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Postdoctoral Fellowship for Research Abroad

Research Proposal

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The influence of 'post-modernism' on social work theory and practice in Australia

Prior research

Since the late 1980s, consultations by social work professionals have been regarded as a professional activity in practice about social work and social policy in Japan. However, social work consultation has not been considered in relation to formalization and institutionalization of social work profession by the government policy. Other studies have noted the reduction of personal costs and the sudden increase of in the workload of staff in Community Care Support Centre (CCSC¹) after the introduction of Long-Term Care Insurance (LTCI) (2000). As a result, social workers in CCSC have had to reduce the scope of consultations and limit the number of clients for consultations. These studies also examined only technical and functional problems for practitioners such as how to react and overcome these problems

I have discussed how the consultation discourse by social work profession has changed in relation to the changing policy trends. I focused on the consultation discourse by policy side (bureaucratic administration) and practice side (professional associations) through the changing policy of community care support centers since the late 1980s. I attempted to describe the transition about how consultations by social work professionals have been placed in relation to the changing policy trends, and how practice organizations have responded to the place. In Japan social work professionals have not had a monopoly on the consultation services in any social and medical services organizations including CCSC. Through these considerations above in relation to CCSC, I was able to examine the changing process of consultation from one of the functions of social work profession to the main activity of social work profession.

¹ Community Care Support Centres: CCSC (Zaitaku Kaigo Shien Senta)

Established in 1990 as a comprehensive agency for the co-ordination and consultation about medical/welfare/community health services to older persons who stay at home and their carers. The number of the goal before 1999 was 10000 centres all over Japan. Two staff in each center, one nurse/community nurse and one certified social worker/certified care worker were assigned by the government budget, which work in 24 hours continuous response on outreach-type consultation in each junior high school area (currently reduced one staff). CCSC association of Japan was established in 1994.

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In 1950s consultation services for older persons was not regarded as the main activity of social work professionals in the period of 'family care centred policy' (Fuse 1993:243-246) . A part of caseworkers in public assistance system and child welfare office had a power as social welfare workers, and their social recognition and professional expertise was relatively low compared with other medical professions. Also, most of consultations of public assistance system in the community were run by community welfare volunteers². In 1960s welfare workers for the aged³ was located in social welfare office at the establishment of Laws for the Welfare of the aged in 1963. However, the welfare workers also have not recognized as professional consultation in the era of 'institutional care centred policy'. On the other hand, home-helpers started to be subsidized by the national government and their activities included the consultation services. However, even these full-time home helpers were lacking the professional expertise and were suffering from the difficult communications with older persons through the consultation services⁴. In 1970s the consultation services for the aged living alone and the aged bed-ridden became the centre of social policy for older persons. However, still main persons who are engaged in the consultation services were mainly community welfare volunteers.

In 1980s the neo-conservative family care centred policy was implemented, which was based on the freedom and vitality of the private sector of individuals, families and enterprises. The Ministry of Health and Welfare attempted to dramatically change the image of therapeutic consultation influenced by medical model of health professionals into coordinative consultation based on a case management. As a result, practitioners have expanded the subject and goal in CCSC, which started as a program of Gold Plan⁵. Therefore, the consultation by CCSC has had broader functions than the service coordination of LTCI system, which the policy side expected at the planning. In other words, practitioners began to notice the goals of consultation beyond the expected goal because the legal power about the service coordination brought them a relative autonomy about the consultation. Practitioners emphasized that the changing policy trends about CCSC before and after the introduction of LTCI strongly influenced on the subject and the goal of CCSC, and reduce and disempower the functions about the comprehensive consultation, which they have practiced in the last 10 years. The consultation discourse was possibly constructed and expanded about in relation to the changing policy trends around CCSC although the tendency would not be clear. CCSC associations⁶, at the beginning, compromised with the policy administration about the reduction of legal power and financial subsidies in order to keep the ability to distribute social resources in the changing policy trends. However, CCSC associations, at last, opposed to the changing policy because they

² Community welfare volunteers (Minsei Iin):Community welfare volunteer law was established in 1948 to cooperate with local governments in public assistance system. They are individuals appointed in each community by the Minister of Health and Welfare for three year terms. In 2000 the law was revised and the role of the volunteers was enhanced into the whole community welfare including community welfare planning, friendly visiting, etc.

³ Welfare office in every local government has to arrange these welfare workers under the law for the Welfare of the Aged. After LTCI, the most of roles to coordinate welfare services for aged are replaced by care managers.

⁴According to Akiyama and Nogawa's (1973 : 105) servey to 50% of local governments in Japan, in free answering questions, most frequent answer was about the difficulties of 'consultation'.

⁵ The Gold Plan : is a 10-year strategy to promote health care and welfare for the aged was announced by the Japanese government in 1989. This plan promote 1) urgent development of in-home services for the aged in local government areas, 2) reduction of bedridden aged people 3) urgent development of residential facilities. Main focus is a shift from institution-centred services to community care services. New Gold plan was announced in 1994. The following objectives are to be met by the year 2004, there will be 170000 home helpers, 60000 short-stay beds in institutions, 1.70000 day-care centers, 10000 Community Care Support Centers (usually attached to residential facilities). As for CCSC, the new plan was not completed.

⁶ CCSC association of Japan was established in 1994.

realized that the consultation in CCSC reduced the autonomy and moreover might lose its capacity to solve some of these problems of authority by formal, institutional means (Friedson 1970: 110-11). Japanese Association of Certified Social Workers (JACSW) continues to support this changing policy because this trend would be a good chance to expand the legal power of certified social workers. Both CCSC and JACAW (although their opinions are different about the policy trends) attempted to maintain the legal power to distribute social resources in the policy making process about CCSC while they are having a bureaucratic pressure. The more practitioners in CCSC tried to strength the legal power by formal and institutional means, the more the professional expertise of the consultation by social work professionals were trifled with the changing policy and were confronted with the policy administration. I examined that the discourse that attempts professional expertise of consultation by social work professionals had a strong relation with the national policy administration, which influence professionals' capacity to solve problems of authority by formal, institutional means. This view did not appear in the discussion about 'what is the professional expertise of social work' (Funaki 2005) .

In my research, in order to examine the transition of consultation discourse in CCSC and its influence on practice in the community, I conducted questionnaire surveys and semi-structured interviews with all staff in CCSC in Fukui Prefecture and semi-structured interviews among 134 older persons from age 65 to 84 (random samplings in 4 regional areas). The analysis of this research suggests that practitioners in CCSC had an intention to make the most of the characteristic policies for CCSC (for example, 24 hours continuous response on consultation, outreach-type consultation in each junior high school area, and the staff arrangement of both social work and nursing profession). Although policy makers' intentions, which attempt to shift the goal of consultation from a treatment to coordination, had been strong traditionally in Japanese social policy, practitioners had the possibility of finding out a new goal and subject in consultation and its developmental significance through their practices. However, the development in terms of the goal of consultation in CCSC practices decreased readily in reality as a result of the changing policy. The restriction by policy brought practitioners a difficulty in changing their practices to respond to the reality of the life condition and consciousness of people in the community. Many staff appealed that they found it difficult to practice and appropriate' consultation relatively. However, the opinions of practitioners are not necessarily the same as the policy demand of practice organizations such as CCSS associations and JACSW. In addition, practitioners did not explain what the 'appropriate' consultation in CCSC and the details of the professional expertise in social work consultation (Funaki and Mano 2004; Hisatsune and Funaki 2003c).

I presented an essay arguing that these phenomena reflect the transition of consultation discourse in social policy and practice in Japan as a whole. They would also demonstrate the separation between social work theory and practice in Japan; between 'social work theories which were imported from western countries and developed in Japan' and 'the consultation discourse in practices' (Funaki and Mano 2004; Hisatsune and Funaki 2003c). Other literature suggests that, in terms of the relationship between social work theory in Japan and the practice of consultation, social work theories which were imported from the USA after World War II seem to have affected the practice of consultation as the mainstream of Japanese social work theory (For example, this can be seen in the development of the practice model from psycho-dynamic case work to case management) (Kitajima 2002:329).

However, it would be appropriate to view that practitioners have had a strong tendency to use social work theories and practical models from the USA as a result of the deliberate intention of policy makers in the central government (Kubota 2002:114). The policy administration in the central government has been more directly influential to the practice level in the history of Japanese social policy. As a recent example, the intention of the policy side to promote economic rationalism and commodification brought about the positivist model of social service delivery such as 'Case management', 'System-ecological approach', and 'Life model' through the introduction of a 'Care Management System' in Long-Term Care Insurance. It seems that social work practitioners could reproduce a new consultation discourse without asking what sorts of social work theory and value their practice have been based on and how the change of policies affect their theory and value for the social work practice (Hisatsune and Funaki 2003c).

Moreover, the separation between social work theory and practice in Japan would bring about a separation between the practice and the life condition and consciousness of people in the community. For example, in the practice of social work for older persons, modern social work practice, based on the assumption that autonomous modern 'citizens' exist as in western society, is illogical to Japanese society and social structure, in which a stereo-typed discourse against 'ageing' still remains in the people's consciousness in many local areas (Amada 2003:522). My research suggests the actuality of the regional communities in Japan reflects very little true 'dialogue' between people in Japan, for example, many older persons don't speak their real intentions to others, don't have a consciousness for their human rights, and have a strong stigma against social services which is based on the traditional value of economic and physical independence (Funaki and Mano 2004; Hisatsune and Funaki 2003c).

The separation between social work theory and practice referred to above has led to a strong criticism of modern social work theories in western countries. In the field of social work and social policy, which emphasizes social science as the basis of practice, the influence of post-modernism to social work theory and practice has been actively discussed since the 1990s in the USA, the UK, Canada, and Australia. As for social work academics in Japan, some literature (Komori et al. 1999; Noguchi 1995; Kamo 1998) has discussed the effectiveness of post-modern social work theory in practice in Japan, especially about 'Narrative model' by social constructionism, which has been widely discussed in the USA. 'Narrative model' or 'Narrative therapy' was advocated by White and Epston (1999). This practical model is based on social constructionism theory which means 'words create the world', and is also therapeutic skills of family therapy which is strongly influenced by Foucault's power theory. Since 1980s the mainstream of social work models in the USA such as System theory, Life model, Eco-system theory tended to be replaced by 'Narrative' discourse. 'Narrative model' became the centre of attention as a new social work practice model (Kihara 2002). It would be a common sense in Japanese social work studies that post-modern social work means 'Narrative model'⁷. On the other hand, Mishima (1998; 2001) argues that there is a different view about the discussion of post-modernism in social work theory. She attempts to mainly analyze the controversy in post-modern social work in the UK such as child abuse discourse, which tends to regard social work studies as a political power device with a strong criticism. She argues that many academics began to

⁷ Some literature criticizes this view about 'Narrative model' (Kamo 2003).

spread the term 'Post-modern area in social work' as a discourse and made an important turning point of social work theory by citing Foucault as the basis of an argument after the child abuse incidents in Cleaveland which authoritarian doctors and social workers' excessive intervention to the family was strongly criticized.

Recently, critical social work has been discussed actively as a new post-modern social work especially in Australia, Canada. Discourse of critical social work such as 'Social change', 'Liberation', 'Human rights', and 'Social justice' may have exerted a strong influence on the new definition of social work adopted by the International Federation of Social Workers in 2000. In Japan some of academics discussed the developmental possibility of critical social work as a new social work approach (Matsuoka 2003; Yokota 2003). However, these studies on post-modern social work in Japan have examined very limited views and understanding and have not attempted the holistic genealogy about the influence of post-modernism in social work theory in the western context. The use of the term 'post-modern' in these studies is often divorced from its theoretical meaning in the western context (Hisatsune and Funaki 2003c).

According to Fook's (2003) studies, the origin of critical tendencies in social work theory rose in radical social work, which developed in the UK and the USA (Baily and Brake 1975; Corrigan and Leonard 1978; Galper 1975; 1980). It developed into feminist social work or structural social work. However, Academics especially in Australia and Canada made an effort to declare 'Critical Social Work' commonly based on critical social theory (Ife 1997; Rossiter 1996). This theory would include two main different perspectives though they both call the same words 'critical social work'. One is Marxist perspective, which advocates the importance of human rights and social justice as an objection to those social structures, which have discriminated against social minorities (Mullay 1997). Another is post-structural perspective, which is influenced by French social thinkers like Foucault and Derrida (Healy 2000; Leonard 1997; Fawcett et al. 2000) It places importance on plural 'discourse' and 'power' rather than meta-narrative definitions of social structure and relations. Recently, some literature attempt to fuse these tendencies of critical social work (Ife 1999; 2001; Peace and Fook 1999). Others try to develop critical social work in relation to the process of more concrete and reflective practice (Napier and Fook 2000; Fook 2002). However, this discussion still lead to a big question about how to fuse contradictory perspectives, which includes both a perspective based on criticism and deconstructionism pitted against positivist modern social work theory, as well as a perspective based on a universal ideology such as human rights and social justice. Also, the development of these discussions seems to have generally been confused by a lack of consensus in theories of social work and social policy. On the other hand, it is the fact that the new movement of social work has been the centre of attention internationally in recent years.

In my past research, I tried to suggest that the consultation as a western-style dialogue used by CCSC could lead to a new social work approach based on human rights (Funaki 2003c). However, I now recognize that this would prove little more than a criticism against present policy and practical models of social work, and would only be another case of importing a western-style technique, which ignores the relationship between theory and practice in Japan. I believe that further research is important to recognize and examine how the relationship between theory and practice in social work is changed in order to reflect the life condition and consciousness of people in the

community and Japanese social structure. I suggest that this is more important than calculating the practical efficiency of the new theory as is common in Japanese social work studies.

The object of the study

This study would attempt to examine a genealogy of post-modern social work theory and practice in Australia and analyze the theoretical transition from modern social work theory to Critical Social Work, based on values of human rights and social justice. I would like to attempt a discourse analysis about the impetus for change in the relationship between theory and practice in the social work field by focusing on the influence of recent theoretical transitions in social work practice in Australia. This would assist me in examining the influence of post-modern social work theory on social work practice in Japan. It would also contribute to a discussion of the possibility of re-constructing a theoretical and practical framework based on human rights and social justice in this field of study in Japan. I use the term 're-constructing' to indicate that the process is neither importing a technique of western-type social work theory nor constructing a new approach in the existent traditional or modern method, rather deconstructing an accepted methodology to develop theory and practice in social work and constructing a new framework which reflects the life condition and consciousness of people in the community and Japanese social structure.

Academic possibilities and originality

In the academic field of social work and social policy studies in Japan, studies on the influence of "post-modernism" are still fragmentary and limited, and include very few basic theoretical studies. For example, the Japanese Society for the Study of Social Welfare has not sufficiently discussed the consistency between the new definition of IFSW and the present social work theory in Japan. Social work techniques and methods with different theoretical orientations co-exist in this field of study in Japan. For instance, the Japanese Association of Certified Social Workers welcomed the afore-mentioned change into the new definition of Social Work by IFSW and officially approved it. On the other hand, most social workers apply US based positivist social work models, which is contradictory to Post-modern social work in their practice. In other words, it is possible that different theoretical backgrounds may co-exist without any contradiction in social work practice and academic study in Japan.

On the other hand, disability studies and social movements by or for people with physical or mental disabilities in Japan have a relatively long history of supporting anti-professionalism and de-institutionalization. They have tried to deconstruct social work studies and adopt post-modern theory into their practice. They would provide an example of the influence of post-modernism on social work theory and practice in Japan. In light of these academic considerations, this study would include the influence of 'post-modernism' in other fields of study in the social sciences and has high academic potential as a pioneer study in social work and social policy studies in Japan.

Moreover, it will be very significant to research critical social work theory and practice in Australia, which has turned out many academics with remarkable studies in this field. In theoretical research about social work as a

practical social science it is essential to conduct research on not only the academic theory but on the influence of the new theoretical framework to social work practice. Therefore, it is important to have a research environment in Australia in which I can grasp the real-time and actual information about the activities and consciousness of social work practitioners and the life condition and consciousness for people in the community who use social services.

It is important to say that the object of my research is neither to learn a new social work theory abroad nor to examine its efficiency in practice. My past research has already pointed out that the introduction of social work theories and practical models from western countries has been an importation, which ignores the relationship between theoretical transition and practice. It is expected that the discussion about post-modern social work and practice will become important in Japan in the near future. In order to solve this problem of the importation of social work theory which does not consider the life condition and consciousness of people in the community and Japanese social structure, my research would concentrate on critical social work theory and practice in Australia. I would use this as a case study and analyze the social factors that these theoretical movements have advanced in a western society such as Australia. It would have critical academic potential to examine the relationship between a genealogy of social work theory and practice, as well as explore the social factors affecting this changing relationship

In addition, the globalization of social-economic conditions would strengthen the social necessity of researching the influence of 'post-modernism' and other social theories on social work theory and practice. The academic possibilities and originality of my research theme would contribute to re-constructing a new theoretical and practical framework as a basic material in the social work field of study in Japan and contribute to the development of the future theoretical social work study in Japan.

Research plan (August 2005 to July 2007)

2005-2006

- 1) Reviewing literature about the influence of post-modernism in social work theory and practice
 - a. I would analyze past research and review literature about a genealogy of modern social work theory and the influence of post-modern social work, and consider the theoretical transition of radical social work which is the origin of post-modern social work and its relationship with modern social work.
 - b. I would examine past research and review literature about the social factors/ socio-economic backgrounds for the change from 'modern' to 'post-modern' in social science theories in western society. I would particularly explore the theoretical transition of post-modernism and post-structuralism in Australia.
 - c. I would analyze past research and review literature about the theoretical transition of critical social work theory in Australia and how post-modernism and post-structuralism affect existing social work theories and lead to constructing the theoretical and practical framework of critical social work, which is based on human rights and social justice.
 - d. I would like to build a hypothesis about the key factors and the discourse changing the relationship

between social work theory and practice in Australia.

- 2) Conducting qualitative interview research about the influence of post-modernism in social work Theory.
 - a. I would conduct semi-structured interviews with social work academics about the influence of 'post-modernism' on social work theory in Australia.

2006-2007

1) Conducting qualitative interview research about the influence of post-modernism in social work education.

- a. I would conduct semi-structured interviews with social work academics about the influence of 'post-modernism' on their curriculum in social work education
- b. I would conduct semi-structured interviews with students about the influence of 'post-modernism' on their understandings of the professional expertise.
- c. I would make transcripts of qualitative interview data and analyze the influence of 'post-modernism' on social work education with the theoretical framework that I will consider in 2005.
- 2) Conducting qualitative interview research about the influence of post-modernism on social work practice
 - a. I would conduct interviews with social workers to grasp the influence of the theoretical transition from modern social work to critical social work and understanding among social workers in practice. The interview method would be semi-structured interviews with social workers that are working in community care service agencies for older persons.
 - b. I would make transcripts of qualitative interview data and analyze the consciousness and understanding of the professional expertise and value basis in social work practices with the theoretical framework that I will consider in 2005.
- 3) Examination about the whole research and summary
 - a. I would consider a hypothesis about the key factors and the discourse changing the relationship between social work theory and practice in Australia.
 - b. I would re-examine the past research results pertaining to the factors of the separation between social work theory and practice in Japan. I would like to explore the possibility of re-constructing a new framework of social work theory and practice in Japan.

Additional benefits for proceeding with this research proposal

- I would set up a Web site about post-modern social work theory and practice on the server of Fukui Prefectural University, Japan and provide academic information and promote international academic exchanges between advanced social work academics and social work practitioners in Australia and Japan.
- 2) I finished my post-graduate study (Master of Arts: social policy, Supervisor: Honorary Associate Professor Janet George) on social work and social policy in the University of Sydney and conducted empirical research through fieldwork (1997 ~1999) in the community service agencies in two local government areas in Australia (Funaki 1998; 2000a; 2000b; 2001). I would make the most use of this social network with social work practitioners and people in the community and suggest an international study exchange for this research topic.

Budget information

<u>Postdoctoral Fellowship for Research Abroad</u> covers travel expenses, a stipend, a research grant (about 4 million yen, \$50000Australian each year). The University of Sydney will be under no financial obligation for my research visits. I would request only acceptance as a visiting scholar in the School of Social Work and Policy Studies and access to study space, computer and library access in the University of Sydney.

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