Introduction

Japanese Society for the Study of Social Welfare
President  Kojun FURUKAWA

I am very pleased to issue the third volume of the Japanese Journal of Social Welfare. The early beginnings of social welfare research in Japan can be traced to the Meiji Period. Similar to other disciplines in social sciences, early research mainly introduced the thoughts, theories, systems and interventions from European countries such as the United Kingdom, Germany, and the United States.

Social welfare research in Japan developed in full scale after World War II, during the latter half of the 1940s. Ad interim, the research was based on introducing social welfare thoughts, theories, systems and interventions in advanced nations. By the latter half of the 1950s, published studies proposing original theories gradually appeared within the area of social policy and systems research. However, since the studies were published in Japanese, social welfare in Japan remained relatively unknown overseas to this day, excluding a very few number of foreigners who understand the Japanese language. To ameliorate the situation as much as possible, the Japanese Society for the Study of Social Welfare has published the English version of the journal to increase the understanding on Japan’s social welfare thoughts and theories, and to provide substantive information on our system and interventions for our colleagues overseas.

Although there are differences in scale, name, or how it is regarded socially, any country in the world has a system or activity for persons who are socially vulnerable including the poor, children, single-parent families, persons with disabilities, and older adults. What is considered a serious problem, nevertheless, is when people in different countries do not have the adequate understanding on the features and characteristics of the systems and activities of other countries. As for myself, when I was translating a book published in the United States on the topic of U.S. social welfare history, I had my doubts as to whether the Japanese - people of a non-Christian country - will be fully understand a social welfare history based on Christianity. On the other hand, I harbor the same doubt about studies from English-speaking nations on their understanding of social welfare in Confucian nations, or the north-east Asian countries (Japan, Korea, China, and Taiwan). Nonetheless, whether the countries are European, North American, or Northeast Asian nations, I do believe that a common element and logic on social welfare systems or activities can be extracted as long as those countries have all experienced a certain level of industrialization. Based on that assumption, coupled with awareness of cultural diversity such as religion, I trust that the key to a more authentic understanding is attainable.

It is my wish that this endeavor by the Japanese Society for the Study of Social Welfare will contribute to such a purpose, and will become vital element to the development of international social welfare.