

September 1999

Implementation Problems in the Development of Urban Community Services in the People's Republic of China: The Case of Beijing

Agnas K.C. Yeung
City University of Hong Kong

Kwok Kin Fung
City University of Hong Kong

Kim Ming Lee
City University of Hong Kong

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw>



Part of the Asian Studies Commons, Social Work Commons, and the Urban Studies and Planning Commons

Recommended Citation

Yeung, Agnas K.C.; Fung, Kwok Kin; and Lee, Kim Ming (1999) "Implementation Problems in the Development of Urban Community Services in the People's Republic of China: The Case of Beijing," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 26: Iss. 3, Article 10.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15453/0191-5096.2594>

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol26/iss3/10>

This Article is brought to you by the Western Michigan University School of Social Work. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.

Implementation Problems in the Development of Urban Community Services in the People's Republic of China: The Case of Beijing

AGNES YEUNG
KWOK KIN FUNG
KIM MING LEE

City University of Hong Kong
Division of Social Studies

To review the ten year implementation of the community service policy of the People's Republic of China, community service implementers and academics located in Beijing were interviewed. By employing implementation theories as a framework of analysis, a number of implementation problems are identified. In terms of policy characteristics and the structuring of implementation, this case shows that the objectives are not specific enough. The decentralized implementation strategy allows the implementers too much discretionary power. The shortage of qualified and motivated personnel further complicate the issue. Lastly, the policy environment of Beijing does not lend adequate support to the policy.

INTRODUCTION

1997 was a special year to those interested in the community service policy of the People's Republic of China (PRC). That year marked the tenth anniversary of the endorsement of the community service policy in the first National Symposium on Community Services in Urban Areas in 1987 (Chan, 1993a; and Leung, 1995). To review the ten-year implementation of community service, another National Symposium was conducted in October 1997, in Wuhan. The community service policy is a crucial ingredient in the PRC's welfare reform package.¹ It is intended to

take over the welfare provision function originally shouldered by state-owned enterprises before market reforms were undertaken. Like other reforms in the PRC, the community service reform is proceeding in an experimental manner, and like other social experiments, the community service policy encountered problems from its inception. In the ten years since its birth, have the policy makers managed to ensure effective implementation of the policy? This paper attempts to answer this question by examining the problems and difficulties in the implementation process.

Three teams of community service implementers and six academics located in Beijing were interviewed by the authors. The reasons for selecting Beijing are three-fold. Firstly, Beijing is among the first batch of cities to implement the community service policy. Secondly, being the capital, local policy makers are more zealous in implementing the policy according to central authority directives. Finally, Beijing has the economic resources to facilitate effective implementation of the policy (Leung & Nann, 1996; and Zhang, 1989). As the success of community service relies heavily on a continual supply of local resources, an analysis of the situation in a resource-rich city would enable some predictions to be made regarding cities with less resources.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

"Policy implementation is the missing link between the concern with policy making and the evaluation of policy outcomes" (Ham & Hill, 1984, p.95). Numerous researches attempt to fill in the "missing link" or "the process of putting policy into action" (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973). In general, the policy implementation literature is subsumed under three headings: the top-down, the bottom-up and the synthesis or iterative approach (Sabatier, 1986).

The top-down approach focuses on how the implementation process is structured to attain policy objectives. Emphasis is placed on the possibility of manipulating legal and political mechanisms (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983, 1989; McFarlane, 1989; and Van Meter & Van Horn, 1977). This approach tries to modify policy design, structure the linkages between organizations and groups involved in implementing the policy, and respond to

the continually changing socio-political environment in order to make the policy a success.

In contrast to the top-down approach, the bottom-up approach tends to adopt the perspectives of the implementing organizations and actors. This approach stresses that the implementation environment or "implementation structure" (Hjern & Porter, 1981, p.211) involves a plurality of stakeholders who have different interests, values and goals. Mobilization of the support of these divergent stakeholders is vital to the success of the implementation. Scholars (Barrett & Fudge 1981; Elmore, 1985; Hjern 1982; and Hull with Hjern, 1987) usually recommend allowing implementers adequate discretion so that they may adapt to the turbulent environment.

The synthesis or iterative approach (Alexander, 1985; Hasenfeld & Brock, 1991; Knoepfel & Weidner, 1982; and Sabatier, 1986) tries to capture the strengths of the first two approaches. As with the bottom-up approach, front-line bureaucrats are seen to possess the capacity to act on their own initiative. The need to pay attention to stakeholders, policy coalitions or affected interest groups within the policy environment is also regarded as important. However, proponents of the synthesis approach also accept the "top down" preoccupation that policy makers should possess the legislative power to structure the implementation process and confine the implementers' behavior within acceptable boundaries. The approach accentuates the impact of continual communication between policy makers and implementers, and ongoing evaluation activities, in helping policy makers to learn ways to improve the monitoring mechanism. The emphasis on interactions between the "top" and the "bottom" has earned this approach another name, the iterative approach.

Guidelines for Identifying Implementation Problems

Despite the diversity of these approaches, they tend to share a common thread. It can be categorized into the following three groups of guiding questions. The first set of questions relates to the policy characteristics and the structuring of implementation. Are the policy objectives spelled out clearly and specifically? Are the implementing agencies granted sufficient resources and legal authority to carry out their jobs? Are the tasks clearly assigned

to different agencies? And finally, is there an integrated structure co-ordinating the implementing agencies at different levels?

The second set of questions is about the implementing organizations and personnel. Are the implementers professional enough to finish their tasks? How are they motivated? Do their value orientations, attitudes and commitments jeopardize the policy objectives?

The last set of questions relates to the policy environment. Are the current socio-economic and political environments supportive for the continuity of the policy? Are there any interest groups or coalitions opposed to the policy? Does the clientel identify with the policy? All these questions will be examined in this study.

CHINESE COMMUNITY SERVICES

The evolution of the Chinese community service system was undertaken against a background of economic reform, which triggered a number of social problems. Community service policy, alongside social security reform, emerged as a response to these social problems (Duo Ji, 1994). The post-reform community-based welfare system is well documented by other scholars (Chan, 1992, 1993a; Leung, 1990; and Wong, 1992). Thus, this paper will only briefly describe the current scenario.

Community Service Policy Objectives

Before 1993, the stated overall objective of the community service policy was to "help the community residents, especially those facing difficulties, through the provision of welfare and services" (Zhang, 1989, p.237). From 1993 onwards, new policy objectives were added. The objectives were: (a) to deliver welfare services to the elderly, disabled persons and families of martyrs and ex-servicemen; (b) providing convenience services for the community residents in general; and (c) co-operating with the enterprises and government departments located within the community to provide social services. The new goal of the policy was to accelerate the establishment of a community-based social service market (Ministry of Civil Affairs, et al., 1993). Even though the overall aim remained intact, serving the general community

residents was considered as important as providing welfare services to the needy group.²

The Scope of Community Services

The scope of community services has been widened since the promulgation of the 14 Ministry Document. Before 1993, the scope was mainly confined to provision of free welfare services for the needy. After the announcement, it was widened to include subsidized and paid-for services. The fee-charging services, which include those services that are not provided in the market, are purely for profit making. These services are also known as convenience services (*bianmen fuwu*) such as helping community members to deal with their daily life nuisances, like bicycle parking and repairing, breakfast serving, shopping services, sewing, leisure and recreational activities as well as the installation of public telephones, etc. Besides convenience services, community organizations can even provide other profit making services, like catering, karaoke, marriage matching, disco and tourist services. Subsidized services are provided to the urban poor who are able to pay a certain amount.

The Implementers

Urban community services are usually organized under a three-tiered system: District government, Street Offices and Residents' Committees. The District government is supposed to be the administrative unit responsible for organizing community services. However, because of the emphasis on local variations, in most cases, community services are delivered by a community network, which consists of a Street Office and the Residents' Committees under its jurisdiction. At the end of 1995, a Street Office usually managed a population of 50,000 to 80,000 in large cities, and 15,000 to 20,000 in small and medium-sized cities. Generally, each Street Office manages 15 to 25 Residents' Committees. Its duties include: (a) administering the daily affairs of the street; (b) acting as the intermediate between the residents and the government; (c) giving advice and directing the Residents' Committees; improving the living conditions of the street; (d) coordinating different governmental and non-governmental units within the street; and (e) directing and monitoring businesses

opened by the Street Office or the Residents' Committees (Ministry of Civil Affairs, 1996a).

The Residents' Committees are para-governmental organizations, though they are supposed to be self-managed by the neighborhood members and the members of the committees are elected by local residents. The Chinese government has further emphasized the community status of the Residents' Committees: District governments should direct rather than lead the development of the committees' activities so as to reduce their government-dependent nature (Ministry of Civil Affairs, 1996b).

The MCA is mainly responsible for organizing and monitoring community service programmes. Nevertheless, there are other ministries and para-governmental units involved in the community: the Ministries of Labour, Personnel, Education and Culture, the Women's Federation, the Communist Youth League, trade unions, and the state-owned enterprises located within the community. As a result, Street Offices and Residents' Committees have to be responsive to various ministries and para-governmental units in their daily operations. Nonetheless, the MCA co-ordinates various requests from these units, because Street Offices and Residents' Committees are formally under the MCA's supervision.

Implementing strategies

With government direction and subvention, Street Offices and Residents' Committees are in charge of mobilizing various supportive forces within society, according to the characteristics of the local community, to develop small scale welfare facilities and other social service activities (Zhang, 1989). Decentralization has become the major strategy for service provision. This means that, District governments, Street Offices and Residents' Committees can autonomously determine what and how community services are provided, and how much of each service is provided.

The rationale behind decentralization is to allow local variations to develop. Since localities have their particular resource endowment, rigid standardization would restrict choices for developing appropriate community services. The principle of self-reliance and mutual help,³ part of the socialist ideology of mutual care and mutual responsibility, is also emphasised (Mok, 1987).

Because of limited financial support, many community service programmes, particularly free services, rely on mobilizing local volunteer groups. The slogan, "everybody helps me, I help everybody" (*renren weiwo, wowei renren*), highlights the mutual help principle behind this approach (Zou and Chen, 1992: 36).

Underlying Principles in Setting Policy Objectives

The objectives of the PRC's community service policy reflect the underlying principles of the central policy makers who are more concerned with economic reform than with the provision of welfare. Community service policy is directly affected by economic reform. Firstly, the development of social welfare and social work is aimed at resolving the possible instabilities associated with economic reform (e.g., Chen, 1988, 1990), especially the enterprise reform. In view of this, some Chinese policy makers suggest developing community services as tools to stabilize society (Hu, 1990). Some (e.g., Shanghai Research Group on Social Security, 1989; Yang, 1994) even argue that community service is complementary to economic development. Because the community is the most basic level of people's lives, providing adequate and appropriate community services can lessen or even resolve the unemployment, inflation, elderly, and child-care problems created by the economic reform. Without the development of community services, further economic reform may be compromised. Especially the role of Residents' Committees as the basic local organizing unit, become an essential element of a stabilizing mechanism at the local or neighborhood level, which is indispensable for furthering economic reforms (Yan, 1994).

Secondly, the limited revenue attained by the central government since the initiation of economic reform has made it more and more reluctant to finance welfare services in general and community services in particular. Consequently, the District governments, Street Offices and Residents' Committees are encouraged to be self-financing. Under the self-financing imperative, for-profit community service provision is encouraged so as to obtain enough funding to sustain or expand services for the needy (Ren, 1993). The slogan, "using services to support services", is well known among service implementers. Another rationale behind providing for-profit services is that these services serve

the wider public who are also members of the community. It is through this self-financing mechanism that central government can limit its public spending without having to reduce the service commitment to the public, including needy groups.

Finally, some policy makers (Zhang & Yang, 1989) not only view the development of community services as complementing economic reform, but also as a catalyst to developing service markets. According to this perspective, community service providers have to serve different segments of the community, not only the most needy. The marketization of community services can provide more choices to satisfy the various needs of the population. Once service markets are developed, Street Offices and Residents' Committees can fulfil the dual goals of self-financing and serving the whole community. With adequate funding, they can offer more quality services to the needy. In sum, the community service system is seen not only as a stabilizing mechanism, but also as a promoter of the service industry and the financial source for social welfare.

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROVISION IN BEIJING

The developmental pace of the community service system in Beijing is closely synchronized with central policy changes. In 1984, the MCA decided that social welfare service organizations should strive for both social and economic efficiency. One year later, the MCA advocated the idea of 'civil economy' (*minzheng jingji*), which means social welfare service organizations need to develop their own profit-making businesses. Welfare production organizations, like welfare factories and community service providers, have to consider whether their 'production' is cost efficient.

Beijing took the lead in launching the new policy objective. In 1987, the MCA, after consolidating the experiences of various experimental projects, initiated the community service policy. It reasserted the principle of "using service production to support welfare provision" (*yi fuwu yang fuwu*). Two years later, the MCA elaborated the details on how to establish a civil economy: introducing a market mechanism in welfare production and provision, using profit generated from service production to subsidize welfare provision; and encouraging welfare service providers to become self-financing (Zhang, 1997).

Beijing adopted a three-year plan since 1986. The first three-year plan (1986–1988) had the following aims: popularizing the idea of civil economy; structuring the community service system with Street Offices as the core and Residents' Committees as the supplement; erecting the community service infrastructure and setting experimental targets. The second three-year plan (1989–1991) further deepened the efforts of the first three-year plan. In addition, a number of community service centers were erected, and different kinds of mutual-help services were developed (Beijing Civil Affairs Bureau, 1990). Up to 1993, the development of community service was still focused upon welfare services rather than service production. The main targets to be served were still the needy groups.

However, after the issue of the 14 Ministry Document, "Opinions About Accelerating the Development of the Community Service Industry" (Guanyu Jikuai Kaizhan Shequ Fuwuyi de Yijian) in 1993, the whole welfare reform drive turned onto a new path. In time with the climate of economic reform, the MCA set up new standards for developing community services. Marketization and the deepening of the idea of civil economy became dominant. In 1995, the MCA encouraged local governments to set up model "Community Service Urban Districts" as examples for others to imitate (Yan, 1997). Following the new instructions, Beijing's Street Offices and Residents' Committees established many for-profit service facilities. Since then community services have been formally differentiated into fee-paying, subsidized and free service types. A number of model community units have also been established.

One of these model units is in Beijing's Xicheng District. The District government restructured the management of community services in 1987. The major goal was to separate politics from service provision. In the past, the community service centers and their financing were centrally controlled by the Street Offices. Although quite suitable for the free and subsidized services, this system was not apt for the civil economy model.

The Xicheng District government further encouraged the community centers to establish their own profit-making businesses. As a result, with the support of the MCA, the Beijing Xicheng District Community Service Association (Beijing Xichengqu Shequ Fuwu Xiehui) and the Community Service Devel-

opment Company (Shequ Fuwu Gongsi) were established in 1993. The Association is responsible for coordinating the Company, its subsidiaries and joint ventures. The Association has legal status, but it is neither a government agency nor a company. It acts as an intermediary between the service users and the providers. The functions of the Association are: (a) accelerating the decentralization process by taking over the job of regulating community service production and provision from the government; (b) mediating the relationships between the government, the Company and other social actors; (c) fund-raising; (d) organizing activities, such as training, needs assessments, citizen surveys, and consultation, to improve the quality of services; and finally (e) monitoring the economic and financial situation of the service providers (Deng, 1995).

At the street level, community service centers have been established. Among the ten streets in the Xisheng District, three community centers were first erected at Xichangan Jie, Yuetan, and Dewai in 1988. It was supposed that other Street Offices would follow later. These three centers are located in densely populated commercial areas. The total construction cost is around 450 thousand Yuan of which 51 thousand came from the City and District governments, 160 thousand from the MCA, 150 thousand from the Street Offices and the rest (89 thousand) from various private donors (Shi, 1990). Although the government provided the initial financial resources and provided indirect assistance, such as tax exemption, the centers have to become self-financing at a later stage. Originally, the centers aimed at serving the traditional target groups (i.e., the needy), and the profit generated from the fee-based services was used to support the subsidized and free services. However, under the self-financing imperative, the centers gradually shifted their focus to profit-making service provision.

At the neighbourhood level, Residents' Committees mainly focus on developing mutual help activities due to their grassroots nature. In addition, they provide convenience services that are also categorized into fee-based, subsidized and free services. The Residents' Committees are also encouraged to be self-financing. As a result, they have to find ways to generate profit. Apart from providing for-profit convenience services, the Residents'

Committees issue licenses to migrant and redundant (xiagang) workers to operate various types of locality-based businesses. These "street businesses" are usually in the form of contracted out convenience services that are important for the common welfare of the neighborhood. The contracting out is justified by the official endorsement of this role of community services, namely, developing the service market.

IMPLEMENTATION PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED

Policy Characteristics and the Structuring of Implementation

Lack of clear specification in policy objectives. The importance of providing services to both the needy and the general community, as well as the significance of both economic and social efficiency have been stressed at the policy level. Consequently, free, subsidized and for-profit services are all legitimate outputs. In order to enhance economic efficiency, marketization is necessary. Moreover, the idea of using for-profit services to finance subsidized and free services may be on the right track. However, there is no further specification about the proportion of resources committed to each type of service. The problem is quite serious when the main implementation strategy is a decentralized one. One of our informants pointed out that implementers are allowed so much "discretion" that they can do whatever they want. This is especially true of those located in a prosperous community, where they can provide many convenience services while leaving the welfare service at a minimum. Local conditions can be used as justification for such measures.

Although some high-ranking officials have persistently called for more attention to the needy (Cui, 1991; and Yan, 1994), some Beijing providers have clearly shifted their focus from free and subsidized services to for-profit ones (Zhang, 1997). As Wang (1997) argues, the for-profit and non-profit services belong to two different structures of the community service system. With the objective of maintaining social stability, community services are treated as remedial services for the needy. Nevertheless, with the introduction of marketization, for-profit services are viewed as providing more choices to recipients who can afford them. The nature of community services has fundamentally changed from

remedial to remedial-cum-commodified, and at worst, purely commodified.

The community service policy is basically a welfare policy. When economic efficiency is over-stressed, even at the expense of social efficiency, one may wonder that the implementers may subsume the social objectives under the economic ones. Without clarifying priorities and specifying the proportion of different types of services, the well being of the vulnerable groups may ultimately rest in the hands of the implementers.

Reliance upon decentralized implementation strategy. The decentralization strategy has the virtue of allowing implementers the flexibility to respond to the local situation in different communities. However, when decentralization is accompanied by the self-financing imperative, the implementers may face difficulties in providing sufficient free and subsidized services to the needy in poor communities. In poor neighborhoods, the size of the vulnerable groups is relatively large, but people who can contribute their valuable time in providing mutual help services or are able to purchase the for-profit services are relatively few. As a result, the implementers cannot mobilize enough resources to satisfy the community's needs. For instance, those community service centers located in the prosperous neighbourhoods of the Xichang District and Dongchang District are well decorated and provide numerous kinds of services. In contrast, there is no service center located in the Toutiao and Ertiao neighborhoods of the Dongchang District because they have a relatively large elderly population. The Residents' Committees in these poorer districts lack money to provide sufficient free and subsidized services.

Worse still, when the self-financing imperative and the role of promoting the development of the service market are introduced to the implementers, the adequacy of welfare service provision becomes questionable in the well off communities too. Complicating matters further is the direct tie between the salary of the implementers and the success of their for-profit business, since staff pay levels are raised if more profit is earned by the organization. Thus, the implementers have a great incentive to deliver convenience and non-welfare services. As noted by Zhang (1997), as the

policy emphasis shifted to self-financing, the Xichangan Jie and the Xinjiekou Community Centers in the Xichang District had to cut a large portion of their free and subsidized services, and moved to provide more fee-paying services in order to survive. Both the members of the Residents' Committees and staff of the community centres interviewed demonstrated their pride in organizing a wide variety of for-profit services, and the amount of profit generated for their organizations in the past few years. However, when we asked about their welfare services, they were quite reluctant to tell us. They mentioned some limited services, such as fun fairs for the elderly and helping the childless elderly with housework. The exact quantity of welfare services was not revealed. Some academics worry that a number of implementers are abusing their position to gain personal benefits particularly by running services" such as restaurants and karaoke clubs. To correct these defects, some rules have to be enforced. More resource input to the poor neighborhoods is also required.

Slow and rigid responses by staff of the Ministry of Civil Affairs. A majority of the service implementers interviewed indicated that the MCA officials were slow in responding to their requests. One service provider of a Dongshang Residents' Committee mentioned that the MCA has not responded to a request for renovation of her office for three years. The slow responses reflect to certain extent that decentralization is mainly confined to managerial duties, while financial discretion is still centrally controlled. Another reason is that the MCA tends to resort to the old established ways of problem solving. The changes brought on by decentralization and marketization are too new for the MAC officials to manage. Under financial constraints and increasing demand from below, many local officials simply ignore the demands or wait for instructions from above. As the top-down approach literature points out, relying on existing departments or organizations to implement a relatively new program has the drawback of dragging along all the existing bureaucratic problems, which deprive implementers of certain flexibility in carrying out the new program (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983). The Vice Minister of the MCA, Yan Mingfu (1994) testifies to the tendency of the MCA staff to avoid the new program. He has admitted that staff often stick to their established

job assignment and says they are not dynamic enough to handle the new tasks.

Lack of inter-departmental co-ordination. Closely related to the above problem is the ambiguous role of the MCA in co-ordinating community service provision. Even though it is the main duty of the MCA to monitor the implementation processes, there are many government departments and para-governmental organizations involved in the community field. They all rely on the community-based network, especially the Residents' Committees, to carry out their work. Since each department or organization has its own agenda, the Residents' Committees are often overloaded. There is a saying that resident committees suffer from the problem of "a thousand threads through a single needle" (qian tiao xian, yi gen zhen). A thousand threads represents the demands of various agencies while the single needle signifies the Residents' Committee. Mobilizing collaboration between these departments and organizations is difficult. The front-line MCA staff do not possess enough authority to mobilize the co-operation of the para-governmental organizations, not to mention the other government departments. This pinpoints the lack of an effective monitoring mechanism to deal with the strong veto-point in the implementation chain between the MCA and other departments and organizations.

Some suggestions have been made within the MCA to resolve this problem (see Ministry of Civil Affairs, 1995). In Beijing, some District governments set up a permanent monitoring committee with senior officials from other departments and chaired by the District office of the MCA. In some districts, senior officials of the Street Office are assigned to co-ordinate with the other departments through a temporary committee (Deng, 1995). Some even recommend that the monitoring function should fall outside the arena of the MCA and rest in a multi-ministerial structure with chairpersons of the structure democratically elected (Zhu, 1997).

Implementing Organizations and Personnel

Lack of high calibre personnel. An obvious phenomenon noted in Beijing is that the staff of the Residents' Committees and voluntary helpers are usually elderly. Many of them have had little

formal education. This is not unique to Beijing. Chan (1993b), Wong (1992), and Leung and Nann (1996) also found a prevalence of elderly persons among service providers in other cities. How to attract more young people and people of a higher education level to join the community service implementing organizations is one serious problem troubling senior officials, as suggested by the staff of the Street Office and the Resident Committees visited. The major reason why implementing organizations fail to attract young people is that the remuneration is low. There are some middle-aged personnel, but they are mostly recruited from the redundant manual workers. They lack the professional skills and calibre to implement the policy successfully. Although there are a number of social workers graduated from some renowned universities, such as Beijing University, university graduates are not willing to take up such low-paying jobs. Mostly, they are assigned to the higher level administrative posts rather than direct service posts.

Lack of motivation and commitment. Apart from the calibre of service providers, motivation and commitment are important elements for the success of the implementation process. Particularly given the financial straitjacket in which these operate, motivation and commitment determine the level of success. Between the two Residents' Committees we visited, performance on service delivery differed significantly, even though they were located next to each other within a relatively poor community. The staff of the better-performing committee pointed out numerous ways of generating convenience services and recruiting voluntary workers. They showed us a list of convenience services provided in the past few years. But the staff of the other committee were not so energetic and creative. They tended to stick to the usual routine work. The cases highlight the importance of the frontline workers' enthusiasm in providing services under problematic structural conditions, as previously discussed. Since the staff of the Residents' Committees are recruited from the neighborhood, a strong sense of community identification is prerequisite to motivate them to work enthusiastically without caring about their pay.

Problems Relating to the Policy Environment

Difficulty in mobilizing volunteers. Organizing voluntary mutual help services constitutes a major part of the implementation program. As such, the altruistic atmosphere of the policy environment determines its success. In the past, the mutual aid services were maintained in the name of socialist values. Recent changes in society, like inflation and the rising standard of living are detrimental to people's sense of charity. The ongoing economic reform has sown the seeds of individualism and instrumental mentality among citizens. Since urban communities have become more money-oriented, the government's attempts to instill the "Lei Feng" (self-sacrifice) spirit has gone unheeded. The general public of Beijing is more concerned with improving its economic condition, by taking up a second job or working longer hours, than helping neighbors. One taxi driver told us that he could earn around 10,000 Yuan per month by working about twelve hours a day and seven days a week. Even though he knew that the Residents' Committee had organized some mutual help services, he just did not have time to participate.

Limited take up of community based services. Although the central authority assigned Street Offices and Residents' Committees as the grassroots implementing organizations, these organizations were used as the tool of governance rather than to provide important community services. Moreover, these organizations had limited authority to deal with problems like unemployment, care of the elderly, youth work and women's services. The past image and ability of these organizations are deeply held in the mind of the residents. As a result, the residents do not recognize the new responsibilities and authority of the organizations. Hence, once they encounter problems, they would not seek helps from the local implementing organizations. One of our informants, a redundant widow, said that she did not seek help from the Residents' Committee because she thought that the committee could do nothing to assist her. Instead, she asked her elder sister for help.

Monitoring issues. Decentralization undeniably grants local implementers managerial control of their service delivery. The problem, as identified previously, is how to monitor their behavior.

The existence of groups and organizations actively concerned about the service provision may check the performance of the implementers. For instance, in the field of elderly care, the influential role of the National Conference of the Elderly (NCE) is well known (Olson, 1988). The NCE, as a coalition organization of all groups concerned about the welfare of the elderly, closely monitors the elderly care policy in the PRC. In housing policy, a similar organization was set up to monitor the recent attempts at housing reform (Zhong & Hays, 1996). However, in the realm of community services, so far, no such coalition organization has been formed. As a result, local implementers are left free to interpret instructions from above, and free to design their services according to their own interests. This may lead to deviation from the original policy objectives.

Inadequate support from the provincial government. An MCA informant told us that the development of community services in Beijing lagged behind that of Shanghai and Tianjin because of lack of support from the provincial government. Political events, especially the reshuffling of some senior officials due to corruption, dampened the government's enthusiasm in implementing the community service policy. Several years ago, with strong support from the Beijing government, some districts and streets were awarded the "exemplary status" among the model districts and streets in the country. However, the performance of these models has not been impressive in recent years. Changing the government's priorities is thus a crucial factor in fostering more effective implementation of the community service policy in Beijing.

CONCLUSION

By employing implementation theories as a framework for the study of the recent community service reform, a number of implementation problems are identified in the case of Beijing. In terms of policy characteristics and the structuring of implementation, this case shows that the objectives are not specific enough. To some extent, this is due to the decentralized implementation strategy that allows the implementers too much discretionary power. Moreover, the existing implementation structures are not

flexible enough to co-ordinate various departments and para-governmental organizations in satisfying community needs efficiently and effectively. The shortage of qualified personnel in implementing organizations and a lack of motivation on the part of service providers further complicate the issue. Lastly, the policy environment of Beijing does not lend support to the policy. Inadequate support from the provincial government, lack of organization in monitoring the implementation and the passive residents hinder the further development of the community services.

NOTES

1. Although the ideals of community care and mutual help have been first introduced since the promulgation of the regulations concerning the Organization of Neighbourhood Office in Urban Areas' in 1954 (Chan, 1992: 359). For the details of the community-based welfare support before the economic reform, see Dixon (1981).
2. The content of the policy document further substantiates such a change. One can easily find paragraphs specifying land use regulations, taxation arrangements, and technical support from the government in promoting the convenience services.
3. The advocacy of the principle of self-reliance and mutual help may be the excuse of the Chinese authority to avoid expanding the financial supports to communities.

REFERENCES

- Alexander, E. (1985). From idea to action: Notes for a contingency theory of the policy implementation process. *Administration and Society*, 16, 403-426.
- Barrett, S & C. Fudge (1981). *Policy and Action: Essays on the Implementation of Public Policy*. London: Methuen.
- Beijing Civil Affairs Bureau [Beijingshi Minzhengju]. (1990). Beijingshi jiushi niandai ahequ fuwu fazhang guihua shexiang [Preliminary thoughts on developing Beijing community services in the 90s]. *Social Work Research*, 10, 12-16.
- Chan, C.L.W. (1992). New challenges to the forms of welfare provision in China after a decade of Economic reform. *International Social Work*, 35, 347-363.
- Chan, C.L.W. (1993a). *The Myth of Neighbourhood Mutual Help: The Contemporary Chinese Community-Based Welfare System in Guangzhou*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Chan, C.L.W. (1993b). Urban neighbourhood mobilization and community care for the elderly in the People's Republic of China. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology*, 8, 253-270.

- Chen, L. (1988). Guanyu shehui gongzuo de jige lilun wenti [Some theoretical questions about social work]. *Social Work Research*, 1, 1-7.
- Chen, L. (1990). Social development mechanisms and social security functions. *International Sociology*, 5 (1), 89-100.
- Cui, N. (1991). Jinyibu gonggu yeguo he fazhan shequ wuwu [Further consolidate, enhance and develop community services]. *Zhongguo MinZheng Tongji Ninjian* [Annual Statistical Report of Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs], 273-276.
- Deng, X. (1995). Beijingshi xichengqu shequ fuwu hangye guanli de tiaocha [An examination of the xicheng district community service industry in Beijing]. *Social Work Studies*, 31, 29-32.
- Dixon, J. (1981). Community-based welfare support in China: 1949-1979. *Community Development Journal*, 16 (1), 21-29.
- Duo Ji, C.R. (1994). Tegao renshi jiqiang lingdao tuidong shequ fuwu ye de quanmian fazhan [Enhancing the knowledge base of and strengthening the promotion of total development of community service industry by leaders]. *Zhongguo MinZheng Tongji Ninjian* [Annual Statistical Report of Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs], 318-328.
- Elmore, R.F. (1985). Forward and backward mapping: Reversible logic in the analysis of public policy. In K., Hanf, & T.A.J. Toonen (Eds.), *Policy Implementation in Federal and Unitary Systems* (pp.33-70). Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Evers, A., & Svetlik, I. (1993). *Balancing Pluralism: New Welfare Mixes in Care for the Elderly*. Aldershot: Avebury.
- Ham, C., & Hill, M. (1984). *The Policy Process in the Modern Capitalist State*. Brighton: Wheatsheaf.
- Hasenfeld, Y., & Brock, T. (1991). Implementation of social policy revisited. *Administration and Society*, 22 (4), 451-479.
- Hjern, B. (1982). Implementation research: The link gone missing. *Journal of Public Policy*, 2, 301-308.
- Hjern, B., & Porter, D.O. (1981). Implementation structures: A new unit of administrative analysis. *Organization Studies*, 2 (3), 211-227.
- Hu, Z. (1990). Shilun jimin weiyuanhui de shehui wending zuoyong [A discussion on the stabilizing functions of the residents' committees]. *Social Work Research*, 7, 49-52.
- Hull, C.J., with Hjern, B. (1987). *Helping Small Firms Grow: An Implementation Approach*. London: Croom Helm.
- Knoepfel, P., & Weidner, H. (1982). Formulation and implementation of air quality control programmes: Patterns of interest consideration. *Policy & Politics*, 10 (1), 85-109.
- Leung, J.C.B. (1990). The community-based welfare system in China. *Community Development Journal*, 25 (3), 195-205.
- Leung, J.C.B. (1995). The political economy of unemployment and unemployment insurance in the People's Republic of China. *International Social Work*, 38, 139-149.

- Leung, J.C.B., & Nann, R.C. (1996). *Authority and Benevolence: Social Welfare in China*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.
- Mazmanian, D.A., & Sabatier, P.A. (1983). *Implementation and Public Policy*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman.
- Mazmanian, D.A., & Sabatier, P.A. (1989). *Implementation and Public Policy: With a New Postscript*. Latham, Md: University Press of America.
- McFarlane, D. (1989). Testing the statutory coherence hypothesis. *Administration and Society*, 20, 395–422.
- Ministry of Civil Affairs (1996a). *Quanguo Chengshi Jiedao Banshichu Jianshe Qingkuang* [The Current Situation of the Establishment of Street Offices in China]. Documents of the Local Government Building Department, Appendix I.
- Ministry of Civil Affairs (1996b). *Quanguo Juweihui Jianshe Qingkuang* [The Current Situation of the Establishment of Residents' Committees in China]. Documents of the Local Government Building Department, Appendix II.
- Ministry of Civil Affairs (1995). *Quanguo shequ fuwu shifan chengqu biao zhun* [Standard of the exemplary module of community services of the whole country]. *Zhongguo MinZheng Tongji Ninjian* [Annual Statistical Report of Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs], 353–358.
- Ministry of Civil Affairs, State Planning Commission, State Commission for Restructuring Economy, State Education Commission, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Personnel, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Construction, Ministry of Public Health, State Physical Culture and Sports Planning Commission, State Planning Commission, People's Bank of China, State General Administration of Taxation, & China National Committee on Ageing (1993). *Guanyu jikuai kaizhan shequ fuwuyi de yijian* [Opinions about Accelerating the Development of the Community Service Industry]. *Zhongguo MinZheng Tongji Ninjian* [Annual Statistical Report of Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs], 193–198.
- Mok, B.H. (1987). Social welfare in China in an era of economic reform. *International Social Work*, 30, 237–250.
- Olson, P. (1988). Modernization in the People's Republic of China: The politicization of the elderly. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 29 (2), 241–262.
- Pressman, J., & Wildavsky, A. (1973). *Implementation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ren, Z. (1993). Qibu, shengcun, fazhan [Embarkment, survival and development]. *Social Work Research*, 23, 9–14.
- Sabatier, P. (1986). Top-down and bottom-up approaches to implementation research: A critical analysis and suggested synthesis. *Journal of Public Policy*, 6 (1), 21–48.
- Shanghai Research Group on Social Security (1989). *Shequ fuwu yu jingji fazhan* [Community services and economic development]. *Social Work Research*, 6, 5–9.
- Shi, L. (1990). Chengshi shequ fuwu zhongxin de gongneng ji guanli [The functions and management of urban community service centres]. *Social Work Research*, 10, 50–53.

- Van Meter, C.E., & Van Horn, D.S. (1977). The implementation of intergovernmental policy. *Policy Studies Review Annual*, 1, 97–120.
- Wang, S. (1997). *Zhuanye Peixun Dui Fazhan Shequ Fuwu de Yiyi* [The Meanings of Professional Training Towards the Development of Community Services]. Paper presented at the Fourth Conference on Mainland and Hong Kong Social Welfare Development, Wuhan.
- Wong, L. (1992). Community social services in the People's Republic of China. *International Social Work*, 35, 455–470.
- Yan, M. (1994). Dali fazhan shequ fuwuyi jianli jianquan chengshi shehui fuwu tixi [Actively develop community service industry and establish a comprehensive urban social welfare service system]. *Zhongguo MinZheng Tongji Ninjian* [Annual Statistical Report of Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs], 300–317.
- Yan, M. (1997). *Jianchi wei Renmin Moufuli de Zhongzhi: Ba Shequ Fuwu Tuixiang Xinde Fazhan Jieduan* [Pushing the Development of Community Services into a New Stage by Insisting the Aim of Citizen Welfare]. Speech addressed at the Fourth Conference on Mainland and Hong Kong Social Welfare Development, Wuhan.
- Yang, Q. (1994). Shiyi shichang jingji tizhi, jianli minzheng bada tixi [Adapting the market system: Establishing eight civil administration systems]. *Social Work Research*, 26, 33–37.
- Zhang, D. (1989). Guanyu shenru kaizhan chengshi shequ fuwu gongzuo de jige wenti [A few problems about the further development of urban community service work]. *Zhongguo MinZheng Tongji Ninjian* [Annual Statistical Report of Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs], 235–252.
- Zhang, S. (1997). An analysis of the changing function of China's social welfare service institution during the transformation period. *Hong Kong Journal of Social Sciences*, 9, 115–127.
- Zhang, Y. & Yang, Q. (1989). Yu shichang wei zhongxin kaizhang shequ fuwu [Developing market-oriented community services]. *Social Work Research*, 4, 33–36.
- Zhong, Y., & Hays, R.A. (1996). The transformation of the urban housing system in China. *Urban Affairs Review*, 31 (5), 625–658.
- Zhu, Y. (1997). *Guanyu Zhongguo Shequ Fuwu Fazhan Moshi de Sikao* [Reflection Upon the Development Models of Community Services]. Speech addressed at the Fourth Conference on Mainland and Hong Kong Social Welfare Development, Wuhan.
- Zou, J., & Chen, Y. (1992). Shequ fuwu jiben moshi tansuo [The search of the basic social service model]. *Social Work Research*, 17, 35–38.

