Social Work Education
Voices from the Asia Pacific
Edited by Carolyn Noble, Mark Henrickson and In Young Han
Contents

Acknowledgements vii

1 Social work: Conversations, challenges, culture and complexities 1
   Carolyn Noble, Mark Hendrickson and In Young Han

Part One: Field Education 5

2 Social work and the Asia Pacific: From rhetoric to practice 7
   Carolyn Noble

3 Reciprocity and cultural diversity: Creating successful field education placements 30
   Louise Coevry and Marty Grace

4 Fijian and Australian social work learning through field education 50
   Amanda Nickson, Selita Kuruleca and Mary Clarke

Part Two: Social Work Curricula 73

5 A reflective-pluralist curriculum planning for theory-building in social work practice 75
   Murti Desai

6 Cultural competency and social work education in 'multicultural' South Korea 99
   Jun Hong and In Young Han

7 Circular movement in the teacher/learner roles for advanced Indigenous social work education 125
   Susan Gair and Lorraine Muller

8 Culturally valid social work education: A Samoan perspective 149
   Moses Malie Gapolo

9 Social work education and sexual minorities 173
   Mark Hendrickson
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This book is an attempt to bring those experiences to life and to a larger audience. As clichéd as it is, there is a lot going on out there! This book is a way for APASWE to recognise those multifarious contributions. In a small way we have worked across languages and cultures to create what we hope will be a book of interest for social workers practicing, teaching and researching throughout the region.

This book is of course the sum of many parts. The authors contributed their passion, talent and experience through their individual chapters. We are very grateful to the translators of the abstracts for each chapter, Joe Leung (Chinese), Hiroshi Harashima, Josh Sasi and Kumi Koike (Japanese), and In Young Han (Korean). Ian Syson from Vulgar Press oversaw the final stages of the production.

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Lastly as editors we gratefully lift a glass to each other for the collegial collaboration and camaraderie we shared as we developed and finalised this collection of voices from the Asia Pacific region. Enjoy!

Carolyn Noble, Melbourne
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CHAPTER 14

REFUGEE ACTIVISM AND SOCIAL WORK

LINDA BRISKMAN

ABSTRACT – ENGLISH

Refugee issues are amongst the most intractable facing the world today. No region is immune to people movements, asylum seeking and government and community resistance. Using a case study from Australia, this chapter outlines the harsh policies towards asylum seekers, particularly mandatory detention. It then discusses social work activism that was invoked in an endeavour to expose and influence the policies in the belief that social work academics in Australia have both an obligation and the freedom to speak out. Finally, the chapter suggests ways in which social work educators can encourage students to be critical social policy analysts in their practice. The form of social work activism discussed is the People’s Inquiry into Detention which was auspiced by the Australian Council of Heads of Schools of Social Work (ACHSSW).

ABSTRACT – CHINESE

没有哪一个国家或地区能杜绝人口流动，因而难民安置问题常被认为是当今世界最难有效解决的问题之一。本章对请求接受庇护的难民的所遭遇的残酷政策，尤其是强制性拘留，进行了描述。接着，我们讨论了由此引发的社会工作行动

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1 Some of the chapter content is based on the Eileen Youngburhund address at the IASSW conference in Durban in 2008.

INTRODUCTION: ASYLUM SEEKING IN THE NEW WORLD ORDER

The movement of people geographically is part of human history and continuing it is a relatively recent phenomenon (Hayes 2004). People movements follow the experiences of persecution, oppression and
war as people seek safe haven. At the same time that the movements persist, governments tighten their borders to deter people from arriving unsuspected and unannounced. By way of contrast a number of governments fulfill, to varying degrees, humanitarian obligations to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and take a quota of people who have applied off-shore and have often waited for many years in refugee camps for resettlement.

The asylum seekers who arrive directly in countries in order to seek refugee status are labelled in some countries as ‘queue jumpers’, ‘bogus claimants’, ‘invaders’ and ‘illegals’ (Briskman & Crenlyn 2005) and may be treated with suspicion and contempt.

Some do not arrive at their chosen destination. In early 2009 Thailand faced international condemnation after towing around one thousand refugees, believed to be Muslim Rohingyas from Burma, into international waters. Five hundred were feared drowned (Levett & Narushima 2009). Also in 2009, a nine-year-old boy was among a group of mainly Afghan asylum seekers who perished on their way to Australia after fleeing an Indonesian detention centre where they had been placed in their initial aborted attempt to reach Australia. On 16 April 2009 three asylum seekers died and others were missing or seriously injured while being escorted to Christmas Island by the Australian Navy (ABC News 2009).

In many countries refugees are treated poorly. For example in Malaysia, which is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugees Convention, the ethnic Rohingya from Burma may be subject to beatings, extortion and arbitrary detention (Tengganita Sdn Bhd 2008). Immigration detention is of unlimited length in a number of countries including the United States, the United Kingdom and Zambia (International Detention Coalition 2006).

A recent global survey of 21 countries found an increase in the use of immigration detention internationally, with detainees often denied their basic rights, in conditions below international standards. The survey listed detention concerns in the following regions: Asia Pacific; Canada; Central America; Western Europe; Eastern and Central Europe; South America; Middle East and North Africa; Eastern and Western Africa; Southern Africa; United States (International Detention Coalition 2008).

Australia has had one of the worst records in the western world in its treatment of asylum seekers and has introduced severe measures that punishes those who exercise their asylum seeker rights and is aimed at deterring others from arriving. These measures have caused immeasurable harm to asylum seekers and immense harm to the human rights reputation of Australia. Awareness of these harms prompted social work academics to challenge the social policies confronting asylum seekers, which were an affront to the human rights obligations of social work embedded in the Code of Ethics (AASW 1999).

Hannah Arendt (1986, p. 269) disturbingly but aptly tells us that refugees have been considered as the “the scum of the earth”. Their human rights have been obscured (Gosden, 2007, p. 162). For asylum seekers, human rights obligations are turned upside down with the rights of asylum seekers violated within an ideology that proclaims sovereign rights as absolute and non-negotiable in order to control national borders (Every 2006, cited in Gosden 2007, p. 151). More broadly we experience what Arun Kundnani (2007) speaks of in the British context as the end of tolerance.

In Australia there is the broader context of an insidious revival of the White Australia Policy that was in place during the first 70 years of the twentieth century aimed at preventing non-white immigration; an increase in nationalism; and the demise of multiculturalism in the public policy agenda (Briskman 2008). These policy underpinnings can be best explained by a brief introduction to Australia’s asylum seeker policies. Although the policies were of deep concern to many people in Australia, the fact that they were antithetical to social work values prompted the social work profession to initiate and implement the People’s Inquiry into Detention.
Asylum seeker policies in Australia: An overview

Although increasingly harsh measures exist on a global scale, Australia has stood out in its application of mandatory detention to all unauthorized arrivals, becoming a testing laboratory (Pickering 2005) for other countries wanting to eradicate what they see as the asylum seeker scourge.

It was in 1992 that the Australian Labor Party secured in legislation the policy of mandatory detention. In subsequent years the policy was ramped up by the conservative federal government of Prime Minister John Howard (1996-1997), which meant that children, women and men were incarcerated, often in detention gaols in remote areas of Australia, on Christmas Island or, as part of the 'Pacific Solution' in Nauru or Papua New Guinea. As people were branded as 'illegals', would-be terrorists, and queue jumpers by the media and government, a human rights discourse slid into a security discourse.

Asylum seekers were brutalised and demonised. Loss of lives occurred. Even before reaching Australia's shores people died en-route. The nation barely shed a tear for the 353 people who died on their way to Australia in 2001 on the boat known as the SIEV X (Suspected Illegal Entry Vessel) or to the Iraqis as the Ship of the Damned. The People's Inquiry into Detention documented the cases of 19 deaths occurring within Australian immigration detention facilities (Briskman, Latham & Goddard 2008). Furthermore, reports are continually emerging of deaths of asylum seekers who were returned to the countries from which they fled, including 24 in Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Colombia, Iran and Pakistan (RCOA 2009).

Many of those who were eventually released from immigration detention centres on refugee visas are so damaged that they will never repair. A psychiatrist told the People's Inquiry that the people he has seen and treated in immigration detention were the most damaged he had seen in his psychiatric career. Another told the Inquiry that the detention environment was so toxic that treatment was ineffective (cited in Briskman, Latham & Goddard 2008).

To add to the suffering, the Howard government introduced the Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) in 1999. Until this was revoked in 2008, those released from detention were granted only temporary refugee status, creating great uncertainty and insecurity. One of the harshest provisions of that visa was that family reunion was barred, meaning that those released were unable to apply for their families to join them, causing immense heartache and despair. The TPV, rather than deterring others from arriving as the government intended, saw women and children compelled into taking perilous journeys to join their menfolk who had come first. It is one of the reasons put forward as to why so many women and children were on the ill-fated SIEV X.

The Tampa incident demonstrated the harsh policy reaction of the Australian government in contrast to the stance of New Zealand. In August 2001 the MV Tampa, a Norwegian vessel, came to the aid of 438 asylum seekers, mainly Afghan Hazaras, whose boat had sunk in international waters on the way to Australia. Although the captain of the Tampa requested medical help, the Australian government response was to send the Special Air Service Regiment soldiers to intervene in order to prevent the vessel from entering Australian waters. From this the Australian government formulated the Pacific Solution, transporting the majority to a detention camp in Nauru. A new moral threshold now meant it was possible to push away unarmed people seeking refuge in Australian waters (Perera 2002). New Zealand, on the other hand, exercised humanity by accepting 132 people from the boat as refugees. Although New Zealand demonstrated more humanity, this country too has been increasingly criticised for an increasingly harsh response to asylum seekers especially since September 11, 2001 (Briskman & Fiske 2009).

September 11 also allowed the Australian government to respond more harshly. 'We will decide who comes to this country and under what circumstances' was an ongoing government mantra...
in Australia. Federal authorities were quick to link refugees, asylum seekers and the terrorist threat. Australia’s Defense Minister at that time said in a radio interview:

...Look you’ve got to be able to manage people coming into your country, you’ve got to be able to control that otherwise it can be a pipeline for terrorists to come in and use your country as a staging post for terrorist activities (Reith 2001).

The policies and practices should have been a wake-up call to social workers who witnessed, albeit often through mixed-quality media reports only, the suffering occurring in our midst. The values espoused by government in the treatment of asylum seekers, enshrined in deterrence and containment, are arguably antithetical to social work core values and beliefs. In time social workers were among those who joined advocacy movements, spurred on by shame and concern at the brutal treatment of asylum seekers in our country.

Children were a major concern to social work and the Australian Council of Heads of Schools of Social Work (ACHSSW) in 2004 lobbied the Immigration Minister about the plight of asylum seeker children on Nauru. Going even further with children, British social workers rallied in that country in 2007 when the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) agreed to support members who found it necessary to refuse to co-operate with unethical practice by immigration authorities, which violated the rights of children and young people.

**The detention of children: A social work concern**

In Australia, the caging of children in immigration detention until 2005 was described by two social workers as organised and ritualised abuse (Goddard & Briskman 2004, p. 17). Although the detention of all people has been shocking, the detention of children, often for many years, has shaken to the core social workers and others in the Australian community. Even when notifications under child protection provisions were made by social workers and other advocates, they were ignored as the children were bounced between the question of federal and state jurisdictions (immigration as a federal responsibility and child protection in the domain of the states). One early childhood worker said:

If I saw the same level of abuse, neglect and distress in the children in the service in which I work, and I failed to make a mandatory notification, I could be prosecuted. Yet I have made mandatory notifications on so many children in detention and they have gone nowhere (cited in Briskman, et al. 2008, p. 186).

A nurse who worked inside detention vehemently argues that mandatory detention causes damage to children and the government’s refusal to prevent this and to enforce child protection laws, makes it culpable of the torture of children (Rogallia 2003).

In July 2002 after visits to Australia’s immigration detention centres the Special Envoy of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Justice Bhagwati, handed down his report on conditions at the Woomera detention facility. In his report he spoke of the young boys and girls he met, who could not breathe the fresh air of freedom, but were confined behind spiked iron bars with gates barred and locked that prevented them from going out and playing and running in open fields. He saw gloom on their faces instead of the joy of youth, with these children growing up in an environment that affected their physical and mental growth. Many of them were traumatised and led to harm themselves in utter despair (cited in NSW Council for Civil Liberties 2007, p. 18-19).

After a visit to an immigration detention facility, Chris Goddard (2004) reflected on his previous social work practice with abused children:
As part of my work, I have seen prisons and secure units. I have seen children dying of child abuse, with fractures too many to count. I have seen children torn apart by sexual abuse. I have seen things I had to see, that I will never forget, that I found impossible to understand. This time I have seen something that I should never have seen. I have been to see an eight-month-old girl, small for her age, smiling at her parents, soon to be walking, her every move watched by guards. I have seen an infant behind grey wires and electric fences, in a high-security prison on the edge of Australia's dead heart. I have seen her parents found guilty, without trial, of wanting freedom. I have seen parents so proud of their first-born, but so close to despair. I have seen an infant given a number. I have seen a baby girl kept in a cage.

**Activist social work:**

**The People's Inquiry into Detention**

As Deborah Hayes explains, past and present movements of people around the globe are filled with painful stories, many of which are too awful to account. To tell the truths and to humanise asylum seekers means it becomes difficult to justify inferior and cruel reception. Once asylum seekers are presented in pejorative terms, it is easier for the community to absorb a dehumanising asylum system (Hayes 2004). The Australian social work endeavour re-storied the perceptions of asylum seekers through accounts of their treatment during their journeys to Australia, in the processing of their claims, in immigration detention centres and after detention.

The way asylum seekers have been treated in Australia is a story of shame for the nation - a narrative of brutality, misery and hard hearts. But, from the deep dark ashes of malevolent and capricious acts arose a social movement from which we can take heart. The asylum seeker advocacy movement debunked the mythology that was being perpetrated and spoke out loudly. The advocates also befriended people in detention and after their release. They saw them as brothers and sisters, daughters and sons and friends - not as threats. Organisations sprang up throughout urban and rural Australia. Some had a specific focus such as children; others focused on policy; many were involved in befriending, and an active minority engaged in direct action and resistance.

Whatever their methods, all groups had a similar aim - to bring about the end of indefinite, mandatory detention and the increasingly harsh policies and practices associated with this scourge.

Many human services professionals were active. There were doctors and nurses, psychologists and psychiatrists who told of the harms that were being inflicted in our name. Social work rose to the occasion by conducting the People's Inquiry into Detention, a massive collective undertaking that took more than three years to complete.

The leadership role taken is one from which social workers can take heart when faced with the day-to-day grind of the organisational workplace, the limits on the capacity to protest and the tensions and contradictions faced by social workers in what is known as 'dual loyalties' - on the one hand to the organisation and the government funders and their policies and on the other hand to those for whom we should exercise a duty of care in striving for equality and human rights. Such tensions have the regrettable potential to diminish the focus on the vulnerable people and the commitment to enhance their lives in accordance with the spirit of social justice.

Social workers are confronted with vexed questions about how to change policies that are antithetical to social work values and violate core human rights tenets. Social workers are effective at case advocacy, but moving to cause advocacy is often a difficult step. It has been said that organisations can be sites of tension for social workers, as their practice ideals are subsumed by organisational missions (Lymberry & Butler 2004). The challenge is to how
to overcome this conundrum and how to incorporate an activist component into social work education.

The People's Inquiry into Detention, auspiced by the Australian Council of Heads of Schools of Social Work, sought not only to change asylum seeker policies in Australia and to have the stories of this era of social policy on the public record for the future of the nation. It was particularly the policy of indefinite mandatory detention that spurred the social worker activism, those harsh prisons where people were enveloped by a punishing power (Browning 2006) and reduced to what Agamben (1998) refers to as 'bare life'. Many of those who talked to the Inquiry talked of a sense of relief at telling their stories and feeling believed.

The Australian heads of social work undertook the inquiry as government would not. The policies and practices of the government were seen as a catastrophic response to a global humanitarian issue that had only minimally reached Australian shores. The ACHSSW was concerned by the resistance of government to investigate its own policies and practices even though it had called an inquiry into the wrongful detention of a mentally ill Australian resident, Cornelia Rau, who had been locked away in a detention centre by convincing the authorities that she was a German called Anna. She had been meted out the very same treatment as the asylum seekers whose plight did not create the media and public eruption that followed Cornelia's detention. The fact that she was 'one of us' and not the demonised 'Other' resulted in a different outcome once her identity was revealed.

The ACHSSW was also driven by the heartbreaking despair of those who had been detained for many years and for whom the courts effectively deemed could remain behind razor wire for the rest of their lives. The People's Inquiry was born from being affronted at what was being done that brutalised people and the nation. And as a group of academic social workers the Council had the credibility to use its knowledge, expertise and passion to conduct a national investigation.

With limited dollars in hand but with a large number of passionate and committed people coming forward to volunteer, the ACHSSW held public hearings throughout Australia and received written submissions to document the stories of detention so that the adage 'Never Again' could perhaps be closer to realisation. Those involved, from all walks of life, shared the vision of the importance of ensuring that the stories of this policy era be on the public record.

A collective formed around the People's Inquiry with people working around the clock to hold public hearings in rural and metropolitan locations throughout Australia. Social work and other students joined us for field placements, with many telling us that the experience was life changing. The stories that were told were compelling and disturbing, particularly the voices of those who had direct experiences of immigration detention. The overall impression was one of needless cruelties.

Former immigration detainees, visiting health workers and others reported a catalogue of callous disregard for human rights. Detention in desert locations was hard enough, but the isolation was magnified by repeated cruelties imposed on vulnerable people. The Inquiry was told about people being called by numbers alone, about being woken in the early hours of the morning for head counts, of delays in sending mail, of the lack of toilets and the refusal to allow personal photographs to be taken of their children. "You couldn't design an environment more destructive to a child's development than in immigration detention", a mental health professional told the Inquiry (Briskman & Goddard 2007).

The Inquiry operated in a somewhat organic way, not sure what the endpoint of the endeavour would be. The fruits of the labour were published as Human Rights Overboard: Seeking asylum in Australia co-authored by three social workers (Briskman, et al. 2008). The book received the 2008 Literature (non-fiction) award of the Australian Human Rights Commission. This is a great credit to what social workers can achieve and where members of
the profession can hold their heads up to demonstrate how they refused to be silent when human rights had sunk to a dark and dangerous low.

The power of social work and the role of educators
As social workers, we are sometimes reluctant to position ourselves in the public domain to try and to right the wrongs that we observe. Yet we have as our basis for action national and international social work codes of ethics that call on social workers to affirm human rights and to challenge injustice. South African social worker Tiamelo Mmatli (2008, p. 306) tells us that it is a dereliction of our professional duty not to comply with what Canadian social worker Bob Mulla'y (1997) calls the promotion of political will to develop a humanised society.

The International Statement of Principles on ethics in social work proclaims that the principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work (IFSW & IASSW 2004). The Australian Code declares that social workers will work to eliminate human rights violations and promote policies, practices and social conditions that uphold human rights (AASW 1999).

Briskman and Cemlyn (2005) point to the need for social workers to be human rights defenders at individual, national and international levels. To date however, there is little evidence to date that social workers are rising to the macro challenges (Lyons, Manton & Carlsen 2006). Hayes and Humphries (2004, p. 217) suggest that social workers in the United Kingdom have become complicit in an inferior welfare system and have been occupied with gate-keeping resources rather than meeting needs.

In social work change endeavours, we can draw on our own ethnography because our experience in a range of fields of practice reveals to us the harm arising from policies that are antithetical to our common humanity. Our knowledge base and practice wisdom can open our eyes to the impact of subjugation, oppression, racism and structural disadvantage. If we take the quest towards inclusiveness and social justice sincerely, then we must reflect on our taken-for-granted and often rule-bound ways of conducting our practice and promote alternatives. Beyond direct practice we can propose an ethics of responsibility where we locate ourselves in relation to others, including strangers (Stratton & McCarr 2002).

It takes some courage to speak out in the name of a profession. Ministers of religion have been told to stick to the pulpit; health professionals have been told to dispense direct care alone and activist lawyers have been smothered by their own profession. Human services workers who ponder how far to take their concerns have a guiding principle as practice ethnographers, which can be framed as ‘I know and therefore I must act’. In stating this position, it is important to acknowledge that not all social workers and social work educators reside in countries where such actions are possible. For social workers in countries such as Australia the prospect of reprisals is minimal, and may amount to little more than public critiques from those holding opposing views. In some other countries social workers and other advocates may incur both the wrath and penalties of the state.

For those with the freedom to act, there is the question of complicity. If we do not act on what we know are we collaborators in inhumane acts? How should we behave when faced with the choices of collusion, silence or advocacy. For social workers facing dual loyalties conflicts there may be a need to reconsider roles and principles. Just one example may be challenging the tenet of workplace confidentiality, so as not to collude in the information lock-up of governments and their agents (Washington 2003, p. 18).

The role of social work educators is crucial. Academics have a right to speak out, which is not always accorded to other members of the profession. As educators we also had a responsibility to be role models for the next generation of social workers who we teach and influence. Hamilton and Maddison emphasise the importance of universities (2007, p. 13) as they:
...are essential for producing educated, informed and questioning citizens with some capacity to scrutinise government decisions. The academics who staff these institutions require a high level of academic freedom to pursue research that may, at times, challenge a government's values and agenda.

Overriding these considerations, is an obligation to redress the wrongs inflicted on human beings. As prominent Australian lawyer Julian Burnside (2007, p. 42) states:

We must treat people decently for the sake of their humanity. The way we are treating asylum seekers diminishes us. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights should be one of our benchmarks and, indeed it is enshrined in social work codes of ethics. After the second world war the conscience of human kind resulted in a belief that what happened to one group of people affected all members of the human family (Burnside 2007, p. 17).

Social work academics need to find ways to counter criticisms. There are those for example who reject the notion that activism is an inherent part of social work. A study by the National Association of Scholars in the United States concluded that descriptions of social work education programs were 'chock full of ideological boilerplate and statements of political commitment' (NAS 2007). Rather than trying to defend ourselves against such accusations social work is well placed to argue its value stance and to impress upon its critics that ideology matters in endeavours to recast the pervasive ideologies of governments in order to be closer to those at the heart of social work, including human rights (Trevithick 2005, p. 32).

How we position ourselves influences the ways in which human services workers cast their gaze on refugees. There can be passive or active ways acting and we must be alert to the fact that decisions that impact on the social work agenda, are not usually made by social workers or those who share our value base. Refugees can be seen as a practice issue in dealing with torture and trauma, mental health and settlement. Another mode of working is through minimising harmful policies in order to provide better service outcomes. A third mode of intervention sees asylum seeking as a political issue requiring direct political action.

There is an inherent difficult of working across all practice boundaries requiring an exploration that draw upon a mix of ethics, theory, values, methods and ideology. Ultimately social workers need to decide whether to work in settings where the policy and practice expectations are in contradiction to personal values and professional ethics and where speaking out and protest is limited. Considered defiance is an option as evident in the actions of the BASW.

How then do we inspire future social workers to take a lead and become morally active practitioners? One important strategy is to demonstrate to our students the passion that we have for our work and in this we become role models. We can bring students along with us, getting them to join with us in our research and policy endeavours. Indeed the People's Inquiry involved students in every aspect of the process and invariably the students stayed on when their placements ended as they believed that what they were doing was important. The ACHSSW did not fear accusations of partisanship when human rights were on its side. Concerns were set aside about whether students were adequately prepared for the realities of practice for they will face those soon enough, but student-time may be the only opportunity for supported engagement in political reflection and political practice.

**Conclusion**

Social problems and social policy are the business of social work and require vigilance. This chapter has grappled with the questions of professionalism, ethics and conscience. Although social movements
are not new to social work, there exists a cautiousness about direct activism in the light of constraints that social workers perceive to be limiting, even when the stakes are not high. In endeavours to transform social work students into morally active practitioners, there are examples from around the world that can demonstrate that activist social work is both possible and desirable. The People’s Inquiry is one such endeavour.

REFERENCES


Chapter 15

SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION IN CHINA:
ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

JOE C. B. LEUNG

Abstract – English

The recent and current rapid developments in social work education, in terms of the number of programs and student enrolment, have been phenomenal. Yet this has not been supported by concerted and coordinated development in the welfare services and social work positions, and the concept of social work professionalization remains immature. The changing social risks in China demands a more professionalized and modernized approach to social work so as to address emerging social issues. At issue is how to achieve an effective adaptation of social work knowledge to the local situation through evidence-based practice and research so as to make possible continuous learning and adjustment.

Abstract – Chinese

近年来，中国内地的社会工作教育发展迅速。现有超过200个社工课程，每年有近万名社工学生毕业。然而，中国的社工教育与社会福利服务和社工岗位的发展并不协调，而中国社会工作的专业化仍然未成熟。市场化经济改革所产生新的社会风险要求现代化和专业化的社工手法处理社会问题及矛盾。中国社工的发展需要强化以实证支持的实践方法和知识的能力。