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The Failure of British Multiculturalism: Lessons for Europe*

Abstract: This paper acknowledges the need for greater convergence of immigrant and ethnic minorities integration policies in Europe and critically examines the general conviction that Great Britain is the source of best practice in this policy area. The articles' main thesis is that contrary to the commonly held view, Multiculturalism as an integration policy is not effective and adequate. This claim is supported by the three groups of arguments. First of all, Multiculturalist policies have led to ghettoisation of the society and ethnically-driven conflicts instead of integration. Moreover, such policies often violate basic principles of democracy and equality as well as abuse individual human rights in the name of the rights of cultural groups. Finally, multiculturalist approach is inadequate especially at the times of "super-diversity," in other words, unprecedented inter- and intra-group diversification. In conclusion principles for the future common EU integration policy that can be derived from the British experience are suggested.

Keywords: multiculturalism, immigrant integration policies, future common European immigrant integration policy, diversity management, minority rights vs. individual rights

Introduction

EU member states have different national histories, legal frameworks, and preferences for managing immigration. Consequently, integration policy lies within the competence of individual member states and there are no legal provisions in the EU treaties for the Union to manage the effects of immigration. However, members increasingly believe that the EU can and should play a role in encouraging good integration practices, harmonizing standards, and monitoring policies. The Hague Programme adopted in 2004, underlined the need for greater co-ordination of national integration policies and EU initiatives in this field. It also called for the development of a framework of common principles, clear goals and means of evaluation. Given the EU's largely open internal borders, the failure of one member to adequately address integration challenges and prevent social exclusion that could lead to extremism or criminal activity could have severe negative implications for other EU members.

Integration is a broad concept and one of its most encompassing definitions is "the process through which, over time, newcomers and hosts form an integral whole" (Papademetriou 2003). There are many various models of accomplishing this task,

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with multiculturalism and assimilation being just two of those (Papademetriou 2003). It is important to note that the word “multiculturalism” can be used both descriptively and prescriptively. The first meaning of “multiculturalism” merely points to the fact that members of a given society may come from various cultural backgrounds (in this sense, every European society is multicultural). In this work, however, “multiculturalism” will be used as a prescriptive term, i.e. the policies supported by the ideas that ethnic diversity should not only be acknowledged but also actively reinforced by government policies. Thus, I will differentiate between the term “diversity,” which is merely descriptive and “multiculturalism,” which entails government responsibility for designing policies which preserve and actively encourage diversity.

The British approach, strongly informed by multiculturalist theories, is widely perceived to be one of the great liberal success stories of the post-war period, and—relative to the perception of ethnic dilemmas in mainland Europe—something the British do best. Not surprisingly, academics and policy specialists from across the channel often practice a considerable degree of proselytism among their European colleagues.

This paper argues, however, that the conception of multiculturalism has outlived its usefulness as an analytical tool and as a policy approach. Although Britain has accomplished much by way of anti-discrimination, the typical multiculturalist policies have led to segregation and ghettoisation of the society, the so-called “parallel worlds,” conflicts and competition between different ethnic communities, and abuse of individual rights in the name of cultural rights of an ethnic community. Multiculturalist solutions are problematic both on the level of policy design and policy-implementation. This is why the future European common integration policy should not be guided by multiculturalist policy approach.

The British society has been diverse for many ages with its culturally distinctive parts: England, Scotland and Wales and the Northern Ireland. But multicultural policies have been developed in response to the effects of a post-WWII economic boom and invitation of foreign workers. The large influx of black workforce from Asia, and the Caribbean to Britain in the 1950s posed a dilemma for policy-makers. On the one hand they welcomed the benefits enjoyed by the economy, on the other, they realised the problem such an influx presented for the concept of Britain and Britishness. Moreover, the newcomers encountered racially-motivated discrimination in various spheres of life. In response, the 1960s saw the implementation of several policies banning direct discrimination. The initial anti-discrimination policies did not bring the intended results. As Malik points out, throughout the seventies, three big issues dominated the struggle for political equality: opposition to discriminatory immigration controls; the fight against racist attacks; and, most explosively, the issue of police brutality (2002). However, instead of directly addressing these issues, the policy-makers started to look for a different strategy.

The general integration policy ideal in Britain was promulgated by Home Secretary Roy Jenkins in 1968 as “not a flattering process of uniformity, but cultural diversity coupled with equal opportunity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance” (as in Rex 1998: 21). Thus for instance, many argued, that black people should not be forced to

accept British values, or to adopt a British identity. Rather different peoples should have the right to express their identities, explore their own histories, formulate their own values, pursue their own lifestyles. As Malik notes, in this process, the very meaning of equality was transformed: from possessing the same rights as everyone else to possessing different rights, appropriate to different communities (2002).

In result, as Rex shows, British integration policy implies “two co-existing value systems or cultures” (Rex 1998: 21–22). The shared political domain rests upon the idea of equal opportunities in economic and political matters. The private domain allows for the existence of separate languages, religions and family practices (Rex 1998).

In order to achieve this ideal a number of policies were developed. The scope and focus of this paper does not allow to discuss in detail the anti-discrimination policy in Britain. But to do justice to British integration policy I will briefly comment upon it. Anti-discrimination policy took over 50 years to develop, starting with eliminating direct and much later indirect ethnic and racial discrimination. Today the body of anti-discrimination legislation ensures a fully-fledged protection for minorities in Britain, where discrimination on the grounds of race or ethnicity is outlawed, there is a body in place to monitor the implementation of legislation, criminal offences which are racially motivated are given special attention, and local authorities and public bodies have a duty to promote racial equality. Moreover, incitement to racial and religious hatred is outlawed.

While anti-discrimination discourse was focused on the equality of individual rights, the debate on multiculturalism has centred around the issue of group rights and special rights (Kymlicka 1995). The British integration approach attributes an important role to communities. Lord Parekh, British political philosopher and sociologist and a multiculturalism theorist, calls Britain “a community of communities” (2000). It is thus assumed that all individuals are members of a community, which is culturally well-defined, relatively homogeneous and has clear boundaries (Anthias and Yuval-Davies 1992). In the view of the theorists of multiculturalism, such as Lord Parekh, the integration of individuals into wider society is realised via membership in ethnic communities.

Applied Multiculturalism in Britain

Thus, multiculturalist theories imply that communities have a role to play in both political domain, being partners of national and local authorities as well as in private domain, where community members are governed by their own cultural community norms and duties. In order to achieve this ideal, a number of state policies has been developed. These policies can be grouped into exemptions from the general rule and special provisions for ethnic groups not available to the public at large, aimed at accommodating the perceived cultural differences of ethnic minorities.

As far as exemptions from general rule are concerned, some groups are exempted from generally applied rules, because they are perceived to be too burdensome for a particular group. Barry calls this “rule-and-exemption” (2001) strategy. There is

a number of exemptions granted to minorities in Britain. One of the examples is the legislation on ritual slaughter. The government accepted that ritual butchery of animals causes unnecessary “very significant pain and distress,” yet proposed to continue exemption for Muslims and Jews on the grounds that a ban would be contrary to the Human Rights Act, since that Act requires freedom “to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice” (British Humanist Association).

In similar vein, the exemption of crash helmet law was introduced in 1976 to accommodate turbaned Sikhs riding motorcycles. Moreover, the Sikhs were also exempted from the ban on carrying knives and pointed objects contained in the Criminal Justice Act of 1988, which states that it is a defence for an accused to prove that he had the article with him “for religious reasons” (Barry 2001: 38).

The British law contains a specific provision which allows the children of Gypsies to go to school for only half as many days as other children. Schools all over Britain succumb to parents’ demands that children should be exempted from certain parts of curriculum, most often Muslim girls from biology or physical education lessons. The acceptance of the “rule-and-exemption” approach invites other exemptions on an *ad hoc* basis.

Apart from specific exemptions from existing policies, which are defined by law, there are also many loopholes as well as pieces of legislation which are not enforced due to political correctness and the conviction that ethnic minorities are to be governed by their own norms in the private domain. It is all too often assumed that it is impolite at best and morally wrong at worst to criticise cultural practices of other ethnic and cultural groups. For example, female genital mutilation was prohibited in Britain 1985, yet there have been no prosecutions under that act. Medical, education and the police professionals were partially ignorant and partially hesitant to go down that route and execute the law (Debates of the Female Genital Mutilation Bill...). Despite the general condemnation of these practices, the “respect for other cultures” had prevented patching the legislation loophole until very recently. As late as in 2004 there came into force the Female Genital Mutilation Act, which makes it an offence for the first time for UK nationals or permanent UK residents to carry out FGM abroad, or to aid, abet, counsel or procure the carrying out of FGM abroad, even in countries where the practice is legal.

Another example of a legislation loophole informed by multiculturalism is forced marriage, which can involve kidnapping, sexual, physical and mental abuse, and even murder if they are refused. But there is no specific law to ban this practice. Annually about 300 forced marriages are reported, but many more are believed to go unreported (BBC, “Forced marriage...”). In spring 2006 forced marriages ban consultations were held by the government but no decisions have been made so far due to a vociferous voice of religious groups against the ban.

What is more, the general idea that different ethnic groups are allowed to maintain their traditional ways of life and should be treated differently in accordance with their distinctive cultures is financially supported by the government. The Section 11 of the Local Government Act of 1966 permitted local authorities to claim additional wage costs arising from the presence of considerable numbers of immigrants whose

language and customs differed substantially from those of the local community. Local authorities were required to consult with the local communities and decide what those funds should be used for. In the '80s Section 11 budgets started increasingly to be used for financing minority organisations.

A really significant role in the story of multiculturalism was played by local governments in Britain since the 1980s. Any local authorities started to implement equal opportunities policies set out by the Art. 71 of the Race Relations Act: to "make the appropriate arrangements... to promote equality of opportunity" and "good relations between people of different racial groups." Very soon the Greater London Authority and the Inner London Education Authority became the forefront of innovation and reform. Special schemes were also set up to facilitate the access of ethnic minority populations to the services provided by public administrations (the establishment of translation and cultural mediation schemes in collaboration with associations of minority ethnic groups, brochures and forms in different foreign languages, development of preventive campaigns specifically addressed to the needs of a group and through the channels more suited to reach them—local ethnic press, religious centres and authorities, associations, etc).

The bulk of educational matters in Britain are decentralised to local education authorities (Vertovec 1998). In the seventies and eighties schools attempted to translate multiculturalist theory into practice by encouraging ethnic minorities to feel pride in their own cultures and histories. This became known as "sari, samosa and steelband" version of multiculturalism—and it avoided the issues of racism, or the low status of those who wore saris, ate samosa and played steelbands (Alibhai-Brown 2001). Moreover, schools have designed various programmes to assist particular ethnic and racial groups of children, as for example, the Liverpool Black Achievement Project, which focuses on support for Liverpool-born black children (Liverpool City Council).

State funding for more faith schools is one of the planks of Blair government. Since predominantly Anglican and Catholic schools had received state funding so far, the government, eager to mend this inequality, has decided to stretch state funding to more faith schools, which is one of the aimed of the Education and Inspections Bill 2006.

Section 44 of the 1976 Race Relations Act also provides for funding of organisations that are concerned with promoting equal opportunities and good relations between people from different ethnic backgrounds by the Commission for Racial Equality.

Despite all the efforts to have good race relations and peacefully co-existing communities race motivated disturbances have not ceased. In May 2001 in three Northern cities there erupted violent riots between white and Asian youths, which continued for three days. The Ted Cantle's and other official reports that followed these disturbances described fragmented and polarised communities lacking a strong sense of civic identity and social values. According to those reports, the disturbances in summer 2001 suggested that multicultural policies are dividing communities in some places, that people from different ethnic groups have little to do with each other, and that attitudes towards people from different ethnic groups are hardening (Home

Office 2001). There was a call for policies reinforcing “community cohesion” (here, the term “community” implies the whole British society—JF).

It has been suggested that a cohesive community is one where:

- there is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities;
- the diversity of people’s different backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and positively valued;
- those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities; and
- strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.

Yet today, it is rather unclear in what direction this new policy approach develops. On the one hand, Community Cohesion Policy is supposed to involve

“addressing fractures, removing barriers and encouraging positive interactions between groups. (...) it aims to build communities where people feel confident that they belong and are comfortable mixing and interacting with others, particularly people from different racial backgrounds or people of different faith.” (Local Government Association: 7)

In other words, interaction between *people*, regardless their ethnic origin, is emphasized.

On the other hand, some policy specialists and practitioners still emphasise the special cultural, religious and linguistic needs of “black and minority ethnic communities.” There is still an assumption that people should and would rather live in closely-tight ethnic communities and what is necessary is just building bridges between communities. Community Cohesion, according to some authors is “building positive relationship between white and BME (black and minority ethnics—JF) communities and also between different BME communities.” There is also a focus on special needs deriving from culture, since according to some community cohesion also means “to account for particular cultural/language/religious differences and to bridge the major gap in outcomes that these communities experience across the full range of public services” (Local Government Association: 26).

One of the steps to enhance the sense of belonging to the British state for the new citizens was Home Secretary David Blunkett’s initiative to introduce “The life in the UK” tests for prospective citizens, covering government, the society and practical issues. With effect from 1 January 2004, all new applicants for British citizenship by naturalisation or registration who are aged 18 or over when the application is decided must attend a citizenship ceremony and take an Oath and Pledge to the United Kingdom. Another step was introducing citizenship education in the school curriculum in 2002.

British Multiculturalism and its Discontents: Where the Problems Lie

The British integration policy may well seem a sensible response to the needs of black and ethnic communities. Indeed, the well-developed anti-discrimination policy has enabled some people with ethnic backgrounds to occupy high positions in the media (BBC boasts of its multi-racial crew), politics, business and arts. These people

can be role-models for the younger generations, the situation so different from that of France, for example. It also seems to show respect and sensitivity towards other cultures.

Integration or Segregation?

However, it is enlightening to examine the results of research looking into various indicators of integration. The general conclusion that can be made on the basis of various studies is that the multiculturalist policies in Britain have boosted polarisation and ghettoisation of the society along religious as much as ethnic lines. Increasingly ethnic groups live with their own kind. There is little interaction between ethnic groups and the white majority—and Ted Cante’s report shows that such segregation is conducive to further racially and ethnically motivated violence (Home Office 2001). For example, the number of people of Pakistani heritage living in what are technically called “ghetto” communities trebled during 1991–2001; 13% in Leicester live in such communities (the figure 10.8% in 1991); 13.3% in Bradford (it was 4.3% in 1991) (CRE: 2005).

Communities also inhabit separate social and cultural worlds. As Commission for Racial Equality research shows, in 2004 and 2005 most white Britons could not name a single good friend from a different race and only one in ten could name two (CRE: 2005). The same pattern applies to ethnic minorities, where increasingly people interact with people from the same ethnic background. Younger Britons appear to be integrating less well than their parents¹ (CRE: 2005) which is an even more worrying fact. It means that the next generation of people of immigrant descent will feel even more alienated from the mainstream society. The research conducted by Professor Simon Burgess and his colleagues at Bristol University shows that children are slightly more segregated in the playground than they are in their neighbourhoods (CRE: 2005). Moreover, the choices of schools made by parents themselves are entrenching segregation. In Tower Hamlets primary schools in 2002, 17 schools had more than 90% Bangladeshi pupils; 9 schools had fewer than 10%.

Thus, the evidence shows that many faith and racial minority communities find it increasingly difficult to break out of their isolated clusters. In these segregated neighbourhoods ethnic minority communities can feel intimidated and under siege, and neighbouring majority communities can also feel excluded, so the two simply never interact.

Social mobility also remains much connected with belonging to an ethnic group. The segregation and closure of ethnic communities, reinforced by government support for the preservation of ethnic communities, lead to the reinforcement of inter-groups inequalities, along the gender lines, among others. As Anthias and Yuval-Davis emphasise, the existing policy reinforces existing power relations within the “community”

¹ In 2004, 31% of ethnic minority Britons said that most or all of their friends were from ethnic minority backgrounds; this has grown to 37%. The 47% of ethnic minority Britons who said that most or all of their friends were white in 2004 has now shrunk to 37%. It also remains true that younger Britons are more exclusive than older Britons.

by adding the political and financial resources of the state to support them (1992). For example, as follows from the Commission for Racial Equality research, in communities where women have traditionally occupied a very fixed and exclusive role of wife and mother, and thus where employment of women has been limited, also today a very small percent of women have jobs² (1997). The situation where there is only one male bread-winner in a family obviously negatively translates into the financial situation of such a family. The level of education also varies from group to group showing how lifestyles and thus the value attached to education are also replicated according to ethnic lines. For example, Pakistani/Bangladeshi ethnic groups are strongly under-represented in further education. In this group two times less people between 20 and 24 years study than in the Indian ethnic group³ (CRE, 1998). It is obvious that such a low percentage of participation in education among Pakistanis/Bangladeshis cannot be explained simply by racial discrimination, since the phenotypes of both groups do not really differ much, at least to an untrained eye.

Many commentators perceive the “difference” discourse, which lies at the core of multiculturalism, as employing the logic akin to racist ideologies. Instead of criticising racism on the grounds of universal equality of people, multiculturalist policy is justified by a conviction that “black” (here “black” means “coloured and underprivileged”) people are in some way fundamentally different from “British” people and thus the problem of race relations is about how to accommodate these “differences” (Malik 2002). What is more, the policies towards newcomers motivated by their initially perceived difference have doubled and trebled the apartness of different ethnic groups and the mainstream society. As one of the commentators has aptly observed

When many of our forms of multiculturalism have been built on the premise that “immigrants” are so peculiar, so different from mainstream British society that the only way we can live together is if we keep apart as much as possible, it is perhaps unsurprising that they are failing to enable us to deal with the society we live in today. (Alibhai-Brown 2001: 52)

Moreover, it has to be remembered that multiculturalist policies were not simply the product of demand from black communities for their cultural differences to be recognised. That demand itself was created through official policy in response to the black militancy of the 1970s and early 1980s (Malik 2002). As it has been mentioned above, comprehensive anti-discrimination policy took a long time to evolve. Instead of tackling head-on the problems of racial inequality, social deprivation and political disaffection, the authorities, both national and local, simply encouraged communities to pursue what the Cattle report calls ‘parallel lives’ (Malik 2002).

Multicultural Policies as Threats to Equality and Democracy

According to many commentators, multiculturalist solutions have proved contradictory to basic democratic principles. Multiculturalist policies have earned a lot of

² 13% of Bangladeshi women against 68% of white women and 46% of all ethnic minority women are employed.

³ 22% of Bangladeshis/Pakistanis against 47% of Indians aged 20–24 receive education.

criticism for taking the steps aiming at providing countless special rights for different groups, from people who claim that this is not what equality is about. As Brian Barry notes “multiculturalism [is] a challenge to the whole idea that equal treatment means treating people in the same way” (2001: 269). Governments and legislators are naturally tempted to take the path of least resistance and cave in to the minority groups demands in order to attract ethnic votes. “To a politician, the attractions of a general law with exemptions for members of specific groups are most irresistible” (2001: 39).

Community leaders who represent the community are rarely elected or democratically chosen. In fact, more often than not they are self-proclaimed conservative (if not fundamentalist) leaders, far from representing the voice of the community (also Anthias and Yuval-Davies 1992). In this way, the consequences of Multiculturalist policies are not only the creation of ethnic ghettos, but also the creation of authoritarian ghettos, violating a basic principle of democratic representation.

Transparency and accountability are threatened, since, as Barry notes:

It is not simply that debate on the general principles of multiculturalism is strenuously avoided. In addition to that, the specific fixes that constitute practical multiculturalism are negotiated behind the closed doors. (2001: 295)

For example, interestingly enough, the government’s own advisory committee issued a report in 1985 advising that kosher/halal butchery should be prohibited on the grounds that it inevitably entails unnecessary animal suffering. No debate was initiated, no groups on animal welfare consulted, let alone general public. The reply said, however, that the government “had an opportunity to consult Jewish and Muslim leaders in great detail on the question.” They rejected the committee report. As Barry comments: “Merely citing the objections as if they were decisive was, in effect, to turn the powers of government over to a pressure group” (2001: 296).

In a similar vein, the crash helmet bill was never debated on the floor of the House of Commons itself (Barry 2001: 295–6). The voices of experts and the majority are often ignored and the minority voices are revered. The religious slaughter permission⁴ is the case when it was believed that the voice of the minority had to be dominant, regardless of the general public opinion or experts’ opinions—the by 1983 a national Opinion Poll revealed that 77% of population were opposed to religious slaughter (Barry, 2001: 296).

Moreover, “sensitivity to multi-culture” and the idea that ethnic communities should be allowed to follow their own norms and standards in what is assumed to be private sphere justifies violation of basic human rights and basic laws. Hypocrisy and double standards for different members of the same society are excused by “cultural sensitivity”—a situation where there is a consent for many practices recognised by the majority as harmful. In other words, while it is assumed that the genital mutilation violates the right to body integrity, and forced marriages violate the duty of consent in marriage, it is still claimed that ethnic minorities should not be banned from such practices in the name of “culture survival.” Yet, for that matter, Indian women are

⁴ It has to be noted that the Jewish religious authorities in Norway, Sweden and Switzerland, where ritual slaughter has been banned, have declared that the traditional precepts do not have to be followed.

not happier in a forced marriage than white European women would be, nor genital mutilation hurts black women and destroys their sexual lives in a lesser extent than it would in case of white women. The exemption for Sikhs to carry knives ignores the public order interest in not having one part of population carrying offensive weapons in public places.

Furthermore, the emphasis on the difference of ethnic minorities, special provisions for them, as well as a possibility not to abide to the rules of the majority has led to the segmentation of the society where even mentioning common values has become reactionary. One commentator asserts, "Multiculturalism as a lived experience enriches our lives. But multiculturalism as a political ideology has helped to create a tribal Britain with no political or moral centre... where many groups assert their identity through a sense of victimhood and grievance" (Malik 2005).

This, in its turn, also leads to conflicts between ethnic groups pursuing varied cultural agenda and competing for the limited financial resources. As some researchers note: "This allows room for ethnic groupings to retain their cultural identity and secure compensatory resources, but may lead to a struggle between different groups to prioritise their cultural differences" (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992: 184).

Financing ethnic organisations has proved to be problematic, just as channelling financial resources exclusively according to some key words, such as "gender" or "ethnicity" and without clearly defined goals. Weber, who examined the use of financial resources by local governments, pointed out:

In their scramble for council funds, some groups are sewn up overnight, with very little thought behind their objectives, others wheel in professional funding advocates from outside the borough to present their case to the council. (as in Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992: 182)⁵

Additionally, financial resources have been often channelled to extremist and fundamentalist groups, as it was in the notorious case of financing two fascist Hindu organisations by the GLC as part of "empowering communities" strategy (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992).

As far as education policy is concerned, its implementation, more often than not, re-enforced cultural and religious difference rather than simply valuing pluralism. As it was already mentioned, children from ethnic minorities were allowed to skip general curriculum classes, because their parents regarded some parts of it not appropriate for their children.

The depictions of unified and homogenous cultures has had not only the effect of reinforcing cultural stereotyping, in which any contestation or deviation from these stereotypes would be perceived as not 'authentic'. It has also promoted group or communal identity (Saghal). Pigeonholing people according to their ethnic backgrounds starts at the very early age, imposing certain ways of behaviour, certain lifestyles and punishing any deviations. What is more, the search for 'authentic voices from the community' has meant that textbooks teaching religion were produced by fundamen-

⁵ As in Anthias and Yuval-Davis, p. 182.

talist religious groups who are seen as the authentic transmitters of those religious traditions (Saghal).⁶

The education policy failed to encouraged unity, cohesion, understanding and openness. Alibhai-Brown writes about education:

Home cultures of black and Asian children are revered and those of white children ignored. It is essentially an education of redress and cultural competition, not an education which teaches children the skills of critical interrogation. It is more interested in “black” history than a history which connects and tells the honest truth. (Alibhai-Brown 2001: 70)

What is more, as Barry emphasised, sometimes culture is the problem and culture is the solution; but more often than not it is not culture that is the source of problem and the solution should not be defined in cultural (ethnic) terms (2001). For example, school problems are not an exclusive domain of Black children, so it is harmful to design a policy targeting Black children school performance. Such an approach creates a stereotype of underachieving Black children, children with less abilities.

State funding for faith schools remains a largely controversial issue. Barry Sheerman, chairman of the Commons education select committee, warns that religious schools pose a threat to the cohesion of multicultural communities: “Schools play a crucial role in integrating different communities and the growth of faith schools poses a real threat to this” (Taylor 2005). Public opinion is also hostile to more faith schools within the comprehensive educational system. A Guardian/ICM poll shows that most respondents are against the plans to increase the number of religious schools and the growing anxiety about their impact on social cohesion. The survey revealed that the majority of the public are uneasy about the proposals, with 64% agreeing that “the government should not be funding faith schools of any kind” (Taylor 2005). Amirtaya Sen also very wisely observes that

The important goal is not just some formulaic parity in relation to old Brits with their faith-schools, but what would best enhance the capability of the children to live “examined lives” as they grow up in an integrated country. (2006)

In other words, education policy should be informed not by equality of religions, but by the goal to prepare children regardless of faith and race to function in the grown-up world and take informed decisions.

Super-diversity and Inadequacy of Multicultural Policies

There may be debates to what an extent multiculturalism was an appropriate response to the inflow of immigrants in the '50s and '60. Yet, it is clear that the multiculturalist policy of active supporting of ethnic minorities and reinforcing differences between

⁶ For instance, as Saghal points, the Islamic Foundation in Leicester has produced textbooks on Islam and prescriptions about governing every aspect of Muslim life which has been endorsed by the Commission for Racial Equality. Similarly, the syllabus on Hinduism was written by the VHP, an international pan-Hindu right wing group which has been implicated in massacres of Muslims in the state of Gujarat in India.

them has become utterly out-dated today, in the times of what Vertovec calls “super-diversity”⁷ (2006: 1). Multiculturalism continues to be discussed and delivered mainly in terms of the African-Caribbean and South Asian communities of British citizens on the basis of the policies and goals developed from the 1960s onwards. New, smaller, less organized, legally differentiated and non-citizen immigrant groups, which emerged due to the changes in immigration patterns, have hardly gained attention or a place on the public agenda (2006).

This “super-diversity” finds the multicultural approach simply inadequate. For example, ethnic labels or country of origin data may mask more significant forms of differentiation than they reveal. As Vertovec notes:

Within any particular population from a given country, there will be important distinctions with reference to ethnicity, religious affiliation and practice, regional and local identities in places of origin, kinship, clan or tribal affiliation, political parties and movements, and other criteria of collective belonging. Linguistic differentiation, for instance, represents one such important social marker which may lie within one or more country of origin categories. (2006: 9–10)

People of the same country of origin can be citizens, migrants, illegal immigrants, asylum seekers, refugees with the status granted in a different European country. In the same way, an ethnicity-focused approach to understanding and engaging minority groups in Britain, fails to deal appropriately with immigrants’ needs or help to understand their dynamics of inclusion or exclusion.

While ‘Asian’ settled immigrants from Sri Lanka are doing well (22.5 per cent are classed as ‘high earners’, while the average figure for those born in Britain is 7 per cent), ‘Asian’ settled immigrants from Bangladesh are not (just 4.3 per cent are classed as high earners) (Sanghera 2005).

The new situation of super-diversity also poses a problems for the British model of local government’s liaison with a limited number of local ethnic organizations. As Vertovec notes, in light of the numerous dimensions of super-diversity, such structures and modes are inadequate for effective representation (Vertovec 2006).

Taken the “super-diversity” into account proves that the new community cohesion approach will miss the point, if it focuses on and privileges the well-knitted together, well-organised ethnic groups, leaving aside all those either in loosely-defined groups or individuals.

Conclusions

The EU does not have a common policy on immigrant integration, yet there are various initiatives aimed at the integration of national systems of incorporating residents of immigrant and ethnic descent. Looking at the British experience in managing diversity it is possible to derive certain principles by which the European approach to immigrant integration should be guided. With the benefit of hindsight, my very concise answer would be: while British fully-fledged anti-discrimination policy is certainly

⁷ The term denotes the transformative ‘diversification of diversity’ not only in terms of ethnicity, but also “a variety of significant variables that affect where, how and with whom people live.”

an instance of best practice, the multiculturalist solutions based on the principle of “divide and rule” fall into the worst practice category. In what follows I will elaborate on this statement and attempt to formulate principles that, in my opinion, should guide the future common European policy towards immigrant integration.

- **Diversity of people not diversity of values**

Diversity of people is often confused with diversity of values. Respect for other cultures should not prevent us from firmly upholding European values as the basis for the European society. Cherishing minority languages, enjoying diverse cuisines, practicing different religions does not conflict with respecting same basic standards. Cultures are not fossilised and have the potential to adapt to new circumstances, also in the sphere of norms and standards.⁸ Equality of men and women, separation of church and state, tolerance towards cultural and sexual minorities, freedom of speech are at the core of European (not just British or French) values. What follows, the EU should support such policies as not to allow cultural relativists harm most vulnerable members of the society in the name of culture. Individual rights of European citizens and residents (e.g. of not to be mutilated, or persecuted on the basis of sexual orientation, or killed to defend the honour of one’s family) should be put afore the flimsy cultural communities’ rights. In other words, a liberal state should not tolerate illiberal practices.

The separation of church and state is an important Enlightenment principle which should not be lost along the way of fostering religious tolerance in Europe. Instead of trying to privilege all religions by broadening the range of faith schools funded by the state or blasphemy laws to encompass all religions the European approach should be scrapping blasphemy laws and putting an end to state funding for religious school. At the same time, the law should protect people against hatred on religious grounds—just as the new British Incitement to Religious Hatred Act does.

- **Cohesion not Tribalism**

It is important to break the wall of hypocrisy and admit that multicultural laissez-faire approach does not support integration of immigrants, but rather creates parallel worlds inhabited by different groups of people divided along ethnic lines. It is still assumed that ethnic communities have very special, culturally-specific needs, which have to be approached on a group by group basis. But once again, culture is not always a problem and, in such a case, culture is not the solution. Such patronising approach re-enforces distances between groups as well as victimises individuals with ethnic backgrounds.

As long as the vision of a society is that of parcelling and labelling people according to their ethnic background, it is difficult to speak of cohesion. Pakistani women, for example, are predominantly unemployed not because of racial discrimination, but because of a patriarchal tradition, where woman’s role is exclusively that of a wife and mother. The European integration approach should promote equality

⁸ Those who claim, for example, that female genital circumcision is a constitutive part of certain cultures, and thus, should not be banned in Europe, should consider the fact that in Europe genital mutilation was practices in 19th century, yet no one today would claim it should be preserved, since it used to be a feature of our culture. The same goes for forced marriages.

of opportunities and not reinforces inequalities, limitations stemming from cultural biases.

The EU claims plans to support “Reflecting diversity in the school curriculum” (European Commission, 2005: 8). It is a noble and useful intention, provided, we do not fall into the trap of “sari, samosa, steelballs” approach. Taking the British experience into account, it is important to put the emphasis on cultural and religious pluralism without celebration of several chosen cultures as well putting pressure on kids of ethnic descent to be “cultural ambassadors.” Again, the emphasis on difference rather than similarity does not boost the sense of belonging and integration.

Education in a diverse society should focus on gender and race equality, civic responsibility, mutual respect and the importance of questioning ideas and ideals. Schools should have “citizenship education” in their curriculum instead of “festivals approach” practiced in British schools for a long time. Benjamin Zefania, Salman Rushdie or Hanif Kureishi should be studied as British and European writers and not “ethnic minority representatives.” At the same time, it is necessary to have easily accessible and well designed language and “life in Europe” courses not only for prospective citizens but also for newcomers (both migrants and immigrants).

- **Rights AND Duties of (new) European citizens**

It is not only important to draw attention to the state’s obligations towards its citizens, but also the duties of (new) citizens. Among those duties is the knowledge of the host language and culture and institutions, recognition of common values as well as civic responsibility. Tests for prospective citizens—introduced already in Britain—are also being debated in other Member States. Yet, it is vital to develop meaningful questions checking candidates’ ability to function well in the new society. Easily accessible and well designed courses in language and society are a must not just for future citizens but also residents.⁹ Moreover, a European component is also necessary in such introduction courses and citizens’ tests. After all, the newcomers become not just British (or any other member state) citizens but also European citizens. At the same time, the aim should be to make the newcomers independent and self-relying as soon as possible. A range of vocational courses, recognition of foreign diplomas as well as language courses for special purposes will certainly help here. Citizenship ceremonies and oath of allegiance make becoming a citizen a very meaningful experience.

- **Ethnic voices: Dialogue not “Bows to Sacred Cows”**

Multiculturalism industry (all the numerous institutions claiming to speak for people of immigrant descent) should not suppress real open dialogue between people. On the one hand, the EU as well as member states should be careful about funding organisations according to key words in the names. On the other hand, “community leader” voices are all too often not representative of the community they claim to represent. It is important to support more direct involvement of people of different

⁹ As experience shows (e.g. in Germany), categories of immigrants are often fluid, guest workers often decide to stay in the country after their contracts expire, just as refugees do, when it becomes safe to come back to their home country, for this reason not only prospective citizens, but all long-term newcomers should be encouraged to take such courses as early as possible.

countries of origin instead of creating limitless number of ethnic lobby organisations, co-financed by the state. Money should be channelled according to merit, ensuring funding for projects with clearly set, attainable goals. Controversies should be resolved by open dialogue but not by thoughtless caving into ethnic minorities demands. It is important to strike a balance between hearing the needs of minorities, but not treating them as sacred cows.

- **Fully-fledged Anti-Discrimination Policy**

All these principles make sense in an environment where direct and indirect discrimination on ethnic and racial background is combated not just on paper (as it has been the case in France) but also in practice in all spheres of life. Counteraction to discrimination aims at eliminating grounds for conflicts. Moreover, racial or ethnical motivation of crimes should be aggravating and given special attention by courts. Otherwise, it will not be possible to make people of immigrant and ethnic background feel full members of the European society. However, it has to be remembered that positive discrimination policy (e.g. affirmative action), as well as too many exemptions, especially in times of super-diversity, lead to conflicts. On the one hand, ethnic groups are internally too diverse to justify coherent special treatment. On the other, different groups differently perceive the justification of privileges given to other groups and demand additional group rights.

To sum up, there is nothing wrong or oppressive in speaking of universal rights and common values, which should be the result of political dialogue and debate. But it is precisely the making of judgments on principles, norms and practices, such dialogue and debate that multiculturalism attempts to suppress in the name of “tolerance” and “respect” and that is why multiculturalist approach should not be the European approach to integration.

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