

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE  
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# REPOSITIONING MULTICULTURALISM IN TEACHER EDUCATION POLICY & PRACTICE

Bobby Harreveld  
CQUniversity Australia

# A POST-CASE ANALYSIS

**Through three key concepts:**

**1.multiculturalism**

**2.capabilities**

**3.cosmopolitanism**

# MULTICULTURALISM

**Multiculturalism is a strategy for dealing with difference in society that situates respect for cultural differences, both theoretically and politically, in the national space (Beck, 2006, p. 66).**

# **POLICY PRINCIPLES IN AUSTRALIA**

- 1. Freedom to practice culture & religion**
- 2. Equal access & opportunity for full participation in economic, social, cultural & political life**
- 3. Responsibility to commit to democratic system & institutions**
- 4. Respect rights of all individuals**
- 5. Maximise economic benefits derived from other policies**

(Calma, 2007, pp. 4-6)



# PARADOXES OF MULTICULTURALISM

- **trapped in national-international distinctions & either/or categories**
- **susceptible to essentialist definitions of collective identity – & potential rivalry among cultures**
- **blind to contingencies & ambivalences of ways of dealing with difference that go beyond assimilation and integration**

(Beck, 2006, p. 66)

# MULTICULTURALISM

One of Australia's *most successful contemporary public policies*, but,

*It is time for leaders of ethnic groups to leave 'fortress multiculturalism' & embrace other movements & institutions that support Australian concepts of 'fair go' & diversity*

(Ozdowski, 2004, p. 1 of 10)

# DEBATES ...

**In Australia, major ethnic groups singled out as potentially incompatible with Australian society:**

**1. Asian migrants**

**2. People of Muslim faith**

**Islam 2<sup>nd</sup> largest non-Christian religion  
= 1.5% of population**

(Canna, 2007, p. 16)

*Muslim Australians are now living in an environment where the significance of their ascribed religion is being reshaped through:*

- 1. media discourses*
- 2. public policy*
- 3. at a conceptual level, the newfound salience of the apparent incompatibility of Islam and modern secular political forms and societies.*

(Celermajer, Yasmeen & Saeed, 2007, p. 3)



# CONCEPTUALLY ...

**Many ways of classifying, categorising or dividing people other than just religion  
e.g. nationalities, locations, classes,  
occupations, social status, languages,  
politics – and religion**

(Sen, 2006, p. 10)

# FURTHER DEBATE NEEDED ON...

**Practical concerns about:**

Particular form that multiculturalism should take e.g. *from* tolerance of diverse cultures *to* making a difference re imposed or freely chosen cultural practices by people with capabilities to learn & reason about alternatives

# UNRESOLVED CONCEPTUAL ISSUES ...

**Plural  
MonoCulturalism**

**Multiculturalism**

Faith-based  
separatism

Cultural liberty

# APPROACHES TO MULTICULTURALISM: CELEBRATE CULTURAL DIVERSITY

**Promotion of  
diversity as a  
value in itself**

**Freedom of  
reasoning &  
decision-making**



# WHAT WOULD THIS MEAN?

## Categorise People

1. inherited traditions including religion of community of birth  
*OR*

2. affiliations & associations with self-choice & responsibility for priorities

## Determine Fairness

1. extent to which people left alone  
*OR*

2. reasoned choice through education, political & social participation

# IF MULTICULTURALISM ALIGNS WITH RECOGNITION OF AFFILIATIONS & REASONED CHOICE/S ...

Then,

Affirms “the other” as both different and the same in a process that Beck (2006, p.58) calls:

Cosmopolitanism

# COSMOPOLITANISM

## - A PROCESS

- Non-hierarchical
- Multi-dimensional
- Multiple loyalties
- Diverse transnational lifestyles
- Cultural differences accepted
- Not in opposition to other social strategies



# CHALLENGE #1

## CONCEPTUAL

Cosmopolitanism's principles =  
internal contradictions

&

concrete manifestations



# **THIS MEANS ENGAGING WITH:**

- 1. Either/or - old & new certainties**
- 2. Recognition of & experiences with differences**
- 3. Perceptions of opportunities & threats**
- 4. Re/drawing boundaries**
- 5. Cultural dis/connections, non/mingling**

# **FOR EDUCATION COMMUNITIES, BUILD CAPABILITIES OF STAFF & STUDENTS THROUGH...**

- **Curriculum**
- **Pedagogy**
- **Relationships – e.g. home-school, students-students, students-teachers...**

(Sen, 1999, 2006; Sabry & Bruna, 2007)

# YOUNG MUSLIM PEOPLE'S CAPABILITIES FOR EQUALITY, FREEDOM & IDENTITY

(SEN, 1992, 1999, 2006)

A capability approach incorporates both what individuals actually manage to achieve *and* the conditions of choice in which they make their decisions

(Gasper, 20007)

# CULTURAL DIVERSITY IS A CONSEQUENCE OF VALUING CULTURAL LIBERTY

(Sen, 2006, p. 116)

Political beliefs	Social values	Economic pursuits
Literary & artistic tastes	Political affiliations	Philosophical involvements
Attitudes to others	Interests ...	Form & extent of religiosity
Class	Race	Gender
Language	Locations	Other characteristics



# CHALLENGE #2

## CONTEXTUAL

Students are living with being different in a society where policy & curriculum rhetoric says they to become informed, active citizens in socio-economically complex, culturally diverse, technologically sophisticated transnational living & working environments.

# **EXAMPLE:**

## **A STUDY OF IDENTITY AND SELF- PERCEPTION AMONG YOUNG MUSLIM PEOPLE**

*By 2006 in Queensland, Australia:*

**Very little was known about the effects of prolonged labelling and stereotyping of young Muslims as particular mono-dimensional ‘others’. What did this mean for how they saw themselves and others?**

**[definitions of key concepts provided in psychological terms]**

# CLAIMS & CONTENTIONS

**Political events construct stereotypical representations of Arabs & Muslims as homogeneous, racialised, threatening ‘other’**  
(Mansouri & Kamp, 2007)

**Religion continues as “a form of identity and mobilisation within racial and ethnic politics”**

**Multicultural policies don’t address “realities of living & coexisting in open multicultural societies”** (Bulmer & Solomos, 2008, pp. 1192-1193).

# BECAUSE ...

**Some feel marginalized in general society plus own immigrant communities (Kibria, 2007)**

**Conditions for Muslims differ from country to country (Schmidt, 2004)**

**Young Muslim people's identities – internal subjective perceptions; external characterisations from others (Peek, 2005)**



# & CONSEQUENTLY ...

**In public, private non-Muslim education & training settings, teachers & school communities:**

- **have limited understanding of Islam** (Hoot, Szecsi & Moosa, 2003)
- **are “*ill-prepared to effectively work with the differences Muslim students bring*”** (Sabry & Bruna, 2007, p. 44) **to their learning experiences**

# **A STUDY WITH YOUNG MUSLIM PEOPLE**

- **Commissioned by a State government department**
- **Multi-disciplinary research team including Muslim adults**
- **Provided entry into 3 communities (1x metropolitan, 2x regional)**
- **Survey questionnaire & focus group interviews with 117 young Muslim people (7-22yrs)**
- **Interviews with 14 Muslim adults**

**Gender: Females (46.2%); Males (53.8%)**

**Country of birth: Australia (47.9%); Elsewhere (52.1%)**

**90% parents born Elsewhere**

**Languages: Considered selves fluent in spoken & written English (75% indicated 'excellent' & 22% 'very well' );**

**Many bilingual using English at school &/or work (91%)**

**In metropolitan centre: attended faith-based Muslim school**

**In regional centres: attended variety of public [state], denominational & non-denominational private schools**

**Data collection at local mosques**

**Gender-matched interviewees**



# **SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Likert scale, multiple choice, open-ended**

**Participants' (& their parents') country of birth, English proficiency & other languages, personal opinions & practices of being a Muslim & the Qur'ân , being an Australian, perceptions of friendships & family relationships; wider community & Muslim community**



# INTERVIEWS

**Story telling: everyday lives & experiences self-identified as important when at school, in public places, at home & with their families & with friends.**

**Questions explored where they liked to go & what they liked the best or worst about various experiences, events and circumstances.**

# INTERVIEWS WITH ADULTS

**Participants considered key stakeholders & representatives of Islamic organisations from government websites & Muslim community newspaper (n=14).**

**Asked to explore their perceptions of social and relational issues for young Muslim people**

# FINDINGS

## Identities claimed:

1. Religious (Muslim)
2. Australian
3. Ethnic community identities

## Friendship:

*But it is easier sometimes to have a Muslim friend as (she) understands why I wear my hijab or can do certain things (because I am a Muslim). [F, 12yrs]*

# FINDINGS

- Pride in being a Muslim
- Concern – re respect or understanding of Islam as religion or Muslims as individuals

*When I was with my mum and she has a hijab, people just swearing (at us) and stuff. Sometime on the road in the car, they yell out at us and called us bloody terrorist bastards. (M, 12yrs)*



# FINDINGS

- **Concern – role of the media (young people & adults share)**
- **Concern – adults re gaps between**  
**(a) older generation of Muslims including their parents; (b) among young Muslims from different cultures; & (c) a wider community.**

# FINDINGS

## *Education in Schools*

- formal & informal exchange of information about Islam & Muslims
- leadership from teachers to be role models in embracing multiculturalism

(Jirowong & others, 2007, pp. 43-44)

# FINDINGS

**Leadership at national, State & local levels**

- “wedged political situation” is not supported**
- recognise Australian Muslims as future resources for country**

**Awareness of young people’s views needed for Muslim organisations & governments**

**Opportunities for social interactions between Muslims & non-Muslims need to be explored.**

# CONCLUSIONS

**Multiculturalism as practice in educational contexts still operates:**

- **at surface level engagements with food, song, dance & so on;**
- **through social engagements with youth & inter-faith initiatives;**
- **with political positioning of ethnic, religious groups**



# ***CONSIDERATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION***

## Implications from Sen's argument:

- Understand cultural liberty and its role in a civil society
- Reject a tolerance of violence
- Be intellectually fair in dealing with global history
- Address explicitly basic functionings as part of capability development

# ***CONSIDERATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION***

## Implications from Beck's argument:

**Cosmopolitan outlook proposes a counter-image to singular categorisations & classifications of people. Therefore,**

- Engage explicitly with 'both/and' choices in decision making – not just 'either/or'**
- Re/organisation of curriculum, times, spaces, places for learning & teaching**