

# Illustration of Four Typical Development Models of Local Urban Social Work in China

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**Abstract:** At present, China's social work undertakings are booming, and the pioneering urban regions represented by Shanghai, Shenzhen and other places have carried out various explorations and accumulated certain local experience. Social work has been constantly integrated with “local conditions” from place to place, and gradually formed typical local urban social work development modes with distinct Chinese characteristics and regional characteristics, such as “Shanghai Model”, “Shenzhen Model”, “Guangzhou Model” and “Zhuhai Model”. In this paper, four development models of local urban social work are reviewed more vividly and intuitively by means of frame diagrams, and the characteristics of the four development models of local urban social work are respectively summarized as “Government-Led”, “Market Competition”, “Project Operation” and “Enterprise Participation”. It is pointed out that China’s urban social work is gradually moving forward from the” Exploring Stage “of” Crossing the river by feeling the stones “to the” Progressing Stage “of rapid development.

## 1. Introduction

At present, social work in China has been comprehensively promoted and developed in terms of top-level system design of the government, development of industry organizations, talents training and talents team construction, and work development in practical field. Social work presents a thriving development situation. The practical field of social work is also expanding and the exploration of local issues has started, gradually showing professional results in practice. The pioneering urban regions represented by Shanghai, Shenzhen etc. have made many explorations and accumulated certain local experiences. In combination with the actual “local conditions” of their own urban communities, all regions have promoted social work undertakings from various aspects such as system, organization, talent team construction etc., and gradually formed typical local urban social work development models with distinct Chinese characteristics and regional characteristics such as “Shanghai Model”, “Shenzhen Model”, “Guangzhou Model”, “Zhuhai Model” etc. Based on the analysis of four local urban social work development models in Shanghai, Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Zhuhai etc. of China, this paper “intuitively illustrates and clearly describes” the development models of social work in each city in the form of more-visualized frame diagrams, summarizes the characteristics of each model, and looks forward to its development prospect.

## 2. Four Development Models of Social Work in Typical Local Cities

### 2.1 Early Shanghai Model

As the first pioneer of social work and professional social work organization operation in mainland China, although it has only been in its first 20 years of starting and development, Shanghai has accumulated a considerable amount of social work practical and management experience through continuous explorations and trials, which is a valuable wealth for the development of social work in China and other regions. Its early experience in promoting and developing social work has been summarized as the “Shanghai Model”.

In the 1990s, Shanghai municipal government “pioneered” and took the lead in developing

professional social work in the mainland. In 1993, Shanghai Civil Affairs Bureau established the first social work industry organization in Chinese Mainland - Shanghai Social Workers Association. In March 2003, the first social work institution - "Lequn Social Work Service" was established in Shanghai. Subsequently, Shanghai Civil Affairs Bureau additionally established the first social work administrative agency in Chinese Mainland - "Vocational Social Work Division", which is responsible for promoting and coordinating the development of social work in Shanghai. At the same time, by setting up Social Work Section or identifying special Sections under Civil Affairs Bureaus at district and county level, the government-led social work promotion system has been established.

In 2004, under the promotion of Shanghai Municipal Government, three social work organizations were registered and established in Shanghai, including Xinhang Community Service Center mainly providing service for termers and emancipist of the community, Shanghai Sunshine Community Youth Services Center providing service for "Three Lost Youth" (out of school, unemployment, and loss of management) of communities, and Council of Shanghai Ziqiang Social Services providing service for drug abusers of communities, respectively carrying out correction social work, youth social work and drug control social work. They were the "three major community organizations" in Shanghai's social work sector at that time.

In the same year, the "three major community organizations" received orders for "government purchase of services" from Shanghai Politics and Law Committee, Shanghai Civil Affairs Bureau and Shanghai Municipal Committee of the Communist Youth League. The "three major community organizations" began to provide social work services for specific service objects by setting up specialized social work stations at sub-district and county level, establishing professional social work sites at street and township level, and arranging professional social workers to enter the community. At the same time, Shanghai Politics and Law Committee and Shanghai Municipal Committee of the Communist Youth League also established Shanghai Drug Control Office, Shanghai Community Correction Office and Shanghai Municipal Community Youth Affairs Office as the management service organizations of the "three major community organizations" and the assessment subject of the "government purchase of services", which are responsible for the assessment of social work services. So far, the "Shanghai Model" of "cooperation between government and society, independent operation of social organizations, and wide participation of social forces"<sup>[1]</sup> has taken shape, and its framework is shown in Figure 1. below.

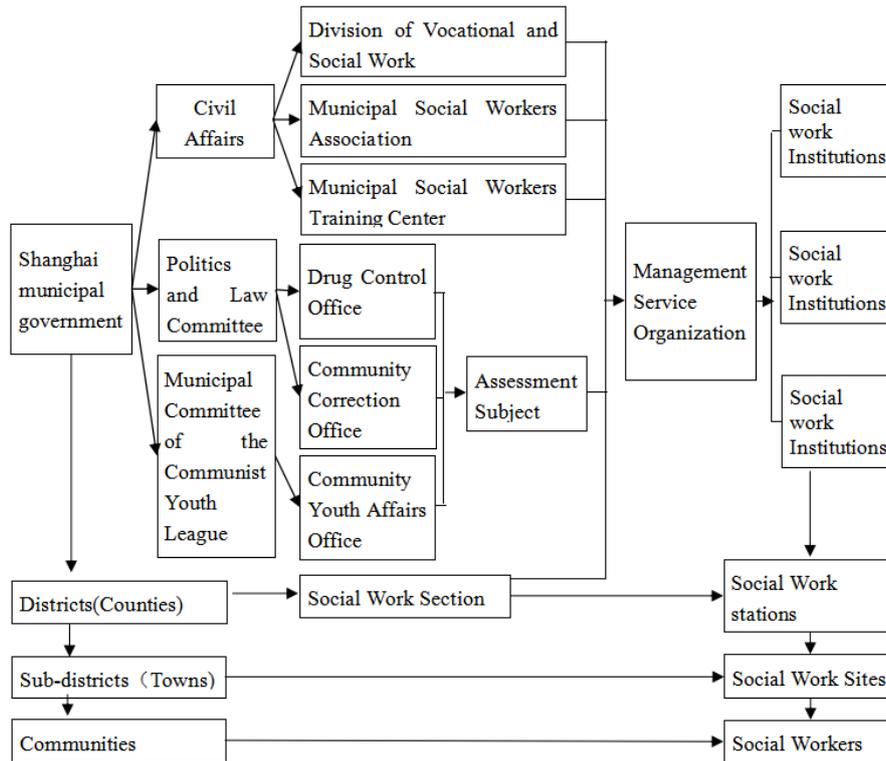


Fig.1 Frame Diagram of Local Urban Social Work Development Model in Shanghai At Early Stage

Note: The frame diagram is compiled with reference to the research conclusions of Wei Xiaojiang et al. [2]

## 2.2 Shenzhen Model

Shenzhen, as the first special economic zone in China, has its unique first mover advantage. Shenzhen seized the good opportunity of “favorable international and domestic environment as well as popular support” in the development of social work, because the development of civil society organizations in Shenzhen started very early, the voluntary spirit of citizens has been well cultivated, enterprises also have fairly strong sense of social responsibility, as well as the “location advantage” of social work development brought about by the proximity to Hong Kong, coupled with the reform of social management and public service policies vigorously carried out by Shenzhen municipal government. [3]

In 2007, Shenzhen Municipal Party Committee and Shenzhen Municipal Government issued the Opinions on Strengthening the Construction of Social Work Talent Team and Promoting the Development of Social Work and seven supporting documents and began to innovatively try “government”, which was the first case in China. On this basis, Shenzhen has gradually established the system of specialization and professionalization of social work, also providing a reference sample for the development of social work in other regions of China. [4]

In 2008, Shenzhen purchased services from non-governmental organizations for public welfare through bid invitation and tendering in accordance with the principle of “separation of government and social organizations, and separation of governmental agencies and institutions”. [5] In 2008, Shenzhen started to try developing social work posts in government administrative departments and institutions. In 2009, Shenzhen started to encourage and support the development of social work projects by holding public welfare project competitions. Since 2011, Shenzhen has been gradually promoting the construction of community service centers. At present, the social work service in Shenzhen has realized full coverage in all districts, sub-districts and communities of the city. Social work institutions provide social work services through about 1700 posts, more than 480 projects and 668 Community Party and Mass Service Centers (renamed from the former Community Service

Center).

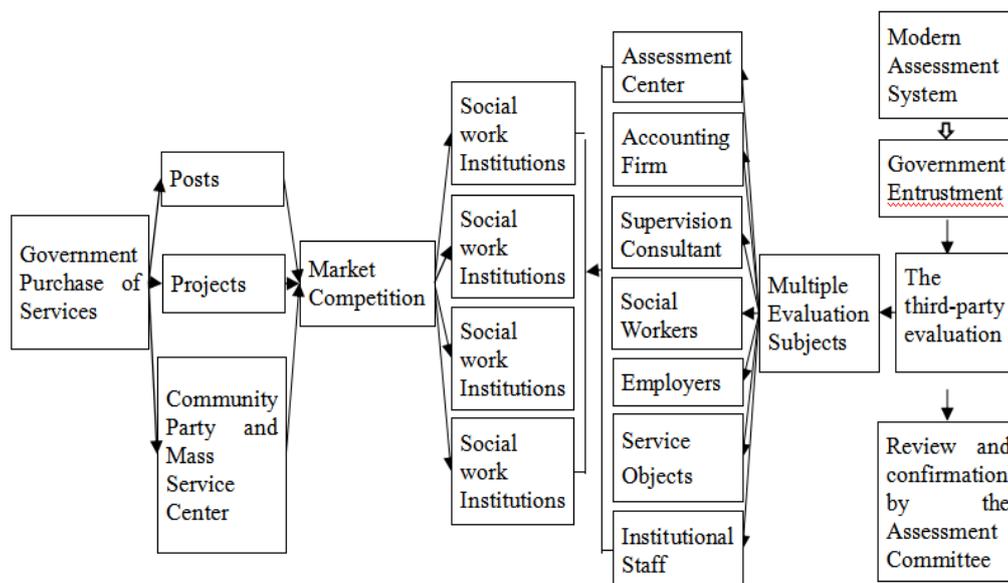


Fig.2 Frame Diagram of Local Urban Social Work Development Model in Shenzhen

After more than ten years of development, social work in Shenzhen has formed “Shenzhen Model” featured in “led by government purchase of services, centering on posts, projects and community service centers, undertaken and operated by social work institutions, taking the third-party assessment institutions as the supervision mechanism” And its framework is shown in Figure 2. above.

### 2.3 Guangzhou Model

Favored by the first-mover advantage of reform and opening-up, Guangzhou was influenced by the concept of social work in Hong Kong and abroad earlier. As early as the 1990s, Guangzhou tried to introduce the professional concept and service methods of social work from Hong Kong. In November 2005, Guangzhou Municipal Party Committee and Guangzhou Municipal Government issued the Interim Provisions on Professional Qualification of Social Workers in Guangzhou, and began to establish the system of professional qualification of social workers in Guangzhou. In 2009, Guangzhou Civil Affairs Bureau specially set up the Social Work Division, and promoted the promulgation of a series of policy documents, and established a comprehensive service management system of urban social work featured in four-level interconnection of “Municipality - Districts - Sub-districts - Institutions”.<sup>[6]</sup>

In 2010, Guangzhou started the process of social management reform. First of all, Guangzhou established Integrated Family Service Centers (hereinafter referred to as “IFSCs”) at sub-district level as platform for social services; the operation right of “IFSCs” was awarded through bid-tendering by various social work institutions by way of “government purchase of services”; and then social work institutions organized professional workers to provide professional social services for community residents through “IFSCs” according to agreements. In June 2018, Guangzhou issued the Administrative Measures for Social Work Service Stations (Integrated Family Service Centers) in Guangzhou, which stipulated that the “Integrated Family Service Centers” of all sub-districts in Guangzhou were officially renamed as “Social Work Service Stations”. The Measures define “Social Work Service Stations” as “ family-oriented and community-based professional social work service platforms established in towns (sub-districts) of Guangzhou, mainly serving the disadvantaged groups”. The Measures require Social Work Service Stations to set up social work service projects in accordance with the “113X” model, including 1 core project to intensify the concept of “social work services guided by party construction”, 1 key project to highlight the most direct and realistic social work services which are most concerned by masses of

administration area, as well as 3 basic projects including social work services for families, senior citizens and youth, plus “X” featured projects independently set up by various Social Work Service Stations in accordance with “social conditions”, residents' demand and capacity of the Social Work Service Stations. Up till 2018, there were 188 Social Work Service Stations in Guangzhou, realizing full coverage of social work in sub-districts and towns, and the basic demand of community residents in social service was satisfied to a certain extent.

Secondly, in consideration of the demand of special groups, Guangzhou has also established a batch of “Social Work Specialized Service Projects” with special groups as the service objects and providing more in-depth personalized services through “government purchase of services”. “Social Work Specialized Service Projects” still adopt the way of public bidding, and qualified social work institutions can obtain the operation right of corresponding projects through bid-tendering. At present, there are 14 Specialized Service Projects in the city, including “Social interpenetration service for foreigners in Yuexiu District, integrated service center for senior citizens in Yuexiu District, linkage and connection services between social workers and voluntary workers, intervention service for empty nesters, and services for losing-single-child families etc.”

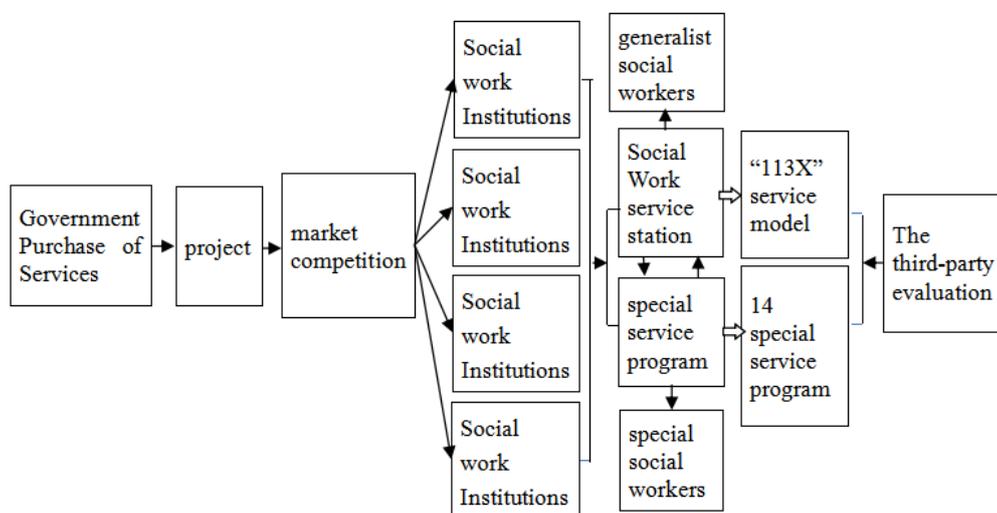


Fig.3 Frame Diagram of Local Urban Social Work Development Model in Guangzhou

Finally, Guangzhou also established a linkage and two-way referral mechanism between “Social Work Service Stations” and “Social Work Specialized Service Projects”. In the service process, the workers of “Social Work Service Stations” are like “General Social Workers”, providing residents with “pervasive services”, while the workers of “Social Work Specialized Service Projects” are more like “Specialist Social Workers”, providing residents with “in-depth personalized and specialized services”. At the same time, the service objects of both sides can be referred and connected, realizing the interconnection of integrated services and specialized services, and consolidating the social work services of communities as a whole.

Through nearly 10 years of practice and exploration, Guangzhou has built a professional service platform of “integration + specialization”, i.e. “Social Work Service Stations + Social Work Specialized Service Projects”, formed the structure of social work talents team featured in “General Social Workers + Specialist Social Workers”, and basically formed “Guangzhou Mode” of “government-led, social cooperation, project operation, and professional services”, and its framework is shown in Figure 3. above.

## 2.4 Zhuhai Model

Zhuhai, as a city on the west bank of the Pearl River estuary, plays the role of window and experimental field for China's reform and opening up in the new era. Zhuhai started to promote the construction of social work professional talents team in 2006. At that time, the Organizational Department of the CPC Zhuhai Municipal Committee and Zhuhai Civil Affairs Bureau jointly

carried out a special survey on the construction of social work talents team. The Survey Report on the Construction of Social Work Talents Team in Zhuhai formed by the survey clearly pointed out the direction for subsequent construction of social work talents team in Zhuhai. In December 2008, the State Council issued the Outline of the Plan for the Reform and Development of the Pearl River Delta (2008-2020), explicitly supporting Zhuhai and other cities to carry out the pilot of comprehensive reform of social management.

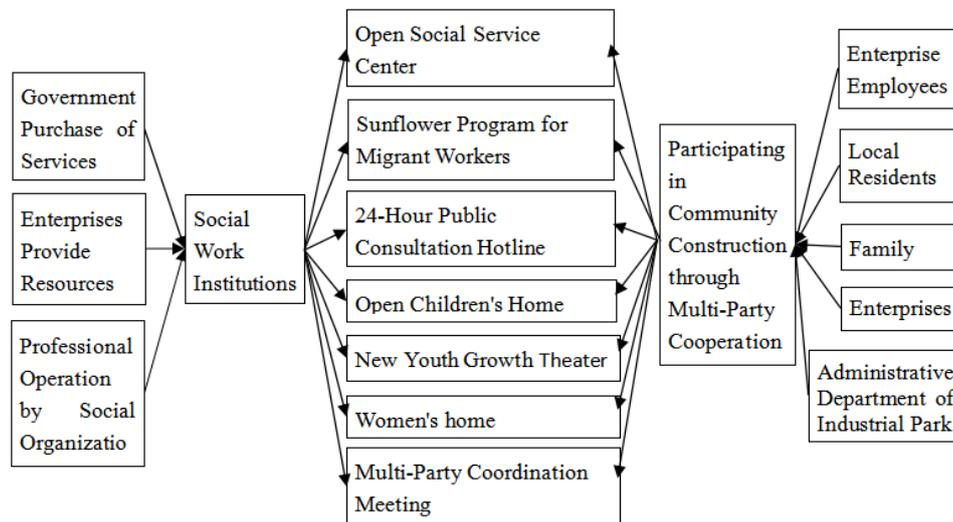


Fig.4 Frame Diagram of Local Urban Social Work Development Model in Zhuhai

In December 2008, Zhuhai introduced the service model of Beijing Collaborators, and established the first industrial-park-based private social work organization in China - “Zhuhai Collaborators Social Work Education and Promotion Center” (hereinafter referred to as “Zhuhai Collaborators”). Its operation features are: government purchase of services, enterprises providing resources, professional operation by social organizations, and collaboration between the three parties to meet the ever changing and growing demand of social services by enterprises and residents in the industrial park, which is hailed as the fourth model for the development of local social work - “Zhuhai Model”. Its framework is shown in Figure 4. above.

Zhuhai Collaborators serve the enterprises and their employees, family members of employees, and community residents in the industrial park, as well as the administrative department of the industrial park, mainly by establishing and implementing the Sun Flower Program for Migrant Workers, New Youth Growth Theater, Open Social Service Center of Industrial Park, Open 24-Hour Public Consultation Hotline, Women’s Home, Open Children’s Home, and Multi-Party Coordination Meetings. Different from the singleness of service objects in traditional enterprise social work, “Zhuhai Collaborators” fully reflect the professional concept of local social work in “solidarity and cooperation, helping people to help themselves” in the process of implementing enterprise social work services, not only regarding enterprises, employees and residents as simple “service objects”, but also considering that the service objects also have the ability of self-service and self-development. It attaches great importance to promoting the participation of communities’ stake-holding groups, including enterprise managers, employees, community residents, enterprises, etc., constructing the “enterprise social work partnership in which social workers, enterprises, employees and their communities jointly participate in community construction” .

### 3. Analysis of the Characteristics in the Four Typical Local Urban Social Work Development Models

#### 3.1 Shanghai Model - Government-Led

The “government-led” model initiated by Shanghai has become a typical experience for

reference in developing social work by other regions in China, which has been adopted by the vast majority of other regions in China for developing social work. Of course, the popularity of “government-led” model is also determined by the fact that “the majority of welfare resources are in the hands of the government”. Under the leadership of the government, not only the necessary supports of funding resources can be obtained through “government purchase of services”, but also the new prospect can be opened up through the powerful promotion by the government. It is self-evident that this is a “shortcut”. However, some scholars also raised the concern that “the Shanghai model has effectively exerted the strong administrative power of the Chinese government, but too much administrative intervention may also affect the independent development of social work” .

### **3.2 Shenzhen Model - Market Competition**

The most important characteristic of social work development model in Shenzhen is that it follows an operation logic of “Market Competition”, in which the government provides institutional guarantee and funding supports, and social work institutions need to obtain government purchase of services through bid-tendering. In order to ensure the service effect and provide reference for subsequent bidding work, the assessment and supervision system for performance assessment of social work service institutions has been established featured in entrustment by government and organization and implementation by third party assessment institutions, which ensures the fairness and rationality in the operation of the whole model to the greatest extent. The innovative “market competition” mode of social work institutions in Shenzhen mode has certain advantages, which is conducive to promoting the healthy operation of social work institutions and stimulating their initiative and enthusiasm. But at the same time, there are some potential troubles in Shenzhen model. Firstly, the “over marketization of social services”, that is, social work institutions may pay too much attention to the needs and interests of “patrons” and neglect the needs and interests of service objects in order to win the favor of “investors” in the “Market Competition”; secondly, although market competition plays a role of “sifting sand for gold”, it may easily result in unbalanced development of social work institutions and even social work fields.

### **3.3 Guangzhou Model - Project Operation**

“Guangzhou Model” is just like “standing on the shoulders of giants”, which has referred to the development achievements and achievements in Shanghai, Shenzhen and other places, and has made certain breakthrough. One of its main innovation points is that the international operation model of “purchasing service projects” is adopted in the process of government purchase of services; the other innovation point is dividing social workers into “General Social Workers” inside Social Work Service Stations and “Specialist Social Workers” engaged in Social Work Specialized Service Projects, realizing the connection and linkage between different levels of social work services and also expanding social work services in both breadth and depth.

The “Guangzhou Model” of providing services through project management has been unanimously affirmed by the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the social work sector, which provides a practical basis for the government's major decision-making on social work, and also provides a beneficial reference for the development of social work in other cities of Guangdong Province and China.

### **3.4 Zhuhai Model - Enterprise Participation**

As the representative of urban enterprise social work, compared with other models, the main difference and innovation of Zhuhai model is that it not only obtains funds through government purchase of services, but also adds ways of providing partial funds and resources by enterprises, which expands the sources of social work funds, thus constructing a good mechanism that the three parties of government, enterprises and social work institutions cooperate and jointly participate in

community construction.

#### **4. Prospect of Local Urban Social Work Development Models in China**

Looking through the four local urban social work development models above, they have not only “Chinese characteristics”, but also “regional characteristics”, which are the results of continuous integration of social work with relevant institutional arrangements and economic and social policies in different regions. It can be seen that, although all of them are urban regions, there are still differences in the social work development models of different regions, with gaps existing among their development levels. At the same time, it is not difficult to find that the four social work development models basically have one common feature, that is, “the leading role of the government”, which is also reflected in the process of social work development in other urban regions. This also means that the main supports and driving forces for social work development in China are from the government, and various local governments play an important role in social work development. In terms of top-level system design, funding, talents team construction, and industry development, the development of social work in China is closely relevant with governmental supports to a large extent.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Under the background and premise that the Party and the government have promoted the development of professional social work and the construction of social work talents team to an unprecedented strategic height, and under the vigorous promotion of social work from all walks of life in China, the development of social work undertakings in China, including urban social work, will be better and better, which is an undoubted fact. Therefore, the most critical issue is not “whether it can be developed”, but “how to develop”. Although in the early stage of social work development, each region has its own significant characteristics, the social work of most cities is now moving towards the model of “government promotion, civil participation, project operation, and third-party evaluation” through continuous “learning from each other” and continuous self-adjustment and self-improvement of various urban regions, which also shows that China's urban social work is gradually moving forward from the “Exploring Stage” to the “Crossing the river by feeling the stones” stage, and from the “Progressing Stage” to the “of rapid development” stage. We also hope to see that more social work development models compatible to “local conditions” can be generated on the basis of more “standardized” and “specialized” “commonness”.

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