Book Review

HeeSook PARK/*Asahikawa University*

Akira YONEZAWA/*University of Tokyo**

Since the late 1990s, Japan's social welfare systems, including those for children, the elderly and the disabled, have shifted from institutional to contractual systems across the board. Institutional systems are those in which the government assesses needs and provides services, while contractual systems refer to those in which users select services through a *quasi*-market. This shift has been both positively and negatively evaluated, but the issue that is becoming increasingly important is the extent to which the particular needs of individuals are reflected in the social welfare system.

This book is 'a joint product born from a constructive process of mutual sharing and critical examination of the authors' ideas over the course of several intensive research meetings' (p. 4) and is clearly not just a collection of articles. It integrates research employing several different approaches based on the common objective of creating a 'needs-based welfare society'. These approaches include micro- and meso-level research on family care, care work and welfare institutions; macro-level research on social policy and welfare state theory and research conducted on different eligible groups such as the disabled and the elderly. The authors also integrate experiential and theoretical approaches in their analysis. A unique feature of this book is the care the authors took as they developed their argument to contrast the needs of welfare service recipients with those of their families and/or the 'experts', as well as to analyze the disparities between the needs of service recipients and the systems and policies in place, focusing primarily on the particular needs of recipients. The problem of family members and 'experts' controlling the needs of recipients has been stressed in disabled activist movements and in the field of disability studies in Japan. The same type of problem also exists in welfare for the elderly, and this book shows that this is a problem that Japan's entire social welfare system faces.

In particular, the book poses the question, 'Is it possible to achieve a welfare society that can meet the needs of all?' (p. 3) and answers it accordingly in the following sections: 'Principles' (Chapter 1), 'Needs and Services' (Chapters 2, 3 and 4), 'Entities' (Chapters 5 and 6), 'Systems' (Chapters 7 and 8) and 'Action' (Chapters 9 and 10). Each chapter discusses the institutions that are considered turning points within the Japanese welfare system—the long-term care insurance system that went into

effect in 2000 and the Services and Support for Persons with Disabilities Act that was promulgated in 2006 to name two—in relation to the needs of recipients. In addition, the authors clearly establish their position in opposition to policy-makers' plans to merge long-term care insurance with the Services and Support for Persons with Disabilities Act, and their exploration of alternative proposals makes this book an action item in and of itself.

On the other hand, while this book carries over ideas from *Tōjisha Shuken* (The Sovereignty of Individual Autonomy) (2003), also written and edited by Nakanishi and Ueno, the lack of consistency in conceptualization of issues across the chapters of the book inherently reveals problems with the earlier book. In this review, we will remark primarily on the points of contention in the arguments put forth in *The Sovereignty of Individual Autonomy*, as demonstrated through the conceptual and theoretical disparities that exist among the contributors to the book under review. In particular, we feel there are several problems with the discussions in this book concerning the conceptualization of the 'persons-in-need'-based approach it advocates.

First are the problems that arise from making the subjective judgments of persons in need absolute when determining needs. Ueno defines 'persons in need' (*tōjisha*) as 'individuals to whom actualized needs are attributed' (p. 17). She states, '"person in need" refers to a self-defined, self-assessed concept. Much as non-actualized needs are not needs, not all persons who objectively fall under the same condition of requiring coverage are "persons in need"' (p. 18) and Ueno emphasizes that self-definition and self-assessment are the deciding factors in determining needs. In other words, the needs of 'persons in need' are not defined by the objective 'condition of requiring coverage' but rather they are defined by the subjective awareness and satisfaction of individuals.

But is subjective awareness a sufficient condition for meeting the needs of individuals? We think there are two problems with this idea. The first problem arises when individuals are not conscious of their needs or when they over- or underassess their needs, and the second problem arises when several individuals' needs come into conflict.

First, this concept runs the risk of excluding those persons who are not conscious of their own needs from the ranks of 'persons in need'. According to Ueno and Nakanishi, social security systems that exclude individuals from the process of determining needs and give priority to the judgment of experts are paternalistic and do not fulfill the needs of individuals. They assert that autonomous decision making based on the mutual interplay between 'persons in need' and their proxies[1] is effective in fulfilling individuals' needs. Their claims that experts' opinions are privileged despite the fact that they can make mistakes, and that the exclusion of 'persons in need' from the decision-making process is inappropriate when determining subjects' needs, are definitely persuasive. But when 'persons in need' over- or underassess the fulfillment of their needs, or when they hesitate to express their needs in the course of interactions with relevant parties, even if needs are not fulfilled by the principle of subjective decision alone, it is possible for them to appear to be so. The Individual Autonomy argument stresses subjective decision making, but the authors' consideration of objective standards is lacking.[2]

Second, by making the subjective awareness of individuals absolute, the authors can no longer provide an answer for situations in which the needs of different individuals come into conflict. Ueno and Sasatani even go so far as to count care workers as 'persons in need'. They write, 'The ideal is to give top priority to recipients' needs with a needs-based approach, but we must also respect the needs of

1. Saito in Chapter 3 and Kasuga in Chapter 4 persuasively argue about how needs are shaped or made latent through interactions with relevant parties.
2. To address this issue, another possible approach is to envisage a set of criteria that both recipients and agents can refer; the 'Capability Approach' for which Osawa argues in Chapter 7 is one such option.

care workers' (p. 35). However, it is natural to expect the needs of family members and care workers to differ from those of the care recipients. So the Individual Autonomy principle defines persons in need in absolute terms as individuals to whom needs are attributed, but how does it handle the needs of other relevant parties as 'persons in need'? The authors cannot address this problem with the Individual Autonomy principle alone.

Yet another issue is the scope of 'persons in need'. In principle, most of the authors define 'persons in need' as 'the socially disadvantaged'. Ueno, Nakanishi and Tateiwa assume socially disadvantaged persons such as the elderly and the disabled, while Sasatani, Saito, Kasuga and Ikeda assume the elderly and Hiroi presupposes the disabled. The inclusion of the elderly and the disabled could be attributed to the awareness of the issue of merging long-term care insurance with the Services and Support for Persons with Disabilities Act, which provided the starting point for the book.

However, as Ueno remarked in her previous book (Nakanishi and Ueno 2003: 19), the problem of 'persons in need' is thought to extend beyond the problem of 'the socially disadvantaged'. In Chapter 7, Osawa assumes that everyone is a 'person in need' and emphasizes the universal nature of goods and services to fulfill needs. Osawa believes, 'Universalization [of goods and services for subjects] not only addresses the mutual diversity of individuals, but seeks to incorporate into the design of goods and systems the notion that each individual changes over time, and each has a variety of needs'. As demonstrated by her statement that 'design just happens to be convenient for "regular people" (i.e., healthy men of working age) at a certain time in their lives' (pp. 196–197), Osawa's description of 'persons in need' exceeds the scope of 'the socially disadvantaged'. While it could be thought that a recipient needs-based approach has the potential to reorient social security systems that concern themselves with the fulfillment of needs according to specific models, it is hard to say that this sentiment is shared by the other authors.

As shown above, issues remain in this book as to whether or not the Individual Autonomy principle is sufficient for individuals' needs and with regard to the scope of 'persons in need'. These problems must be addressed in the development of the needs-based welfare society concept.

Finally, the sections of the book that discuss the entities, systems and actions of a 'needs-based welfare society' are clearly more robust than they were in the editors' previous work (Nakanishi and Ueno 2003); however, the following issues must be considered.

In the 'Entities' section, which covers organizations that provide social services, Ueno and Ikeda argue that social services should be provided by non-profit organizations (NPOs), cooperatives and other third-sector entities, but their respective emphases on this point is disparate. Ueno clearly distinguishes the third sector from other sectors before arguing its efficacy based on seven unique principles of the third sector.[3] Meanwhile, Ikeda limits the distinction between the third sector and other sectors to the question of whether or not entities are listed on the stock exchange (thus making his line between the third sector and other sectors vaguer than Ueno's). In addition, Ikeda argues that the efficacy of social services provided through cooperatives does not originate from unique principles but from the diverse combination of services provided and underlying cash resources. In other words, he stresses the mixture of multiple elements. In this manner, the rationales given for the efficacy of the third sector are not entirely consistent between authors.

In the 'Systems' section, which covers policy frameworks for social services, and the 'Action' section, which covers guidelines for 'persons in need' action, the authors present the 'needs-based welfare society' concept from the perspectives of both policy and action; however, the concepts in

....

3. However, her argument is insufficient because relative advantage is actually only analyzed from the perspective of operational costs.

each section are not uniform. In the 'Action' section Tateiwa and Nakanishi describe the design of systems that would have the capacity to address all individuals' needs based on the relatively limited financial resources laid out in 'Systems' section. On the other hand, both Osawa and Hiroi point out the relatively small amount of social security expenditures, yet appear to distance themselves from the design of systems that accommodate unlimited needs.[4] In addition, the relationships between Nakanishi's 'user union', Osawa's 'three government systems' and Hiroi's 'Social Service Act' are not entirely clear.

In conclusion, this is an important book for exploring the ability of a welfare society to fulfill individuals' needs. In the very least, it is to be commended for bringing to light the problems of the current social insurance system that does not value concerned persons' needs. To conceptualize a needs-based welfare society, however, a more rigorous examination will be needed to determine if the principle of Individual Autonomy alone is sufficient, to what extend the scope of 'persons in need' can be defined and how to draw a road map to actual achievement. Perhaps these are best understood as questions about the needs-based approach rather than problems. In either case, further refinement of the concept, empirical research and action will all be necessary to construct a needs-based welfare society.

Reference

Nakanishi, Shoji and Chizuko Ueno. 2003. *Tōjisha Shuken* (The Sovereignty of Individual Autonomy). Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.

---

4. Ikeda also stresses that there are 'limits to user action' (p. 171) which is, as expected, a different stance than that of Nakanishi and Tateiwa.