

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK IN POST DISASTER AREAS: EXPERIENCE FROM THE HOPE SCHOOL PROJECT IN CHINA

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Abstract. The China Youth Development Foundation (CYDF), China Association of Social Work Education (CASEW), and Hong Kong Keswick Foundation (HKKF) conducted the Hope School Project which raised funds to help the students in the disaster area return to school and provided professional school social work services after the Sichuan earthquake in 2008. This project lasted for three years and gained substantial procedural and empirical evidence on the benefits of disaster relief, post-disaster reconstruction, and school social work services. Due to the similarity between Vietnam and China, there are some aspects of this school social work model worthy of consideration. Vietnam has the chance to consider models from around the world in designing a model of school social work best fitted to the Vietnamese context where schools are recognized as a key area for developing national wellbeing.

Keywords: School social work, social work, social work model, social work practice, post-disaster Vietnam, China.

1. Introduction

In most industrialised countries, school social work is part of the school system. School social work first appeared in the United States which has an extensive history dating back to 1906–1907. In Europe, Norway and Sweden established school social work in the 1940s, then followed by Denmark and Finland in the 1950s. Later in Asia, South Korea, Hong Kong and Japan began to pay attention to school social work in the 1980s and 1990s [1]. The development of school social work in these developed countries showed that school social work was established in addressing every emerging issues among the young generation. If the school counselor focuses on providing individual and group counseling for students and their families to meet the developmental needs of young children and adolescents, school social work have a more comprehensive approach. They work with teachers, family and community to address issues related to students. Social workers like a bridge between students' families and the school, between parents, guardians and teachers and other school officials (including school counselors) to ensure

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that students get their personal and academic potential. Additionally, they advise teachers on how to cope with difficult students [1]. However, in Vietnam, school social work is still a new concept after the Vietnamese government through MOLISA (Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs) officially classified social work as a profession in 2010 [2].

As a tropical depression in the East Sea, Vietnam is significantly affected by climate change and natural disasters. Over the past 20 years, natural disasters resulted in the loss of over 13,000 lives, and annual damage equivalent to an average of 1% of the gross domestic product (GDP) [3]. Despite considerable attention and efforts on school safety and disaster preparedness, there is growing evidence of the negative impacts of natural disasters on the education sector. Schools tend to collapse physically, causing injury and life-loss among children in areas prone to disasters [4]. The main subjects involved in social assistance and disaster relief activities in Vietnam are the staff of the government departments and other social, political organizations [5,6]. Services are provided mainly through administrative channels with few professional social work intervention methods. Disaster victims typically obtain money and material assistance but rarely receive counseling services and advice on reconstructing social functions. The purpose of this paper is to explore the construction school social model work on the project of disaster relief schools after the Sichuan earthquake in China. As a consequence, that could be a useful experience in helping to design professional school social work interventions to respond to school-specific hazards in the Vietnamese context.

2. Content

2.1. A literature review

There are several studies have demonstrated that social work plays an important role in the process of disaster relief and post-disaster reconstruction is among the key areas of social work practice [7,8,9]. Social workers have a unique and outstanding contribution to create and provide resources and professional services to vulnerable groups including children who met post-traumatic stress after a disaster [10,11].

Various countries and regions have adopted school social work service models based on different social contexts and situations derived from many years of practice. The school social work models are diverse worldwide (Table 1). Europe is the birthplace of school social work [12]. Western countries pay more attention to technology and the effect of implementing clinical services based on the systematic, organized, and legalized development of Western social work. The research results and service methods of Western school social work are difficult to directly apply in China [13]. The school social work service trend changed from 'traditional clinical' to 'systematical change' [14]. Alderson (1972) indicated the social work practical models used by schools in the United States, namely, the traditional clinical model, school change model, community school model, and social interaction model [15]. Costin (1975) proposed a school-community-pupil relations model based on system theory, which emphasizes the strengthening of interactions among schools, communities, and students [16]. This model focuses on the running defects of schools, on the shortcomings of families and society, and on changing the deficiencies of the students' qualities. Frey and Dupper (2005) proposed a more comprehensive school social work

service model called the broader clinical approach and clinical quadrant model [17] This service model is a typical mode of integration that was highly refined and re-configured to four kinds of school social work operation modes before the 1980s. First, the model attempts to go beyond the traditional clinical model, which is microscopic, exhibits narrow remediation, and displays biased thinking. Second, it intends to use an intermediated and one-sided fragment of the community–school model, which focuses on the periphery, and the school transition model, which focuses on the inner part. Third, it promotes the inclusion of integration orientation and intermediation mechanism into the social interaction modes. A wide clinical pattern is considered the basic orientation for school social work practice in the 21st century [17].

Models review of school social work service

Model	Target group	Work focus	Services	Service method
<i>Traditional clinical model</i>	Students and parents.	Helping students solve problems and restore their social function	Focusing on the personal growth of students	Case work and group work
<i>School–community model</i>	Schools and communities	Creating a quality community environment in schools.	Adopting an ecological perspective to promote two-way change in communities and schools.	Case work, group work, community work, and outreach
<i>Social interaction model</i>	Interaction between students and society.	Eliminating barriers between youth and society, creating an interactive mechanism, and improving this interactive mechanism.	Improving the health of students and the community; Promoting active communication mechanisms and models; Promoting the sharing of resources between students and the community.	Case work, group work, community work, social work administration, and other integrated services approach
<i>Wide clinical quadrant mode</i>	Students of individuals, groups, and even the school system	Using micro and macro interventions to help students and families.	Promoting change in students and families by changing the environment.	Micro-social work methods and macro-social work methods

School social work system in China used these above experiences for construction and implementation of their model. Currently, China focuses on the construction of a macro-social work that implements a clinical service model. Therefore, the Hope Social Work Services analyzed and applied mainly school social work practice models in the United States. While in Vietnam teachers and students who major in social work have never supported and offered social work services to primary and middle schools in disaster areas.

2.2. A project of school social work in Sichuan, China

Background of the project: The Chinese government started to promote the training of professional social work since 2006 [23]. With the support of social work policies, all localities and departments have issued the regional policy to pilot and promote the development of social work [24]. In China, the deadly earthquake that ravaged Sichuan and its surrounding regions on 12 May 2008 was recorded to have one of the highest casualty rates in modern Chinese history which led to 87,449 people perished (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2009). A total of 13,616 educational institutions were estimated to be fully or partially damaged [25]. According to official records, 5,335 students died or went missing, and another 546 students suffered sustained severe injuries [26]. On 20 April 2013, another earthquake struck the city of Ya'an in Sichuan. This earthquake caused 193 deaths, 25 people to go missing, and injured 12,211 people [27]. The earthquakes badly damaged the teaching and studying environments of primary and secondary schools. They also damaged the minds, feelings, and emotions of teachers and students. Schools were seen as the center of crisis intervention, prevention, and assessment during this period. Therefore, The China Youth Development Foundation (CYDF), China Association of Social Work Education (CASEW), and Hong Kong Keswick Foundation (HKKF) conducted a Social Work Volunteer Service Project which raised funds to help the students in the disaster area return to school as soon as possible, and provided professional school social work services. This project lasted for three years and gained substantial procedural and empirical evidence on the benefits of disaster relief, post-disaster reconstruction, and school social work services.

The research methods: The researchers worked as supervisors, educators, and practical social workers. The researchers studied the changing process of school social work services and intervention strategies, how social work service could play a leading role in system construction, how the existing education system could avoid alienating the professional service concept of social work, and how the methods and modes of professional services could meet the needs of the Chinese local welfare service.

The aim of the project: This project provided services and support to professional volunteer service social work teams from nine universities by applying social work administration concepts and methods. Project management involved personnel selection, professional training, service expansion, external communication, and seminars.

Participants: In two and a half years, there were 73 social workers participated in disaster relief school social work. Casework services were offered for 1983 students and families. Group work was offered to 876 persons, and lectures were provided to 342

classes. A total of 139 lectures, 84 school activities, 401 class meetings, 110 community practices, and 99 indirect services were likewise conducted. The numbers of people who benefited from the various forms of services were 10,800 from September to December 2008, 39,292 in 2009, and 34,144 in 2010 [27]. All the services had 84,236 beneficiaries in total including school students, graduate students, mutual school services, school teachers, retired teachers, schools, city education department administrators, parents, neighborhood and community residents, co-workers, and teachers and students who participated in the training activities. CASWE held eight professional training sessions for social workers, including post-disaster stress relief, post-disaster crisis intervention, the training of social work professional intervention of disastrous events, project description and sharing of practical experience, and group work in disaster resilience.

Project process: There are three stages in this project, namely, voluntary service, model exploration and model construction. The first stage aims to determine the developmental strategy that enables the cooperation with other organizations, to meet the needs of schools during a disaster, to conduct direct service, to establish professional relationships with clients, and to meet the needs of the clients. In the second stage, the social workers offered local service to help local students recover from the disaster. The project principally aimed to explore the model of school social work regarding object orientation, operational model, and profession development. In the third stage, with the clearance of service objects and service content, more attention is paid to reviewing the service process and exploring the service mode. The Chinese researches did their best to study the pilot classes and caseworks to extract and gradually transplant a feasible and suitable service model of school social work in the disaster area.

2.3. Service model of school social work in Sichuan

Service contents: The Chinese researchers divide the main social work services of the Disaster Relief School into four quadrants, namely, A, B, C, and D in which: 1) Clients in Quadrant A are an individual and small group, maybe students or teachers. The field of service extended to communities. The target of this quadrant is to create a quality community environment. 2) Clients in Quadrant B are the same clients of Quadrant B. Services for this quadrant are carried out in schools. Many school social workers regard it as a traditional clinical model; 3) Clients in Quadrant C extend to the big group of parents and residents. The target of the quadrant is to reform the institution of school by the opening; 4) The target of Quadrant D is to promote social mechanism.

With the development of the project, the content of the service of Quadrant A, B, and C are from the *traditional clinical model* to a broader platform. Basing on the four above quadrants, the researchers arranged the services in the specifically as follows:

Traditional clinical model: The team helps students determine the processing capacity of interpersonal communications and relationships with others (teachers, parents, students as clients); deals with problems and difficulties in personal growth, counsels students about their academic and extracurricular activities as well as their needs on other aspects. The specific services include life education, adolescent sex education, planning career and counseling students in rural areas, service of rural children left behind groups, service for students who have learning difficulties, and post-disaster psychological counseling intervention.

The school–community model: Social workers establish the organization platform for parental services in schools. Such a platform is called the *home–school committee* and is set up in new schools for rural parents in the community. It focuses on the home–school relationship, parent–child relationship, community-based home care and rescue, parental education concepts, and method enhancement. Social workers offer workshops and training for parents, parenting groups, home visits, and other services on a regular basis. The major services likewise include the establishment of community libraries, advisory for community parents, the organization of a safety education exhibition of the earthquake disaster, after-school care, family holiday amusement parks, community concerts, and other service projects. These services are offered to allow them to gradually take root in the community and affect the upbringing of children and rearing philosophy of families.

Intervention process: The intervention strategies and steps of the project are given as follows: *Steps:*

1. Analysis of the situation and needs
2. Develop strategic objectives of cooperation:- To explore common goals; - Formation work for the win - win result expectations; - Connection point of the pursuit of organizational goals and individual objectives.
3. Choosing the right clients and partners: - Necessary conditions (space, number, nature of the problem); - Clear goals (feasibility, benefits, effects).

Strategies: 1. Communication and coordination; 2. Respect, equality, trust, and mutual assistance (principles of management of personnel relations with the parties); 3. Assessment, implementation (needs, coordination of resources, power, action, and coordination); 4. Services and assessment of the effectiveness

Service methods: A variety of services methods in the form of casework and group work, consultation services, teacher lectures, class meetings, school open day, community work, social worker classes, and social worker tabloids substantially increased.

1) *School-based methods:* This project is based in schools and promotes the comprehensive use of multi-disciplinary theories and knowledge, as well as multi-service methods, such as cases, groups, and community activities.

The group work method: The social worker's design and implement group work plans. The plans are rich in topics, contents, and forms. The theme of group activities focuses on the relationships of students with themselves, the school, their families, and the community as a whole. Social workers likewise design service plans that cover student self-identity, academic progress, self-confidence, emotional management, adolescent education, thanksgiving education, life education, potential mining, team communication and collaboration, and social values education. Moreover, social workers focus on the needs of left-behind children and disabled students. They change the prejudices and discrimination of teachers and students toward disadvantaged students. Group work may *have limited efficiency regarding meeting the many needs of clients*. The social workers improved the ideological and moral education courses, as their teaching philosophy and influences were poor. They used these courses and

designed class activities with group work methods, which were popular with school leaders and students.

Casework: the Chinese school social workers developed a casework method on Chinese characteristics called *social workers' mailbox*. This casework focuses on the characteristic shyness of Chinese students regarding talking about personal problems with others face-to-face. This conversation method is conducted through paper instead of in person. From September 2008 to the end of 2009, social workers received 379 letters from students. Among these letters, 67 were about their studies, 131 were on interpersonal relationships (i.e. relationship with classmates, friends, teachers, parents, etc.), 50 on growth confusion, ten on advice, 88 on feedback, and 33 on other aspects [27]. The service team conducted some procedural explorations. They clarified the mailbox service concept and determined the reply stationery templates, service procedures, reply content structure, and management model. The ideas of the mailbox service strictly adhere to the philosophy and values of social workers. The reply letters *highlight the principles of respect, acceptance, non-judgment, and confidentiality*. The structure of the response letters for social work is as follows: acknowledgement, clarification, analysis, suggestions, expectations, and wishes. They *used their professional knowledge and ethical rules* to response letters with respecting the personal privacy of students.

2) Community-based methods:

Family-Students relationship: The social workers discovered that the students and their families face a variety of issues and misunderstandings, particularly in the aspect of education. Chinese social workers committed to promoting the establishment of the parents' committee. However, the effectiveness of this committee depends on good service, which is closely related to the support of parents. The parents of students in the primary school of Tian Yuan Town Center in De Yang City rented a three-story building for the establishment of a *Love Island network* of community service in schools around the new villages. This *Love Island* became a platform that links schools, communities, and families. The expansion of the service space from the school to the community resulted in important changes in the community. Students no longer lacked concern and attention after school. The working focus of social worker groups likewise changed from addressing student learning difficulties, interpersonal barriers, and issues (e.g. parent-child relationship alienation) early in the project to providing growth and development services for students and parents in the school and the community. The series of lectures, life education courses, and community care services gradually changed the old notions of students, parents, and teachers, which allowed them to think and determine their needs through social work services. The needs of parents would be further stimulated, and the understanding and need for professional social work of the parents will be analyzed.

School-community relationship: The links of interactions and resources still exist between schools and communities in disaster areas even after the social workers have left the schools. Moreover, this project gradually changed the measures of treatment from curative into preventive care after the earthquake. At the end of the project, CASWE and CYDF jointly established *the Hope School Social Work Service Center* in

the city of Guangyuan in Sichuan Province. The local government and CYDF jointly funded the purchase of *school social work services* and provided *office space for activities and intern accommodation*. The Hope School, Social Work Service Center, provides direct social work services for the 14 primary and secondary schools in the school stationed approach as well as integrated services to the community and families. From conducting school disaster relief social work services to establishing civil school social work service organizations, school social work is becoming more systematic, institutionalized, and specialized in China.

Service staff: There are three ways to choose staff to operate in this school social work model:

The first operation way is the formation of a school pattern by utilizing the ‘1+2+3’ mode. This mode involved *one supervisor, two social workers, and three local teachers*. Teachers were trained to become social workers through on-job learning. Through this approach, teachers could obtain the required qualifications of social workers.

The second operation mode involves the establishment of a mode outside the school. In this mode, *institutions outside schools provide social workers, and schools hire the social workers by availing of their services*. Schools could choose social workers with different backgrounds according to the needs of the schools in different phases.

The third operation mode involves the establishment of the transitional mode. In this mode, *teachers are trained to become social workers* who are capable of combining ideological and moral education as an emergency measure. However, *training local teachers is difficult* because the teachers are too busy with part-time work and social-work service training.

Results: Overall, the Hope School social work service effectively achieved the service goals and satisfactory results. The mood of the students changed, and their happiness was enhanced. Academic performance, teacher–student relationships, parental relationships, and student relationships were improved. Educational philosophy, personal feelings, and work and psychological pressure of teachers were significantly alleviated. School social work brought a new atmosphere to the school. The campus atmosphere, educational concepts, updating of methods, resource linking, social support, and other aspects achieved significant development and breakthroughs [27].

3. Conclusion

Education must be available to all children, whatever the challenges presented by children with different abilities, diverse backgrounds and wide-ranging problems. These challenges increasingly require a team approach with support personnel bringing diverse expertise into schools to reach educational goals. Social workers have a key role as partners with educators in guiding children and youth to reach their potential intellectually, emotionally and socially. School social workers work with young people and their school and family environments, assisting them to accomplish tasks associated with their learning, growth, and development, and thus to come to a fuller realization of their intrinsic dignity, capability, and potential. The three-year service experience of the Hope School social work project shows that promoting the development of school social work requires additional efforts. These factors include the role of social workers, the

fusion mechanism between social work services and school departments, the establishment of additional school social work-related rules and norms, service standards, and professional guidance, and the personnel selection of new performance evaluation and incentives. Awareness of this research and practice could be a good experience for developing a model of school social work in post-disaster in Vietnam.

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