



## An Analysis of the Localization of School Social Work in the Chinese Mainland: Comparison among Three Patterns in Operation

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### Abstract

School social work is in its infancy in China, yet it has its special advantages in overcoming some increasingly evident social problems among contemporary college students, and it has become the necessary supplement to strengthening and promoting the ideological and political education in colleges and universities. According to the ownership of school social workers, this paper classifies them into three categories: engagement pattern out of school system, coexisting pattern within school system, and integration pattern within school system. After thorough SWOT analysis, the author puts forward that the integration pattern within school system is the best choice for the localization of school social work in China.

**Keywords:** School social work, Localization, Pattern

School social work is a loan-word, which refers to a kind of professional serving activity. The school social workers apply the theory, approach and skill of social work to school circumstance to promote the harmonious cooperation of school, family and community, aiming at improving the condition of teaching and learning in school, helping students overcome the difficulties in growing up, and guiding them to pursue individualized education and life-oriented education, forming socialized personality, acquiring the ability to adjust to the present and future life. In this way, school social work can help to achieve the goal of school education.

We can take a look at the relationship between the school social work and the ideological and political education in college: on the values, they possess the same ones; on the approaches, they can draw on the experience of each other; and on the effect, they can make a good complement to each other, all of which provide a reasonable theoretical premise of the localization of school social work. According to the operating experience of school social work in developed countries and areas, and the operating pattern of the student work in higher education institutions in our country, there can be three patterns of the localization of school social work in China: engagement pattern out of school system—the institution of school social work exists out of the school system; coexisting pattern within school system—colleges and

universities set up independent institution of school social work; integration pattern within school system—combining school social work with ideological and political education work in colleges and universities.

### **1. Engagement pattern out of school system**

This is a commonly used pattern in many developed countries and in Hong Kong, Taiwan. The school social workers belong to the specialized institution of government or the Third Sector, and they are specialized and professional social workers. They are engaged by school or arranged by government (buying their service) to conduct social work to solve the practical problems in school. Under this pattern, school social work is not operated within, but out of the school system. The relationship between school and school social workers are engaging and engaged, and the school social workers are not the members of the school. Hong Kong's "one school with one social worker" follows this pattern.

The advantages of this pattern: the social workers engaged by school come from professional institution and they must undergo strict specialized training, and obtain professional certificate recognized by government or special professional organization. They can provide specialized and efficient service to specific problems. Meanwhile, the school can supervise and assess whenever necessary the quality and the level of their service, according to which the school can determine whether to continue to engage them or not. It increases the school's choice of social workers and can guarantee the efficiency and the degree of the solution of social problems for college students.

However, there still exist many practical difficulties for the Mainland of China to adopt this pattern. On the one hand, school social work hasn't won the general recognition in higher education institutions. Although some colleges and universities open such related courses, yet school social work hasn't been adopted officially and genuinely. On the other hand, some progresses have been made in professional social work education, yet as the third sector in society, social work service institution is still in its infancy and it has a long way to go to become mature. The slow development of non-government organization hinders the school engaging or the government buying this specialized social service. Besides, even the school is willing to accept and engage social workers, but due to the large number of schools, the present school social workers can't meet the demand of every school, that is, one social worker will be engaged by several schools at the same time, the result of which is the short time the workers working for a specific school and the unsatisfactory effect of the social work. Finally, the natural development of school social work pattern is closely related with the economic development of the country or the area. Generally speaking, the more developed the economy is, the earlier the specialized social work appears, which will easily lead to the unbalanced development of school social work in different areas.

### **2. Coexisting pattern within school system**

Given the emergency of many present problems in school, some domestic social work experts suggest that colleges and universities set up the post, or even the specialized institution to bring school social work into the educational system. They ask the school to augment the posts for student work, staff professional members and make allowance for their evaluation and application of professional titles. The school should reconstruct the system of student work to form the division and cooperation system for students' daily management work, school social work, and ideological and political work, with the three aspects complementing and supporting each other. In this way, the higher education institutions will open up new phase for student work.

This view is very helpful for giving full play to and speeding up the development of social work. The advantage is that it can overcome the shortcoming of the working time problem existing in engagement pattern; the school social workers can work stably for one school, and integrate themselves into the activities of the school, which can help to enhance the real effect of school social work.

But more problems arise in the common use of this pattern. Firstly, many higher education institutions have a vague view of the significance of school social work, or even worse, they superficially regard the service of social workers in school as the psychological health education or voluntary service, so the school social work is lack of proper foothold and can't establish the exact professional role; secondly, the long dominant role of ideological and political education is facing challenge, which is likely to conflict with the school social work. In higher education institutions in China, such problems still remain unanswered concerning the two aspects as how to make good use of the modern method and avoid putting the minor before the major, and how to clarify their working area and harmonize their relations. Thirdly, it's not easy to break the traditional educational pattern and management system. The higher education institutions in China have built fairly perfect and mature pattern for student work and they are reluctant to break the original fairly stable and balanced educational working system, which leaves little room for the development of school social work. Of course here the personnel management is mainly involved.

### **3. Integration pattern within school system**

In China, compared with the mature ideological and political education, school social work is just beginning. Apparently, the effort of school social work for new living space is meeting with many big obstacles in terms of people's concept and the present educational reform system in higher education institutions. This is the very difficult

position the localization of school social work is facing. Therefore, the development of school social work in China has to combine with China's national conditions, and with the nature and characteristics of student work in colleges and universities. School social work needs to reexamine its connotation and evaluate its position, go hand in hand with, and learn the strengths from ideological and political education, thus, set up the integration pattern with Chinese characteristics.

This integration pattern doesn't mean that the school social work will invade or replace, or be invaded or replaced by the ideological and political education in colleges and universities; rather, it's the pattern that the two will support each other, relate mutually and work jointly. This is determined by the deep-rooted educational guidelines and patterns in higher education institutions. By virtue of the integration of their values, working contents, operating patterns, working approaches and workforces between ideological and political education and school social work, we can give full play to their individual characteristics to mutually complement their strengths and promote the full development of college students' quality. Without any doubt, the integration pattern within school system can't be accomplished in one step, but, the realization of its aim will be advanced gradually in an orderly way.

### **Conclusion**

By comparing the above three patterns of the localization of school social work, this paper holds the view that the integration pattern within school system will be the best choice. This integration is reasonable in theory and feasible in practice; it can overcome the shortcomings of both sides, and realize the mutual integration between ideological and political education and school social work; it can retain not only the essential nature of ideological and political education, but also the strong points of school social work, thus promote the actual effect of ideological and political education, and the comprehensive development of college students.

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