

Some Suggestions on Sino-Nepal Cooperation in Social Construction

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Abstract

The current Sino-Nepal cooperation is mainly centered on the fields of politics, economy and trade, culture, security and military affairs. What is sorely lacking is cooperation in social construction which is helpful for deepening the bilateral relationship. From the perspective of social work, the paper puts forward some suggestions on cooperation of social construction such as cultivation of social work professionals, social work service across borders and learning from practical experiences of each other.

Introduction

Sino-Nepal comprehensive cooperation is deepening along with the advancement of the 'Belt and Road' strategy. The statistical data from the Ministry of Commerce of China shows that China has been the largest source of Foreign Direct Investment, the second largest trade partner and also the second largest source of foreign tourists for Nepal. However, present cooperation and communication between China and Nepal mainly focuses on the field of politics, economy and trade, culture, security and military affairs, and sorely lacks focus on social construction.¹ At present both Nepal and China face the problem of discerning how to balance social construction and economic development. There exists enormous space for Sino-Nepal cooperation in social construction, which is also helpful for deepening the relationship between these two countries.

From the perspective of the relationship between social construction and social work, the former supplies the platform for the development of social work and the latter is essential social power for the former.² This paper is divided into three parts, the first two

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¹ Yang Siling & Gao Huiping, 'The Belt and Road Initiative: challenges and prospects for cooperation between China and Nepal', 2017, *South Asian Studies*, available at <http://jtp.cnki.net/bilingual/detail/html/LAYA201701002>, accessed on 14 March 2020.

² Wang Sibin, 'Promote the Common Development of Social Construction and Social Work', *Chinese Social Work Journal*, 2018, p. 62, available at <https://kns.cnki.net/kcms/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CJFD&dbname=CJFDLAST2018&filename=ZSGZ201819041&v=OmCsunjy3eZr3JsRt%25mmd2BfaKY-T46EuqjQghp6nCAfm3FsJ0x%25mmd2FWfKeOK9gSvQkyAdNq%25mmd2F>, accessed on 15 March 2020.

parts are about development of social work and dilemma in Nepal and China, the last part contains some suggestions on the Sino-Nepal cooperation in social construction from the view-point of social work.

Social Development and Dilemma in Nepal

Social work in Nepal began in 1996 when St. Xavier's College affiliated to Kathmandu University initiated full time 3-year arts bachelor degree in social work (BSW). Ten years later from that date, the first MSW (Master of Social Work) was approved by Purbanchal University and is being offered by St. Xavier's College until now. In 2007, Nepal College of Development Studies (NCDS) and Kadambari College united to found Nepal School of Social Work (NSSW).

Society transition in Nepal creates great demand for support of social work and social work in Nepal has had effective response to the demand. Great achievements have been made in social policy formulation and practical service actions in child protection, ageing, poverty reduction and democratization. However, facing the problems of economic and social development, Nepalese social work is confronted with the following dilemmas.

Firstly, the scale of social work professionals trained in Nepal is too small to respond to the demand from the requirement of social transition. Although the BSW programs mushroomed in 2012, none of them is carried out in areas other than Kathmandu. Until 2012, only two private universities viz. Kadambari College affiliated to Purbanchal University and St. Xavier's College affiliated to Kathmandu University, had provided full time BSW courses. There are eight full time staff, 17 part time teachers and 136 students in NSSW.³

Secondly, it's necessary for Nepali social work to be further localized. Nepal is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-lingual country. The question, 'How to integrate Nepal's local knowledge, multi-values and customs with social work originating from Western society so as to better meet Nepalese social transformation demands?' has not been adequately responded to by Nepalese social work professional education and practice.

Thirdly, the activities of professional social work in Nepal are carried out mainly in central cities such as Kathmandu and professional identity is recognized at low level. For the scale of social work talent, training is limited, the social work supplies professional service mostly in urban area. The urbanization rate of Nepal was 18.2% in 2011, according to the World Bank Data. In addition, Nepalese social work development lacks strong support from government. The aforementioned factor does not lead to the availability of social work service in Nepali rural area where there is a wider scope, more population, and greater demand. This also leads to low professional recognition of social work.

³ Bala Raju Nikku, 'Building Social Work Education and the Profession in a Transition Country: Case of Nepal', vol. 6, no. 3, *Asian Social Work and Policy Review* p. 252, 2012, p. 261; Sara Louise Parker, Bala Raju Nikku & Rose Khatri, 'Social policy, social work and age care in Nepal: mapping services and missing links', vol. 17, no. 3, *European Journal of Social Work* p. 353, 2014, p. 353-366.

Chinese Social Work Development and Dilemma

Social work in China began in the 1930s. JinLing University in NanJing formed the independent faculty of social work in 1948. But in 1952 when higher education was adjusted through China, social work was suspended and not reconstructed until 1987. Through 31-year development from 1987 to 2018, 312 universities carried out BSW programs and 148 carried our MSW programs, which was started in 2009. Ten thousand more talents graduate every year.

The talent trained system of social work makes progress step by step as well as the Professional Qualifications Authentication of Social Work. In 2006, Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security and Ministry of Civil Affairs jointly promulgated 'Interim Provisions on the Evaluation of Professional Level of Social Work' and 'Measures for the Implementation of Professional Level Examination for Assistant Social Workers and Social Workers'. Last year 'Evaluation Measures for Senior Social Workers' was issued by MHRSS and MCA, but development of social work in China is also confronted with many problems.

The first problem is about localization of social work in China. The conflicts with Chinese society and culture are produced during the social work professional education and practices. How the localized knowledge system of Chinese social work is set up is one of the problems.

The second problem is that government is more dominant than non-government sector in the development of social work in China. The government has played a leading role in the construction of social work professionalization, which is also nuclear pusher in socialization and organization of social work at the same time. The professional service supplied by social work is universal in Chinese large and medium cities, and most of these service programs have been from the government public service.

The third is that degree development of social work varies in different area, eastern better than western, urban better than rural and large cities better than medium and small ones.

Some Suggestions

Economic and trade cooperation brings common interests for Nepal and China and cooperation and exchange in social construction are conducive to mutual understanding and trust between people of the two countries. This enables the two countries to share the benefits brought by 'one belt and one road' and further promote cooperation between the two countries on a broader and deeper level.

Based on the background of 'one belt and one road' and the development experience and difficulties faced by China and Nepal, the Sino-Nepal cooperation and exchanges in social construction can make breakthroughs in the following aspects.

Cultivation of Social Work Professionals

Sino-Nepal cooperation in cultivation of social work professional can be initiated from the following two points. First, China can provide the BSW and MSW for Nepal by utilizing the resources of training social work professionals in China. Second, China and Nepal can draw lessons from each other in terms of training standards, professional qualifications for social work personnel and theoretical research of social work.

Social Work Service Across Borders The number of Chinese enterprises investing in Nepal has surpassed 100. The foreign direct investment in Nepal reached \$198 million in 2016, vast majority of which came from China, mainly in infrastructure, cement and mining.⁴ The FDI enterprises from China in Nepal have great demand for the support of social work in environment protection, public relationship, community integration and so on. In order to enhance the social responsibility awareness of Chinese enterprises in Nepal, the Chinese government can promote Sino-Nepalese social work organizations to carry out professional services in Nepal by purchasing services, especially the integration of Chinese enterprises in Nepal into local communities.

Learning Practical Experience from each other

In the process of social transition, China and Nepal are both confronted with the conflicts and contradiction between economic and social development. The problem the two countries face is how social work is contributing to social development in order to make the people benefit from the economic growth. This also presents a chance for cooperation between Chinese and Nepali social work.

Chinese Social Work Experience

Chinese government has vigorously promoted coordinated development between urban and rural areas in recent years which creates the great demand for social work as well as a chance for social work development. Through the practical service in disaster social work, community governance and precise poverty alleviation, Chinese social work has formed relevant empirical models, such as community building in Taiwan (2007), disaster social work (2011), four models of community governance in China (2017), and precise poverty alleviation model of social work intervention in rural areas (2017), etc. Current social work in Nepal can learn from all of these examples.

Nepali Social Work Experience

Social work research contributes to policy debates and people's participation on policy

⁴ Sun Nuohai, 'Study on Green "B&R Initiative" Environmental Law Regulation', *Law Journal of China*, 2017, p. 113 available at <https://kns.cnki.net/kcms/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CJFD&dbname=CJFDLAST2018&filename=ZGFX201706007&v=SV1kb2U8Q2CgSCCtTXKg51ZNkNoeDc%25mmd-2Fr5hrpScT9o3f%25mmd2Bf3e3tuwUm%25mmd2B%25mmd2BZ85xeBTJK>, accessed on 15 March 2020.

formulation in Nepal. NSSW faculty members have conducted research on issues such as children protection, ageing, and used the research result for advocacy and lobby activities, some of which has been referred to widely such as child adoption. The experience of promoting the social policy formulation by research of social work in Nepal is a reference for Chinese social work.

Conclusion

The 'Belt and Road' strategy has brought opportunities for cooperation in the field of social development between China and Nepal, which will not only promote mutual development of social construction and social work between the two countries, but also further strengthen bilateral cooperation in a wider range of fields and provide a model for cooperation between the countries along the Belt and Road.