The challenges of corporate social responsibility (CSR) multi-stakeholder practices: searching for a new occupational social work model in China

Pun Ngai* and Yuen-Tsang Woon-ki Angelina

Department of Applied Social Sciences, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

The emergence of China as a ‘world’s factory’ in the new millennium was accompanied by the rise of a new working class which was composed of more than 200 million peasant-workers. As internal migrant labourers, these peasant-workers were deprived of citizenship rights to reside in the city and lacked basic labour rights and protections. In order to address the precarious working conditions of migrant workers who were employed by transnational corporations, a global Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) movement emerged, introducing a wide range of transnational corporate codes of conduct, labour standards and labour rights. This article presents a case study of a transnational CSR multi-stakeholder training programme at a Chinese workplace, in an attempt to demonstrate how capital, transnational NGOs and local labour NGOs – and including social workers – are all involved in the project to promote labour rights in China. Specific focus is placed on the role of social workers in enhancing worker participation in this project; the challenges and dilemmas that they encountered in the process, and suggestions are provided regarding the future development of a new model of occupational social work in China.

Keywords: CSR multi-stakeholder; Chinese workplace; labour rights; occupational social work; community organizing

The emergence of China as a ‘world’s factory’ in the new millennium was accompanied by the rise of a new working class which was composed of more than 200 million peasant-workers. As internal migrant labourers, these peasant-workers were deprived of citizenship rights to reside in the cities in which they were working and lacked basic labour rights and protections (Lee 2007, Pun 2005a, Pun and Lu 2010). In order to address the

*Corresponding author. Email: punngai@gmail.com