3. Questions and Challenges
(a) Is it time to stop using the equal opportunities mechanism to counteract discrimination as it’s not changing anything? Do we need something different?
(b) Is the option of self-employment for African-Caribbean groups a good one?
(c) What are the practical ways of addressing institutional racism?
(d) What is the one thing that employers should be doing?
(e) As different people in communities may be differentially impacted by supposed ‘pro-ethnic’ initiatives, in this instance the introduction of Halal meat into mainstream supermarkets, did Colin Meah work with local communities and existing suppliers when introducing it to Sainsbury’s?
(f) No-one at the conference so far has been directly addressing the demographic changes that are due to affect Britain in the coming decades as a result of continuing migration. How should we be preparing for these changes?

4. Solutions and Further Challenges
(a) If the equal ops mechanism is really not changing anything, then translate the learning that we have from those who have successfully implemented equal opportunities work to others who are interested and able to do similar work. To make progress on equal ops it’s the middle-ground ‘fence-sitter’ employers that need to be targeted as the leaders will always do well for themselves and for their employees, and the ‘fence-hands’ may be implacable. The ‘fence-sitters’ need to be turned into ‘leaders’.
(b) Help those who would like to in self-employment become better at it by learning from the experience of successful businesses, small and large. Develop programmes specifically to counteract negative social conditioning or lack of networks.
(c) Monitor more closely how well institutions are, or are not, meeting their obligations under the RR(A)A in order to tackle institutional racism better.
(d) Employers should stop using mainstream recruitment agencies, and should instead use the smaller, slightly more diverse ones.
(e) Employers need to consider more seriously the ways that informal/social networks inhibit and enhance access to employment opportunities. For example, we can access hidden communities better and encourage them into the labour market, if we pay attention to how networks mediate access to opportunities.
(f) Active management of migration could ensure that everyone is doing well at the end of it (we should be as laissez-faire as we were in the past). Try and anticipate problems, not just fix them after they’ve occurred and a ‘lost generation’, or several, has been allowed to waste its capacities.
(g) (i) Use this conference to promote the acceleration of accreditation – processes that are driven by the Home Office. There is good practice already (in Leicester for example) that could be rolled out.

Discussion points
1. Where broad agreement seemed to lie
• Institutional racism is still a problem, contributes to the ‘ethnic pay penalty’, and is still not picked up adequately by inspectors.
• Employers need tools to challenge institutional racism and accommodate the varying needs of different communities.
• Accreditation of qualifications processes for newcomers is necessary but should be accelerated.

2. Where disagreement seemed to lie
• The degree to which and the way in which institutional racism impacts on employment earnings and its influence on the ‘ethnic pay penalty’. (SS)
• Different people in communities may be differentially impacted by supposed ‘pro-ethnic’ initiatives, e.g. the introduction of Halal meat into mainstream supermarkets as in the case of Sainsbury’s (above). A national chain in catering for the local consumer may be penalising if not cutting out altogether the existing local BME supplier.

Presentation
1. Shamit Saggar led off the discussion with an exposition of how the disadvantage still suffered by some BME groups in employment might be less about active discrimination and more about coming to the workplace ‘human capital poor’ as a result of substandard education or the social drawbacks of one’s community. So the divisions persist, and are augmented by circumstantial factors to do with mobility, child care, housing – which continue to impact on the areas of education and employment.

Half the growth in the working age population in this decade will be from minority ethnic groups, so a strong rationale for focusing on this is the younger profiles of minority ethnic populations, particularly south Asians and, to a lesser extent, Black Africans. Thus far, Indian and Chinese populations are mirroring or surpassing the overall trends of white groups while African Caribbean and Bangladeshi groups are not, and boys are the ones falling seriously behind. As majority ethnic groups are not yet showing the same mobility in employment, the cluster effect of economic disadvantage can be maintained from education into employment – or unemployment.

Being employed does not always mean earning at a level that matches qualifications. Shamit Saggar points to figures that show an ethnic pay penalty (the improvement you get for better qualifications is not that much) in ethnic penalty (the improvement you get for better qualifications is not that much) in

2. Annmarie Dixon-Barrow talked about how Project Full Employ developed a ‘job opportunities programme’ to broker between skilled minority ethnic workers and the jobs market. Having started as the bridge to the informal networks, they decided to act as the informal networks themselves: (a) with the graduate MBA programme for minority ethnic job candidates, which counteracts the disadvantage of using mainstream recruitment agencies that rely on white informal networks; (b) acting as an employment agency for secondment candidates lacking a current employment status. ADB wants to make the workforce ‘understand the current employment status. ADB wants to

Professor Shamit Saggar, Policial Science, University of Sussex
Annmarie Dixon-Barrow, CEO, Full Employ and Minority Matters Recruitment
Colin Meah, Sainsbury’s Store Manager (Bolton New) & Member of Oldham United

Note takers: Zohra Moosa and Baljinder Virk

Chair: Naina Patel, Director, Policy & Research Institute on Ageing and Ethnicity Presentations:
Professor Shamit Saggar, Policial Science, University of Sussex
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