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### **INCREASING POVERTY AND SOCIAL WORK IN JAPAN**

In Japan as well as in most of the Western postindustrial societies, on the background of neo-liberal modernization policies the economic and social gap has become widening and poverty is spreading. The rate of unemployment still is comparatively low, but it keeps growing and insecure and short-term labor contracts have become more and more common.

Newly created expressions like “*furitâ*” (young man and unmarried women under 35 working only on an hour based contract as “part-time workers” for one to five years in the same job), “*nîto*” (young man and unmarried women under 35 who are neither in education, nor training or employment or concentrating on housework), “*nettocafe nanmin*” (homeless day laborers spending the nights in internet-cafes) or “*haken mura*” (a tent village built in an extended park inside Tokyo in December 2008 for dispatched workers who, with the termination of their contract had lost housing, left with no alternative to spending New Years eve except outside on the street) clearly point to basic problems of labor conditions which seem by no means particular to Japan. Data hardly leave any doubt that the “society of all being middle class” has been fading away. This is reflected in schools and other educational institutions by children, who have lost all eagerness and hope, as it has been shown by Kariya (2001) and others. While only two percent of the youth leave educational institutions by the end of compulsory education, educational costs are high, making up for more than 4.000 Euro per year even in a public senior high school. (Kodomo no gakushuhi seikatsu chôsa hôkokusho)

After throwing some light on this general background, the paper will concentrate on the intergenerational reproduction of social inequalities. It will be asked, what has been done and what could be done to support the disadvantaged, and what kind of debates are going on among professionals in social work, on the community level and among social scientists.

#### **References:**

**Kariya, T.** 2008: *Gakuryoku to kaisô (Akademische Fähigkeit und Klasse)*, Tôkyô: Asahi shimbun shuppan.

**Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture** 2006: *Survey of Household Expenditure on Education per Student.*