特集論文：「福祉の哲学，価値，思想」について

Social work value and ethics

――A call for a social justice based practice in Japan――

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● Abstract ●

This article focuses on clarifying how social justice, a representative social work value, has been understood in Japan. Social justice is a value that governs ethical behavior in social work practice, but it is not used much in social work education and practice in Japan. This study explores why the concept of social justice wasn't popular through a historical review of the literature. After the war, social work has developed from a human rights perspective. However, a social justice perspective is needed in today's social work in Japan more than ever. Finally, this study propose Paulo Freire's praxis as a social justice-based social work practice and education method.

● Key words：social work values, social work ethics, social justice, rights, global definition of social work, Japan

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I. Introduction

The subject of values and ethics are important to social work for values and ethics serve as a core of the discipline. Moreover, they are increasingly important today because of globalization and advancing technology as we have become exposed to diverse ways of thinking about the subject and figure out a way how to live and work with others who think and act differently, which sometimes goes against our own values and ethics. In social work, this may mean dealing with a client from a foreign country or having to problem-solve within a multidisciplinary team of different professionals who have dissimilar training and goals. Mirroring the importance of the subject, there has been a growing international interest in social work values and ethics in general. According to Banks (2008), the proliferation of interest in social work ethics is evident in the recent introduction of two journals dedicated to social work values and ethics, The Journal of Social Work Values and Ethics (USA-based) and Ethics and Social Welfare (UK-based). Furthermore, there is a growing number of new and revised codes of ethics/ professional conduct, alongside other ethical guidance and discussion documents produced by professional associations and regulatory bodies.

As for Japan, it is difficult to assess the interest. However, a recent literature search by the author on the availability of texts and journals on social work ethics and values shows that there has

Table 1. Result of OPAC search on books on social work ethics and values from 1980s to 2018

Books with key words "social work" and "ethics" or "values" (n = 15)		Books with key words "social welfare" and "ethics" or "values" (N = 61)	
1989–2002	7	1986–1998	5
2009–2016	8	1999–2003	13
		2004–2008	15
		2009–2013	14
		2014–2018	11

Number of articles in the JASW's journal with the word ethics or values in the title or the text from 2000-2017

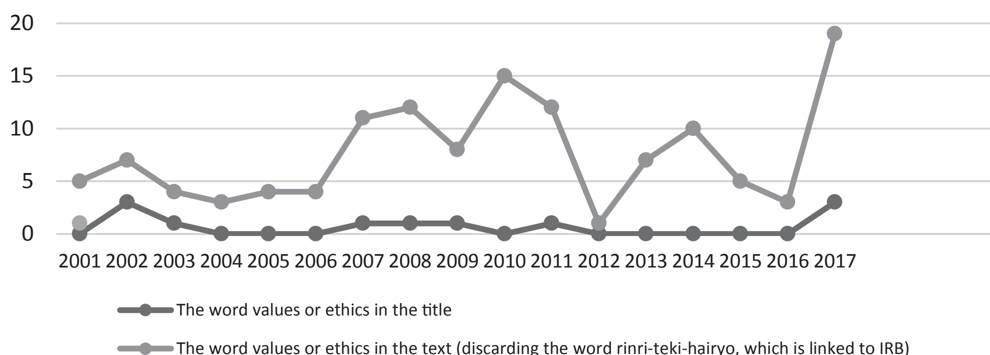

Figure 1. Result of a search in the Japan Association of Social Work (JASW) journal with the word ethics or values in the title or the text from 2000–2017

been an unsteady but some interest in this topic in recent years (See Table 1 and Figure 1).

So what are values and ethics? First, the English term for value comes from the Latin word valere, which means be strong, be well, be worth, have power, and be able. In English it is defined as (1) the regard that something is held to deserve; the importance, worth, or usefulness of something; (2) principles or standards of behavior; one's judgement of what is important in life. The Japanese word for value or *kachi* is defined as, (1) the nature or degree of usefulness of things, worth, useful; (2) an absolute characteristic that is always approved by a person or society as 'good' such as truth, good, and beauty. While the English definition links values to behaviors, the Japanese definition seems to have a broader meaning as characteristics that can be related and not limited to cultural, personal, political, and religious.

Second, the English term for ethics comes from the Greek word ethos, meaning character. It is (1) the discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation; (2) a set of moral principles: a theory or system of moral values; (3) the principles of conduct governing an individual or a group; (4) a guiding philosophy; (5) a consciousness of moral importance; and (6) a set of moral issues or aspects (such as rightness). According to Banks (2012, p. 5), ethics are mainly used to mean either a moral philosophy (singular term) or norms or standards of behavior both good and

bad (plural term). Both definitions are linked to morals, and in fact many use ethics and morals interchangeably. But, some Western commentators distinguish the two. Osborne (1998, pp. 221–222 in Banks, (2012, p. 6)) makes the following distinction,

> Moral systems are systems of interdictions; they are ideologies, codes to which individuals must relate themselves. Ethics, on the other hand, might be considered in a more positive sense, not as codes of interdiction, not as external norms to which individuals must relate themselves, but as constructed norms of 'internal consistency'. Morality, one could say, is about doing one's duty to others or doing one's duty by some moral norm; ethics is about doing one's duty to oneself.

Osborne's distinction is like the Japanese definitions for ethics and morals. The Japanese word for ethics or *rinri* is defined as (1) the way to fulfill and act as a human, (2) an actual principle as the norm of morality. Moral or *dotoku* means a set of norms that people must obey to understand the good and bad so that they can act righteously. Furthermore, the Japanese language has also adopted the English word, moral as *moraru* which is used as morals that fit the realistic modern-day life. Since the Japanese word *dotoku* invokes Chinese philosophy such as Confuciansim or moral education for elementary school children during World War II, to avoid such nuances, the imported word *moraru* is used to refer to judgements of rights and wrong that are needed to make today's relationship with one another.

In social work, values are usually principles related to the goal or the mission of the profession and how others such as clients, colleagues, and members of our society in general should be treated. Additionally, Reamer (2013, p. 15) views values as a method of intervention that social workers use in their work and as the resolution of ethical dilemmas in practice. In other words, values are practice skills and a measure in which the social worker (and the client) make ethical choices. In social work, ethics is more directly related to actual behaviors or practices. For example, a major professional value is social justice and its related ethical principle is challenging social injustice.

The global definition approved by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) General Meeting and International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) General Assembly in 2014 no longer use the term "values" but "principles," which seems to reflect the more practice or action-based understanding of the term value. According to Banks (2012, p. 8), many professional ethics distinguish the two terms, "... with 'values' being used to encompass broad beliefs about the nature of the good of society and the role of social work within this (belief in human dignity and worth, integrity in social work, etc.), and 'principles' being general statements about actions that promote these values (treating people with respect, placing service users first)." Therefore, the current global definition seems to move away from mere ideals to emphasize more of the ethical behaviors needed in social work.

Under the heading 'principles,' the global definition states that the overarching principles of social work are, "... respect for the inherent worth and dignity of human beings, doing no harm, respect for

diversity and upholding human rights and social justice." Undoubtedly, these are general beliefs that are considered worthy or valuable in the social work context. In Japan, the key words such as "respect for the inherent worth and dignity of human beings," "doing no harm" and "upholding human rights" seem to be easily understood and resonate with the Japanese people. However, the terms "respect for diversity" and "upholding social justice" seem to be understood in various ways. As for the former, Akiko Mishima's book (2017) discusses diversity - a concept quite new for a fairly homogeneous country - as to how it is understood in the West and how social work education on diversity should be implemented in Japan. She explains that in the West, diversity is not only about race and ethnicity but includes religion, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation. Mishima suggests that the broader meaning of the social work value, "respect for diversity" will become increasingly important in social work practice and education in Japan (p. 105).

As for the latter, there are not a lot of texts that have gone in depth to define social justice in the context of Japanese culture, society, beliefs and so forth. Nevertheless, the pursuit of social justice has been a key value of the social work profession. For example, in the United States, social justice has served as an alternative to the concept of social welfare since the early 20th century (Hunter, 1904; Woods, 1905 as cited in Reisch and Garvin, 2016). However, in Japan, social justice has not been a strong basis for practice nor for training even though the concept of social justice has been embraced by the social work profession. Personally, after a 15-year hiatus from Japan, I came back and learned very quickly that the word social justice rarely appears in Japanese social work textbooks and the majority of students do not mention that they chose the profession to pursue social justice for the socially vulnerable and oppressed populations.

Akimoto (2014) is one of the few scholars who have written about social justice in Japan, and he underscores my experience by stating the following, "It [social justice] is simply dealt with as a principle or a "given" concept." Japanese people seldom refer to the concept of "justice" directly and Japanese textbooks go into depth in discussing social justice as a concept or in connection to direct practice. He states that the Japanese base their norms of distribution on principles of social obligation and solidarity. He believes that the concept of social justice is Western and he questions whether Western concepts of social justice can be applied to a vastly different society such as Japan.

Social justice may be a Western concept, but there is a more in the field of social work to embrace social justice internationally as a core value. Particularly with the injustices occurring internationally and impacting people on a global level, social work is not an exception to reaching an international agreement towards having the same terms, concepts, and theories. Even in the West where the concept of social justice was born, applying social justice into practice has been difficult. Reisch and Garvin (2016) state that the profession of social work in the United States has long struggled with translating its social justice concepts into policies, programs, and practice frameworks. The profession's pursuit of social justice has sometimes been compromised by its pursuit of professional status and contradicted by its complicity, intentional and unintentional, in mechanisms of social control. Therefore, it's not only in Japan that the meaning and use have become ambiguous but also in the United States and elsewhere.

The interpretation of the term can and should change with the social, economic, and political climate of the time. In fact, the social work profession is and has always been in flux and has been contextually driven by values which are generalized, emotionally charged conceptions of what is desirable, and historically created and derived from experience (R Williams, 1968, cited in Reamer, 2013; 14). The social work profession is destined to repeat the process of redefining our values and ethics with the changing society. The same applies for social justice. With today's social, political, and economic climate - particularly referring to globalization and neoliberalism, social justice requires more attention in today's social work practice in Japan.

In this paper, I will discuss social justice in Japan based on the cultural and historical perspectives. It is important to know why the pursuit of social justice is not a key value in Japan as stated by some critics, and how it can be incorporated in today's social work as we have moved into the era of globalization, advanced technology, and changing world order. In the end, I propose how the value of social justice can be incorporated into the social work training and education.

II. Social Justice in Japan: A historical overview

Social justice in the pre-war period

There are only a few articles and books mentioning the development of social justice in modern Japan. However, based on the existing texts, the concept of social justice seemed to have existed and was stronger during the Meiji era. Hosoi (2017) states that there were no better times than the Meiji era when Japan started having diplomatic relations with the West, and Christianity and modern theories of justice were imported. The movement for democracy occurred (1874–) and the ideas of liberty and justice were actively debated. However, Christianity and ideas of liberty and justice were left out as soon as the hierarchical dissolution of the farming class destroyed the social infrastructure for a democratic movement and a new constitution was created with the Emperor as the central figure of the nation.

Christianity spread slowly after 1888 through the philanthropic work by Christians such as Juji Ishii, Kosuke Tameoka, and Gunpei Yamamuro. For example, Isoo Abe, a pastor of the Okayama Church and the supporter of the Okayama Orphanage, was one of the pioneers who argued for better social welfare from a social justice perspective (Hosoi, 2017). Abe's view was highly influenced by his experience in the United States where he learned about Christian socialism and not Marxism. He returned to Japan and wrote a book called "Interpretations of Social Problems" in 1901 which was the first book of in-depth discussion on labor issues as a social problem. He believed that philanthropic work was only a temporary measure towards Japan's poor labor conditions and that socialism was the key to long-term solutions. He emphasized the need for a labor union movement just like the United Kingdom where labor unions were approved, and movements were developing.

However, Japan was rapidly moving into the international market as a capitalist society with an aggressive national militaristic policies, so there were fears that the labor movement will quickly lean towards the left and become an impediment to national interests. Influenced by the circumstances

of the time, the scholars in Japan created the Japan Society for the Study of Social Services in 1898. They declared socialism as a dangerous thought and disapproved any kind of class conflict. Therefore, Abe was heavily criticized from the Society and later by Marxists.

According to Nagaoka (2009), there were various attitudes of scholars and practitioners toward defining the role of social work in Japan during the war. At one end, there was a view that the role of social work should be encapsulated by the wartime social welfare policies. For example, scholars and practitioners in this type looked up to Nazi Germany's fascism style of national control. The Japan Society for the Study of Social Services emphasized ideas such as "equal sacrifice" and "a concept of standard level of living," which meant a lifestyle catered to prioritizing war efforts. They divided social work services into two - active and passive services. Active services aimed to increase wartime productivity, while passive services were basically the traditional poor relief. Researchers with good conscience like Soji Obayashi, one of the early researchers on settlement movements and social reform, who hastily changed their positions during the war due to the pressures of the time.

There were scholars especially from the field of social policy studies who represented the middle. They saw social services as a pragmatic tool to meet the needs of war. Social policy researchers such as Kazuo Okawachi is perhaps the most well-known figure from this group. In Okawachi's work (1938) titled, "The Present and Future of Our Nation's Social Programs: Focusing on the Relationship between Social Work and Social Policy," he stated that social policy and social work were separate entities. The former was necessary for the existence of a capitalist economy through national labor policies which provided healthy and reliable labor force, and the latter was important for aspects outside the economic order - mainly poor relief work at both private and public sectors. The association between the two was that social work played a supplementary role of social policies. Some interpret that because social work in wartime Japan was heavily based on the ideas of charity and philanthropy, and dependent on the household system and communities, Okawachi tried to lift social work's status from charities and poor relief to becoming serious national programs. There were others who questioned whether Okawachi was purely supportive of social work or was pandering to the wartime government. Even so, his ideas later helped build the post-war social work theory of "supplementation theory", which his legacy was carried on by scholars like Shoichi Kohashi. However, Okawachi did not discuss about social justice. He dismissed the value-laden ideas of liberty and justice as a metaphysical problem.

On the other end, there were scholars and practitioners like Abe, although very few, who criticized the war by basing their rationales from Marxism, social sciences, and humanism. Many were forced to compromise their thoughts in return for a more expanded social program for needy citizens. For example, Yasoshi Kazahaya who wrote the "History of Japan's Social Policy" (1937) attacked Okawachi's theory but quickly silenced thereafter. Men like Tadao Amadate, Hiroshi Urabe, and Shinichi Shigeta who conducted empirical social work research criticized the wartime social welfare programs but were also quieted under the Public Order Law.

In sum, during wartime Japan, theories of social work were eradicated, and any direct criticism of the wartime social welfare programs went unforgiven. Social work and social policies were equated

with economic policies to increase wartime production and any notion of liberty and social justice were stripped away. However, Nagaoka (2009, p. 149) states that it is important that we remember brave men such as Isao Kikuchi who said, "We must not forget our original duty," or Yoshio Otani who called social services as, "humanistic activities." Scholars and practitioners who distanced themselves from criticizing wartime policies like Katsuo Takenaka later languished pandering to the wartime government. After the war, he dedicated his life to rebuilding post-war social work research and participating in political activities. It was a difficult time for everyone to speak out for social justice.

Social justice in the post-war period

The mentioning of justice immediately after the war occurred when drafting the Constitution. The Japanese Constitution was drafted based on the recommendations from the General Headquarters of the Occupation Forces led by the US General Douglas MacArthur (GHQ). In article 24 of the GHQ's draft, it is stated as follows, "In all spheres of life, laws shall be designed for the promotion and extension of social welfare, and of liberty, justice and democracy" (Hussey, p. 6). Based on the GHQ's recommendation, the Japanese committee who worked on the Constitution created Article 25 - the Right to Existence, Article 13 - the Right to Pursue Happiness, and Article 9 - Renunciation of War. Additionally, Article 24 gave gender equality and Article 14 forbade any discrimination in political, economic or social relations because of race, creed, sex, social status or family origin. The term justice appears only in Article 9 as follows, "Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes." The Japanese Constitution treats justice as a necessary value for preventing war and violence and that the Japanese people are committed as global citizens to uphold international rules for the safety and tranquility of others in the global community.

Even though social justice was introduced during the creation of the Japanese Constitution as stated above, it remained as a concept. Moreover, it was not discussed or framed as a necessary value for social work practice in Japan. There are four major reasons. First, the field of social work practice remained fairly the same as the wartime period because former bureaucrats who ran the wartime social welfare programs led the social work agenda and poor relief workers were renamed as local welfare commissioners to do the frontline community social work. Second, scholars and practitioners who initially introduced American social work to Japan were criticized after the war for their conversion to supporting wartime ideologies during the war. Third, the GHQ saw that the top priorities for the field of social work were to create post-war order and stability in people's lives. Fourth, the discussion of post-war social work theory was mainly driven and contributed by the scholars in the field of social policy (Ohashi, 2007, p. 42). Notably, Okawachi's "supplementation theory" which was developed during the war continued to have a strong influence on post-war social work theory. Okawachi's theory was carried on by men like Shigeo Okamura and Kojun Furukawa. Like Okawachi, Okamura also avoided discussing values such as liberty and social justice (Hosoi,

2017). Social work practice such as the discussion on the qualifications and function of social workers was not dealt till the 1990s when social work was institutionalized and sought after from the society (Ohashi, 2007, p. 50).

From the 1950s onwards, it was not the word social justice but rights which became more of a key value in the field of social work. It was a time when movements sprung up for women's rights, followed by movements organized by groups such as war widows, persons with visual challenges, patients, burakumin or social outcasts, and aboriginal Ainus. The post-war dismantling of the national unification of the Japanese people led to the organizing of various minority and special interest groups. By the 1960s, Japan had rapidly transformed from a war-torn country to a one of the strong economies of the world. On the flip side of modernization and growing wealth, there were pollution-related illnesses such as Minamata Disease and adverse drug effects from thalidomide on infants born from pregnant women who took the drug to alleviate nauseas and morning sickness. Interpretations of the Constitution were challenged, too. Although the Constitution stated the responsibility of the government to guarantee citizens a minimum standard of living and non-discrimination, social welfare laws such as the Public Assistance Act enacted in 1945 was no different from pre-war poor relief. Citizens did not have rights to claim for assistance. People challenged the interpretation of government responsibility for guaranteeing the "minimum standard of living" for their citizens and protests seeking for government accountability grew during this period. The fundamental ideology which influenced these movements were Marxism and thus, the working class refuted the idea of a welfare state.[1)]

This generation also gave birth to a cadre of scholars who built the modern social work theories in Japan. Scholars such as Yasuko Ichibangase, Naoshi Sanada, and Susumu Takashima shed light on the vulnerable and needy persons and advocated for social action by the people. Particularly, Ichibangase believed that the field of social work did not explicitly discuss about human rights and social action. Influenced by Marxism, she proactively demanded the need for universal policies that guaranteed the right to daily life for the working class. She saw that the emergence of monopoly capitalism led to the creation of a class system. With the changes in the labor market and daily living structure, Japan saw an increase in daily life problems, specifically, poverty accompanied the lower classes.

Ichibangase believe that this created an opportunity for labor movements as well as other citizen-led social action. She theorized that as a concession to the social protests, social work was linked to the social security system mediated by the national government and the key value of social work was guaranteeing the right to daily life, or *seikatsu ken* (Furukawa, 2013). She rationalized that social work must uphold that right, which is stated in Article 25 of the Japanese Constitution, or the right to existence for citizens. As noted earlier, Article 25 is based on a history of ideas from civil liberties and human rights.

Furukawa (2013) analyzes that Ichibangase intentionally chose the word *seikatsu* over the word *seizon*, which means existence because most Japanese interpret it as a biological maintenance of life. The other English translation for it is subsistence, which connotes the bare necessity to maintain life.

Ichibangase believed that the Japanese word, *seikatsu* was better because it encompassed the following three meanings: life, daily living, and lifetime. Her rationale was that today's poverty was not only about the lack of material goods; it permeated throughout many other aspects of daily living in various ways. Thus, she saw the importance of investigating both the state of the workplace as well as the homes, the behaviors and attitudes, and how all of these come together to building our society. She theorized that when social action takes on the form of community or citizen movements, it then leads to a class conflict.

Ichibangase discussed her work using the term rights, but she didn't neglect the social injustices created at the institutional level. She made the distinction that the problems of daily living stems from the reproduction process of the labor while the problems of labor is based on the consumption process of the labor (Furukawa, 2013, pp. 43‒45). The problems of daily living are the lived experiences of the working class in a capitalist society. The workers' assets are based on the wages earned through the commodification of their labor. However, because labor conditions differ greatly from worker to worker, workers experiences are diverse and so are the problems experienced by them. Therefore, social problems have become more complex to define and difficult to solve. Moreover, in a capitalist society, people's lives are based on the law of self-reliance. Self-reliance can be traced back to the liberation of the serfs during the medieval period and the citizen revolution in the 17th century. With freedom came self-reliance. However, self-reliance transformed into an oppressive value as people were forced to fend for themselves (i.e., self-help) to overcome various difficulties and disabilities accompanying the reproduction process of labor. Ichibangase's theory starts with the demand for the right to daily life for the working class as a collective, but the actual problems are more urgent and personal. Therefore, rather than the word social justice, the word rights seemed to have resonated with Ichibangase.

Immediately after the war, justice remained as an important value for peace and prosperity at the international level but not at the domestic level even though injustice can occur in communities and organizations, and experienced by groups, families, and individuals. By the 1960s, social movements did occur domestically, targeting the government for creating injustices. Even though the time was ripe for the word social injustice, it was not used. The Japanese viewed that these problems affected the basic needs of the people, which meant that the government did not follow through on the protection of the rights to minimum standard of daily living as written in the Constitution. Therefore, it can be interpreted that social work scholars such as Ichibangase deliberately used the word rights instead of social justice to emphasize the personal and urgent aspects of the social problems in Japan.

III. A call for social justice

The need to elevate from a rights approach to a social justice approach

Investigating the development of social justice, modern history thus far seems to tell us that social justice has been adopted as early as the Meiji era by the Japanese people. By post-war Japan, rights

rather than social justice has been used to legitimize grievances and to achieve social justice. The commitment to the pursuit or attainment of human rights is often contrasted to or considered complementary to the commitment of social justice, but there is a distinction that has to be made clear. Kihara (2014) clarifies the distinction in his book, "Social Work and Human Rights." Kihara explains that rights are self-driven, subjective needs while social justice is an objective standard or moral accepted and validated by society (p. 5).

Today, social justice seems to be up and rising in Japan as reflected in the significant upsurge of protest movements in Japan. In particular, the March 11th, 2011 tsunami and earthquake disaster, which killed more than 15,000 people in Japan, with several thousand still unaccounted for, has become the trigger for demonstrations in the past years. The incident caused a meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, which severely contaminated the vast farming region and forced more than 160,000 people to leave their homes. It is said that this has been the worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl in 1986, and has sparked widespread anti-nuclear sentiment gathering thousands of protesters annually on the anniversary of the earthquake. The word "demonstration march" has become one of the high-ranking search words on twitter and an internet site has been created to provide information on scheduled protests on various issues nationwide.

Furthermore, in June 2017, the national government passed the "Act on Punishment of the Preparation of Acts of Terrorism and Other Organized Crimes," which was enacted, as the official explanation goes, as a preventive safety measure to protect international visitors and citizens as Japan prepares for the summer Olympics in the year 2020 held in Tokyo. It was also said to be the stepping stone towards ratifying a new law based on the UN convention against transnational organized crime. The Act allows investigative authorities to prevent organized crime before irreparable harm is done at an earlier stage, namely by punishing acts of organized crimes are being planned and prepared. Some has expressed fear that the 277 acts that are subjected to investigation as possible criminal activities are not overtly connected to acts of terrorism or organized crime such as mushroom picking in conservation forests and copying music. The Act is that it can hold a suspect for up to 23 days and can deny the legal representation before the Japan Authorities decide to file charges. If one is officially charged for the crime, the conviction rate is 99%. This has stimulated many public debates and protests for the fear of losing the freedom of speech and to freely create civic organizations.

From a social work perspective, the emphasis on human rights may only make the social work profession more reactive to the individual negative behaviors and overlook the structural and systemic issues that create injustices. In the examples above, these issues are highly relevant to people's rights written in the Japan's Constitution: the right to exist (Article 25), the right to equality (Article 13), and the right to liberty (Article 12 and 14). But it is important to note that the people's rights are threatened by the structural injustices created at the institutional and national systems such as the laws, bureaucracy, and processes such as the legislative and judicial procedures. In Japan, since social workers tend to work in local governments where they are under managerialism with top down decision-making and emphasis on control of client problems, it requires a conscious

effort when dealing with such issues to be able connect the dots and to see the bigger picture surrounding the individual problems.

Another point is that rights are coupled with responsibilities in today's social welfare. The government gives certain rights to people, but then the people must fulfill their role in exchange of their rights. For example, the most recent government slogan of "*wagagoto marugoto*," which means that one accepts other people's problems like their own and create a system that solves any kind of individual problems within the community. The general criticism for this slogan is that this is a devolution of government's power with the consequences for increased role by the local municipalities and an emphasis on communities and families as providers of social welfare. This can mean that membership to a community requires everyone to fulfill their responsibility to help others. What happens is if one doesn't fulfill one's responsibility? It is possible that he/she may not be able to access the social resources and may be socially excluded. Moreover, we tend to support those who are closest to us like family and friends, so it is possible that the help doesn't go to the most people in need. This example shows us that systems are not the only culprit of oppression and discrimination towards individuals and groups. Each of us can also be participating in these systems and contributing to the injustices.

Finally, rights can also be inflated. Kihara (2014) states that rights are fundamentally human desires so they can become avenly subjective. Clement (2017) discusses an example on Canada where there is a proliferation of right-based groups and the rights have been claimed on many different things such as poverty, marital breakup, environment, and living conditions of prisoners. Due to the growing list of rights claimed for many different things, organizations fighting against today's injustices have stopped using the word rights to maintain their neutrality and/ or because it can expand or dilute their mission.

In today's social work, rights continue to be emphasized over social justice in japan. The most recent evidence can be found in Japan's amplification of the global definition of social work. The development of the amplification begins with the revision of the social work definition in 2014. The definition was renewed so that the profession will "re-engage the 'social' in social work" (Ornella, Spolander, Engelbrecht, 2018). The revision was to re-position the social work profession globally in response to the increased global complexity in which we lived and worked. The process started around 2004 arising from a series of parallel developments of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) Executive wanting to clarify professional leadership in response to the evidences of lowering morale and confidence of social work practitioners globally, and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) was exploring strategies for increasing global influence and the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) was changing the relationship between global conferences and its advocacy strategy (Jones & Truell, 2012). Of course, social workers in Japan have been involved in the international discussion of the definition and the code of ethics based on the IFSW statements since the 1980s. Japan has been sending a coordinating body to the IFSW meetings and has participated in the international development of social work profession and practice. The new global definition of social work reads as follows:

> Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. (International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), 2014).

However, from 2014, IFSW has stated that although the global definition has been set, how it is interpreted by country or region may differ. The co-chair of the IFSW Social Work Definition Project, Nicolai Paulsen's report reads:

> There are now new voices in social work, particularly from the Latin American, Asia-Pacific and African regions, as well as representatives of social workers in indigenous settings. These new voices articulate different perspectives and approaches to Social Work whilst sharing the global social work principles. There are new theoretical approaches adding to our common body of knowledge, examples are new social work research on the social determinants of social cohesion, health and wellbeing, and the need for interpreting traditional social work principles into today diverse realities (2012, p. 1).

He also states that the global definition will need to, "... leave room for possible regional, national, and local transformations and translations - recognizing on one hand our common global social work understanding and history, as a global profession, and on the other hand recognize the contextual and cultural diversities, which influence the transformation of social work into a meeting and relationship with local citizens (groups and individuals)" (Paulsen, 2012: p. 1). Therefore, the amplification reflects the core and the focus of Japan's social work mission. JACSW issued the Japanese amplification of the global definition focusing on four endeavors:

- Social work engages people, their environment, and points where these interact with each other, realizes the right of all people who live in Japan to maintain the minimum standards of wholesome and cultured living, and promotes wellbeing.
- Social work, recognizing discriminatory and oppressive histories, engages in practice that respect diverse cultures and strives for peace.
- Social work respects human rights and works together with related people and organizations towards the realization of social change and social inclusion where people with life problems can experience connectedness regardless of age, sexuality, disability, religion, nationality etc.
- Social work advocates for the right of all people to be able to live a life based on self-determination and builds systems that allow seamless usage of needed support, including preventive responses.

In Japan's amplification, the word right(s) appear in the first, third, and fourth bullet points but there is no mentioning of the word social justice. There are a couple of points which require some discussion before touching upon the need for the word "social justice". First, the term "maintain the minimum standards of wholesome and cultured living ..." is the similar phrase in Article 25 of the Japanese Constitution. By borrowing this phrase, it invokes the notion that social workers abide by the institutional standards which promises a "minimum" which means just above the poverty threshold and barely "making it." Furthermore, the phrase "wholesome and cultured living" has been criticized for lacking specificity as to the standards which it upholds. Japan is seeing a widening income gap due to population aging, increasing households living alone, and ounger persons working in part-time or temp jobs which pay lower wages (Cabinet Office, 2015). Widening income inequalities is also said to lead to serious negative consequences such as stalled social and economic mobility, decreasing longevity and increasing mortality rate, and political polarization. The phrase of maintaining standards of wholesome and cultured living is not enough to address the lived experiences of hardship. Standards usually address the financial aspects of being poor by dealing with people are making less money than the median disposable income of the population. Approximately 15% are all households are under the relative poverty rate. However, when you ask people how they evaluate their own daily living, more than half of all households participating in the national study (MHLW, 2017) reported that their lives were difficult (55.8%). It was higher among household with older adults (54.2%) and households with children (62%). Furthermore, another national study (MHLW, 2016) showed that families with children who are experiencing financial difficulties are also experiencing unmet social needs. Children were less likely to go do fun activities such as amusement parks and zoos or have extracurricular activities or after-school cram learning opportunities. Social work needs to address the issues of poverty beyond the financial issues because being poor is also about unmet social and emotional needs.

Subsequently, the amplification goes on to state that social workers, "advocate for ... and build systems ..." referring to the social action to help vulnerable populations and create social change. However, the goal of the advocacy expressed here are about rights and not about the structural injustices which systematically create oppression, discrimination, and hate. The term self-determination is indeed a very important word in social work but since social workers in Japan are mainly working within a top-down bureaucracy and under direct control of the social security system, the supervisors and the laws already conduct what the clients can do and cannot do. Self-determination can have very little meaning to social work practice in Japan. Therefore, it is important to look beyond the provincial vision of self-determination so that social work can examine the systemic issues that limit the client's power to self-direct his/her decisions and the potential for social workers to do innovative practices.

Finally, same argument applies to, "building of systems of seamless usage of needed support." It is undoubtedly an important goal, but this phrase provides an image that needed services already exist and that the fragmentation of these services is the only problem. Social work needs to be more creative. It is unfortunate that much of the innovation of services and philanthropies are occurring

outside traditional social work. Social workers need to realize that they can be active agents for social change and need to seek new models to upgrade our practices.

This takes us back to the idea of social justice. We need to upgrade our practice as a social justice based practice. Our lives are not only affected by national and local systems, but also by international and global systems. We live in a global world. Social issues are becoming borderless: human trafficking, drug trade, and abuses and bullying on the internet are only handful of the many social issues that seemed to be problems of other countries, are now being experienced by the Japanese people, too. Our weather patterns and seasons have changed significantly. Large scale typhoons have landed on our mainland and extreme heat waves were experienced nationwide, which led to many lost lives, people losing their homes and their livelihood, and tremendous cost to the domestic and international economy. Environmental justice is also a growing global issue. As reflected in the revised global definition of social work, social work cannot reject the interconnected "macro portrait" of our world. In other words, the importance of social, economic, political, environmental, spatial, individual, and historical contexts are vital for understanding the social distress, policy initiatives, social work theory/ models and their impacts. Ornella, Spolander, Engelbrecht, (2018) call these as "interconnected influences," which needs to be recognized and challenged as having impacts on individuals, communities, organizations and the wider social context.

Moreover, how the Japanese government treat human rights, death penalty, gender equality, and poverty is subjected for evaluation by the global community. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) otherwise knowns as the Global Goals which were approved by the United Nations in 2015 are, "… a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity" (UNDP, 2015). All member countries are asked to integrate the SDGs intro their plans and policies. The private sector which do not follow, for example gender equality and respect for diversity in the workplace, can be incurred fines or other regulatory measures including loss of license to operate. For example, the recent young female worker's death by overwork in Japan led to a revision of labor standards and company practices. However, the problem with death due to overwork cannot be solved merely by protecting the rights of the workers by revising standards and penalizing bad companies. It has to do with the oppressions faced by females in a male-dominated workplace. So the problem will never be solved unless structural changes are made to today's patriarchal society. Otherwise, the problem will repeat itself over and over again.

Social justice-based social work practice and education

There are many schools of thought on how to define social justice. In general, social justice is defined as a concept centered on the principles of fairness, equality, equity, participation, and rights. Some people consider social justice as equality or equity in access to opportunities, some people consider social justice as equality or equity of outcomes, and some consider both. In social work, the principle for "Promoting Social Justice" states what it entails (See Figure 2)

Social workers have a responsibility to engage people in achieving social justice, in relation to society generally, and in relation to the people with whom they work. This means:

3.1 Challenging Discrimination and Institutional Oppression

Social workers promote social justice in relation to society generally and to the people with whom they work.

Social workers challenge discrimination, which includes but is not limited to age, capacity, civil status, class, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, nationality (or lack thereof), opinions, other physical characteristics, physical or mental abilities, political beliefs, poverty, race, relationship status, religion, sex, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, spiritual beliefs, or family structure.

3.2 Respect for Diversity

Social workers work toward strengthening inclusive communities that respect the ethnic and cultural diversity of societies, taking account of individual, family, group, and community differences.

3.3 Access to Equitable Resources

Social workers advocate and work toward access and the equitable distribution of resources and wealth.

3.4 Challenging Unjust Policies and Practices

Social workers work to bring to the attention of their employers, policymakers, politicians, and the public situations in which policies and resources are inadequate or in which policies and practices are oppressive, unfair, or harmful. In doing so, social workers must not be penalized.

Social workers must be aware of situations that might threaten their own safety and security, and they must make judicious choices in such circumstances. Social workers are not compelled to act when it would put themselves at risk.

3.5 Building Solidarity

Social workers actively work in communities and with their colleagues, within and outside of the profession, to build networks of solidarity to work toward transformational change and inclusive and responsible societies.

Figure 2. Promoting Social Justice (IFSW, 2014)

There are different schools of thought in regards to what is social justice is. Reisch (2019, p. 48) states that it depends which justice issue is being prioritized. In the global social work principle for social justice, we see aspects of transformative justice in the first, second, and fifth statement on challenging structural discrimination and institutional oppression. As for the second statement, it refers to the role of communities as promoting inclusivity. Transformative justice is eradicating the

underlying structures which create inequalities such as poverty, gender inequalities, and environmental degradation. For example, feminists who view the world as discriminatory and oppressive towards women pays attention not only to the individual experiences of women in a patriarchal society but also to the structural inequalities causing women to be inferior and powerless. Tranformative justice speaks to the need for change in the institutions and systems which create gender discrimination. In Japan, women have fought for their rights to vote right after World War II. Japanese women have been able to advance their status due to government's adoption of international standards such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1985.

Distributive justice can be seen in the third statement. Distributive justice can mean a fair distribution and access to resources. This is recognizing marginalized groups, individual and states. For example, mothers who became single due to divorce or widowed were considered for tax deduction for single mothers while unmarried single mothers were not included. However, since the rate of unmarried single mothers (8.7%) have surpassed widowers (8.0%) in 2016 and regardless of their marital status, single mother households were more likely to be poor than other household with the exception of older adult households, the law was amended in June 2018 to end the inequal treatment of unmarried single mothers.

The fourth statement seems to be touching upon retributive or restorative justice. It means penalizing the wrongdoer with a punishment equal to the committed crime or injustice or having an understanding, empathy, and/ or forgiveness towards to the wrongdoer by the victims of a crime or injustice. It brings justice for the victim. This is less frequent in Japan because the judicial practices do not allow a dialogue between the criminal and the victim compared to the West. It is more likely to happen as an informal and indirect process.

The statements above tell us that social work speaks to different type of social justice. The "social" of social justice means that the basic goal of fighting injustice must be shared by all. Social justice cannot be achieved unless all levels - individual, groups, communities, societies, and the world make a conscious effort to contribute to upholding this value. Social work needs to take on a leadership role in promoting social justice. In Japan, social justice was thought to be achieved by valuing equality and equity. These values were both economic and social priorities in Japan. For example, people were paid based on a life-course perspective so that wages were similar according to age groups and not by individual performances. Rich people and their families (when they inherited) were heavily taxed that no rich families can survive more than three generations. However, today's Japan is experiencing widening income inequality. The concept of rights has worked much of the post-war period but rights is a difficult concept when social and economic mobility are stalled. The higher the income level, the more one can, for example, claim their rights to services offered under the social insurance system or addressing their need. As Kihara (2014) worries, rights can be uncontrollable in its definition and may be likely to be a demand for self-serving desires. On the other hand, the poor has no voice to be heard of his/ her rights, and worse, may not know of his/ her own rights from the start. In today's world these differences could be

labeled diversity, but diversity is trying to understand social and cultural differences. Here, the differences occur due to the financially powerful group to rationalize their privilege and justify the injustices experienced by those who are deprived financially and socially excluded. A new framework based on social justice is needed to guide us to solve such complex and dynamic social problems both domestically and globally.

So how can social work implement social justice in their education and practices? Reisch (2019) states that Paolo Freire's praxis is helpful in guiding social justice based practice in social work. It has been taught in many schools of social work because of its critical contextual analysis of practice and promotes ongoing dialogue between key actors in practice, which are also characteristics of ethical practices in social work. In other words, it is a pluralistic approach of involving many people in the process of defining the problem, understanding the problem, seeking approaches, and implementing solutions.

The analysis will require a multidimensional approach by examining the role of history, culture, and power, and understand the mechanism of injustices. This is increasingly important in today's world because there is more than one factor to the problems we face today. Praxis builds on people's stories of injustices and see from their standpoint of understanding the world we live in so we can, "... strengthen their capacity to pursue social transformation" (Payne, 2014). It goes beyond just criticizing the existing systemic and institutional injustices and seeks to cultivate a positive vision of change because every individual has the power within oneself to make the change.

In Japan, the concept of "power" is probably difficult to translate and understand. It isn't only about capability or competence. It is a state of mind and a phenomenon created and recreated by different relationships and environment. The Japanese communication style such as how people tend to defer to others than to assert one's opinions shows how the Japanese sees valuing harmonious relationship is important and a mature act. So, it is less likely that the Japanese people view gaining or maintaining power as a good thing. However, power can also mean resisting power that is created by others. Building a sense of agency is an important educational goal for training social workers by encouraging self-directed learning so they can make their own decisions on the kinds of knowledge they want to pursue so they can learn how to become powerful through their training experiences (Fook, 2014). This will also help social workers in their practices to be able to help others to do the same.

IV. Conclusion

The idea of human rights, which was established in Europe, was not a universal concept initially; only males were given the rights. Human rights were secured for all persons in 1948. In other words, it took a historical process for human rights to be a universal principle for all. The process required serious reflections by modern Western societies and also the experiences gained from other societies which initially had no idea of rights in their cultures or communities but through difficult experiences were able to conceptualize human rights as a universal principle. The same applies to

the idea of social justice. We already have the idea of social justice, but it is still incomplete. We need to build on this concept in public and make the efforts to make it universal. It should not be an abstract principle because it is a highly important and needed principle for the marginalized and oppressed people in our society. Our society exists with these people and social work should pave the way by putting in our efforts towards realizing social justice for all.

Notes

1) While the left refuted the idea of a welfare state, the right upheld the idea of a welfare state as their principle. Therefore, the post-war Japanese political structure was distorted. To appease the angry citizens, the conservatives created the life-time employment system. Employers were responsible to take care of their workers, but workers had to sacrifice their lives for work over their families. The universal social insurance system which was set up in 1961 was based on the nature of work (businessmen, civil servants, self-employed, etc), thus the Japanese people's identities were defined closely with their jobs.

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