



**A HISTORY OF SOCIAL WELFARE AT DOSHISHA UNIVERSITY: A  
CASE STUDY**

**By: Katsunobu Kihara**

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# **A History of Social Welfare at Doshisha University: A Case Study**

**Katsunobu Kihara (Doshisha Univ.)**

## ***1. Introduction***

In order to understand Japanese social work education, especially Christian social work, I will focus on Doshisha University, as a case study. Doshisha University was established in 1875 and is one of the oldest universities in Japan. It has had a social work course since the 1930s. It is the oldest school of social work in Japan.

Its history reflects a typical historical pattern of Japanese social work education and the relationship between Christianity and social work in Japan.

## ***2. A Brief History of the Doshisha and Neesima***

According to Doshisha's historical records (the Doshisha Archive Center), "*a young samurai man broke new ground in Japanese education and sowed the seeds of liberal learning in Japan, seeds which have been passed down through the generations for 139 years*". His name was Jo Niijima, known in English as Joseph Hardy Neesima, and he formed the basis for Doshisha University. Neesima was actually the first Japanese pastor and missionary, but in Japan, he is better known as a famous educator, especially as the founder of Doshisha University.

Due to the national broadcasting network's (NHK, Japan) popular Taiga Drama Series "*Yae no Sakura*" (Yae's Cherry Blossoms), Neesima (1843-1890) has become a household name. This drama's heroine was Yae Niijima, who was Neesima's wife. The telecast was seen all over Japan, every Sunday night in 2013 for one year or 50 times throughout the year.

Neesima was born as a child of a samurai in 1843 in Gunma prefecture (East Japan, near Tokyo) and he studied hard to become both a good “knight” and a good scholar, as most young samurai men hoped to be in those days. Yet, he could not find any hope in the closed nation of Japan and gradually he came to doubt the Japanese traditional feudal society itself. On the contrary, he entertained a growing awareness of Western culture and Christianity, so he realized the importance of studying those in the U.S. (<http://www.doshisha.ac.jp/en/information/history/neesima/neesima.html>→2014.9.25)

In those days the Japanese government strictly prohibited Christianity. In the days of the Edo period (Tokugawa shogun era), the government had closed the door to foreigners for about 260 years, it means that no one could go out and have contact with other countries. If someone would go abroad and got caught, he or she would be handed down the death sentence by the government.

The young Samurai, Neesima, could not help taking the risk of leaving this closed country. So he decided to leave (or stowed away from) Japan for the United States in 1864 secretly by himself. He had found as a matter of course that it meant breaking the seclusion policy that prohibited citizens from traveling overseas. Filled with much anxiety but a faint light of hope without any reason or support, he began his real adventure risking his life and literally by himself. In Shanghai, he secretly boarded the US-bound ship, the *Wild Rover*, headed for Boston. He was given the name ‘Joe’ after the biblical name Joseph in the Book of Genesis. He sold his sword (a symbol of the samurai and of his identity) to buy a copy of the Holy Bible. This was a symbolic act of his transition from being a *samurai* to a Christian. Two years later in 1866, he was baptized at a Congregation church in the U.S.

With the benevolent support of an American Congregational church, especially under

the unfathomable and graceful sponsorship of Alpheus Hardy, the ship owner of the *Wild Rover*, Neesima could attend high school at Phillips Academy and went on to study at Amherst College. In fact, this Alpheus & Susan Hardy welcomed to take Neesima as their adopted son and looked after him during his whole stay in America. In this way, the Japanese samurai, Jo Nijima, was born again as an American Christian boy named Joseph Hardy Neesima.

As he learned about advanced Western science and technology, he came to realize that the U.S. has a deep-rooted, spiritual Christian background. He decided to become a Christian minister (pastor) and entered Andover Theological School, after graduating from Amherst College. He understood the importance of conscience and liberty according to Protestant values in the U.S., which emphasize living according to the will of God. He returned to Japan after a ten-year stay in the U.S., with a strong ambition to establish a Christian university and to preach the gospel in Japan.

He was the first Japanese to graduate from a U.S. university. As I mentioned earlier, he studied at three distinguished private schools in New England: Phillips Academy, Amherst College, and Andover Theological Seminary. So he could absorb typical American values in the good old days as if he were a dry sponge absorbing much water. At the last school, Andover Theological Seminary, Neesima received a special training to become a Congregational Church pastor and a missionary. Before he graduated in July 1874, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) formally appointed him as a missionary. As a foreigner (in the U.S.), particularly as an Asian person, this was an exceptional case, according to the historian Motoi (2013).

Fortunately, the Japanese samurai era (Tokugawa shogun period) ended in 1868 following a civil revolution, and a new government (Meiji era) abolished the law that

banned Christianity in 1874. The waves of modernization swept toward Japan. For Neesima, it would be felt as totally following the wind of change and an invisible hand. So Neesima could come back to Japan peacefully and safely without any penalties. Upon returning to Japan, Neesima established *Doshisha Eigakko*, a precursor to Doshisha in 1875. He wanted not only to teach students scientific skills and abilities, but also to nurture those who wanted to put their spiritual conscience into such practice of cultivating a decent character with a strong mind. He strongly believed that a real democratic society could be established only by respecting each person's individuality. In 1890, at the end of his life, he left a message to all faculty members and colleagues: "*Those who teach students must treat them respectfully.*" This simple will clearly demonstrates his philosophy of education.

Unfortunately, Neesima passed away in 1890, at the age of 46, without fulfilling his final dream of formally establishing a university. Nevertheless, his disciples and successors -- those who shared his ambition -- passed on his legacy and established Doshisha University in 1912.

(<http://www.doshisha.ac.jp/en/information/history/neesima/neesima.html>→2014.9.25)

### ***3. History of Social Welfare Education at the Doshisha***

The Doshisha University's social work education program was begun in the context of theology, established as one of the courses at the Divinity School. Education in both social work and theology has long been a symbol of Doshisha because those elements are strongly connected and associated with Christianity and America at the beginning, where Neesima lived and was influenced. At first, it began not as a professional social work education, but as a kind of charity work aligned with Christianity. It is possible, to trace the developmental process of this education as a typical pattern from charity to

social work in Japan (Kihara, 2012). The historical progress pattern is as follows:

charity→ philanthropy→ social pathological or social movement approach→ public welfare work in war time→ social welfare and professional social work

The Doshisha University's social work education has the same historical pattern leading up to modern social work. Its course has changed as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of the history of social work education at Doshisha

1931: Social Enterprises Major in the Department of Theology in the Faculty of Letters

1941: Public Welfare Major in the Department of Culture

1944: Department of Public Welfare in the Faculty of Law and Letters

1948: Social Welfare Major in the Department of Sociology in the Faculty of Letters

1950: Social Welfare Major in the Graduate Program (Graduate Education)

2005: Department of Social Welfare in the Faculty of Social Studies

#### 1) Theology-connected: 1931-41

The course began as one of Christian theology. Toyohiko Kagawa was a part-time professor, and some other “giant” practitioners sent graduates out into the society such as Kosuke Tomeoka, Gumpei Yamamuro, Toraji Makino, Tokusaburo Hachihama, and Shiroshi Ohtsuka. Most of them were not only Protestant ministers, pastors or evangelists, but were also social workers (philanthropists).

Their names are so famous that they are recorded in the textbooks of social welfare history as well as in general history textbooks of Japanese middle and high schools. They opened up new horizons in the fight against social injustice, poverty, and discrimination in the Meiji and the Taisho periods (post samurai era) (Kihara, 2012).

#### 2) 1941-44: Public Welfare Major in the Department of Culture

Katsuo Takenaka (1898-1959) had been a full time professor at the Divinity school of Doshisha. He was a famous scholar who had studied social policy at the University of Chicago. He was called the founder of the Study of Social Welfare and Social Policies in Japan. He established a new department of Social Welfare that was separate from the Divinity School. This meant secularization of theology and charity and yielded a progressive pattern for a Japanese history in social welfare (Kihara, 2012).

### 3) 1944: Department of Public Welfare in the Faculty of Law and Letters

The period surrounding World War II was a particular time of crisis for social work education. Japan was headed toward nationalism and totalitarianism, and the government became afraid of using the word “social” because of its connotations with socialism. The Ministry of Internal Affairs changed the name of its Bureau. The names of Social welfare could not help changing the name of *Kosei Kyoku*. Doshisha University was forced to change the name of its department to Kosei due to the influence of the governmental policy in a period of war (Kihara, 2012: Japanese National Council of Social Welfare,1994).

### 4) 1948-2005: Social Welfare Major in the Department of Sociology in the Faculty of Letters

In 1945, another professor, Aiji Takeuchi (1895—1980), a Graduate of Doshisha Junior High School and studied social work at Oberlin University in the U.S. became a professor of clinical social work at Doshisha (Takeuchi, 1949).

According to Emeritus Professor Johji Ogura, who had been a research assistant in those days, Takenaka and Takeuchi were not in agreement regarding the purpose of education of social work and welfare. Since Takenaka was a socialist and a scholar of social policy, he was skeptical of professional education for social work, while Takeuchi

insisted on the American style of pragmatic social work education. As a result, in 1948 Takeuchi moved to Kwansei Gakuin University, which has since then become famous for clinical social work. Takenaka, on the other hand, resigned from Doshisha in order to become a member of the House of Councilors of the Socialist Party. In 1941, another professor, Munetsugu Obayashi (1884–1944), a Methodist pastor, became a professor at Doshisha University and taught social settlement work and history in a Christian context. But he passed away in 1944.

Consequently, only Keiichiro Shimada (1909–2003) remained on the social welfare faculty of Doshisha. He was a devoted Christian who studied Karl Barth's theology. He was a direct disciple of Toyohiko Kagawa and studied social policy at the University of Chicago in the U.S. He established the Japanese Society of Christian Social Welfare\* with Takeuchi, eventually becoming the president of this society.

He was also famous for being an advocate for the value theory of social welfare. Even now, Shimada's value-oriented welfare theory has influenced many scholars, as have Okamura and Kohashi's theories. For 40 years, Shimada worked as a full-time professor of social welfare and served as a leader of this department. In those 40 years, the Doshisha's social welfare program grew.

In 1950, Doshisha established a graduate program with a social welfare major, which was the first form of graduate education in social work to appear in Japan. Doshisha invited an American clinical social worker, Dorothy Dessau (1900–1980) to be its full time professor in 1951. This was Shimada's idea to start a new professional social work education in the graduate school. He insisted on the importance of both social welfare policy (the macro approach) and social work practice (the micro approach). In 1947, Dessau had been sent out as a social worker by the GHQ and had worked for

recovery in Japan, especially in Hiroshima soon after World War II. She then moved to Kyoto, and became a professor at Doshisha, where she remained until 1970. In 1953, she established *the Aoibashi Family Clinic*, which was the first institution for clinical social work in Japan, and family therapy in a private practice setting. As both a professor and a practitioner, she taught an American style of clinical social work to graduate students in English, not in Japanese. Her influence was incredible (Dessau, 1958). Just as it was the work of Christian missionaries to preach the gospel of Christ, so Dessau “preached” the American clinical social work. Tatsuo Otsuka, Kei Sumiya, Kazume Fukuyama, and many other famous social work educators in Japan were her disciples. This is a typical pattern of “importation” from American social work (Kihara, 2012).

#### 5) 2005- 2009: Department of Social Welfare in the Faculty of Social Studies

The Department of Social Welfare moved to the Faculty of Social Studies in 2005 with minor changes. The Master’s and Doctoral Programs also moved to the Faculty of Social Studies. This was intended to separate those courses from literature or letters and move them into a sociological context.

According to the latest brochure from Doshisha, one feature of the Department of Social Welfare at the undergraduate level, is to offer a multifaceted education that makes the fullest use of the strengths of a comprehensive university, and aims to teach students how to become “*generic social work professionals*.” It emphasizes a field practicum that is aligned with the national examination for certified social workers. Many graduates of this department go on to take active roles on the front lines of the social work fields; as social workers in social work-related positions in national or local government bodies, or at NGOs or international volunteer organizations. The current

undergraduate curriculum is shown in table 2.

Table 2: Main Curriculum of the Department of Social Welfare (Undergraduate level)

The Study of Social Problems  
Social Welfare and Human Rights  
History and Thought of Social Welfare  
Social Work Theory  
Child Welfare  
Social Welfare for the Handicapped  
Gender and Social Welfare  
Social Welfare Legislation  
International Social Welfare  
Social Security  
Social Welfare Policy  
Methods in Mental Health Social Work (Particular Theory)  
Social Welfare for the Elderly  
Community-Based Social Services  
Social Welfare and Family  
Public Assistance  
Medical Social Welfare  
Social Work and Mental Health  
Field Practicum

According to the latest brochure from the Graduate School, some objectives of Doshisha's Master's Program are the "*acquisition of knowledge,*" the "*development of a sense of value and ethics as a method for providing professional services,*" and the "*acquisition of skills for social work.*"

The study of such subjects as the theory, philosophy, and history of social work, as well as social policies is provided in good balance, from the micro, to the mezzo, and macro perspectives. Furthermore, practicum subjects involving fieldwork are provided to enable students to study based on their year in school or field of specialty. Moreover, this course has the additional objective of nurturing human resources with an

international perspective and insight.

The objective of the Doctoral Program is to nurture students to become outstanding researchers by providing assistance in the writing of the students' doctoral theses, as well as to train leaders and management level personnel for various facilities and organizations concerned with social welfare. Many graduates of this Doctoral program become professors of universities. The Curriculum of the Doshisha's graduate school programs can be found in Table 3.

Table 3: Current curriculum of the Graduate School

Theory of System of Social Policy and Welfare

Philosophy of Social Work

History of Social Work

Research on Helping Relationship

Human Service Practice through Social Work with Groups

Christianity and Social Work

Community Based Social Work

Comparative Study of Social Security Schemes and Welfare Regimes

Field Work

Qualitative and Quantitative Research Method

#### **4. Conclusion**

In this presentation, I have demonstrated the historically progressive pattern of Japanese social work through an analysis of the Doshisha University's social work education program.

And I put great emphasis on the role of Joe Neeshima (the founder of Doshisha) on Japanese culture and education, especially Japanese social work. Its history reflects a typical pattern of Japanese social work education. The keywords are U.S. and Christianity.

While Japanese social work has been influenced by American ideas including democracy, individualism, pragmatism and Protestantism, it was never influenced by Japanese traditional thoughts such as Mu (emptiness or nothingness), Wa (harmony), Buddhism or Confucianism.

Through this analysis, it seems clear that Japan both consciously and unconsciously imported American styles of social work into the nation's culture, like the way Prof. Dessau "preached" the American clinical social work at Doshisha. In a sense, it may be good to train professionally certified social workers who are on par with the American standards. We can trace a lot of positive sides from this. But this would not be entirely good for their clients, especially elderly people, who live their lives in a traditional Japanese context. It would create incoherence between social workers and clients.

Therefore, we should not only attempt to understand the ideas and practices that have been "imported" from the U.S, but should also focus on discovering an alternative style of social work, rooted in original Japanese culture and Asian identity to increase harmony between contemporary social work education and traditional Japanese ethos.

\* Japanese Society of Christian Social Welfare (JSCSW), which was established in 1960. Its purpose is to facilitate the research and practice of social welfare on the basis of Christianity.

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