

Invited Article

Historical development and characteristics of social work in today's China

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Social work education has experienced three stages since its introduction to China in the 1920s: introduction, abolishment and reinstatement. Theoretically, there are four types of social work in China: official-educational, official-practical, voluntary-educational and voluntary-practical. In practice, all four types of social work have not necessarily been embodied in each developmental stage, and the order of their historical development is not the same as the order of their logical development; i.e. some types are lacking in some of the stages. Each type of social work has its own characteristics, which are integrated into each development stage. Today, Chinese social work faces two major interrelated tasks: the professionalisation and the institutionalisation of social work. The former refers to the development of standardisation in Chinese social work; the latter has to do with the development of the social welfare institution in general and the development of institutional welfare in particular. In general, the dramatic development in Chinese social work largely depends on the accomplishment of the two tasks.

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Social work, which was introduced in China in 1922, has had less than 100 years' history. During this time its development was interrupted for a period of some 36 years. It was first in 1988 that the development of professional social work in China was resumed. To fully understand the historical development and main characteristics of social work in China, we must look not only at the situation today, but also at social work in a historical perspective – its initial introduction, subsequent abolishment and later reinstatement. As Chinese social work's main characteristics are largely embodied in its historical development, a reasonable narrative approach would be to discuss its representative features during the various stages of its history. Such an approach is not only convenient and feasible, but also avoids the mistake of artificiality and empty rhetoric that arises when the main features of social work are regarded separate from its historical development. This article discusses mainly three integrative issues: 1) social work's introduction in China (1922–1952), 2) the 36-year period during which social work education was abolished (1952–1988), and 3) social work's reinstatement in today's China.

Social work's introduction in China (1922–1952)

The 30 years between 1922, when a department of sociology was first established at Yenching University, and 1952, when the study of sociology and social work was abolished, can be regarded as the introductory stage of social work in China. Social work is a discipline with many dimensions. For the purposes of this article, the authors have divided social work into two dimensions: practical-educational and voluntary-official. Using the former as the x-axis and the latter as the y-axis gives us a frame of reference wherein four types of social work emerge: official-educational social work, official-practical social work, voluntary-educational social work and voluntary-practical social work. Figure 1 illustrates this relationship.

It shows the logical or mature condition of Chinese social work, but greater transparency is achieved if various parts are presented and analysed in the order of their historical development. So the following narrative is according to the historical development order of Chinese social work, not the logical order.

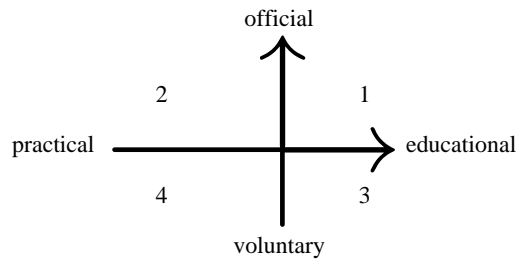


Figure 1. Analytical diagram showing the direction of development of Chinese social work.

1: official-educational social work; 2: official-practical social work; 3: voluntary-educational social work; 4: voluntary-practical social work

Voluntary-educational social work

What we have designated as voluntary-educational social work refers to social work education as it was developed by private institutions. Western social work wanted to enter China and this was most easily done by working through the private schools that had a Western cultural background. Thus Yenching University, which had an American cultural tradition, became the natural point of entry for social work. Consequently, J.S. Burgess and D.W. Edwards, members of the Princeton University Alumni Association in China, instituted a sociology department in Yenching University in 1922. This event marked the introduction of social work into China because, besides sociology, the department also encompassed the discipline of social work. This dual-focus reflected the purpose for which Burgess and Edwards established the sociology department at Yenching University. According to Professors Lei Jie-qiong and Shui Shi-zheng, the purpose was to train a professional corps of social service professionals to work in charity organisations and various social welfare agencies that had been established in China by the USA (*Actuality Challenge Prospect*, 1988). It was hardly incidental that the sociology department at Yenching offered social work education from the very start. At that time the department was staffed by six American teachers, with Burgess serving as the department's chairman. The department changed its name to the Department of Sociology and Social Service Administration in 1925, with Professor Xu Shi-lian as chairman. In 1927 the new department established a summer school and eight educational programmes: an undergraduate and a graduate sociology programme, an undergraduate and a graduate social service programme, a specialised social service programme, a graduate religious social service programme, a religious social service programme for intensive study, sponsored partly by the

religion college, and, lastly, a social service correspondence programme. This brief presentation shows quite clearly the main orientation of the social work education programme at Yenching University.

The main contribution of the Department of Sociology and Social Administration at Yenching University was to promote the professionalism of social work education in China. This becomes apparent if we take into account two events.

The first was the start in 1927 of the publication *The Sociological World*. Ten volumes in all were published before the outbreak of war with Japan in 1936. Besides publishing sociological papers and investigative reports in social work, each volume of *The Sociological World* also published a special annual report on the progress being made in the development of social work at the Department of Sociology and Social Service Administration at Yenching University, as well as information on the development of social work at other universities. Among the more well-known of the published contributions were 'A Study of 1200 Poor Families in Peiping' by David New (*The Sociological World*, Vol. 7, 1933), 'A Study of the Soup-Kitchens in Peiping' by Chang Chin-kai (*The Sociological World*, Vol. 7, 1933) and 'The Ch'ing Ho Village-Town Community' by Ti Huang (*The Sociological World* Vol. 10, 1936).

The second event of note was the establishment of the Ch'ing Ho Fieldwork Base sponsored by the Kellogg Foundation. This base provided a much-needed arena for teachers and students to apply their values, knowledge and skills in daily practice; the base also produced many investigative reports and papers of high academic merit. All these papers and investigations, as well as the fieldwork base itself, played an important role in promoting the professionalism of social work in China.

Several other private colleges and schools run by the Christian Church – for example, Kinling University at Nanjing, Kinling Women College of Humanities and Natural Science and the Educational Administration College at Su Zhou – also offered either whole educational programmes or at least some courses in social work, or had established a department of social work or social administration (Fang Yuan, 1988). Although Hu Jiang University at Shanghai established a sociology department in 1915,¹ it offered no courses in social work until 1933. Moreover, Fudan, Daxia, St John and Guanghua, among others, also instituted their own sociology departments, and several of these institutions offered courses in social work as well.

¹ According to Li Tian-yu (Professor of Eastern China Normal University at Shanghai), the sociology department at Hu Jiang University was set up in 1915, but according to Fu Su-dong (researcher at the Beijing Institute of Social Sciences), it was set up two years earlier, in 1913.

Voluntary-practical social work

Although much voluntary-practical social work was carried out by private institutions and other philanthropic agencies, Yenching University also made an ambitious contribution. With financial assistance from the Kellogg Foundation, the university established the Village Services and Fieldwork Base at Ch'ing Ho town in 1928. Even though the base's main purpose was teaching, it also engaged in a fair amount of voluntary social work for faculty and for the students during their fieldwork training. The base also published many reports and papers on social work practice and on its ideas for helping people in need. Yenching University's Ch'ing Ho Fieldwork Base was not only an agency for social work education, but also a base of operations for social work in practice. Yenching University also formed partnerships with a number of other institutions, such as the Social Service Department of Xiehe Hospital, the Christian Youth Association, the Chinese and Overseas Relief Society, Beijing Prison, the Psychoses Hospital, the Central Epidemic Prevention Division, the China Club of Ping Religion, the Social Investigation Department of Chinese Culture Foundation Council, the Health Experiment Institute in Beijing inner-city left second district, the Beijing Local Service Federation and Tsinghua School.

Fieldwork units for child welfare included the Infant Care society, the House of Nurture and day-care, the House of Xiang Mountain Loving Infant and the Beijing House for the Nurture of Infants. Fieldwork was a very important part of voluntary-practical social work. The social work values held by teachers and students were realised through their efforts in voluntary-practical social work.

Voluntary-practical social work was mainly a philanthropic undertaking, whereas welfare services *per se* were provided by other private agencies. The Peiping Poor Children's Home is a good example. This private institution was founded in the late autumn of the third year of Xuantong in the Qing dynasty; it was located in Millenary Buddha Temple Bystreet, north Drum-tower inside Stability Door. The Peiping Poor Children's Home was a private philanthropic agency and was not affiliated with any institution, nor did it have a guaranteed funding base. Nevertheless, it received and nurtured more than 200 poor boys and girls who were completely dependent on the benevolence of the home's sponsors. Agencies such as the Children's Home, although their endeavours were overshadowed for years by the conflicts waged by the warlords, deserve our unwavering admiration. Boys and girls slept in separate dormitories. They were taught by teachers trained in cultural subjects, handicrafts, carpentry and so forth. On the walls of the Children's Home, the children's school produc-

tions were exhibited. The Children's Home made a real difference in the children's daily and future life.

An American missionary in China gave high praise to the work of the Peiping Poor Children's Home:

I have lived in China for 16–17 years and have travelled all around the country, yet I have never found such a home for poor children as this. From this experience I know now that Peiping's philanthropists have not allowed themselves to be surpassed by the philanthropists of the Western countries. Just as the chairperson said 8 or 9 years after establishing the Peiping Poor Children's Home, even though it is not an affiliated agency and has no income, it has helped more than two hundred poor children; they are being molded by charitable ideas and the loving actions of everybody here. Today's visit to the Home not only makes me envious, but also challenges my prejudice that China lack's the quality of mercy; furthermore, it has done away with my pessimistic perspectives regarding Chinese social work. (*Good paper*, 1919)

Voluntary-practical social work was also characterised by private donations and benevolent activities organised by mass groups and voluntary organisations. In 1920 China was in the grips of a severe drought; swarms of grasshoppers destroyed the crops and people all over the country were in danger of starving to death. The North China Association of Disaster Relief organised a fund-raising drive and published petitions like the following:

Well! I say! Are there any human beings suffering more from cold and hunger, more destitute and just drifting from place to place than today's victims of the natural calamities in Tianjing city, the provinces of Shandong, Henan and Shanxi? To go hungry year after year, with no shelter for a long time; and then, on top of everything else, this year's drought, desolation and war. Their situation is as a layer of frost on top of snow. Cattle and livestock, whether young or old, are killed for food. Refugees crowd the roads, going without food day after day, carrying the young and old, dwelling in the face of the wind and sleeping in the dew, waiting for death, sobbing and wailing with a cry of grief that reaches to the gates of Heaven itself. Today the frost has already begun to fall and winter is just around the corner; imagine what a miserable prospect that is! In such a situation, should men of good will take pleasure in dressing warmly and eating their fill? Society regards poor relief as its duty, so we appeal to all men of good will to provide surplus millet to feed the refugees, to give the naked clothes to keep out the cold, to donate money for starting up new jobs, and to use their intelligence to promote righteous

actions undertaken for the public good, prevent from change and collapse. It is time to stop the calamity and to welcome harmony; time and tide wait for no man; don't let the poor and suffering wait so long. Cordially yours. (*Weekly of Providing Disaster Relief*, 1920)

There were some 221 celebrities from all walks of life who signed the petition to express their support of its proposals. Numerous people generously contributed funds to help the refugees.

Official-educational social work

There were no state-sponsored universities offering courses in social work in the early stages of this period – not until the end of the 1920s. After that, Jinan University, Nanjing Central University and Tsinghua University each started an education programme. Although the public universities offering social work education accounted for only a small number of students, their influence cannot be ignored. Because of their efforts, private social work education acquired new meaning: 1) it received, if indirectly, official support; 2) social work education gained a legal position; 3) the universities helped to shape a unified theory and practice of social work; and 4) by spreading social work values, social-cultural change was promoted in contemporary China.

In the revolutionary base area, and areas of liberation under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, there were a number of schools, such as Shanbei Public School, Anti-Japan College, Yanan University, Military and the Political University, that were engaged in similar social work programmes to train revolutionary social workers (Mouhau Lu, 1988).

Official-practical social work

Two regimes held sway in China prior to 1949: the Guomindang government and the Communist Party Government. There was no social department in the Guomindang government until 1940 because of the ongoing civil war. Yet, in 1944 the minister of the new Social Department, Gu Zhenggang, put forward three basic proposals that were to serve as the guidelines for social administration:

- 1) the establishment of social policies based on the Three People's Principles to complete the social construction of China;
- 2) the founding of the system of social administration and social enterprise to promote the smooth development of social work and social administration;
- 3) the training of social work professionals in social work and administration to consolidate the basis

of social automatism and social democracy. However, these policies were not put into practice at that time.

As for the Communist Party Government, it organised a considerable amount of social work in the areas of liberation; for example, it gave support to soldiers and their families, helped the needy, provided poor relief, supported vulnerable groups and punished evil-doers. It showed great concern for life of the people and improving job methods, and so on. The film *Girl with White Hair* reflected exactly the kind of official-practical social work being done by the Communist government.

Summary

The characteristics of social work in China during this stage are as follows:

- 1) It began with private social work education; the development of Chinese social work was promoted by teaching and spreading values, knowledge and professional skills of social work. The civil war and the existence of two separate regimes in the country disrupted the development of social work during this period; nevertheless, there was a tangible influence on the professional and institutional development of social work during this time.
- 2) Revolutionary war and civil war led to dis-union of Chinese social work and blocked the development of professional and institutional social work in China.
- 3) During this stage, Chinese social work had a bright feature of military and revolution.

The abolition of social work education in China

With the founding of the New China in 1949, there was much that needed to be accomplished. The central government showed its maturity and solidity by constituting a range of firm economic, political and foreign policies. However, in the area of education some unfortunate decisions were made, among the most absurd being the abolition of sociology in 1952. As we have already seen, social work and sociology were introduced into China at the same time, with social work attached to the sociology departments. As a result, when the university sociology departments were abolished, social work disappeared, too.

Why did the education sector decide to abolish sociology at that time? There were four main reasons.

- 1) Following blindly the leadership of the Soviet Union. At the beginning of building the New China, the government adopted the 'lean to one

side' policy; i.e. to learn about everything from our 'Soviet Brother'. The Soviet Union abolished sociology soon after the victory of the October Revolution; it regarded sociology as 'bourgeois pseudo-science'. Consequently, there was no longer room for the development of sociology in China.

- 2) The idea that historical materialism could replace sociology. The leading opinion was that historical materialism was a science and sociology was not. By applying the ideas of historical materialism, all kinds of social problems could be resolved, so it did not matter if there was no sociology in China.
- 3) A misconception of the socialist society. It was said that as there were no longer any problems in the socialist society, sociology was useless.
- 4) Confusing social work with sociology. In fact, the former is a kind of professional education whereas the latter is a sort of academic education. These are not the same thing.

These, then, were the reasons why sociology was abolished, and along with it social work education as it existed in China at that time.

But the fact that social work education was abolished in the universities did not mean the discontinuation of social work in China. Both at the institutional level and the voluntary level, the development of social work practice was enhanced in the developmental stage coinciding with the construction of the New China.

Official-practical social work

Even in ancient China there was always an officer in charge of social work, called the 'Situ'. From the T'ang Yu, Yin Shang and Xi Chou dynasties to the Chunqiu Zhangguo dynasty, the post of 'Situ' existed to assist the emperor in settling the nation and stabilising the state. In the Ch'in and Han dynasties, the 'Situ' was replaced by the 'Cheng Xiang', while the post of 'Min Cao' was formed to help the 'Cheng Xiang' manage civil affairs. During the time of the Three Nations, Two Jins and South and North dynasties, the official positions of 'Shang Shu', 'Hu Cao', 'Zuo Min' and 'Si Dai' were in force to handle civil affairs. The Sui and T'ang dynasties each had a Board of Revenue and Population, and in the Song Dynasty there was a Department of Revenue and Population to run the civil administrative affairs. A Department of Revenue and Population administered civil affairs in the Yuan and Qing governments as well. It was the Qing government that first established a Ministry of Civil Affairs in Guang Xu's 32nd year (1906).

After the founding of the New China, the Home Department, the domestic equivalent to the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs, was given the responsibility for institutionalising social work. The Home Department was forcibly disbanded during the 'cultural revolution', but was later reinstated under the new name of the Ministry of Civil Affairs and was put in charge of managing the civil affairs sector. The responsibility for social work fell to the Ministry of Personnel, which administrated social security programmes for city employees.

In 1951 the State Council passed the People's Republic of China Labour Insurance Statute and began to implement a relatively comprehensive social insurance programme that included coverage for the elderly, as well as for injuries, disease, death and for the survivors of the deceased. Business enterprises or those representing capital contributed 3% of the total cost for setting up a labour insurance fund. When employees retired they could obtain different levels of retirement pension from the fund. Other insurance benefits were paid for by business enterprises in accordance with a payments standard regulated by the government.

From the statute, we can see the following characteristics of the social security system in China during this period.

- 1) The starting point for the social security benefit level in China was relatively high. For example, the highest retirement pension was equivalent to 75% of employees' standard wage before they retired; moreover, the substitute rate reached 100% for members of the revolutionary cadres.
- 2) The Chinese social security system was linked to employment. The right to receive a retirement pension and other benefits was wholly dependent on the length of time in employment and the level of benefits directly connected with the employee's income before retirement.
- 3) The state was solely responsible for the social security fund; employees need not have contributed to the fund. Retirement pension and other related benefits were paid for by business enterprises in accordance with the level of real consumption. These expenses were charged to the cost of running the enterprise and led to such a heavy financial burden that the enterprises lost the motivation for improving productivity.

Nevertheless, at the time this system was certainly useful for maintaining social stabilisation. At the end of the 1960s, for a number of historical reasons social insurance became the sole responsibility of the business enterprises; thus, social insurance evolved into a concern of business enterprises in China.

In June 1978, the State Council passed two new statutes: 'Provisional Statute about Arrangements for Cadres with Diseases and Injuries', and 'Temporary Regulation of Employee Retirement'. These statutes

prescribed that men could retire when reaching the age of 60 and women the age of 50 if they had a continuous length of service for more than ten years. However, the retirement pension was still to be paid by the business enterprises.

In 1984, a reform was initiated providing for a comprehensive social plan for meeting the expenses incurred by business enterprises for employee retirement pension. This reform measure has significantly reduced the financial burden of the business enterprises and guaranteed financial resources for retirement pension. At the same time, it further legitimised the central government's withdrawal from the field of social security.

Voluntary-practical social work

Although China is an organised society, civilian organisations were rare during this period. The three largest civilian organisations are still the Women's Federation, the labour union and the Communist Youth League. In essence, these are semi-governmental organisations. Thus, what they accomplished in social work practice generally reflected the intentions of the government; i.e. it was in effect institutionalised social work. In fact, these organisations filled the roles of social worker and dispatcher of social welfare programmes. According to the labour insurance regulation, the Women's Federation was in charge of women's welfare; the labour union was responsible for employees' welfare; and the Communist Youth League was concerned with the affairs of youth. For other vulnerable social groups, such as the elderly and disabled people, the Ministry of Civil Affairs had the responsibility for their welfare. In terms of welfare delivery, these civilian organisations filled the same role as that of the Ministry of Civil Affairs.

Voluntary-practice social work in China at this time was manifested mainly through the relief activities of business enterprises and non-profit organisations or 'units'. In China, 'units' means people belong to them besides family. This period was largely characterised by the planned-economy system. Business enterprises and 'units', being part of the state, fulfilled comprehensive state functions. Normally, the 'units' provided minimum lifetime security benefits for all employees and their families. Thus, except for 'the three-year period of difficulty' in the 1960s, basically no one starved to death in China during this period, and there were no beggars or vagrants.

In the middle of this period, some collectivist ideas, such as 'I do for others, others do for me' and the Leifeng spirit as in 'be happy to help others', were strongly promoted. It was a time in which the political system and public sentiment were in harmony. Although social work was officially abolished,

voluntary-practical social work continued to be developed in all social fields because people had acquired new life aspirations and new social values with the founding of the New China. In the first three years, New China successfully eliminated some socially harmful phenomena, such as prostitution, gambling, drug addiction, laziness and disease. Chinese social work practice surprised the world for its comprehensiveness and effectiveness.

Summary

The main characteristics in social work during this period are as follows.

- 1) Because social work had been abolished, two generations of people did not know what social work was. However, under the promotion of various governments, practical social work developed rapidly and made great strides.
- 2) The State and 'units' became the main body of social work. In fact, national cadres and 'units' leaders were, broadly speaking, social workers. Institutional collectivism and equality eliminated the phenomenon of social polarisation, with the result that social problems were on the decline. Thus the demand for professional social work was not very strong.
- 3) Because of the lack of professional social work education and professional supervision, social work practice was of an empirical kind, outdated and insensitive in its methods; particularly, it lacked the core values of social work and a professional ethical spirit.
- 4) The reinstatement of sociology in the 1980s impelled research on Chinese social problems; at the same time, it awakened the people's memory about social work. Thus, a base was formed for the reinstatement and reconstruction of social work.

Social work's recovery and reconstruction in today's China

Official-educational social work

In the late 1980s, along with the recovery and reconstruction of sociology in China's universities was the recovery and reconstruction of social work. In 1987, the Ministry of Civil Affairs got together with the State Education Committee to discuss the reinstatement of social work education. They eventually reached a joint decision: the Ministry of Civil Affairs was to invest one million yuan of RMB (people's currency) in the Department of Sociology in Peking University for the purpose of reinstating and building up social work professional education. As one of the principals involved in the rebuilding of social

work as a profession, this author was a happy witness to this extraordinary event.

In the summer of 1988, on the invitation of the Asian-Pacific Association of Social Work Education, Professors Yuan Fan, Wang Sibin and I visited several universities and institutions engaged in social work education in Hong Kong. The purpose of the visit was to prepare a professional training programme and curriculum for social work in general and to make concrete preparations for the Asian-Pacific Area Social Work Education Seminar to be held in Peking University in December of that year.

The Seminar was held in Peking University according to schedule. Some 160 delegates, all of whom were engaged in social work education or social work practice, attended the seminar and workshops. Over 100 of the delegates came from China. As one of the joint chairmen of the seminar, as well as one of the speakers and organisers, this author can say without doubt that the seminar made a vital contribution to social work education in China. It not only taught the Chinese delegates much about the nature of social work and the kind of social work that today's China needs, but it also planted the seeds of social work in the mother earth of China.

After the seminar, the universities of Jilin, Xiamen and Shanghai have, one after the other, built up the social work profession. At the end of the year 2000 there were more than 70 public colleges engaged in social work education. The training goals and curriculum arrangements at these universities focus on three different levels: the macro level, the mezzo level and the micro level. In some universities, such as Peking University, social work education is at the macro level, focusing on social administration, social planning, social policy analysis and social welfare system building. In others, such as China Renmin University, social work education is at the mezzo level, with an emphasis on social work with families, in industry and schools and institutional development. Lastly, in other universities or colleges, such as the China Youth Politic College, social work focuses on the micro level, which includes case-work, special social group counselling and individual potential development. Of course, graduate social workers are assigned different duties depending on which level was the focus of their social work education. Graduates well-trained at the macro level mostly work in the social policy and social research sectors; those trained at the mezzo level choose social work related to institutions and business enterprises; and lastly, students who have mastered skills on the micro level work mostly in the local social services.

Voluntary-educational social work

Accompanying the development of the private college sector, some private colleges also engaged in building up the social work profession and provided social work education to meet to the demands of social development. An example is the Haidian Correspondence College, which is now a member of the Chinese Association of Social Work Education.

Official-practical social work

During this period official-practical social work was mainly concerned with exploring the social security system, with the exception of traditional civil relief work. Many city employees were facing layoff and unemployment, and were in danger of losing their basic life security as an indirect result of the city economic-system reform, the establishment of a market economy and the withdrawal of the 'units' security system in the planning time. A precondition for a smoothly operating market economy that does not endanger social stability is to solve the social security problems facing the city employees. Therefore, since the 1990s the Chinese government has successively strengthened the legislation pertaining to social security.

Social insurance for business enterprise employees

In June 1991 the State Council passed the 'Decision on the Reform of Enterprise Employees' Retirement Pension System'. Its main provisions include: 1) to set up a three-tier retirement pension system – the state's obligatory basic pension insurance, the corporations' supplementary pension insurance and personal savings insurance; 2) to introduce a multiple-channel mechanism for raising funds whereby pension fees are shared by the state, 'units' and individuals on a fair basis, that is to say, individuals have to pay their share of their retirement pension benefits; 3) to change the pay-as-you-go method for pension fees and determine the principles of payment and benefit here and now.

In March 1995, the State Council passed the 'Notification of Deepening Reform in Enterprise Employees Pension Insurance System', which stipulated that the retirement pension insurance scheme for employees of business enterprises is to implement the principle of social planning viewed as a whole in combination with personal accounts, and which provided two concrete concrete alternative methods of implementation.

In July 1997, the State Council passed the 'Decision to Establish a Unified Retirement Pension Insurance System for Business Enterprise Employees'; and in January 1999 the State Council passed the 'Provisional

Statute for Levying Social Insurance Fees'. Thus the framework for the enterprise retirement-pension insurance system in China came into being.

Pension insurance system for the staff in the state sectors and in the non-profit organisation 'units'

The pension insurance system for state employees and non-profit 'units' differs from that of the business enterprises. Its main feature is that employees do not make pension insurance payments; these are paid by the state or the non-profit 'units'. Pension benefit payments depend on the employee's basic salary at the time of retirement and length of employment. State civil servants are paid a basic salary plus an additional salary for length of service length, and when they retire, their post salary and rank salary are granted pro rata. Staff members in the non-profit 'units' are paid pro rata for the sum of their post salaries plus allowances. The proportions are shown in the following tables.

Table 1. Drawing ratio of pension benefits for civil servants, according to position and rank salary.

Service length	<10 years	10–20 yrs	20–30 yrs	30–35 yrs	>35 yrs
Drawing ratio	40%	60%	75%	82%	88%

Table 2. Drawing ratio of pension benefits for staff in non-profit 'units', salary plus allowance.

Service length	<10 years	10–20 yrs	20–30 yrs	30–35 yrs	>35 yrs
Drawing ratio	50%	70%	80%	85%	90%

From the above tables we can see that there is an appreciable difference between the welfare treatment of civil servants and that of non-profit 'units' staff. Although the drawing ratios of the former are only slightly less than those of the latter, only the first group is qualified to receive both a total basic salary and an additional salary based on length of service.

At present the system covers some 30 million people. To meet the needs involved in the setting up of a socialist market-economy system, the pension insurance system will be reformed accordingly.

Pension insurance in the countryside

Social pension insurance in the countryside is a social policy that is promoted by the Chinese government for the purpose of resolving the problem of elderly peasants. The policy was approved by the State Council in 1991. Its basic principle is that the social security level must be adjusted to the development level of production and with the enduring ability of the parties. Social pension insurance must be combined with family support, land security and social relief. In implementing rural pension insurance, the govern-

ment's role is organisation and leadership; the peasants can choose of their own free will whether or not to participate in the programme. There are three main characteristics of the programme:

1. The necessary funds are contributed mainly by individuals and supplemented by subsidies from the collective with additional support through state policy.
2. The establishment of personal accounts, the implementation of a reserve fund and the determination of the payment criterion in terms of the amount of available funds.
3. The integration of the pension insurance programme among various groups of people in the countryside, including farm workers, peasants and rural merchants, and the implementation of a uniform system with an unchangeable code consistent management of the insured. In short, the programme emphasises the self-reliance of the peasants and does not add to the state's financial burden.

So, social pension insurance in the countryside is more of a self-security system for peasants than a social security system. However, the government has played a crucial role in mobilising, organising and coordinating activities. The programme is still attractive to peasants because of rural family planning, decreasing land resources and the unwillingness of rural young people to support their elderly parents. After ten years' development, there are now some 80 million people in the countryside participating in the programme and pension funds have reached 16 billion yuan of RMB. As a matter of fact, half a million peasants have now begun to draw their pension benefits. In general, there are agencies in all areas of implementation, basically forming six levels within the management system and service network, including department, province, county, town and village.

Supplementary pension insurance of the business enterprises

Supplement pension insurance is the employer's responsibility. It must meet the following conditions: 1) the employer must join the basic pension-insurance programme and have fulfilled its contribution duty; 2) the insurance scheme must be in accord with the basic regulations stipulated by the state. The scheme encourages the individual to share in paying part of the fees. Money from 'units' and individuals are collected together called the 'model of fund planning as a whole' and managed by personal accounts. The money in personal accounts belongs to the individual holding the account. Employees can withdraw the whole amount at one time, or portion out their withdrawals

during their retirement. The money in personal accounts is transferred when the employee changes jobs.

Voluntary-practical social work

Domestic political struggle induced the transformation of the Chinese society and further created the deconstruction of the total state or absolute society. Marketing exchange based on the above has created room for the emergence and development of a truly civilian organisation. Thus, voluntary-practical social work has grown rapidly in China along with the emergence and development of a civilian organisation. Today, there are thousands of voluntary organisations throughout the whole of China. These can be divided into five main categories: the Chinese Youth Volunteer Association, the Chinese Community Volunteer Association, the Chinese Environmentalist Volunteer Association, the Chinese Volunteer Association for the Protection of Endangered Species, and the International Volunteer. Membership in these volunteer organisations may overlap. They have provided a rich and varied voluntary social work practice in a wide range of social work fields. They have promoted social work values, strengthened the reputation of professional social work and laid the foundation for social work education.

Summary

The characteristics of social work in this stage are the following:

- 1) There is an increasing professional identification among traditional social work groups, such as social workers in the civil affair sectors, women league organisations, labour unions and youth league organisations. They share the values and ideas of social work, and seek professional knowledge and basic skills to improve their work.
- 2) Social work education reflects the trends of normalisation, professionalism and globalisation. In the mid- and late 1990s, the Chinese Association of Social Workers and the Chinese Association of Social Work Education were established. These organisations promote the establishment of norms of behaviour for social workers in social work education. Along with greater academic exchange and increasing international contacts in the field of social work, Chinese social work education is striding towards globalisation but in accordance with conditions at the local level.
- 3) Teaching social work values and doing fieldwork are highly regarded by most social work institutions. Social work educators at different levels regard the teaching of values as the basis for social work and regard fieldwork as the key

element in training social work skills.

- 4) The continued development of Chinese social work is limited by the degree of development of the Chinese social welfare system. As the Chinese economy attains the level of the developed countries, the Chinese social welfare system will necessarily become more stable and more financially viable. So, as the delivery system for social welfare, social work in China has a tremendous market.

Conclusions

- The road to development of social work in China is a steep one with many twists and turns. In less than 100 years Chinese social work has experienced all three stages of the 'positive-negative-integrative' pattern of development, which in Hegelian philosophy is believed to be universal.
- The political context for Chinese social work has changed over the years, as well, with the result that the social work discourse has also changed, not only between eras but also within one and the same era. This makes it a very challenging task to analyse the historical development and features of contemporary Chinese social work.
- Chinese social work is still in its elementary developmental stage; it is still seeking to achieve a balance between the two poles of globalisation and localisation. To fully grasp the current discourse on Chinese social work, one must apply the principles of discourse analysis even on the local level.
- Social work in China has a tremendous market in both the public and private sectors. As with the development of the social security system, institutional social work in China is expected to make great progress in the near future. In both the public and private sectors, the goals of social work are to enhance the Chinese people's standard of living.
- In the last analysis, the development of Chinese social work depends on increased professionalisation and a more profound institutionalisation. By mid-century, Chinese social work can be expected to have attained its goals in these two respects.

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