Migrant and BME organisations: navigating the perfect storm

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Introduction

• This presentation builds on a number of ‘Knowledge Exchange projects undertaken within the Social Policy Research Centre (www.sprc.info) such as:

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Introduction

This presentation builds on a number of ‘Knowledge Exchange projects undertaken within the Social Policy Research Centre, and it aims to:

• discuss the role of migrant and BME organisations;
• describe the changing environment over the last 20 years (a ‘perfect storm’?);
• analyse how the sector has been affected by and has reacted to this;
• discuss the broader implications for ‘diverse Britain’.
Migrant and Ethnic Organisations

• Migrant and Minority Ethnic (‘BME’) organisations have attracted considerable interest among researchers and policy makers (Moya, 2005; Schrover and Vermeulen, 2005).

• For the purpose of this paper, I define Migrant and BME organisations as:

Charitable or no-profit organisations which are Migrant/BME-led and aim to provide services and support for specific migrant or ethnic minority groups. These include:

  • Community centres (‘community houses’);
  • Advice and advocacy services;
  • Providers of training;
  • Supplementary schools and nurseries;
  • Youth groups;
  • Luncheon and elderly people clubs;
  • Cultural organisations.
The Role of Migrant and Ethnic Organisations

- Migrant and Ethnic organisations are important means of support and integration, particularly for newly arrived and socially excluded migrants (Zetter et al., 2000; Griffiths et al. 2005, Schrover and Vermeulen, 2005)

- As well as providing direct support with the provision of tailored services, they increase civic engagement and reduce social isolation (Rex 1987)

- They can also sustain the labour market inclusion of socio-economically marginalised BME communities (D’Angelo, forthcoming)

- Migrant and BME organisations are not inherently ‘positive’ in their effects.
  - They can reinforce social division and even segregation, and create a condition of dependency to access services and exercise rights. (Taylor, 2003; Crow, 2005)
  - With their ambition to represent ‘the Community’ they tend to be the channel through which ethnic-specific advocacy is carried out and where internal and external resources are concentrated (D’Angelo 2008).
The ‘antecedents’ of migrant and BME organisations

- Migrant organisations have been used as a measure of:
  - group-level social capital (*Fennema & Tillie 2001; Jacobs & Tillie 2004*)
  - “collectively expressed and collectively ascribed identity” (*Schrover and Vermeulen 2005*)

- However, factors in their development also include:
  - Migrants’ resources and migration patterns (*Breton 1964*)
  - Outside discrimination (*Portes & Sensenbrenner 1993*)
  - Lack of language and knowledge of the system
  - Opportunity structure (*Schrover and Vermeulen 2005; Caponio 2005*)
Migrant Organisations in the UK

• For a long time, the migrant and BME sector in the UK has been relatively well established (particularly if compared to other European countries).

• A 2001 study reported over 5,500 organisations in England and Wales (McLeod et al.).

• Many more operate ‘below the radar’ (Soteri-Proctor 2011)

• This is due to a number of historical reasons as well as national and local opportunity structures (Afridi & Warmington 2009):
  • Multiculturalism
  • Promotion of and support for the community sector

• However, the last two decades have seen the emergence of a series of challenges to the Migrant/BME sector … a ‘perfect storm’?
Crisis of Multiculturalism

‘Social Cohesion’

‘Equality Act’

‘single group’ (BME) orgs are discouraged *

Equality Impact Assessment (?) *

Marketisation of Third Sector

Large, mainstream orgs are favoured

Commissioning & Social Enterprise

Reduced grassroots and core funding

Fewer Infrastructure and umbrella orgs

Cuts in public Services and welfare

Reduced funding overall

Spending Review etc. *

Recession

Increased deprivation and inequality

Increased unmet needs

(No right to provision)

Philanthropy

Right to provide

Big Society

‘Neighbourhood’ approach *

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* = (Racial) Equality off the agenda?
Crisis of Multiculturalism

Marketisation of Third Sector

Negative impact on BME community organisations

Recession

Big Society

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Marketisation of the Third Sector (1990s-2010s)

• Since at least the late 1990s the ‘Third Sector’ has been characterised by an overall trend towards its ‘professionalisation’ and ‘marketisation’ (McKay 2011).

• 2002: Departments for Trade and Industry’s Social Enterprise Strategy

• 2002: Treasury’s Cross Cutting Review on the role of the voluntary and community sector in public service delivery.

• 2003: the ‘Future Builders Fund’ provides loans to Third Sector organisations to help them win and deliver public service contracts.

• Commissioning promoted as an alternative funding model to long-term ‘core-funding’.

• Large (social) enterprises thrive; medium to small voluntary organisations struggle.

• BME organisations have been encouraged to operate as enterprises – often in markets which are very competitive, closed to newcomers... and are not actual markets.
Crisis of Multiculturalism (Social Cohesion)

- 2006: Commission on Integration and Social Cohesion
  - “Single Group Funding’ should be the exception rather than the rule”
- 2006-2010: Equality Act (including Equality Duty)
- 2007: Establishment of EHRC (Equality and Human Right Commission)
Recession and Welfare Restructuring

• 2009: The UK officially enters recession for the first time since 1991.
  • Unprecedented rise in unemployment. Other effects include increased levels of poverty, mental health issues, stress and family tensions.
  • The impact among migrant and ethnic groups is disproportionately severe.
  • Increase demands on migrant and BME organisations.

• 2010: Spending review, followed by cuts and ‘restructuring’ in welfare and service provision and reduction in funding for the voluntary sector (- £3-5bn)

• Welfare restructuring is increasing the need for advice among migrant and Ethnic communities - which would be better addresses by local minority organisations.
Big Society

• “The Big Society is about helping people to come together to improve their own lives. It’s about putting more power in people’s hands – a massive transfer of power from Whitehall to local communities”. (Cabinet Office) Key parts include:
  • ‘Community empowerment’ (on decisions shaping local areas).
  • ‘Opening up public services’ (enable charities, social enterprises, private companies and employee-owned mutuals to compete to offer high quality services).
  • ‘Social action’ (National Citizen Service; Community Organisers; Community First).

• The risks of ‘Big Society’ and its implications for Ethnic minority organisations:
  • Limits of the ‘neighbourhood approach’ (Localism vs Diversity?)
  • TSOs can work with little money, but not with no money
  • Right to provide replacing right to welfare
  • A renewed emphasis on old-fashioned Philanthropy

• Progress towards Big Society is “glacially slow” (ACEVO, 7 January 2013)
Crisis of Multiculturalism

‘Social Cohesion’

‘Equality Act’

‘single group’ (BME) orgs are discouraged *

Equality Impact Assessment (?)

Marketisation of Third Sector

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Commissioning & Social Enterprise

Reduced grassroots and core funding

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Spending Review etc. *

Increased deprivation and inequality

Recession

Increased unmet needs

(No right to provision)

Philanthropy

Right to provide

Big Society

‘Neighbourhood’ approach *

Increased inequality

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* = (Racial) Equality off the agenda?
The impact on BME community organisations

• ‘Big Squeeze Report’ *(LVSC, July 2012)*
  • Over 50% of London VCOs had to close services in the previous year.

• ‘Living in the Margins’ report *(Afya Trust, March 2012)*
  • 20% of LAs did not carry out equality impact assessment before reviewing their budgets for voluntary and community sector.
  • BME organisations disproportionately affected by cuts.

• Changing LA’s vision for the (BME) voluntary sector *(D’Angelo 2010; forthcoming)*
  • Most London LAs moving towards commissioning.
  • Sustainability to be achieved through “consolidation rather than expansion”.
  • BME organisations encouraged to merge, ‘go mainstream’ or become marginal.

• Although comprehensive data is lacking, evidence suggests that reduced capacity of the BME sector is affecting the more vulnerable in the community
A case study: the role of BME organisations in education

- Key findings from: “BME children in London: educational needs and the Role of community organisations - An evaluation of Day-Mer’s education services” (D’Angelo et al. 2011)

- Community based services enhance academic achievement and social development of children as well as parental engagement.
- In Haringey, the ‘Learning Trust’ set up a one-off funding programme to enhance the sustainability (‘professionalise’) a number of community education services.
- This approach is based on trust on the community sector and pragmatism (lack of funding, changing policy).
- But it is also revealing of a broader policy model where communities (rather than schools or local authorities) have the responsibility of service provision.
Is this a ‘perfect storm’?

• Dictionary definitions of ‘Perfect Storm’ [Merriam-Webster]:
  • “A critical or disastrous situation created by a powerful concurrence of factors”

• ‘Some’ organisations managed to navigate the storm by adapting to the new environment; in most cases this required changing their structure, ‘business model’ and their ethos.
The impact on minority populations and wider society

- Although many national (and local) policymakers think “Multiculturalism has failed”, it has not been replaced by a clear, alternative model to ‘manage’ diversity.

- The changes which have affected the BME sector appear symptomatic of a broader trend whereby (Ethnic) diversity and equality are moved to the background.

- Law and regulations on Equality are seen as a bureaucratic burden to policymakers.

- The actual effect is a reduction of cultural and language specific service provision, with a multiplying effect on the already disproportionate impact of the economic crisis.

- A new emphasis on the ‘right to provide’ has replaced the idea of rights to welfare and public services.

- Public-funded community sector is replaced by ‘privatisation’ of public services (social enterprises?), counterbalanced only by Philanthropy and self-help.

- The (implicit) model of society which is emerging is one where minority groups are expected to cater for themselves (sink or swim!).

- In a nutshell, although the idea of Equality is still ‘tolerated’, this is not underpinned by Equity in the provision of services and distribution of resources.
Migrant and BME organisations in the UK: navigating the perfect storm

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