X_{6:2}$ talent team (talent, training and education); $X_{6:3}$ basic resources (infrastructure, etc.); $X_{6:4}$ cultural atmosphere (cultural atmosphere); $X_{6:5}$ government procurement (government procurement); $X_{6:6}$ overseas institutions (overseas contacts); $X_{6:7}$ finance and taxation (economy and finance); $X_{6:8}$ public private cooperation (cooperation and sharing); $X_{6:9}$ intellectual property (intellectual property)
X_7(Policy Operability)	$X_{7:1}$ specific implementation scheme (specific steps); $X_{7:2}$ supporting policies (element allocation)
X_8(Policy Evaluation)	$X_{8:1}$ sufficient basis (basis for policy formulation); $X_{8:2}$ clear objectives (clear policy objectives); $X_{8:3}$ program science (program science)
X_9(Incentive Constraint)	$X_{9:1}$ supervision and assessment (industry supervision); $X_{9:2}$ legal protection (legal protection)

According to the formula (1)–(3), the PMC index can be calculated as:

$$X \sim N\,[0,\,1] \tag{1}$$

$$X_t \left(\sum_{j=1}^{n} \frac{X_{ij}}{T\left(X_{ij}\right)} \right) (t = 1, 2, 3, 4, 5\ldots\ldots) \tag{2}$$

t is the primary index; j is the secondary index.

$$PMC = \left\{ \begin{array}{l} Xt\sum_{j=1}^{n} \frac{X_{1j}}{5} + Xt\sum_{j=1}^{n} \frac{X_{2j}}{3} + Xt\sum_{j=1}^{n} \frac{X_{3j}}{2} + \\ Xt\sum_{j=1}^{n} \frac{X_{4j}}{4} + Xt\sum_{j=1}^{n} \frac{X_{5j}}{5} + Xt\sum_{j=1}^{n} \frac{X_{6j}}{9} + \\ Xt\sum_{j=1}^{n} \frac{X_{7j}}{2} + Xt\sum_{j=1}^{n} \frac{X_{8j}}{3} + Xt\left(\sum_{j=1}^{n} \frac{X_{9j}}{2}\right) \end{array} \right\} \tag{3}$$

Then take the policy 1 (P1), policy 2 (P2), policy 6 (P6) as an example, all of them are issued by the State Council, and the PMC index is 7.14, 5.87 and 6.19, the rank is No.1, No. 3 and No. 2 among the policies.

Table 6. PMC index calculation table of entrepreneurship policy from the State Council.

Policy Code	Nature of Policy	Policy Prescription	Policy Level	Policy Function	Action Level	Policy Tools	Policy Operability	Policy Evaluation	Incentive Constraint	PMc Index	Ranking
P_1	1	0.33	0.5	0.75	1	0.56	1	1	1	7.14	1
P_2	0.8	0.33	0.5	0.5	0.8	0.44	1	1	0.5	5.87	3
P_6	0.8	0.33	0.5	0.5	1	0.56	1	1	0.5	6.19	2

Overall, the policies on off-farm workers returning hometown to start a business in China are good or better. Among them, the "Opinions of the State Council on Further Perfecting Employment and Entrepreneurship in New Situation" (2015) has reached an excellent level. The path of policy optimization can be started from two aspects: policy function and policy instruments. In terms of policy function, institutional constraints should be strengthened, and in terms of policy tools, the use of policy tools such as government procurement, public-private cooperation, intellectual property rights and overseas institutions, can be increased.

5. Conclusions and Suggestions

5.1. Research Conclusion

Through the use of two types of entrepreneurial tools and an entrepreneurial process analysis framework, this paper examines eight typical policy texts on off-farm workers returning hometown for entrepreneurship from 2015 to 2020 from different perspectives, and draws the following main conclusions:

(1) As found in the analysis of the overall characteristics of the policy, the overall focus of the policy is to provide more services and support for off-farm workers returning to their hometown to achieve the long-term development goals. Therefore, the key point of the policy design is to provide in-depth support services from the perspective of government, society and platforms, promote the development of rural industries and create a good business atmosphere. As shown in the results of further unearthing the keywords of policy text and the policy release time, the State Council and the General Office pay more attention to providing services and resources for off-farm workers returning hometown, while the ministries and commissions pay more attention to specific links such as entrepreneurship training and entrepreneurship employment opportunities. Over time, the policy of off-farm workers returning hometown pays more attention to development issues, which is well related to the Strategic Plan for Rural Development (2018–2022) and incorporates off-farm workers' entrepreneurship into the rural development and revitalization strategy.

(2) The policy tools in Roy Rothwell & Walter Zegveld's policy tool analysis framework also tends to create a good business climate and the internal consistency of entrepreneurship policy is good. Further analysis suggests that the use of secondary policy tools is somewhat inadequate and that there is a need to develop diversified policy tools and to exploit the potential of balanced policy tools to achieve more policy objectives.

(3) From the perspective of the entrepreneurial process, it is found that the policy for off-farm workers returning hometown for entrepreneurship covers a wide range from the pre-start, start-up stage, development stage to the whole stage, which is covered by relevant supporting policies. At the same time, the depth of the policy content is also great. Considering the problems that may arise in the process of off-farm workers' entrepreneurship, such as equity financing, listing financing and so on, it provides a forward-looking policy for the expanded development of off-farm workers' entrepreneurship.

(4) From the perspective of the two-dimensional framework of policy tools and the entrepreneurship process, the analysis presents that the use of policy tools is relatively uneven at all stages of the return of off-farm workers to hometown for entrepreneurship. Among them, the policy tools are less used in the pre-start stage and should be given further attention; the demand-oriented policy tools are less used and need to be further involved in policy design.

5.2. Policy Suggestions

(1) The frequency of policy tools used in the pre-start phase should be strengthened accordingly. The research indicates that the current policy tools are more spread out in the early and development stages of enterprises and that the policy tools are under-utilized in the pre-start phase. However, it should be recognized that the pre-start phase needs more policy support to access potential resources, information and skills and to create the conditions for a successful transformation of entrepreneurial awareness into entrepreneurial enterprises. Policy design should therefore pay more attention to the entrepreneurial characteristics of this stage and provide targeted policy tools to help. Furthermore, within the framework of Roy Rothwell & Walter Zegveld policy tools, special attention should be paid to the use of supply policy tools, and the necessary public services and

talent information support should be provided for migrant workers in the pre-start stage of entrepreneurship.

Firstly, during the start-up period, we should pay special attention to improving the overall quality of off-farm workers returning hometown, providing technical assistance for various problems that arise during the start-up period by training them in technical skills, teaching them vocational skills, passing on the latest policies and guiding them to understand market dynamics. Secondly, to provide financial support and pre-employment training opportunities for off-farm workers during the start-up period, the lack of funds during the start-up period is the norm for entrepreneurship, and it is more difficult for small and micro enterprises to get financial support due to qualification problems, so we should pay attention to financial support and tax incentives in the start-up period, and government-led investment attraction and private capital investment are feasible options. In addition, providing special support funds to off-farm workers to start businesses in their hometown, accepting awards in lieu of subsidies to support entrepreneurial projects in their hometown, and fully subsidizing sanitation and water bills are all favorable policies. At the same time, more pre-employment training opportunities will be provided for off-farm workers so that they can understand the difficulties and challenges they may encounter in starting their own businesses and acquire the relevant knowledge in a timely manner. Thirdly, to promote the reform of land system, returning off-farm workers need to have land as their business base, so they need to be supported in land use and property rights allocation, etc. Try the system of linking the increase and decrease of urban and rural construction land, the limited use of rural idle house bases and village construction land remediation and reclamation into arable land for the construction of agricultural and by-product processing projects, etc. Allow the establishment of production houses within the house bases and other measures to realize the entrepreneurship of off-farm workers the guarantee of land use.

Optimize the internal structure of supply policy tools and strengthen the application of entrepreneurship technology and entrepreneurship information tools. At present, the use of entrepreneurship infrastructure construction and entrepreneurship training tools account for a relatively high proportion, but it's not so urgent to select entrepreneurship technology and entrepreneurship information and set up as policy terms alone. At present, rural construction has entered the digital era. In 2020, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs issued the "Digital Agriculture and Rural Development Plan (2019–2025)", the launch of digital rural construction requires off-farm workers to start businesses through digital technology and information. Its expression in the policy design to provide conditions and support for off-farm workers returning hometown at the national level is what the policy should focus on in the future. In addition, the current rural entrepreneurship clusters are concentrated in the "Taobao village", and the agricultural products are rising in the form of "Internet plus" e-commerce platforms. In the rather mature operation mode of the Taobao village, entrepreneurial technology and entrepreneurial information play a key role in the entry and development of returning migrant workers. However, off-farm workers are still lack of technology and information, and they need to think about the policy support points in terms of technology, information and entrepreneurship. To solve the problem of information access, we can set up special windows for business consultation and Internet service platforms to publish timely information on business projects, market conditions and production technologies, and cooperate with research institutes and universities to introduce professionals to provide legal advice and technical training for off-farm workers and form a regular mechanism. As for the entrepreneurial technology, strengthening skills training is an important way to invite "foreign brains" to give lectures and management consultation and diagnosis to off-farm workers from time to time, to teach advanced knowledge and skills, and to provide opportunities for off-farm workers to visit and study in advanced enterprises, so as to diversify the sources of information and increase technical skills of off-farm workers returning to their hometown through various forms. Through various forms, the information sources of returning off-farm workers are diversified and their technical skills are increased.

(3) The application of demand-oriented policy tools in developed enterprises should be strengthened accordingly. Demand-oriented policy tools mainly include government procurement, service outsourcing, trade deregulation, foreign exchange, etc., which should be generally applied to developed and mature enterprises. As far as off-farm workers returning hometown to start businesses are concerned, properly, demand-oriented policy tools are distributed less in policies. However, it should also be taken into account that some returned off-farm workers have a short business cycle of successful entrepreneurship and may face rapid expansion soon after starting their own businesses, when it is necessary to provide them with demand-oriented policy tools. Moreover, the Belt and Road initiative is a long-term national plan that will not be affected by short-term international situations. Cross-border trade is very common in the wave of "Internet plus" and digital economy. Overseas exchanges are not far away from off-farm workers returning hometown for entrepreneurship. It is necessary to take into account the characteristics of their entrepreneurship and the business cycle, and to strengthen the application of such policy tools. For example, Nanle

County in Henan Province has implemented the "One Belt, One Road, One Park" demonstration project to build a hometown entrepreneurship cluster demonstration area and an international business square business incubation park, all of which are powerful measures to encourage off-farm workers to start outward-oriented businesses. In addition, tax preferences are given to export and foreign trade enterprises, the development of cross-border e-commerce in rural areas is strengthened, domestic and international infrastructure is enhanced, and training on cross-border trade is provided to off-farm workers returning to their hometown to guide them to benefit more from foreign business.

In short, as the results of the analysis of the policy for off-farm workers' returning hometown for entrepreneurship show, the current national policy enjoys the integration of internal consistency with scientific, short-term and long-term effectiveness, and is also linked to rural development and revitalization too. However, the research results also show that there is room and opportunity to further optimize the current policy. In the context of national macro-industrial development and rural revitalization, it's necessary to further explore the special policy for off-farm workers returning hometown for entrepreneurship and provide more policy perspectives and suggestions.

CRediT Author Statement: Xiujuan Gao: Conceptualization, Methodology, Supervision, Validation and Writing – reviewing & editing; **Ruijuan Zhang:** Data Duration, Validation and Writing – review & editing.

Data Availability Statement: Table 1 is collected from official website published by government.

Funding: This research was funded by Beijing Philosophy and Social Science Foundation (22JCC090); Central Universities Basic Scientific Research Business Fund Project (ZKY201020216); Central Universities Basic Scientific Research Business Fund Project (2022QN0102).

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgments: Not applicable.

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