

Report on the 70th JSSSW Fall Conference

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The Fall Conference of the Japanese Society for the Study of Social Welfare (JSSSW) was held on 15th and 16th October 2022 at Kansai University of Welfare Sciences. Over the past few years, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the conference had been held online with parts of the programme being cancelled. I am honoured and truly appreciative for being able to hold this conference in person for the first time in four years with blessing of great weather on these days and for the great number of participants. There were 585 registered participants (including overseas presenters), 348 in-person and 287 online participants.

The conference was held with the combination of in-person, online and on-demand streaming, some of which we have never used before. This resulted in some technical issues such as sound problems. I would like to express my sincere apology for all the inconveniences experienced at the conference.

We have finally been able to hold this Conference three years after first receiving the offer. I was not confident when I first heard about it from Prof. Koichi Kaneko, the chairperson at the time. However, with encouragement and strong support from my colleagues, I decided to accept the offer. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the conference was delayed for a year.

I would also like to express my profound gratitude to Prof. Fumiharu Yamagata, Prof. Shinya Iwasaki, Prof. Kayoko Ito, the Chairpersons from the Executive Committee, Executive Committee members, the board members of the JSSSW and International Academic Publishing Co., Ltd. for their tremendous support.

The morning session on the first day was a workshop for international students titled “Multicultural coexistence in social welfare research and education – from the experiences of international students.” After the opening ceremony, the awards ceremony was held. The academic award was awarded to Emeritus Prof. Masami Iwata and Prof. Yu Nagata, and the encouragement award went to Assistant Prof. Mai Shi and Assistant Prof. Miki Akutsu. I would like to congratulate all this year’s winners.

The theme for the Conference was “The new normal and social welfare – looking at the future of ‘connection.’” With the COVID-19 pandemic and innumerable natural disasters, our lifestyles have changed dramatically, and we are challenged to adapt our lives quickly. In such times, social welfare which directly influences the lives of people is now being recognised for its professional value more than ever. The professionals working in the fields of social welfare are indispensable and it is the purpose of this Conference to discuss the roles of social work professionals when thinking about the connections among people.

During the symposium, ardent discussions took place guided by the Conference theme. This year's in-person Conference allowed presenters and participants to come together in an exciting environment.

The second day started off with a symposium by the Research Support Committee titled "Pressing on with research – how to overcome various challenges." It was followed by a specific agenda session titled "Disability and Women – focusing on sexuality and reproductivity," a Conference organised session titled "Pondering the research methodologies in the study of social welfare - concrete methods for evaluation-," and followed by further oral presentations. The poster sessions were held online. There were 105 oral presentations. I would like to say a special thanks to the members who managed and moderated the whole Conference.

Reflecting on the Conference, there were several concerns identified. The first concern is the peer review process of oral presentations and poster presentations. Since the criteria were extremely strict, we apologise for the stress it caused to presenters. The necessity to discuss clear standards and to what extent peer review should be done is a pressing matter. The second concern is regarding the method of hosting the Conference. Hosting has now become quite complicated with a mix of online and on-demand streaming. Advantages and disadvantages should be carefully considered when discussing future conferences. The third concern is about the cancellation of information exchange sessions and changing poster sessions to online. This change possibly restricted communication between participants. Since it was the first in-person Conference in a while, this limitation was deeply regrettable. We would be grateful to hear your honest opinions regarding these challenges highlighted.

Last but not least, this Conference was prepared with a team consisting of 17 Executive Committee members from the association and a lecturer (non-association member); 18 members in total. In addition, students from our university have done preconference preparations and heartfully welcomed our guests on the days of the Conference. We were honoured to receive kind words from our association president Hiroto Kuga in his opening ceremony speech. I am proud to say that we all have built this Conference together. I would like to conclude with my deepest gratitude towards everyone who contributed to host this Conference.

Comments from the Awardees –

The Japanese Society for the Study of Social Welfare Award 2022

After a scrupulous selection, the Review Committee for the 2022 JSSSW Award has selected Emeritus Prof. Masami Iwata and Prof. Yu Nagata for the Academic Award (Sole Author category), and Assistant Prof. Mai Shi and Assistant Prof. Miki Akutsu for the Encouragement Award (Sole Author category).

The awarding ceremony took place after the opening ceremony on the first day of the 70th JSSSW Fall Conference, on Saturday, October 15, 2022, at Kansai University of Welfare Sciences. The ceremony was broadcasted live online and has been archived for on-demand streaming (the first hour of the hosting University's symposium) until Thursday, November 17.

Here we deliver jubilant messages from the awardees.

Academic Award (Sole Author category)

Emeritus Prof. Masami Iwata, Japan Women's University

The title of the book awarded:

Dissecting the Social Benefit System – Reweaving the Safety Net

Iwanami Shoten, 5 November 2021

At the beginning of August, I received an e-mail from the administration which said, “would you accept the Academic Award for 2022?” I was completely surprised and replied saying there must have been a mistake. This was because I am an elderly woman who had just received recommendation to become an honorary member and that I have received the Academic Award back in 2017. What I mean to say is that I am already an “adjourned” researcher and I should not be in the way of fresh researchers not least to mention that I felt guilty receiving the award for a second time. However, when I was told that there were no age limits or limitations to how many times one can receive this award and that the decision was made by the Review Committee through a meticulous selection process, I decided to gratefully accept the offer. There were three other recipients this time. It was soothing to think that JSSSW considers “all generations.”

The book for which I received this great honour attempted to earnestly unravel the “isolated position” within the social security/ welfare system, which had been a doubt I had carried for long towards the social benefit system. It has been one of my long concerns that when discussing social benefit, procedure problems in frontline practice and support for independent living are often highlighted but there is very little research done. Also, as Japan being a welfare state with “national health care and pension,” I found it quite problematic that the relation between these systems and the social benefit system was not being discussed. Furthermore, the relation between the standards for social benefit and low-income standards had not been organised either. This book sheds light on these problems while also suggesting a pathway to dismantling the system to social assistance.

The book originally targeted the younger population who work to support people in poverty using simple and easy words to understand. However, since the system itself is very complicated, I relearned a lot through the process of writing which might have resulted in not sufficiently achieving such a goal. I hope that future research will edit the suggestions I have made in this book. However, since research has the tendency of becoming “exclusive,” having intersectional discussions seems to be a challenge.

Academic Award (Sole Author category)

Prof. Yu Nagata, Doshisha University

Title of the book awarded:

Collaborative Governance for Integrated Community Care: Implications for the Changing Roles of Local Government

Yuhikaku Publishing, 15 October 2021

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to have the honour to receive the Academic Award for my book Collaborative Governance for Integrated Community Care: Implications for the Changing Roles of Local Government.

This book attempts to respond to the new life challenges brought about by the individualisation of the society by contemplating how to develop an integrated community care which is realised by the coordination between the two elements: “within welfare system” and “collaboration of welfare system and community care.” This study utilises the lens of governance to analyse the process of this coordination. Collaborative governance in integrated community care is a field where various stakeholders customise the

national policies through collaboration. My study attempted to clarify the roles of the municipal government on different stages of collaboration as it holds a leading position in steering the collaboration processes between various actors. It means that the mezzo level, where macro level policies and micro level practices are bridged, is considered as the stage for various actors to dynamically interact rather than as a subject of management by law. This book proposes to use the lens of “governance” to analyse the process of promoting this stage.

To elucidate this process, this book utilises case studies through interviews with staff members working in the department responsible for integrated community care and participatory observation. Samples were chosen from municipalities which I had been involved for a certain period. It meant that I was both a researcher and a “practitioner” at the same time which prompted me to reflect on the difficulties in the studies of community welfare. I am hoping to continue my search for methodologies in community welfare research.

Social welfare is a study of practice. I would like to humbly keep learning from the practitioners working hard in the field. Furthermore, I will digest the tasks I have received from the reviews and hope to proceed with my “incomplete project” through research and practice. Finally, I would like to convey my profound gratitude to the reviewees who have thoroughly read my book, to the collaborators in the five municipalities who have co-created this research, and to the numerous mentors who have guided this study.

Encouragement Award (Sole Author category)

Assistant Prof. Mai Shi, Tsinghua University

Title of the book awarded:

Co-production Model – The New Supporting Strategy to Fill the Gap in the Welfare System

Koyo Shobo, 20 March 2021

During my postgraduate studies, I felt happier when my supervisor Prof. Takafumi Uzuhashi thought my research was “interesting” rather than “good.” At first, I did not understand what “interesting” exactly meant, but I feel that the seven years of international study at Doshisha has taught me that. I am greatly honoured that this book which aimed to be an “interesting” research, has received the Encouragement Award from JSSSW and at the same time feel extremely comforted that what I feel “interesting” has been accepted and recognised by the readers, especially the veteran professors. Here, I

would like to use the opportunity to share with you the two points that I feel especially “interesting” about my research. First is the encounter with diverse knowledge. This book was written in fulfilment of the PhD degree for Social Welfare at Doshisha University, but the content does not end with just the study of social welfare. In order to fulfil my purpose for this research, I actively gathered knowledge and methodologies from various academic branches. For example, for the first theoretical part, other than the orthodox welfare pluralism (study of social welfare), institutionalism in organisational theories (organisational sociology), theory of public-private partnership (study of public policy and administration) and other fields of study are utilised for discussion. In the case studies in the latter half, while it focused on cases of youth social support, I have boldly applied analytical strategies commonly used in theory of service management (business administration).

Second is the creation of new knowledge. “Co-production” has too often been used carelessly in previous research and official documents. I did not want to follow that flow but rather radically question the definition in my study. Applying the conceptual positionality of “co-production,” which is recently actively discussed throughout the world, to the gap problems in the social welfare field is the highlight of this research. What was most beautiful was the process of systemising new theory from the actual social service production happening in the field through careful consideration. There were times when I faced the wall, but this experience itself is the academic originality that is distinct from any other study.

I believe that absorbing innumerable amounts of “interesting” knowledge led to the interestingness of my study. I will earnestly continue my journey to pursue “interesting” research.

Encouragement Award (Sole Author category)

Assistant Prof. Miki Akutsu, Mejiro University

Title of the book awarded:

My Record, Family’s Memory - Care leaver and the Future of Social Care

Ozora Publishing Company, 13 August 2021

I am greatly honoured and humbled to receive this amazing award. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to those who have contributed to this research and to the Review Committee for choosing my book amongst the many candidates. The book, though written with clumsy sentences, is written and published with passion to spread word on the problems of records taken in child social care in the hope that

many people will take interest in the topic. I base my research in archival science where we research about records and information management. From early on as a researcher in this science, I had set child social care as my field of research. This book comprises my work during my PhD years up until now. Through the process, I have been able to visit and do research in many childcare institutions. The institution that I have been visiting the longest is from when I was a master's student at postgraduate school. At the time, I had been told by one of the staff there, "I don't like researchers because they come once, observe, and say that that's everything." Even after more than ten years, I still remember as clearly as yesterday, how I had sworn to myself on the way home from the institution, that I will build a strong long-term relationship with the institution through frequent visits. As the staff told me on the first day, there were many aspects that I was able to recognise because of our long-term relationship. Therefore, I am truly grateful that I heard the staff's honest opinion on that day.

From 2016 to 2018, I lived in a children's independence support institution in Hokkaido called Hokkaido Kateigakko. I was blessed with a great learning environment where staff members and children taught me a lot through dialogue and observation. The results from this experience are unfortunately not included in this book. However, what I had learned from the precious experience I had in this public children's independence institution with such a long history helped build the foundation for this book.

I will sincerely take into account all the comments I have received through the review and will strive to proceed one step at a time for more future research.

監訳

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