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Social work in Taiwan
A historical and critical review

● **Yueh-Ching Chou, Muhammad M. Haj-Yahia, Frank T.Y. Wang and Li-yeh Fu**

The terms 'international social work', 'multicultural social work' and 'indigenization of social work' have been discussed extensively in the literature. Social work in Taiwan, like its social policy programs, is influenced by both global and local forces (Harris and Chou, 2001). In this connection, Ahmadi (2003) argued that just as international politics and economics have transcended national boundaries, welfare policy and social work practice have also transcended national and cultural boundaries (2003: 14). Social work in developing countries has been molded and shaped by western societies (Kendall, 1986; Midgley, 1990; Nagpaul, 1972; Resnick, 1976; Walton and El Nasr, 1988). However, even if social work may appear to be similar in countries throughout the world, the context and content of social workers' roles and approaches may vary radically in different countries. Hence, it is possible that even if social work will continue to be increasingly influenced by international trends, the indigenization and awareness of the specific contexts will still be affected by national and local trends, including political, historical, economic and social developments in individual countries.

The development of social work in Taiwan has been influenced by the government's social welfare policies. Moreover, the early stage of social work development has been mixed with its social welfare development. Notably, social work and social welfare development

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in the island have been affected by historical, economic, political and global trends.

Taiwan has been called 'the state of the miracle' (Dessus et al., 1995; Gold, 1986) particularly because of its economic development since the 1950s. By contrast, the development of social welfare in Taiwan has been ignored in the past four decades (Gold, 1986; Lin, 1991). In addition, social welfare was never delivered as part of the government's bureaucracy until the 1990s, when Taiwan became a new democratic country and major social changes occurred following the abolition of martial law (Gold, 1986; Chang, 1995). Besides the historical, economic, political and social factors that have affected the professional characteristics of social workers in Taiwan, global developments and the increasing numbers of foreign workers and brides from abroad have also had a major impact (Tseng, 2002).

To begin the discussion, the historical background and a description of the characteristics of the profession, together with the current problems and challenges facing social work in Taiwan, will be outlined. The analysis presented in this article is based on the following main sources:

1. a literature review of publications on professional aspects of social work in Taiwan;
2. a content analysis of laws, regulations and other official publications;
3. secondary analysis of data from various sources, including the central governmental bureaus of Taiwan; and
4. personal experiences and observations in local frameworks of professional practice and training.

Historical context of social work in Taiwan

According to Lin (2002), social work was introduced in Taiwan through secondary diffusion, due to its specific historical background. Western social work was brought to Japan during the Japanese colonial period in Taiwan (1895–1945), and adapted in Taiwan from 1910 to the 1930s. After the Second World War, Taiwan became part of the Republic of China (ROC); and after the civil war, in 1949, the ROC moved to Taiwan. During that period, social work was introduced in Taiwan through the ROC government by scholars who were the pioneers of the profession in China. Before the ROC resigned from the UN in 1971, during the 1950s and 1960s the USA played a significant role in developing social work systems in Taiwan, based on the relations between Chiang Kai-shek and the coalition countries in the Second World War. In addition to community development, major national welfare policies were established as part of international programs sponsored by the UN. Some social work professionals came to Taiwan to assist with curriculum design for social work training programs; and other practitioners received grants from UN projects for social work training in the USA. With the advent of capitalist economics in the 1970s, social work education was influenced by a UN-sponsored United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) project in 1971.

Medical social work was the first field of social work practice in Taiwan. In 1959, a social service department was established in the Taipei Hospital (now renamed Taipei City Chang-shin Hospital), and the practitioners referred to themselves as social workers for the first time. The Christian Children Fund (subsequently renamed the Chinese Children Fund, CCF) and World Vision were pioneers in introducing professional social workers into Taiwan in the early 1960s (Jan, 2001). Notably, the professional social worker system was far more advanced in private service delivery at that time, and was at least 20 years ahead of the public sector. The Taiwan Provincial Government launched experimental projects in the professional social work system in 1967, but did not implement them until the mid-1980s. One experimental project linked with community development and welfare policies for combating poverty, was known as the Shao-Kang Scheme ('a little well-to-do society') and An-Kang Scheme ('a secure and healthy society') and was initiated in the early 1970s (Lin, 1991). Moreover, prior to the 1990s the teaching staff of social work departments at universities and colleges in Taiwan consisted mainly of people who had received their MSW or doctoral degrees in the USA. Under the circumstances, social work in Taiwan – including the educational programs and course curricula – as well as field placement and guidelines for practice – was largely modeled after the USA.

The year 1980 was regarded as a significant landmark in the development of social welfare in Taiwan. Three laws – the law for the elderly, the social assistance law and the law for the disabled – were enacted and implemented in the same year. During the 1980s, and especially towards the end of that decade, a growing number

of social movements emerged as a result of the process of political democratization and following the formation of the opposition Democratic Progress Party (DPP). In the spirit of these social movements, the welfare for the disabled movement was promoted by various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that sought to mobilize assistance for disabled people. This support took the form of public campaigning and lobbying among legislators. As a result of these efforts, the welfare law for the disabled was amended, and additional resources were allocated for the establishment of welfare institutions for them. Furthermore, NGOs were integrated as major partners of the official welfare system (Jan, 2001; Hsiao and Sun, 2000). In short, the 1980s can be seen as a decade of welfare transformation in Taiwan, which was aimed at meeting the growing needs that emerged out of social and political differentiation, and especially as a response to pressure for welfare services from the opposition party.

In the 1990s, privatization became the major trend in the welfare service system and the Act of Local Self-Government was issued in 1999. A formal system was established for licensing professional social workers in 1997 with the enactment of the Professional Social Workers Law. Thus, in order to contract services to the central or local government, private service organizations were required to recruit professional social workers with recognized licenses. As a result of policies of welfare privatization and decentralization, which partially reflect the concept of welfare pluralism, private agencies and institutions have substantially increased their share of the service delivery market over the past decade, and account for more than half of the services provided in some domains. Owing to the prevalence of private service delivery, management of non-profit and non-governmental welfare organizations has become one of the core subjects in social welfare and social work studies at Taiwan universities (Jan, 2001). Following the revocation of martial law in 1987, non-profit organizations serving vulnerable people have become one of the main occupational markets for social workers. Concomitantly, since Taiwan became a democratic country with a president elected by the people in 1997, the government is obliged to concern itself with the social needs of the population. Thus, the workload of employees in the social affairs departments of both central and local authorities has been expanded, and the majority of workers have a formal background in social work education.

Characteristics of social work in Taiwan

The knowledge base of social work

Wang (2002) and Chien (2004) have noted that social work education in Taiwan is embedded in the country's colonial character, just as political and economic aspects of social work have been modeled after the USA, including textbooks, curricula and professional systems such as licensing. During the 1970s, social work focused on casework and social welfare administration; the textbooks on group and community social work were not published until the 1980s. In the 1980s, in accordance with the Standards for the Classification of Social Work Practice in the USA, social work at the college level required basic knowledge and compulsory courses such as: Introduction to Social Work, Casework, Group Work, Community Organization and Development, Human Behavior and Environment, Social Statistics, Social Work Research, Social Welfare Administration, Social Policy and Law, Psychology, Sociology, Social Psychology and Social Work Practicum (Lin, 2002). Higher-education regulations require all students at the undergraduate level to complete 128 credits (eight semesters) of coursework in four years.

Since the 1990s, social work indigenization has been concerned with the indigenous social work society of Taiwan. Additionally, since the late 1990s, academic exchange programs between Taiwan and China have attracted citizens of both countries because they are conducted in the same language. Towards this end, their new curricula include courses dealing with issues that relate to the social context of Taiwan, such as Taiwan Society, Local Psychology, Religion and Social Work, Vulnerable Groups and Social Work Ethics, Policy and Welfare Services for Aboriginal People, Anthropology, Asian Society, Mainland China Study, Woman and Laws (Sha, 2002).

Professional education and ethics

Formal training and professional social work experience are acquired primarily at accredited colleges and universities as well as at accredited professional schools, at the undergraduate (BSW) level as well as in MSW and doctoral programs. Regarding the current social work education system in Taiwan, data from the Ministry of Education reveal that there are 75 universities and 70 colleges. Up to 2004, 24 of these universities and colleges provided training at the BSW level for social work practitioners with a total enrollment of

nearly 2000 students each year. Fifteen universities provide Masters' programs, and four universities offer PhD programs in social work or social welfare (Sha, 2002). Before the 1970s, social work training was part of the Department of Sociology. Today, the number of social work departments exceeds that of sociology departments. Altogether, there are about 210 full-time faculty positions at social work departments in universities, and 63 percent have a PhD degree (Peng, 2002).

Following the enactment of the Professional Social Workers Law, a code of ethics for social workers was drawn up in 1998 by the Ministry of Interior, ROC. With the establishment of the National Licensed Social Workers (NLSW) organization, the members were required to have a qualified license; in 2002, the code was amended based on the 18th article of the Social Workers Law. The current code contains 18 regulations that licensed social workers are required to follow.

Professional organization and remuneration
The first professional social work organization in Taiwan was the Medical Social Work Association of ROC, founded in 1983 by a group that consisted of medical social workers. The National Association of Social Workers (currently known as the Taiwan Association of Social Workers, TASW) was established in 1989 by practitioners and academic scholars in the field of social work. Today, the TASW is the main professional social work association in Taiwan; it has promoted legislation for a professional licensing system and a code of professional ethics for social workers (TASW, 2003). Three more associations were organized in the 1990s: the Taiwan Association of Social Work Education, the Taiwan Association of Social Policy and the Taiwan Social Welfare Association. Based on the regulations of the 1997 Social Workers Law, the Association of Licensed Social Workers was established locally in 1999 and the Nationwide Association of Licensed Social Workers was established in 2002.

The numbers of the social work departments including postgraduate programs at the universities and colleges have been growing rapidly since the 1994 higher-education revolution. The number of social workers with academic training has increased in response to needs emanating from the growth of NGOs. Government data indicate that social workers employed in NGOs receive lower wages than their counterparts in the public sector, and social workers employed in hospitals (medical social workers), particularly the hos-

pitals run by the governments, receive higher wages than social workers employed in NGOs and governmental bureaus of social welfare.

Public recognition of social work
It can be suggested that the relationship between the public and the social work profession is different from in the west: Taiwanese people rely on their families and do not perceive intervention in family affairs as part of the state's role. Many would even prefer to consult fortune-tellers than social workers. However, there are indications of an increased value being placed on the role of social workers as evidenced in, for example, Chou's study (1994) of services for abused women and later, the recognition of the role of the profession in response to the earthquake in 1999. Following the enactment of the Social Workers Law, April 2 has been declared as an annual Social Work Day in the ROC by the Ministry of Interior, as part of an effort to promote social work values and social welfare concepts among the public and to enhance the professional status of social workers.

The challenges of social work development in Taiwan

Gaps in the social work community and between social work and society
Research conducted by Chou in 2002 reveals several obstacles to the development of social work in Taiwan, such as limited self-reflection and cooperation between the academic educators and practitioners; limited linkage between academic training and practical needs; and lack of regard for the development of social work in the external political and social environment.

Most of the social workers practising in the field are young, inexperienced people who have recently completed their academic training. Moreover, most of the academic instructors received their postgraduate training in western countries. Thus, the material they use in their courses is published in English, and deals with western social contexts such as those of the USA and the UK (Sha, 2002; Shen, 2002; Tseng, 2002).

Generally, Taiwanese social policies are based on selective ideologies, and social workers, particularly those working in governmental bureaus, have become investigators or gatekeepers of welfare eligibility. Notably, academic training is more concerned with social administration and policy-making than with the development of

practical skills. In doctoral programs, for example, preference is given to courses on social policy. Especially since 1987, when martial law was revoked, governments, politicians and political parties have focused on welfare policies. Social work practice and clinical social work, by contrast, have been ignored in academic training programs for social work as well as in society at large, where clinical social workers receive low wages and their positions are marginal (Chou, 2002).

Excluded from international social work

Taiwan is in a difficult position with regard to international relations because it has not been identified as an independent state. This has meant that it has been excluded from the UN since 1971 and is barred from membership of international organizations, such as WHO. This has impacted directly on social workers because of the non-recognition by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) (which normally limits membership to one national association per country). This situation resulted in a lack of international support for Taiwanese communities and social workers at the time of both a major earthquake (1999) and the SARS outbreak (2003).

According to the international definition of social work, the values of social work are as follows: 'Social work grew out of humanitarian and democratic ideals, and its values are based on respect for the equality, worth, and dignity of all people' (Hare, 2004; IFSW, 2006). It seems that social work values can be applied inside a country, but cannot be practiced between countries. The question arises whether scholars have addressed this issue or discussed the stress that results from such a nationalistic perspective. Additionally, it should be noted that the values of 'humanitarian and democratic ideals' and 'respect for the equality, worth, and dignity of all people' are selective and conditional. Therefore, social workers in Taiwan also feel they face discrimination by international social work networks. In this situation, Taiwan experiences challenges in the attempt to develop international support networks that will help its social workers face the new and global social problems.

Indigenization of social work

Undoubtedly, social work in Taiwan was imported from western societies, and followed the model of the USA in particular, as discussed earlier. However, social workers have begun to question whether western thinking and approaches are appropriate for the needs of the local people. The issue of finding a balance between

the globalization and the localization of social work has been discussed in recent symposiums and literature (Chien, 2004; Leu, 2002).

Gray (2005: 232) proposed that 'indigenization is essentially about culture'. Consistent with that argument, we propose that social work in Taiwan is similar to social work developed in China, and that both contexts are different from the western model of social work (Cheung and Liu, 2004). Paradoxically, western social work knowledge and approaches were adopted in the context of Taiwanese people and culture, which are fundamentally different in many ways. In light of this situation, we still need to invest considerable effort in developing conceptual frameworks and structures for organizing social work principles and practices that are appropriate for the unique sociocultural context of Taiwan.

Conclusion

The development of social work in Taiwan over the past 50 years can be divided into different stages, which were influenced by national and international contexts. Today, Taiwan has become a highly developed country, after being a third-world colony of Japan for 50 years. In the early stage of development, social workers in Taiwan, just like social workers in the developing countries, assumed leading roles in governmental social development programs, such as projects aimed at raising the standard of living in deprived communities. Furthermore, social development programs in Taiwan, like other world policies, have previously been sponsored by the UN. Up to the past decade, Taiwanese social workers were also restricted by a severe shortage of resources (Midgley, 1990, 1991). The issues of multicultural or cross-cultural social work have also become important for social workers in Taiwan, who have been engaging increasingly in practice with clients from various ethnic backgrounds and cultures. This realization has also created an awareness of the need for more social work education on multicultural knowledge and practice in Taiwan.

Chou's study (2002) indicates that, on the whole, the social work profession has not had a significant influence on society in Taiwan and has yet to attain social legitimization. Despite the significant opportunities discussed in this article (the revocation of martial law in 1987, the establishment of the NASW in 1989, the establishment of social work licensing in 1997, and the involvement in post-disaster work, such as the 1999 earthquake and the SARS epidemic

in 2003), social work has yet to establish professional values that are appropriate for the people of Taiwan.

Besides these efforts, social work in Taiwan faces many more challenges, such as how to establish partnerships between academic scholars and practitioners in the field; promote collaboration in dealing with social needs; raise public awareness of social workers; give support to the practitioners' experiences building up Taiwanese practice wisdom in social work; raise consciousness of the global influences on the economic and social context of Taiwan (Chou, 2002; Leu, 2002; Lin, 2002; Shen, 2002). In addition, although western scholars are currently making efforts to raise the consciousness of social work in international contexts (Ahmadi, 2003; Drucker, 2003; Gray, 2005; Midgley, 1990), practitioners, educators, researchers and relevant organizations in the Taiwanese social work community need to cooperate in efforts aimed at broadening international networks on the one hand while meeting local needs on the other.

Notes

In order to explore the developmental obstacles of the social work profession in Taiwan, the study utilized focus groups and mail surveys to collect data. Participants in the study were practitioners, policy-makers and social work educators.

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i s w

Using Foucault's concept of power to analyze school discipline and draw implications for school social work service in Hong Kong

● Siu-ming To

This article draws on Michel Foucault's conception of power to provide a new frame of reference to explain how power relations exist in school discipline and contribute to the constitution of students' and teachers' subjectivities. It is argued that such a perspective can help school social workers enhance their reflexivity and promote empowering practices. Education is a global issue affecting young people's welfare and future trajectory in life: it is the subject of considerable public attention and also that of the social service sector. School discipline is one of the contentious topics in education. There have been many discussions of school discipline, including issues such as corporal punishment and harsh discipline policies. Most discourses focus on the complex situation faced by teachers and the continual intensification of student misbehavior, as well as on the effectiveness of different strategies or methods in working with disruptive students (Adams, 2000; Farmer, 1999; Mayer, 2001; Roland and Galloway, 2002). A review of the literature reveals that there have been few studies on the nature of school discipline, especially the connection between school discipline and its social control function. Similar to the western experience, there has been little attempt to address this issue in Hong Kong-based studies.