

3. The needs of social workers regarding case conference training

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1. Introduction

We are now in an age that requires an even stronger ability to discuss social welfare through cases in both the practical field and educational institutions. It goes without saying that the Case Study is a necessary method from the point of view of social worker practice. It is defined as a method of evaluation by examining systematically many characteristics of one individual, group, family or community, usually over an extended period (the Social Work Dictionary 5th ed. NASW). Whether or not a social worker can evaluate his/her case adequately is a key determinant of the quality of the service he/she provides. However, actually, social workers cannot always start and continue a case study due to various factors. "I sometimes hesitate and lose self confidence with my practice" "Social workers' work is very hard, so they lose aspiration" Social workers have serious assignment.

Kensaku Ohashi alleges that the types of cases through which teachers can educate students are crucial and expresses his deep concern about the qualitative aspect of the current Japanese social welfare education using the phrase "teachers without cases." Is it possible for Japanese social worker training institutions aiming to develop more practical human resources to discuss the realities of numerous cases in welfare situations?

2. Contents of today's presentation

First, I want to discuss the revision of the Certified Social Workers and Certified Care Workers Act and the situation surrounding specialist social workers. Subsequently, I will discuss part of the questionnaire results of the needs of current social workers regarding case conference training, and present my proposed model to conclude the presentation.

3. Direction of the revision of the Social Workers Act

The Certified Social Workers and Certified Care Workers Act that is Japan's national certification of social workers was enacted 23 years ago in 1987. Since the enactment, we have seen many complicated and multilayered livelihood problems that require an approach materialized through the wisdom of various specialists together with the diversification of people's lifestyles.

The Japanese Association of Schools of Social Work together with educational institutions including universities that control social welfare education and Japanese Associations of Schools of Certified Social Workers together with training institutions that offer social work training programs jointly submitted the "Proposal for the

National Examination System of Social Workers” in 2006. In the proposal, they proposed that social workers could perform their specialties in any field as a generalist social worker and insisted that the training of generalist social workers is an urgent task.

The Certified Social Workers and Certified Care Workers Act was revised in 2007 with the aim of realizing the “development of better practical human resources,” “expansion of occupational fields,” “promotion of appointment and utilization,” “improvement of social position,” and “improvement of training programs.” The 22nd national examination was held in January 2010. Demonstrating its further practicality, successful candidates will now be announced five days before graduation beginning this year so that candidates can learn if they are certified before seeking employment, though traditionally the results were announced after graduation on March 31. Therefore, it has become a major issue for students whether they can attend the graduation ceremony in their long-sleeved kimonos prepared especially for the ceremony with certification, instead of waiting for the announcement to know if they have received certification.

4. Recent trends surrounding social workers

In the social worker certification system, discussions and considerations focus on the system that develops specialist social workers and certified social workers in Japan. This is because immediate examination of the system to develop specialist social workers and specialist social care workers was included in the partial revision of the Social Welfare Act in 2007 as a supplementary resolution for approval in the House of Councilors.

The supplementary resolution is designed to prevent the incidence of social workers that are incapable of managing assignments because of the difference in the workplaces of social workers in need of support and the difference in approaches to the on-the-job training (OJT) in the workplace, and improve the certification of social workers qualitatively to create a situation where specialists manage even more difficult social needs. Discussions are being held by the Japanese Association of Schools of Certified Social Workers, Japanese Association of Social Workers in Health Services, and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare under the initiative of the Japanese Association of Certified Social Workers.

5. Requests to develop more practical human resources

Specialist social workers capable of managing more advanced practices now under consideration are required to have even higher practical ability. That is, they are required to have the ability to discuss practices through cases; namely, they should be able to document practices, discuss written cases, manage case conferences, analyze assignments extracted from case conferences, summarize them as a case study, and present studied cases.

In the most advanced specialist training program currently offered by the Japanese Association of Social Workers in Health Services that is the specialist organization of medical social workers, it is mandatory for applicants to submit three cases in the

given form with analysis. The three cases are the critical factor for the training program in deciding whether or not the applicant is suitable. The Japanese Association of Certified Social Workers has added subcommittees that require members to submit case reports in academic meetings. The national examination asks examinees to answer case problems that were not evident in the examination when it first started. In addition, practice hours are increased and teachers are asked if they can give students more practical education because of the revision of the curriculum. The ability to discuss social welfare through cases is desired even more strongly both in educational institutions and welfare situations.

6. Current situation of case conferences

In Japan, there are actually many workplaces that have no senior associates who can manage a case conference, that do not offer sufficient time for case discussion, and that are too busy to allocate time for documentation. It seems that neither case discussion nor case review has been established.

Let me show you two actual data.

One is data from the survey conducted in 2006. This survey covered 12,944 facilities that employed officials engaged in social welfare practice across the country. I divided the practices into 17 items and asked the respondents how many hours they spent on each item per day. I focused on items like "coordination inside and outside the facility and organization" as the subjects to be discussed in the case conference. Judging from the results, I do not think the execution rate is especially low because, taken all together, an execution rate of 58% is the fourth highest rate.

The other is the result of the questionnaire I conducted for medical social workers with less than three years' experience after they underwent the case conference training program. Naturally there were replies from them indicating their lack of experience in case conferences, as evidenced in comments such as "I seldom have case conferences in my workplace," "I have never discussed a case," and "I have never had this kind of experience before in my life."

I also found other responses, such as "I always upset my superior in case conferences," "I am not good at case conferences because I am uncomfortable with others knowing my practices, thus giving me a lack of confidence," "I cannot express my practices in proper terms because I hold back in my daily affairs," "I found that I only listened to what was being discussed while hiding behind the backs of senior social workers." From these responses, it was evident that the respondents recognize case conferences as something that they are not good at because case conferences are not presented to them in the correct way. At the same time, I realized that there are certain physical and psychological aspects to case conferences that make them seem like a special event in which it is difficult to participate without confidence, because some said, "Although I have never experienced a case conference, I am determined to pluck up the courage to participate in a local meeting for case studies."

7. Objective of this report

I want to cover case conferences that are indispensable to the qualitative

improvement of social workers. The Doshisha Educational Research Center of Social Welfare was established inside Doshisha University, and its first duty in planning and providing a case conference training program for current social workers was to clarify their needs for the case conference training program.

8. Research method

To start the model training, I gave two focus group interviews to 14 practitioners in the healthcare and welfare field who are advisors to this center on problems with case conferences for current welfare workers.

Next, I gave a questionnaire survey to the participants of the model training program that I conducted in 2007 and 2008. I asked them the following seven questions as the questionnaire items.

1. How did you learn about the training program?
2. What did you expect from the training program before participating in it?
3. To what degree were you satisfied with the training program?
4. What changes did you find after participating in the training program?
5. How did you feel about comfortableness in the group?
6. What is your impression of the training program?
7. What do you expect of future training programs?

I classified the items for free description using the KJ method.

9. Results 1

I organized the results obtained from the focus group interviews for the 14 advisors into the following two segments. One is the problems faced by current social workers, and the other is problems faced by specialists. The following answers to the first problem were obtained.

1. I am at a loss as to whether I am taking the right direction.
2. Failure cases are rarely revealed.
3. What should I do to improve my assessment ability? I improved my assessment ability, which enabled me to create a support program.
4. I found it necessary to discuss what motivated us to address case studies and research and participate in the training program in the workplace where social workers are exhausted.
5. No one can develop his/her ability unless he/she makes efforts to improve it.
6. I want a researcher to help me.
7. The facility will remain unchanged even if only one of the staff members participate in the training program because the on-site approach in the facility is important.

The following answers to the second problem were obtained.

1. I find workers unable to grasp the concept of social working, even though they have social worker certification.
2. Because there are many small-group workplaces, a superior's value and

- ethics often ruin many social workers.
3. Social workers have the reputation that they are not as adept at talking about success cases as nurses and doctors.
 4. We should discuss social welfare more through cases. It is time to realize how important it is for social workers to discuss problems through cases.

From the interviews about case conferences, I found that by not organizing case conferences social workers developed a sense of crisis that leads to a crisis in any specialist task.

10. Results 2

A total of 245 people participated in the two model training programs, and most of them were social workers. In addition to social workers, 23 teachers in the social welfare program and 24 graduate school students also participated in the two model training programs. Because of the time constraint, I want to report only (2) What did you expect from the training program before participating, and (7) What do you expect from future training programs?

I classified the answers to “What did you expect from the training program before participating?” into the following eight groups.

1. I am impressed by the title and lecturer.
2. I want to know the specific procedures of case conferences.
3. I want to study case conference theory from the very beginning.
4. I want to use the training program as a reference for my research and educational practice.
5. I want to confirm how much I have progressed in this training program.
6. I want to improve my skill as an instructor of an organization.
7. I want to get advice on specific matters that I had difficulty in settling in the case conference.
8. I want to establish associations with many people.

On the other hand, I classified the answers to “What do you expect from future training programs?” into the following four groups.

1. I want the case conference to be a participative program where teachers and social workers can collaborate.
2. I want the case conference to be a place where universities and officials in welfare situations have discussions.
3. I want the case conference to be a place where I can select and learn the methods to practice social welfare best suited to me.
4. I want the case conference to be a place where current social workers can receive training continuously.

11. Conclusion

I studied the needs of case conferences and reached the following conclusions.

- 1) Social workers want to learn theory.

- 2) They want to apply it in both research and practice.
- 3) However, they want the case conference to be a place for maximum communication and learning.

I want to point out the necessity to understand the specialty system of social work through cases and, as another pillar, systematize us as specialists through the discussion on personal experiences and values. I propose a training model that incorporates these two viewpoints to conclude my presentation. Thank you for your kind attention.

※ 17 Items for social work practice

1) Psychological support	2) Collecting Information	3) Drawing a support plan	4) Evaluation	5) Information provision
6) Support for daily life and operation	7) Improvement and adjustment of the living environment	8) Coordination inside and outside the facility and institution	9) Activities involved in the management and operation of affiliated facilities and institutions	10) Making records and documents
11) Support for systematization and activities	12) Approach to the improvement of the social welfare system and service	13) Complaint processing	14) Promotion of activities to spread knowledge and understanding of social welfare	15) Human resources development
16) Research and training	17) Move, rest, etc.			