

MY OFSTED

From South America to South Shields, the fundamentals of social work remain the same the world over, says David N Jones, President of the International Federation of Social Workers – and Ofsted HMI

A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE ON SOCIAL WORK

Now that Ofsted regulates children's social work in England, we are also discovering new international networks. David N Jones, President of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), joined the new Ofsted in April 2007. Following the 2008 biennial world conferences, this seemed a good time to hear about how his global role fits alongside part-time life as an HMI.

David became IFSW President in 2006. He first encountered international social work in the 1980s and was previously European President. In the 1990s, he helped draft a Council of Europe statement on social work, endorsed by member governments.

IFSW includes more than 80 national organisations. It works closely with the International Association of Schools of Social Work and the International Council on Social Welfare. David helped draft the global standards for social work qualifications (2004) and has given professional evidence to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

David says, 'I addressed all three global conferences in three different continents in July and August, involving nearly 5,000 social workers and educators. The conference in Brazil explored 'The challenge of ensuring rights in a global and unequal society', involving around 2,600 people, well over 2,000 from Brazil. The need for dialogue between the different ideological and practical perspectives of Latin America and the rest of the world was stark.'

David is often asked whether social work is the same in diverse social and economic environments:



David addresses the 2008 conference in Brazil.

'Practice takes different forms, but we are united by our understanding of the interaction of personality and environment, shared practice methods and an ethical commitment to human rights.'

The President can see practice on every continent at first hand – from school social workers in New York to 'displaced persons' camps in Kenya. 'The basics of human existence and behaviour are consistent. Practice may vary, but the essence of social work is consistent as is the professional aspiration to the highest standards of service.'

And that is also true of his Ofsted work. Promoting the values and

essence of good social work should be embedded in our judgement criteria but also in the way we inspect. At its best, social work is about consistency, acceptance, integrity, respect and empathy.

Evidence from David's research showed that where these principles were applied in management and in practice, service users were more likely to receive the best service – and that can apply to inspection as well.

'I am keen to ensure that the approach to inspection is consistent with the highest professional and practice standards', David concludes.



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