

UK x JP
2016

Poverty in the UK and Japan

Conference Report

10-16th September 2016 @ London, UK



日英学生会議
UK-Japan Student Conference



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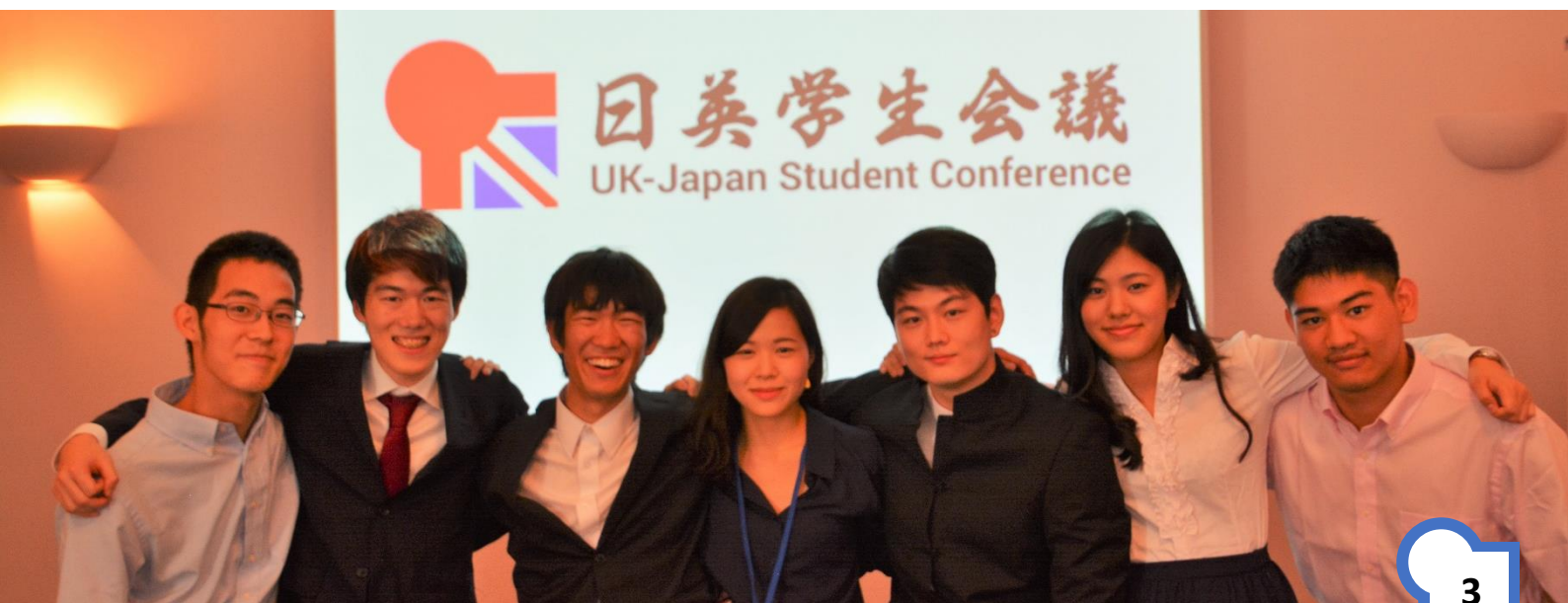
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Mission of the UK-Japan Student Conference

We aim to create a space for cross cultural pollination and a forum for discussion on crucial issues facing future leaders amongst British and Japanese students. Our vision is to support students in establishing a long-lasting human network across borders that fosters an immeasurably valuable relationship between the United Kingdom and Japan through this student-based hub. The established bond, independent of any business interests, will be a life-long treasure for all the participants of this conference. The UK-Japan Student Conference will be a space for students to enter a multicultural environment unlike their own communities. We hope this conference will be a bridge providing precious encounters, having an influence on the lives of all participants.

We put emphasis on providing experiences that lead us to question our collective biases and preconceptions, and through this realise the alternate approaches towards the theme of the conference. Nurturing the ability to discuss matters in an international context, we hope for participants to bring such perspective back to their own communities. We strive to design the UK-Japan Student Conference after the process of discussion, realisation, and action.

The UK-Japan Student Conference will be a unique opportunity for highly motivated British and Japanese students with a global awareness to come together, bringing future leaders of two nations together, so that they can exchange their thoughts and create a shared vision towards a sustainable future. The vision that we share, the life-changing experiences we provide and the diverse perspectives amongst attendees are all of immeasurable value. We strive to channel this value back into our two countries by publishing our activities and feedback. We strongly believe and hope that the UK-Japan Student Conference would kindle passionate discussion and rich interaction between the two countries.



In this inaugural UK-Japan Student Conference, we addressed the issue of poverty in the UK and Japan, analysing the causes and consequences, and debating what policies and strategies would be effective. Poverty is a significant issue worldwide, and developed countries such as Japan and the UK are no exceptions. The nature of poverty in developed countries, its mechanism and its solutions can be different from that in developing countries. For instance, expenses for uniforms and stationery to join companies and attend schools filter out those who barely meet the minimum standard of living. In developed countries, these expenses tend to be overlooked. In order to prevent increasing disparity in developed countries, it is important to raise public awareness towards social and economic factors that work against people in poverty.

We realise that in many cases, the people who are experiencing poverty are separate from the ones with social impact that can change the situation. Therefore, it is crucial to make their voices audible so that they can make a difference. Our mission is to foster deeper understanding towards these social issues through active discussion. The conference consists of a series of discussions and seminars, fieldwork with social sectors, and a wrap-up group presentation. We encourage participants to discuss freely, exchange thoughts and ideas, and share their visions towards a sustainable society.

Even between Japan and the UK, how poverty is treated in each country is unique in their own ways. In the UK, issues that are beyond the scope of individuals and governmental bodies are often dealt by charity organisations. In Japan, on the other hand, poverty tends to be seen as a personal problem, and public awareness remain low. These differences are reflected in the policies in the two countries. We wish that this opportunity of sharing such different opinions and solutions amongst students from the two countries will broaden their perspectives and trigger new ideas to move forward.



The conference is about broadening each other's perspectives through active exchange of thoughts, ideas and experiences, thus arriving at a shared vision towards the future. Open discussion has an essential role in this process. We designed the programme so that everyone is part of the discussions and presentations, and may apply what they have learnt in seminars, fieldwork and workshops.

Preliminary Learning

Preliminary learning sessions are organised to provide participants with a general background knowledge of poverty, and the issues associated with it. It is intended to help them develop a mature understanding of relevant issues so that they are prepared to actively contribute to the conference by expressing their thoughts, constructing a logical argument to support their opinions, and analysing arguments put forward by other participants.

Part A: We suggest a range of topics associated with poverty to give a macroscopic understanding of the issue. Participants list up controversial points often raised in arguments, and develop your own stand point for each argument. In the meeting, we have a debate based on the topics raised.

Part B: Participants choose one specific topic to discuss. Based on relevant reading materials, they summarise the key information and the main arguments. Demonstrate how the topic is important, to whom it is relevant, and how it reflects the current state of society. They present their thoughts on what is required to make a change to this situation.

Part C: Discussion of a set case study. Investigate the issue in detail, analyse the cause and interlinked reasons, and make a proposal on what is to be done in the situation.

Seminar

Speakers who have active and professional research of relevant poverty issues – the theme of the conference – are one of our key resources of input, providing core concepts that serve as building blocks to discussions and presentations. Speakers present us insights into the theme of the conference from different angles. After the speaker presentations, participants exchange thoughts on how the ideas presented might fit into the larger picture.

Fieldwork

Participants are given the opportunity to provide themselves a realistic picture of the issue they are addressing. This involves visiting local areas in poverty, talking to the local people and understanding

what statistics alone cannot describe - sometimes poverty is simply unnoticeable on the surface, and only becomes apparent after talking to the people, and what goes on behind the curtain. The fieldwork is intended to provide participants with material to consider later on, in the idea contest.

Workshop

Workshops are interactive sessions where participants actively contribute their own ideas or work on research and data analysis in groups. These sessions are oriented on hands-on experiences. For this conference, we have two workshops – a map exercise and an idea contest.

The map exercise is designed so as to give participants essential tools to perform map analysis and collect geographical statistics. Historical maps and maps showing different characteristics of the area are accessed online. We organise this workshop so that participants can use these databases later on when they are performing research for their presentations. The idea contest integrates the learning experience from the fieldwork expeditions and map exercises. As opposed to the final presentation, the idea contest is focused on how to improve specific geographical areas.

Cultural Exchange

While we value academic exchanges that take place in the conference, we also aim to develop mutual understanding amongst participants that will help them build a long-term relationship. Cultural exchange plays a key role to learning about each other's backgrounds. To promote this interaction, we provide entertainment sessions, along with a Karaoke night and a pub night.

Presentation

The presentation is the heart of the learning experience in the conference. It challenges each participant to actively digest the information presented, drawing and taking solutions from them.

In the introductory presentations, delegates provide an overview of poverty in their own countries, focusing on the socio-political specificities and local mind-sets, to deepen knowledge that delegates from the other country might already possess. The final presentation summarises the current situation of poverty in the two countries – their causes, current solutions – and as a group, present an impactful solution towards alleviating the situation.

After every group presentation, we have group discussion sessions in order to make sure that everyone is on the same page, and to give everyone a chance to share ideas and thoughts that were / weren't addressed in the presentations.

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Conference Details

Schedule

Dates: 10 – 16 September 2016 * including two days of sightseeing

	12th Sep (Mon)	13th Sep (Tue)	14th Sep (Wed)	15th Sep (Thu)	16th Sep (Fri)
	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
9:00 AM	Head over to venue	Head over to venue	Head over to venue	Head over to venue	Head over to venue
10:00 AM	Introduction	Presentation on Homelessness	Workshop by Oxfam	Idea contest	Group Preparation
11:00 AM	Ice breaking	Seminar by Prof. Daniel Kilburn			Lunch*
12:00 PM	Presentation & Discussion		Lunch*	Lunch*	
1:00 PM	Lunch*	Lunch*			Workshop by Oxfam
2:00 PM	Induction		Map Exercise	Cultural Exchange & Tea Break	
3:00 PM	Fieldwork	Reflection	Seminar by Mr Neil Lee		Reflection
4:00 PM		Free time	Reflection	Group Preparation	
5:00 PM	Reflection @ ISH	Free time	Free time		Group Preparation
6:00 PM					
7:00 PM	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner in groups & Karaoke (~11pm)	Dinner in groups	Free time
8:00 PM					Farewell Dinner

Venue



Accommodation

229 GREAT PORTLAND STREET, LONDON W1W 5PN

URL: <https://ish.org.uk/>



Conference Venue

13-14 Cornwall Terrace Mews, London NW1 4QP

URL: <http://www.dajf.org.uk/>

Lecturer



Daniel Kilburn

Dr. Daniel Kilburn is a tutor of geography at University College London. He also serves as an associate fellow of the Higher Education Academy. His research focuses on the influence of housing policy and urban development on social relations within city neighbourhoods. He received his B.A., M.Sc. and Ph.D. from the London School of Economics and Political Science.



Oxfam

Oxfam

Oxfam is an international confederation of charitable organisations focused on alleviation of global poverty. Founded in Oxford in 1942, its initial concern was provision of food to famine in Greece. Today, Oxfam has three main points of focus: development work, humanitarian aid and advocacy. They operate in over 90 countries and has raised over 250 million pounds.



Neil Lee

Dr. Neil Lee is an assistant professor in economic geography at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). He has previously served as head of the Socio-Economic Centre at The Work Foundation. His research focuses on cities and the social dimensions of economic change. He received his B.Sc. from University College London and his M.Sc. and Ph.D. from LSE.



Takehiko Kariya

Dr. Takehiko Kariya is a professor of sociology at the University of Oxford. He has previously taught sociology at the University of Tokyo. His research focuses on sociology of education and social changes of postwar Japan. He received his B.A. and M.A. from the University of Tokyo and Ph.D. from Northwestern University.

Support

Hosted by:	UK-Japan Student Conference Executive Committee
Collaboration with:	Bizjapan Association
Endorsed by:	The British Chamber of Commerce in Japan
Sponsored by:	Benesse Corporation
	The Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation

Organisers

Karin Matsuzaki	King's College London
Shu Ishida	University of Oxford
Daichi Ishii	Keio University
Fuzuki Nasuno	University of Tokyo
Wakaha Minami	Keio University
Takahiko Shibata	Waseda University
Tatsuma Otani	London School of Economics and Political Science
Edward Zhang	University College London

Japanese Delegates

Ayaka Naota	Royal Holloway, University of London
Shiori Kontani	International Christian University (Japan)
Yuka Takahashi	Yokohama National University
Ririka Takahashi	University of Tokyo
Anna Ota	Yokohama City University
Sae Tanaka	Keio University
Misaki Saito	Keio University
Nao Noguchi	University of Bradford
Satomi Oya	University of Southampton

UK Delegates

Theo Keeping	University of Oxford
Thomas Yates	University of Oxford
George Lewin-Smith	University of Oxford
Alexander Curtis	University of Oxford
Alvin Chua	University of Oxford
Neneh Kumar	University of Leeds
Beth Barker	University of Cambridge
Kaifeng Wei	Imperial College London

We organised four preliminary learning sessions, each with set readings and assignments to complete. In the first session, we addressed various dimensions of poverty. We researched and discussed what poverty is like in reality, analysed its causes and consequences, and investigated how society is responding to these issues. We then focused on the social structures that lie behind the causes of poverty, in particular on their economic and political backgrounds, as well as the roles of companies, governments, and other institutions. Finally, we discussed the impact of charities, local authorities and social enterprises to raise public awareness and to make a change.

1st Study Session

In discussion part A, we discussed three topics. Firstly, 'the people encountering poverty', in which we looked further into the working poor, child poverty, and inequality in opportunity. Secondly, 'poverty in developing countries', where we addressed the myth in Japan that all people are middle class, which is one of the reasons relative poverty is invisible. Thirdly, 'poverty conditions', where we understood that children's academic background and social status are influenced by that of their parents. Once one is born into poverty, it is extremely difficult to break out of its course. In discussion part B, the participants performed detailed analysis of selected topics and exchanged ideas. In discussion C, participants worked on case studies based on assigned books. We thought it is significant for homeless people to gain money through jobs such as volunteer activities or jobs at non-profit organisations but not receiving welfare, which will eventually be beneficial for the society.

2nd Study Session

Participants researched how administrations and companies affect poverty situations. As for administration, we debated 'to what extent the government should intervene in lives of people in order to guarantee the minimum level of healthy and cultural life'. Japan sets the standard of welfare-payment particularly high, making 80% of those under the poverty line unable to receive welfare. With the increase in the social security budget due to aging population, proportion of welfare-payment in the national budget is unlikely to be raised. Regarding company measures, employment of irregular workers had been promoted due to the recession in the early 90's, relaxation of the labour market through globalisation, and company's policy to cut the labour cost. However, in recent years, the government has been encouraging companies to decrease the number of irregular workers and promote employment of regular workers. Japan ranked the lowest in income distribution among OECD nations in 2009, which suggests the so called "Abenomics", the policy promoting comprehensive economic growth, is ineffective in spreading wealth to the lower class and thus widening the gap between the rich and poor.

3rd Study Session

Participants drew comparisons between poverty in Japan and the UK. The unemployment rate in the UK is 4.9%, which is the lowest figure since 2005. Japan has 3.1% unemployment rate, which again is the lowest rate in the last two decades. There is a clear indication that the UK and Japan both have improved the employment rates. However, those figures do not reflect the quality of jobs. Japan has seen a rapid rise in part-time workers, after which around 40% of the employed population works part-time, and in the UK, despite the increase in employment rate, wage growth and productivity has slowed at 2%. It is obvious that employment environment and conditions are causing poverty issues.

Although average income in the UK has risen, the level of inequality hasn't improved since the 1980s. According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, middle-income families in the UK today resemble poor households in the past. This statement stands mainly for three reasons: half of the middle-income families are renters while less are owners; poorer families are less reliant on benefits due to increases in employment rate; middle-income households with children now acquire 30% of their income from benefits and tax credits. It can be argued that increased employment rate has restricted the availability of benefits, which may not be helpful for those who live under the poverty line.

4th Study Session

Participants framed existing solutions to alleviate poverty. In Japan, the main sectors working for eradicating poverty are NPO, whereas in the UK, charities play a central part. There are more than 27,000 charity programs with 13 billion GBP of funds overall, yet it is still difficult to confirm its effectiveness. Therefore it is crucial for the three sectors – the government, private companies, and NPO or charity – to cooperate in order to make its activities transparent. Each sector has different functions; charities can verify the needs of people, private companies can provide financial support, and the government can frame policies which meet the demand of the poor.



Introductory Presentation

12th Sep 11.15am - 1.15pm, 13th Sep 10am – 10.45am

Participants prepared presentations on poverty in their home countries in small groups. Group A analysed the characteristics of poverty and its policies in their home countries, indicating cultural and political backgrounds, whilst group B analysed the backgrounds of more specific issues such as (i) child poverty, (ii) homelessness and (iii) workers in poverty.

Some main keywords raised were 'relative poverty', 'economic disparity' and 'income inequality'. As to why poverty still prevails despite efforts to alleviate it, it was suggested that governmental policies may be helping only a portion of the poor, and further consideration is required for those who are trapped in the poverty spiral of working under low wages, paying back debt and housing costs, and those who cannot receive governmental support due to having no fixed address.

Poor understanding towards the reality of poverty was also noted as a reason of the persistence of the issue. At present, the sufferers continue to take the blame and responsibility for being poor, whilst the faults of society such as opportunity inequality based on gender, age, wage and ethnicity persist.



The history of industrial development is reflected in employment. In Japan, a long-term recession following a rapid increase of demand caused companies to offer more part time and temporary positions as a solution to remain flexible and avoid risk. Policies and schemes already implemented, such as education support, career services, welfare and scholarship schemes were also mentioned.

Fieldwork

12th Sep 2pm – 6.30pm

Separating into four groups, we analysed current situations of four areas in poverty in London – Islington, Newham, Tower Hamlets, and Stratford. In 40 minutes, participants researched statistics

and public opinion of the area they are about to visit. After that, we spent two hours at the destination, observing the area first-hand, recording the similarities and differences to what we have expected and what we observed. By interviewing the local people, we discovered a divide within the community, and subtle signs of poverty which were not apparent. For instance, Stratford is a commercial area that has been recently redeveloped for the London Olympics, where further development is in progress. However, interviews showed that some areas remain where prostitution and crime are still prominent. In Tower Hamlets, the number of gambling and pawnshops, graffiti and rubbish on the streets, shuttered stores and unrestored houses all showed the prevalence of poverty. In Newham, despite the economic disparity and ethnic divide within the community, the local citizens were reluctant to talk about these issues.



Seminar with Dr Daniel Kilburn

13th Sep 10.45am - 1.30pm

Dr Daniel Kilburn, a geography fellow at University College London whose interest ranges from housing policies to how formation of cities affect how people interact with space. In this lecture on 'The Housing Problem: Geographies of poverty and provision', Dr Kilburn addressed housing issues in London, elaborating on current situations of housing supply and rising housing and rent prices.

Dr Kilburn explored the tension between gentrification, i.e. 'a rise of living standards in the area with



the influx of relatively wealthy people, causing the poorer inhabitants to move out of the area', and urbanisation. In particular, there was focus on the question of 'how London should continue to fulfil its role as an international city whilst keeping foreign investment and population growth under control'. In the discussion that followed, the extent to which the government can intervene with the market and policies that can be

implemented were debated. It also became apparent that the differences in population, development of transportation, and cultural expectation towards a standard living between the UK and Japan largely contributes to the characteristic differences in land usage.

Map Exercise

13th Sep 10.45am - 1.30pm

We performed research in the area of Shoreditch, a district in East London where gentrification is significant, using maps and statistic data. Using online resources such as DataShine – a database that visualises crime levels, education levels, employment, ethnicity and religion groups, etc. – and Digimaps – online historical maps that date back to the 19 century – we discussed in small groups how Shoreditch is characterised. For instance, when we discovered a street with concentrated crime levels, we set a hypothesis of why that is occurring, and seek to evaluate it by referring to and comparing with other resources. A diverse range of approach and findings from this exercise was observed from the team reports.



Workshop with Oxfam

14th Sep 10am - 2.45pm

We hosted a workshop by Oxfam, an international charity organisation focused on alleviation of global poverty. The workshop consisted of a lecture on poverty and Oxfam's activities to tackle the issue, project proposals towards Oxfam in groups, and an "agree or disagree" activity.

The lecture started off in a dialogue format, where participants exchanged their own perception of poverty. The discussion expanded to thoughts on government's responsibilities regarding poverty, and students debated the potential of further collaboration between non-profits and local communities. The coordinator then described Oxfam's activities to tackle the issue of poverty. Oxfam has been creative in the way they raise funds and public awareness, running sports events, festivals and recycle shops. Organising skill training workshops and educational programmes to help the unemployed out of the poverty cycle, Oxfam rigorously engages with the local community, adapting to local needs whilst following its global mission: reducing economic divide, improving access to employment and women empowerment to name a few. We learnt how Oxfam strives to make a change beyond the scope of an individual by acting on a community scale.

In the afternoon, the coordinator introduced the "agree or disagree" activity. The students were given notions to agree or disagree with, and the topics ranged from causes of poverty to philosophical questions. With each topic, students exchanged ideas on the reasons to support their point of view. We also made a short project proposal for Oxfam in small groups, brainstorming new ideas that takes advantage of the resource and influence Oxfam has.



Even during breaks, participants were engaged in discussion amongst themselves, debating whether it is possible to change the attitude of consumers so that we can prevent prices of products to become unfairly cheap for those who work with low wages.

Lecture by Dr Neil Lee

14th Sep 3.15pm - 4.15pm

On the 14th September, we invited Dr. Neil Lee from the London School of Economics and Political Science to give us a presentation on the critical analysis on Inclusive growth and inequality in cities. Dr. Neil Lee first addressed the issue of increasing trend towards inequality across the globe and the need for policy-makers to consider on the distribution of wealth in the city, instead of focusing on growth statistics. He pointed out the situation of in-work poverty, an issue raised in both the UK and Japan. In the UK, more than half of households are in poverty even when there is a breadwinner in the home. Reflecting on this fact, Dr Neil Lee argued the need of creating "better" jobs in order to improve the quality of life of the population. Furthermore, he pointed out the importance of education and training when tackling poverty as the level of education which the population pursue will significantly affect the quality of life of individuals, as well as the future economic growth of the nation.

The talk was followed by 10 to 15 minutes of Q&A. Many students actively asked questions. For example, a student asked whether inclusive growth policies are pragmatic or not for the current UK / Japanese government. The reaction of the student to the talk was very positive; the talk was inspiring as well as absorbing, contributing positively to the final presentation.



Idea Contest

15th Sep 10am – 1.15pm

Focusing specifically on a local area in London as a place of implementation, we brainstormed ideas on how poverty can be alleviated. Competing in small groups, participants pitched their idea on posters. The fieldwork and interviews on the first day served as a basic market research, provided insight into the local areas we are addressing, whilst the online databases we introduce for the map exercise on the second day were used to evaluate the feasibility and demand for the idea.



Group A noted that in Newham, interaction amongst White, Hindu and Muslims communities is limited. They proposed establishing a school partnership programme, with cross-school 'houses' and joint school events such as sports days to break down national and ethnic boundaries, alongside having local teachers from all faiths to give primary school students insight into their diverse lives and faiths - treating it as a vehicle to understand ones neighbours as opposed to enforce one religion. This will hopefully introduce a new sense of community into students' lives.

Group B proposed increasing the number of job cafes, reducing student loan interest rates, and promoting volunteering schemes for academic tutoring for poor children in Japan. For the UK, they proposed increasing the opportunity for community interaction across ethnic groups.

Group C addressed language barriers in Newham, where the majority of the population in the borough consists of first generation immigrants. Lacking English skills, they have less access to sustainable jobs. Group C proposed an after school English course. The idea not only provides language training, but also creates new jobs for immigrants with high English proficiency.

Group D proposed a Clean & Green scheme where locals can be paid to clean and garden the streets, as means to empower the community and to improve the local branding image. This not only opens the area to tourism and marketing opportunities, but also creates jobs for the poor that doesn't require sophisticated skills. This can help them get out of the poverty cycle and get back on track. In the vote, the idea presented by Group D received the most approval, given its feasibility and demand.

Cultural Exchange

15th Sep 1.15pm – 4.30pm



On the 15th, we organised a cultural exchange event. After having sushi and rice balls for lunch at Regent's park, we enjoyed Japanese and British games under the beautiful blue sky. Participants were able to open up to each other in a relaxed atmosphere and deepen their friendship. After outdoor activities, the participants wrote calligraphy on Japanese paper fans and folded origami. During teatime, they enjoyed Japanese green tea and confectionery. It was a great chance for British participants to have a glimpse into Japanese culture.

Final Presentation

16th Sep 10am – 3.30pm

On the final day, four mixed groups of both Japanese and British students presented their final thought on poverty issues and its solutions in developed countries. Students reflected upon the learnings from seminars, workshops and fieldwork throughout the week, exploring potential solutions on a local, national and global level, each coming up with unique plans to tackle the issue of poverty at local, national and international levels. For example, one group had focused their policy upon how to support those in in-work poverty, especially single parents in the developed nation.

After the presentations, Professor Kariya at the University of Oxford kindly gave us some comments on the presentations. Prof Kariya highly approved the aim of the conference, and introduced some additional viewpoints such as the consequences of aging population and the reasons behind



recurring poverty which we haven't fully covered in our discussions. Prof Kariya also highlighted how such academic interaction between two different countries not only facilitates better understanding of the other, but will also provide discoveries about our own country, its culture and policies in comparison. He closed the conference by suggesting that looking back on history of the two countries may provide better insight not only for the present, but for our future.

Comments from participants

“For me it was the chance to meet new people, hear of different cultures, and broaden your perspective on important modern issues. I found the discussions very stimulating, the Japanese culture very interesting and the overall experience very worthwhile.”

—Tom Yates, student at University of Oxford

“The people who I met in this conference are the people who I will cherish for a lifetime. The conference provided me with deeper knowledge on poverty, and how countries like Japan, and the UK should be facing this issue.”

—Ririka Takahashi, student at University of Tokyo



Acknowledgement

We would like to express our gratitude to our guest speakers Dr Kilburn, Ms Violante, Dr Lee, Dr Kariya, Benesse Corporation for sponsorship, The Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation for subsidy, The British Chamber of Commerce in Japan for endorsement, The Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation for the venue, The International Students House for accommodation, along with all of our supporters who has helped us realise the conference.

— UK-Japan Student Conference Committee