Call for Papers

Social Work Action/Practice Research in Greater China

**Special Issue Editors:** Hok Bun Ku, Associate Editor

**Special Issue Editor Team:** Hsiao-chun HSIA (Taiwan); Denny Kwok-leung HO (Hong Kong); Yuk-chun CHAN (Hong Kong); Rick SIN (Canada); Renita Y. L. WONG, (Canada); Suo DENG, Ph.D. (China); Weihe GUO, Ph.D. (China)

**Papers due to ARJ December 31, 2018**

With the growth of the social work profession in mainland China and other Chinese societies, the development of ‘practice knowledge’ (Sim, 2017) has become the focus of study in both the Chinese academic world and its social work institutions. In social work, the process of translating knowledge to action is commonly labelled as ‘practice.’ Learning from social work knowledge outside China, the Chinese social work practitioners, especially since the rapid development of the social work profession in mainland China in the mid of 1980s, has followed the idea of translating scientific knowledge to action which has long been understood as ‘science-informing-practice’ (Nowotny, Scott and Gibbons, 2001) model. Recently when more social work practitioners attempted to integrate new insights from the discussion of the idea of Phronesis (originally defined by Aristotle as integrated wisdom, see also Petersen and Olsson, 2015) and Model II knowledge production (Nowotny, Scott and Gibbons, 2001) into practice knowledge, discussion of new perspectives appeared in both academic circles and practice domains in Greater China. This trend
is related to Action Research since, as Carr (2006) has argued, the concept of Phronesis comes from the Aristotelian philosophical tradition of “practical philosophy” which is shared by Action Research. If we trace this historical trajectory, we might be convinced that the family of action research and participatory action research (Bradbury, 2015) shares, along with other perspectives such as practice research and Cultural-historical activity Theory (CHAT), the idea that knowledge emerges through praxis. We witness such a growing trend in Chinese social work that more research and practice attempts have been guided by such an assumption about praxis.

In the Chinese social work profession, when more practitioners doubt the ‘science-informing-practice’ translation model, more seek to understand the nature of praxis and to develop knowledge that can deal with the sense of uncertainty in practice. These professionals have clearly brought to light the needs for more knowledge to inform practice (Nowotny, Scott and Gibbons, 2001). This echoes the call from a group of academic social workers who joined together in 2008 and articulated the Salisbury Statement on Practice Research, in part as follows:

“Practice research involves curiosity about practice. It is about identifying good and promising ways in which to help people; and it is about challenging troubling practice through the critical examination of practice and the development of new ideas in the light of experience.” (p. 32).

This statement reveals the needs, vision and wisdom of the practitioners involved in a social work intervention program with insights from research so as to build in a self-correcting and self-improving process in practice. It also makes known a new attempt by which data and analyses collected in interventions turn out to be the ground on which both practitioners and researchers evaluate on-goingly. In light of this, intervention programs can be modified in reaction to the changing needs of the clients and the complexities of the practical context. This is an approach using research skills to strength practice. All these features succinctly show implication to the broadening the scope of action research.

The aim of this special issue is to bring to light attempts in Chinese social work field through which practice knowledge have been brought into action and research. We wish to discover how
Chinese social work researchers and practitioners work together to contribute to integrating action, practice and research into a collaborative entity. In calling for papers on this topic, we wish to be as inclusive as possible so as to depict the current landscape of the social work practice and research. We take ‘practice’ or ‘praxis’ as broadly as possible to include any kinds of social work activities including intervention programs and social work services schemes. We expect more discussions on how the knowledge of social work practice could be generated from different forms of practices, more reports on how social work practitioners collaborate with social service recipients and result in more innovative programs and transformative activities. We also hope this special issue can engage dialogue among the international social work community in its discussion of the nature and value of social work research.

Papers might address the following kinds of questions (but should not be limited to them):

- How has practice knowledge been generated and integrated into action processes?
- How can social work practice in Chinese societies contribute to different ways of knowing or different kinds of knowledge?
- To what extent is the Chinese social work practice knowledge indigenous and in what ways?
- What are the unique contributions to action research to social work practice in China?
- Are there any siblings of social work develop in Chinese social work practice and what are their impacts on the social work development in greater China and the world?
- To what extent is participation important to the practice and research relationship in Chinese social work?

Full drafts of papers should be submitted through our online submission process no later than 31st December 2018. Papers are submitted through [http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/ARJ](http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/ARJ) Please note: all papers should follow regular ARJ submission recommendations, that is, 5000–7000 words inclusive, using APA style, more details at: [https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/journal/action-research#submission-guidelines](https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/journal/action-research#submission-guidelines).
Questions may be directed to the special issue corresponding guest editor, Dr. Hok Bun KU, email: ssbenku@polyu.edu.hk

References:


