

The Impact of New Public Management Policies and Perspectives on Professional Social Work: a comparison of British and Japanese experiences

This collaborative seminar series, jointly funded by the ESRC and the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), sought to explore the impact of New Public Management ideas, policies and practices (often referred to as *managerialism*) on one branch of social care provision - professional social work - in the United Kingdom and in Japan.

The idea for the project arose out of discussions between British social work academics and Japanese colleagues who attended a social work conference held at Liverpool Hope University in 2008. From these discussions it was clear that there were similar developments in the impact of managerialist policies and practices on social work in the UK and Japan which merited further exploration.

A sum of £11,649 was awarded by the ESRC to Dr Iain Ferguson of the University of Stirling to host a seminar series on the theme 'The Impact of New Public Management Policies and Perspectives on Professional Social Work: a comparison of British and Japanese experiences'. A similar sum was awarded by the JSPS to Professor Akira Namae of Nihon Fukushi University to host a second seminar in Japan.

More than thirty participants from all parts of the UK attended a three-day seminar at the University of Stirling in September, 2010. This involved presentations by five social work academics from three Japanese universities to an audience of British practitioners, postgraduate students and social work academics. A similar number of Japanese practitioners, students and academics attended the second seminar in Tokyo in March 2011 to listen to and discuss presentations by four British social work academics from Stirling, Bath, Durham and Liverpool Hope Universities.

Collaborative developments since then have included the award of a small research grant to a Japanese colleague into ethical dilemmas in social work which will be jointly conducted with a British academic colleague; agreement in principle by a Japanese colleague to act as regional editor for a new international social work journal to be edited by two of the British social work academics involved; the translation of key publications by British colleagues into Japanese; planned joint presentations and seminars at the International Association of Schools of Social Work Conference in Stockholm in 2012; and joint publications which are currently in preparation.

The seminar series has served to deepen our mutual understanding of similarities and differences in trends in British and Japanese social work and initiated a collaboration which will provide the basis for future projects.

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Farewell Dinner, Tokyo, March 2011