The Public Assistance Act (1950)

- Legislated by the Japanese government
  under occupation after WWII, based on instruction by the allied powers in 1945.
- In 1946, hurriedly came into operation
- In 1950, revised as almost in the same way from the present
- Provides the only, packaged public assistance system in Japan
- 8 assistances “from the cradle to the grave”
  (birth, education, housing, medical, long-term care, maternity, occupational, funeral)
- 3 principles including “Minimum standard of living”
  (Indiscrimination and equality, Minimum standard of living, Supplementing )
- Realizes the article 25 (the right to live) of The Constitution of Japan
  “All people shall have the right to maintain the minimum standards of wholesome and cultured living.”
- Provides benefits after application by each family and review

The role of panels of experts

Makes consultation about “the minimum standard of living”
without a decision right (the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare decides)
After a constitutional litigation about the standard in 1957

History
1961-1999 Under The General Administrative Agency of the Cabinet
2000 - present Under The Social Security Council of The MHLW
(Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare)

After 2007, MHLW reviews the standard
2007 The sub-committee to review about the standard
2011 - present The sub-committee about the standard

Decision method
1950 - 1963 Absolutely (market basket method)
1963 - 1983 Absolutely and relatively
1983 - present Relatively (comparison to low income households in the lowest decile)

(According to R. Iwanaga(2011))

The “Problems” and the “Resolution” without expertise

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<th>The Real Problems</th>
<th>Recognition in Japanese society</th>
<th>The “Solution” by the MHLW and the Government</th>
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<td>Too low utilization rate</td>
<td>Increase of recipients, foreign recipients</td>
<td>Suppression of use (1954-)</td>
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<td>Too small budget</td>
<td>Increase of the total amount, Too high standard</td>
<td>Lowering of the standard (2013-)</td>
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<td>Too difficult to use</td>
<td>Too easy to use</td>
<td>More difficult application (2013-)</td>
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<td>Too strong stigma</td>
<td>Too weak stigma and family bond</td>
<td>Media campaign 1950s-, especially after 2012-</td>
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<td>Too few social education</td>
<td>Too easy to use, Too many illegaly recipients (actually around 0.5 % in amount in money)</td>
<td>Assignment former police officers to welfare offices</td>
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<td>Large mismatch to other welfare programs</td>
<td>Disadvantage to people on the old age pension and the working poor</td>
<td>Lowering the standard (2013-)</td>
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<td>Institutionalization for the needy and the disabled</td>
<td>Not recognized as a problem</td>
<td>Enforcing institutionalization much more e.g. conversion from psychiatric wards to &quot;residential facilities&quot; (2014-) (= only reforming and renaming)</td>
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