

# Neoliberalism

## Social welfare Impact

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# May You Live in Interesting Times

## Chinese Curse

- Reflections from England – themes recognisable in other countries
- Change and new policy developments may have positive influences i.e. reduction of stigma in children's services
- No profession or working practice can be undisturbed in challenging times
- But can progressive elements of positive policy development be overpowered, constrained or nullified by neoliberalism?
- Politicians focus on transformation/ modernisation and the language of change – need to critically consider fields of politics, social policy, professional development, leadership, ethics and virtues

# Changes to Children's Services

- Creation of new structures and new professions
- More policy and directive from centre
- Fixation on “targets”, “performance” & use of corporate consultants to takeover services or improve faltering services
- Increased use of “practical” social work & changes to education and “role”
- Increased criminalisation of child welfare discourse and increased use of electronic surveillance

# The context of structural change in Social Welfare and Health

- How do decision makers convince, persuade and recruit wide range of professionals for policies that may be considered (in number of ways) as retrogressive? (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005)
- Why structural change, why is it being introduced (or evolving) now?
- What are core ideas of modernisation?
- What are the key ideas that underpin modernisation?
- What are the assumptions that are left unanswered or unchallenged?
- Are there questions which are silenced or never answered?
- Where are the new professional roles that are being developed?

# Structural Change/ Modernisation

- Should be explored in more detail
- Clearly need to ensure effectiveness of services, but...
- Seemingly neutral language of “modernisation”, masks political decisions about the use of markets into ever more areas of social life?
- Not able to advocate free market openly – language of “modernisation” is an opportunity to extend neoliberalism

# Neoliberalism

“Theory of political economic practice that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free market and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practice ” (Harvey 2010:2)

# Ideology

- Mainly based on the opposition to the doctrine espoused by John Keynes in the UK in the 1930s and the New Deal in the USA
- Ideas are based on ways to reduce the size and influence of the state, increase deregulation and on the development of private enterprise
- Theory suggests that as the state has less responsibility, its financial requirements reduce, resulting in lower taxation rates which is considered good for growth

# Characteristics

- Hood (1991, pp. 4-5) identified seven key characteristics of neoliberal policy and implementation
  - Use of explicit standards and performance measures
  - Management of the public sector, using private sector techniques and values
  - Emphasis on results rather than processes
  - Disaggregation of the public sector
  - Increased competition in public sector service provision
  - Increased discipline in resource utilization
- Pollitt (2001)
  - Greater use of specialised, flat and autonomous organisational units rather than large, hierarchical bureaucracies
  - Increased use of contractor type relationships
  - Use of market mechanisms to deliver public services i.e. privatisation and internal markets
  - Shifting from equity, security, universalism and resilience to individualism and efficiency
  - Blurring the edges between public and private sectors



- Principal aim is to achieve efficiency and accountability, other core values, de-emphasise such as equality, equity and participation (Gregory, 2007)
- Important to note, whilst prioritising some contexts the approach also fails to recognise other important, highly prized values in commitments i.e. social justice, a fundamental value of social work (IFSW, 2000)
- Increased use of markets, devolution, managerialism, promotion of contractual relationships and accountability

- Markets have a direct and indirect influence on national social and health care policy and what once might have been seen solely as a political decision is now a concern of the market
- Displeasure of the world markets and financiers is immediately transmitted to governments by the rating agencies and markets - Greece and austerity
- Results national welfare policy options to be considered are increasingly narrow, as politicians seek to appease the markets

- Concern Neoliberal reform:
  - Lack of legitimacy - particularly where key welfare reform decisions are being made i.e. in terms of markets
  - Reform is channelled either through non-democratic reform processes or through 'restructuring' so that staff are found to be implementing decisions rather than being involved in them
- Neoliberal reform requires organisational as well as cultural change and acceptance of private sector ideology in the civil society
- Successful promotion of neoliberalism in European health systems has been problematic - debates around public services vs. revenue maximisation, difficulties in agreeing on pricing
- Commodification of aspects previously considered impossible to marketise such as social welfare, pollution and water (Connell *et al*, 2009)
- Even organisations set up on the model of cooperatives, have been co-opted to become profit seeking organisations
- Important consideration in the UK coalition government's support of the 'big society' in which cooperatives and voluntary groups would assume a larger role in running traditional state provided services

# Defining and Mapping Change

- Changes to detail of policy – increasingly promotional, lack detailed evidence to support policy shift (Fairclough, 2000)
- Emotive slogans used to “brand” & “market” initiatives – “Every Child Matters”
- Reform starts before the end of “pilot project” evaluation – Children’s Trusts (Audit Commission, 2008)
- Refashioning of “pilots” as “trailblazers” – adventurous, momentum vs. sceptical, scientific
- Workforce reform – configuration of service not fully developed – Partial and incomplete of workforce reform - predominately female

- Those objecting to change seen as:
  - “traditional” & “conservative”
  - “modern, active welfare” – opposed to breaking “welfare dependence”, “Anti modern”
- Predicament of poor seen as failure to modernise due to limitations reproduced & reinforced by themselves or because of disadvantaged position in global economic process (Haylett, 2001)
- Welfare reform – no use dwelling on globalisation - of what can't be changed, must focus on social and cultural i.e. people

# Challenges

- Develop professional identities?
- Contribute to macro & micro welfare policy & practice development?
- Role to work directly with service users, plus engage with population & politicians to understand implications of welfare and economic implementation
- Critical policy development in graduates?
- What is Social Services leadership and management in the future?

# *George Orwell: 1984*

*“And when all others believed the lies which were spread by the party – when all records told the same tale – then the lie went down in history and became the truth.”*

- IFSW - Ethics in Social Work
- • Distributing resources equitably
- – Social workers should ensure that resources at their disposal are distributed fairly, according to need.
- • Challenging unjust policies and practices
- – Social workers have a duty to bring to the attention of their employers, policy makers, politicians and the general public situations where resources are inadequate or where distribution of resources, policies and practices are oppressive, unfair or harmful.(IFSW, Ethics in Social Work, Adelaide 2004)



- It's the action, not the fruit of the action, that's important. You have
- to do the right thing. It may not be in your power, may not be in your
- time that there'll be fruit. But that doesn't mean you stop doing the
- right thing. You may never know what results come from your action
- but if you do nothing, there will be no result.
- Mahatma Gandhi

- Market solutions and market ideology - key to providing improved and affordable services
- Concern about the affordability of the welfare state
- Implementation of the neoliberal economic doctrine has led to welfare services increasingly being seen as a commodity which can be identified, packaged and traded through market mechanisms
- Inconsistencies - commitment to deregulation and to market mechanisms, but use public finance to support ailing private banks - 'privatising profit and socialising losses'
- Ambiguity suggests that professionals need theoretically coherent, robust and sophisticated approach to respond critically to neoliberal impacts