

# Research on the Development Dilemma and Coping Strategies of Social Work Professional Education in China

Chuang Yan

College of Marxism  
Northeast Normal University  
Changchun, China 130024

**Abstract**—Although China's social work professional education has developed rapidly in recent years and achieved remarkable educational achievements, it has been restricted the further development by objective conditions such as teachers' professional knowledge needs to be strengthened, teaching content is vague, the difficulties in the employment of graduation in the social work profession and the influence of the discipline appraisal mechanism owing to the short development time and poor social foundation. The state and society should attach great importance to this and strive to promote reforms and achieve breakthroughs in strengthening the construction of teaching staff, promoting the localization of social work education, broadening the quality of employment channels for social work, and optimizing the evaluation mechanism of social science disciplines to advance the in-depth development of China's social work.

**Keywords**—social work; professional education; development dilemma; coping strategies

## I. INTRODUCTION

In 2018, the 40th anniversary of China's reform and opening up, China's economy has developed rapidly in 40 years and has become the world's second largest economy. It has not only had a profound impact on the growth and development of the world economy, but also contributed to the tremendous changes in Chinese society representing the demand for social services and the shortage of professional social service talents. In response to social changes and the conflicts in service demand, as early as November 8, 2011, 18 departments and organizations including the Central Organization Department, the Central Political and Legal Committee, and the Ministry of Civil Affairs jointly issued the "Strengthening of the Construction of Professional Teams for Social Work." The Opinions require that a high-quality team of social work professionals be trained to provide strong talent support for strengthening and innovating social management, building a socialist harmonious society, and consolidating the party's ruling foundation. In such a macro-social background and historical opportunities, China's social work professional education which is responsible for cultivating relevant talents has achieved rapid development, and the scale of social work

talents has continued to grow. However, behind the prosperity, there are also problems that need to be solved urgently which are many difficulties faced by professional education in work, and how to effectively break through and resolve these dilemmas have become important issues that every social work educator, practitioner and manager must think about and answer.

## II. CURRENT SITUATION OF SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION IN CHINA

China's local social work higher education began in the early 1920s, and many universities such as Yanjing University, Qilu University, Zhijiang University, and Jinling Women's College have opened social work-related courses,[1] social work education gained rapid development. However, when the departments of higher education institutions were adjusted in 1952, social work and sociology and other related majors were cancelled. The period lasted for more than 30 years. Until 1989, Peking University's social work and management major enrolled the first undergraduate students. The professional education of social work has embarked on the path of normal development.[2] In the more than 20 years of recovery and development, China's social work professional education has been flourishing. At present, more than 200 universities have opened undergraduate programs in social work, and more than 30 universities have opened social work specialties. Nearly seven or eight thousand undergraduate and junior college students are enrolled in schools. National and local professional social work organizations have been established, especially the Chinese Social Workers Association and the China Social Work Education Association have become important driving forces for social work practice and education. Professional social work newspapers such as China Social News, China Social Work, and Social Work have established and through these professional journals and other social science academic journals, relevant professional social work research has been well presented. Social work practice has been carried out in urban communities, schools, the elderly, medical, family, rescue management, special care and placement, ethnic and religious affairs, rural communities, etc., and a number of social work practice

internship bases and social work organization that having certain influence have created. [3]

### III. THE DEVELOPMENT DILEMMA OF SOCIAL WORK PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION IN CHINA

Although the social work education has gone through a tortuous development process and entered a new stage of development, the objective conditions such as short development time and poor local foundation have restricted the further development of China's social work professional education and formed a development dilemma that has affected far-reaching.

#### A. *Teachers' Professional Knowledge Needs to Be Strengthened*

As a foreign product that originated in Western society, social work lacks historical traditions and social foundations in China's indigenous society. In addition, the historical gap period of more than 30 years has been suspended, making the number of social work professionals rare and the overall quality is not high. Even the teachers who work in the front-line teaching posts of colleges and universities are mostly non-social work majors, with a weak foundation and poor foundation. The teaching content is often new learning without relevant research and practical experience. The lack of professional knowledge of the teaching staff has become the most important predicament that restricts the development of social work education. Classroom teaching is not attractive. The situation that "teachers don't speak well, students don't love learning" has appeared in a wide range, directly affecting the teaching effectiveness and social reputation of social work professional education.

#### B. *The Teaching Content of Social Work Professional Education Is Blurred*

As a professional science that helps people to help themselves, social work originally originated from religious charity activities in European and American society. It is a typical social endogenous phenomenon. Social practice is preceded by professional education. It has rich historical experience and extensive social foundation. In contrast, the development of social work in China comes from the top-level design of the government. Through the direct introduction of the mature theory of Western social work, the rapid development of social work education in China has been realized, which is a government-implanted phenomenon, but historical experience and the social foundation has not been able to achieve simultaneous development opportunities in this process, leading to professional education significantly ahead of social practice. It is this different logic at the stage of development that has caused the disunity of the content of professional education in China's social work. Different colleges and universities have great differences in highlighting knowledge learning and strengthening social work practices, and at the same time, it affects the integration and development of the social work group. As what Tajfel said, "The social identity is part of the individual's self-knowledge, and self-cognition stems from the knowledge of identity of the ethnic group member, and

the values and emotional significance of the identity of the group". [4]

#### C. *Lower Employment Ratio in the Social Work Profession*

Although the state has vigorously called for the development of social work, and at the macro level, it has continuously introduced relevant policies to support the development of social work and strive to create a social environment conducive to the development of social work. However, in the field of student employment, Chinese social work continues to be cold. The professional counterparts of social work graduates are extremely low in employment, and a large number of graduated students are employed outside the profession. According to relevant surveys, only about 10% of social work graduates are engaged in this professional work, and a large number of other professionals are forced to change careers for the future [5]. These lost social work graduates not only waste social work education resources in colleges and universities, but also greatly affect the degree of social recognition of the social work profession and objectively hinder the further development of social work.

#### D. *Existing Social Science Discipline Appraisal Mechanism Affects the Development of Social Work Discipline*

At present, the evaluation mechanism of social science disciplines in China is mainly characterized by scientific research, the weight of subjects in teaching and social practice activities is low, and the weight of scientific research indicators is outstanding. The teachers with rich academic achievements can successfully stand out from the discipline evaluation and obtain high level and academic titles or academic titles, which also enriching academic resources. As a specific subject in the social science group, social work has its unique subject attributes and development characteristics. The emphasis on practical activities or social practice activities is an important feature that distinguishes it from other social science disciplines. However, the development of social practice activities requires a large amount of manpower, material resources and financial resources. The results of the activities are more reflected in the improvement of social satisfaction and the happiness index of social members, and it is difficult to translate into academic achievements in scientific research. A typical feature of teachers engaged in social work and social practice activities in colleges and universities is low professional titles, low income, and constantly marginalized in the university teacher system. The contradiction between academic research results and social practice activities is difficult to be effectively reconciled in the existing social science discipline evaluation mechanism. The long-term development results will separate social work professional teachers from social practice activities and make the teaching content book-based and low level knowledge. Teaching effectiveness and teaching satisfaction are difficult to improve.

#### IV. STRATEGIC ANALYSIS OF THE DIFFICULTIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHINA'S SOCIAL WORK PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

Social work takes the professional help method as the main working method, and it has an irreplaceable social role in solving the social grassroots problems and meeting the people's living needs. It is precisely owing to this objective role that the development dilemma of China's social work professional education will inevitably be finally broken. In the process of promoting the realization of this result early, our social work educators and practitioners can make some specific efforts and attempts to solve the above difficulties.

##### A. *Strengthening the Construction of the Teaching Staff*

"People are the primary productive forces." The key to promoting the development of social work education is to build a professional faculty with good professional knowledge and practical skills. Faced with the objective situation of the current professional level of the teaching staff is not high, it can be strengthened in a variety of ways. For example, the social work professional teachers could be systematically transported to study abroad in Hong Kong and Taiwan through the "going out, please come in" way to be educated continually in the professional content. At the same time, high-level experts and scholars at home and abroad can be hired for training or lectures. In this way, we will understand the international frontiers of social work education and update the knowledge base of the teaching staff in a timely manner. Since social work education contains a large amount of social practice content, it is also possible to employ social people with first-line social work practice experience to participate in teaching work and to supplement the urgently needed practice of social work teachers through various means such as regular lectures, joint training, and project participation.

##### B. *Promoting the Localization of Social Work Education*

China's social work profession has a short recovery time and limited development. These objective conditions make the current social work education not separate from Western textbooks, and the lack of localization research has long existed for the contradiction between theoretical study and social work practice. The author believes that the idea of breaking through this predicament is to promote the standardized development of social work education and to develop a social work education model with Chinese characteristics. "Social work education in mainland China should not reject the basic ideas and methods of international common experience, however, it is also wrong only to copy" [6]. With the continuous development of China's economy and the profound transformation of Chinese society, the development of social work in China has entered a new historical period. The early practice of copying the Western social work education model has not adapted to the current reality and the task of promoting the localization of social work education is urgency. This historical task is not only a requirement of the times, but also a way to solve the ambiguity of teaching content such as the priority of theoretical study and social work practice, because social

work education combined with local experience is inevitably a social work education with unified theory and practice.

##### C. *Improving the Quality of Employment in High-quality Employment Channels*

The author believes that there are two reasons for the low employment ratio in the social work profession. First, there are few jobs in social work, and second, the income of existing social jobs is low and the guarantee is poor. A large number of graduates are forced to leave the profession for their own development. To this end, the state should play an executive-led role, actively adjust the social and economic structure, mobilize social resources, and comprehensively expand employment positions suitable for social work graduates such as school social workers, medical social workers, and correctional social workers to achieve social employment, making the number of jobs increase overall. At the same time, the state should also do a good job in overall planning. In the professional access process, priority should be given to the social work direction graduates to join the traditional social work positions such as civil affairs, trade unions, women's federations and the Communist Youth League, and increase the opportunities for social work graduates to enter the national official positions. The government must raise the income and social security level of graduates and improve the employment system for social work graduates.

##### D. *Optimizing the Evaluation Mechanism of Social Science Disciplines*

As a practical social science discipline, social work inherently requires a large number of social practices to improve teaching activities and objectively constitutes the social practice of social work. It can be said that social practice activities are indispensable for social work education. To this end, the state's education management department should make effective adjustments in the top-level design, optimize the evaluation mechanism of social science disciplines, increase the social practice investigation content of social work professional teachers' promotion links, and avoid a one-size-fits-all evaluation mechanism to harm the work enthusiasm of social work professional teachers. For example, it is possible to increase the weight of social practice content in the promotion of professional titles, set up academic publications for social work practice, set the types of professorship titles in practice, and guide social work professional teachers to participate in social work practice activities in various aspects to form a synergy of teaching and learning. In this way, we can promote scientific research through practice and promote teaching with scientific research.

#### V. CONCLUSION

Although China's social work education faces many difficulties, it affects the development speed and development quality of social work to a certain extent. However, in the macro social contexts such as social transformation and social governance, the social significance of social work is gradually becoming recognized by the

majority of members of society. With the reception, the social mass base and social work areas are gradually expanding. It is believed that with the joint efforts of social work educators and social work professionals, China's social work education will inevitably get out of the predicament and achieve breakthroughs, and ultimately promote the in-depth development of China's social work.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Lin Sunli. The rise and development of social work education in China. *Social Work*, 2016 (2): 12.
- [2] Wang Sibin. Introduction to social work. Peking University Press, 1998, preface.
- [3] Zhou shaobin. The coping and reform of social work education under double dilemma. *Journal of Sichuan University of Science and Technology (Social Science Edition)*, 2011 (8): 34.
- [4] Henri Tajfel. Social identity and intergroup relations. Cambridge University Press, 2010, 3.
- [5] Li Shaomei. Talk about the employment status and countermeasures of social work professionals. *Science and Technology Vision*, 2017 (10): 189.
- [6] Wang Sibin. The development of social work education in China under the background of non-coordinated transformation. *Journal of University of Science and Technology Beijing (Social Science Edition)*, 2004 (1): 24-29.