INCORE

Local International Learning Project (LILP)

Multiculturalism and Diversity

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INCORE

Conflicts of an ethnic, religious, political and cultural nature continue to dominate the world's attention. Since 1990, over 150 wars have taken place, most of which are re-current, protracted and intra-state and there is little evidence that such conflicts will decrease significantly over the coming decades. Ninety percent of our states are now multi-identity states and most governments are having difficulty dealing positively with such diversity.

Addressing the causes, effects, solutions and post-settlement impacts of such wars has been the role of the UNU Institute for Conflict Resolution at the University of Ulster (INCORE) since it was established in 1993. INCORE is a joint research institute of the United Nations University and the University of Ulster. It seeks to address the management and resolution of contemporary conflicts through research, training, practice, policy and theory. INCORE's vision is of a world where the knowledge and skills exist to make non-military management of ethno-political conflict the norm.

The *Research Unit* undertakes, commissions and supervises research of a multidisciplinary nature, particularly on post-settlement issues, governance and diversity, and research methodology in violent societies. The *Policy and Evaluation Unit* is committed to bridging the gaps between theory, practice and policy. It seeks to ensure that conflict-related research and practice is incorporated in grassroots programming and governmental policy.

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Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Foreword

In today's global reality it is becoming increasingly important, and possible, for societies to share strategies in order to combat the problems of the twenty-first century. There can be much to be learnt from approaches in other contexts. INCORE is aware of the potential of international comparative work, and believes that it is crucial to develop models that facilitate the reciprocal transfer of lessons and methods, whilst also recognising the challenges posed by different contexts and the 'transferability' issues involved in lessons learned. Indeed it is recognised that the direct transfer of approaches without thoughtful appraisal can be unrealistic and potentially harmful.

With funding from the Community Relations Council (CRC), INCORE initiated the Local International Learning Project (LILP). LILP aims to promote the exchange of models and ideas between Northern Irish and international practitioners and policy makers within the field of conflict resolution and community relations. The project has centred on workshops and exchange visits, although the exact format of events has varied from stream to stream. The structures sought to provide a learning environment that continued over a period of time.

The nine-month pilot phase of the project was divided into four thematic streams:
- Single Identity Work
- Civil Society in Transition and the Role of Civic Forums
- Multiculturalism and Diversity
- Realism of the Past

This report represents a summary of the main ideas and challenges that arose during the third stream of the project: 'Multiculturalism and Diversity'.

Introduction

One of the most urgent societal and political challenges of today is the constructive management of diversity. In some cases the multi-ethnic nature of society has taken on increasing significance in the last 40-50 years as the forces of globalisation, economic migration, and refugees and asylum seekers have contributed to the increasingly multifaceted composition of modern states. In some states this phenomenon is a more recent one and there has not been the same influx until more recently. The case of the Irish transformation provides a stark example of the changing nature of modern societies; in 1995 20 people applied for asylum, in 2000 there were over 11,000 applications.

Traditionally there has been little dialogue around multiculturalism in the Northern Irish context, as Anna Watson of the Chinese Welfare Association put it: 'there is a big denial of multiculturalism in Northern Ireland.' Recently, questions of ethnic minorities and diversity have begun to take on more significance in the Northern Irish context. Indeed Northern Ireland now has one of the strongest legislative bases in Europe. Such legislation includes the Race Relations Act (1997) and the recent Northern Ireland Act (1998) that established the Equality Commission. LILP aimed to provide space for reflection around the question of the management of diversity.

As part of the 'Multiculturalism and Diversity' stream, LILP held a workshop on 21st June 2001, in the Holiday Inn Express, in Belfast. The event consisted of two sessions:

A. Multiculturalism and Diversity – National Approaches and Strategies

Panellists included:
- H.E. Mr M. Goburdhun, High Commissioner, Mauritius High Commission, London
- Marie-Josee Lafleur, Policy Advisor, Canadian Heritage, Ottawa

- Cheyanne Church, INCORE, Derry/Londonderry, (Chair)

B. Multiculturalism and Diversity – Thematic Issues

Panellists included:
- Dr Laurie Johnston, Hoffstre University, USA & Queens University, Belfast
- Anna Watson, Chinese Welfare Association, Belfast
- Phillip Watt, Director, NCCRI, Dublin
- Cheyanne Church, INCORE, Derry/Londonderry, (Chair)

Exchange visits were facilitated which gave participants the opportunity to travel to Ottawa to consider the Canadian model of Multiculturalism in more detail.

This report will review examples of a multicultural approach to the management of diversity, the policy bases that exist, and the challenges posed for practitioners and policy makers that are specific to certain areas, such as education and racism.

Legislative Framework

A number of states such as Canada and Mauritius have long been implementing multicultural policies, to ensure that all citizens can maintain their identities, take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging. Multiculturalists argue that this approach is beneficial to the society as a whole not just in terms of culture, but also for social cohesion, economic prosperity and human security.

Mauritius – an implicit multicultural approach

Plagued by ethnic strife in the years preceding independence Mauritius has witnessed very little overt racial tension since 1968 and many believe that this is due to a combination of economics and respect for diversity. Although it does not have an official multicultural legislative base, the constitution respects fundamental rights and freedoms and the government is committed to policies that foster a respect for diversity. In Mauritius the word multiculturalism has become an integral part of the political rhetoric, and indeed an inclusive approach to all cultural groups has facilitated the development of multiculturalism.

Canadian Multiculturalism Act – an act for the preservation and enhancement of multiculturalism in Canada

The Canadian Multiculturalism Act (1988) applies to all Canadian government agencies, departments and crown corporations. Under this act all departments must take measures to better reflect and respond to diversity. It is also concerned with raising public awareness and stimulating public debate. Indeed some argue that multicultural participation has now become a tool of institutional credibility and there are many statistics that point to the success of this broad ranging approach. For example, polls in 1999 found that more than 83% of the population agreed that 'the multicultural make-up is one of the best things about Canada'.

Lessons from a multicultural approach

In drawing on the experience of others it is equally important to consider both the successes and failures. Speakers on the 'National

Approaches and Strategies' workshop reflected on some of the lessons that can be drawn from their diverse experiences. These include:

- Linking policies and programmes to business keys such as setting target goals ,

- Involving the community to ensure implementation,

- Making managers accountable for the implementation of a multicultural approach,
- Facilitating enabling mechanisms such as research,
- Training civil servants,
- Focusing on international consultation,
- Remaining vigilant and active,
- Fostering a common sense of citizenship.

Implementing Multiculturalism

Interpretations of multiculturalism are vast and varied. The general expectation is that a multicultural society is one that is composed of people belonging to different cultures, in which all citizens are proud of their culture and see their identity as being endorsed by the state. This approach encompasses a wide range of actors and sectors within society including languages, sport, cultural heritage, media, immigration, and policing and law enforcement. This report focuses on those areas that were addressed in the multiculturalism and diversity workshop: Education and Racism.

Education

Few would dispute that the challenges facing us in an increasingly diverse world need to be addressed in our education systems. Multiculturalism and the changing nature of modern societies pose a variety of pressures and challenges that are specific to education. For example, how does a school in Belfast admit a Somali child, with limited English language skills, in the middle of a term? Real problems have emerged such as the fact that ethnic minority children tend to be classed as special education, which can reaffirm cycles of economic discrimination. This is a challenge that is becoming increasingly relevant in Northern Ireland; 40 per cent of Northern Irish teachers have taught ethnic minority children.

During the workshop on 'thematic issues' Prof. Johnston noted a number of important recommendations that have been identified for educationalists in a multicultural context. These include:

- Establishing designated student support services,
- Teaching in a more culturally responsive way,
- Providing professional training for teachers,
- Designating release time for teachers,
- Infusing multiculturalism into the curriculum,
- Providing funding for minority language education and encouraging second language education,
- Examining policy and procedures for institutional racism,
- Committing management to pursuing a culturally responsive ethos,
- Being ready to remove teachers, if necessary,
- Facilitating community and parent partnerships.

Racism

Racism is increasingly recognised as a very serious problem in modern societies. A very particular form of discrimination, racism is a combination of prejudice and power, focused against ethnic minority groups. It also has an ideological dimension, as is evident from both historical and recent events.

Philip Watt, Director of the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Immigration (NCCRI), Dublin, identified a number of important characteristics when adopting anti-racist approaches, in any context, but particularly in one that is aiming to foster respect for diversity. These include:

- Acknowledging the importance of recognising that racism can exist on many levels: individual, cultural and institutional. Consequently racism can target diverse groups and needs to be addressed on each of these levels.

- Implementing effective legislation. As with any policy which attempts to adopt a more multicultural approach and respect for diversity, it is important that there is effective legislation, in particular equality legislation, which provides a base for legal action against discrimination and racism.

- Dealing with racist crime. Combating crime is particularly important to prevent escalation of such crime, and the emergence of intra community conflict, which may reinforce negative attitudes.

- Increasing public awareness. This serves to highlight the existence of racism where it is not considered a problem, but also to promote and foster respect for diversity in order to combat racism.

- Implementing anti-racist training. As with any initiative it is important that there are qualified individuals, who understand the complexities of the issues, to implement an

approach or policy. Consequently it may be necessary to promote anti-racist training, in order to provide resources for dealing with this problem.

- Facilitating related data. It is important to highlight the necessity for ethnic equality data so that the problem can be effectively tracked, and understood.

- Addressing the reasons for racism. It is central that the causes of racism should be tackled, both in terms of raising public awareness but also with regard to tackling poverty and social exclusion.

In Northern Ireland racism is becoming increasingly problematic, and a number of participants at the workshop commented on this new reality e.g. one referred to the increasing instances of racial graffiti. As Northern Ireland goes through transition it appears increasingly likely that it will have to deal with the challenges of racism which face other states.

Questions and Challenges

A multicultural approach faces a variety of challenges and questions, some of those which arose during discussion in LILP's multiculturalism stream include:

- The term 'mulitculturalism' has many interpretations. This complicates discussions especially where there are a range of other terms, such as pluralism, multi-ethnic, and cosmopolitan. In any discussion of multiculturalism it is important to consider what exactly is being addressed.

- The popularity of the term 'multiculturalism' highlights the fact that it has many interpretations. This complicates discussions especially where there are a range of other terms, such as pluralism, multi-ethnic, and cosmopolitan. In any discussion of multiculturalism it is important to consider what exactly is being addressed.

- What is the definition of a group? As groups have become more loosely defined to cater for inclusiveness, individuals can move in and out of identity groups causing them to inflate and deflate. In such cases 'self-identification' with a group has proved statistically problematic. Another related issue is how does the state define a group/visible minority?

- Equality of opportunity versus equality of outcome? This dilemma brings to the fore the question of policies such as positive discrimination and their role in facilitating a multicultural society.

- Can individual multicultural approaches (e.g. education) impact society more broadly. Will it have a ripple effect, creating a more inclusive society? What can multiculturalism realistically hope to achieve?

- What is the next step? Multiculturalism has been criticised widely in recent years. Yasmin Alibhai Brown, in her latest book, *After Multiculturalism* argues that multiculturalism was invented as a progressive project to promote and equalise opportunities, but today it can too often do the opposite. Some proponents have advocated 'inter-culturalism' as an alternative approach. Inter-culturalism is concerned with equality, inclusiveness, and celebration of difference.

Northern Ireland and Multiculturalism

In Northern Ireland there are significant challenges facing a multicultural approach, not least those pointed out by Anna Watson at the workshop in Belfast, which included:

- Unfair distribution of public resource
- The fact that most ethnic minority groups do not vote
- Economic and social isolation
- Lack of access to information as public notices are not translated

However things are beginning to change. Northern Ireland now has one of the strongest legislative bases in Europe. This includes the Race Relations Act (1997) and the Northern Ireland Act (1998) that established the Equality Commission.

Conclusions

The Local International Learning Project has promoted the exchange of models and ideas between Northern Irish and international practitioners and policy makers within the field of conflict resolution and community relations. As part of its third stream, LILP looked at the question of 'Multiculaturalism and Diversity'. Questions of the management of diversity are becoming increasingly relevant in Northern Ireland as it moves towards a 'post-conflict' society. Multiculturalism is an approach to diversity that has been implemented in a number of states over the past few decades.

Adopting a multicultural approach can mean different things to different people. The state remains the centre of all policy making and a strong legislative base such as that in Canada has proved a significant precursor to the implementation of a multicultural approach. This does not necessarily mean that a legislative base is a prerequisite, for example in the Mauritian case multiculturalism has become engrained in the political culture of policymaking.

Implementing a multicultural approach has significant implications at both the policy and practitioner levels. As this report shows multiculturalism poses serious challenges for a variety of areas, not least education and the fight against racism. No one sector of society can or should be looked at on its own when adopting a multicultural approach; a holistic approach is central to any discussion of the management of diversity.

In any democracy all citizens are entitled to the same rights and opportunities, but they also have the right to be different in a collective sense. This is proving to be the major challenge in a world where the majority of states are multi-ethnic.

Resources

Organisations

Canadian Heritage, 25 Eddy Street, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K1A 0M5, http://www.pch.gc.ca/

Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence, University of California, Santa Cruz, 1156 High Street, Santa Cruz CA 95064, http://www.crede.ucsc.edu/

Chinese Welfare Association, 13-15 University Street, Belfast BT7 1HQ, Northern Ireland.

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, Amdras House, 60 Great Victoria Street, Belfast BT2 7BB, www.cre.gov.uk

Multicultural Resource Centre (Northern Ireland), 12 Upper Crescent, Belfast, BT7 1NT, Northern Ireland, http://www.mcrc.co.uk/

National Association for Multicultural Education, 733 Fifteenth Street, NW Suite 430, Washington, DC 20005, USA. http://www.nameorg.org/

Northern Ireland African Cultural Centre, 60 Lisburn Road, Belfast, BT9 6AF, Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities, 3rd Floor, Ascot House, 14-31 Shaftesbury Square, Belfast BT2 7DB, Northern Ireland, http://www.qub.ac.uk/mgt/dim/js/imam/pages/homepage.html

Pavee Point Travellers' Centre, 46 North Great Charles Street, Dublin, Ireland.

The National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI), 26 Harcourt Street, Dublin 2, Ireland www.nccri.com

USC Center for Multilingual, Multicultural Research, University of Southern California, Rossier School of Education, Waite Phillips

Hall Suite 402, Los Angeles, CA 90089-0031, www.usc.edu/dept/education/CMMR/

Web sites

Anti-Defamation League (ADL), www.adl.org

CyberTrail, http://www.wmht.org/trail/trail.htm

March 21, www.march21.com

No Room For Racism, http://www.shastalink.k12.ca.us/noracism/default.htm

Teacher Talk: Cultural Diversity, http://education.indiana.edu/cas/tt/v2i2/cultural.html

The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), http://www.eric.ed.gov/index.html

The Multicultural Book Review, http://www.isomedia.com/homes/jmele/homepage.html

Yahoo - Society and Culture, http://dir.yahoo.com/Society_and_Culture/

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