

Towards a Progressive Framework for Migration

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Development: Policy and Practice

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Dr Heaven Crawley
Centre for Migration Policy Research
Swansea University
h.crawley@swansea.ac.uk

Presentation structure

- Background and aims of the paper
- What do we mean by 'progressive'?
- The international context
- The current UK approach
- Underlying principles of a progressive framework
- **GROUP DISCUSSION** of the principles
- Implications of the principles for policy and practice
- Towards a more progressive approach

Background and aims of the paper

- Commissioned by the Barrow Cadbury Trust as a response to widely expressed concerns about the direction and content of the UK government's current approach to migration
- Also a response to increased political and public anxiety over the last decade about how to best 'manage' migration and whether it can be 'managed' at all
- Provides a synthesis of emerging evidence on the political, economic and social implications of international migration
- Attempts to pinpoint what has gone wrong in the UK's approach to migration and why it can't be described as truly 'progressive'
- Identifies ten key principles that might be understood to underpin a progressive approach to migration and therefore an appropriate framework for policy development

What do we mean by 'progressive'?

- Definitions of 'progressive' are wide-ranging and used by different individuals, organisations and government departments to mean quite different things
- A genuinely progressive approach to migration must:
 - deliver social justice, nationally and internationally
 - lead to or be associated with improved distributional outcomes and reduced inequalities of health, income and opportunity in relation to education and autonomy
 - deliver socially just outcomes for both migrants towards whom policies are targeted and non-migrants who are directly and indirectly affected by these policies and by the tone of the political and public debate
- Social justice is partly about outcomes but it is also about issues of process involved in building societies based on values of respect and recognition

“The progressive values and human rights principles that guide democratic societies cannot stop at their borders. They must also guide the country’s behaviour towards migrants and their relationships with other countries from which migrants - including forced migrants - originate”

The international context

- Increased international migration can only be understood as part of an overall growth in mobility associated with globalisation
- This mobility will undoubtedly increase in the future, including as a result of efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals
- Immigration controls are largely successful BUT the cost of measures to control immigration are high in both human and financial terms
- The current approach to migration is a reflection of the interface between restrictive and backward looking approaches that have developed over the last 30 years and high, and increasing, migratory pressures

The current UK approach

- Successive British governments have struggled to deliver coherent and consistent approaches to migration that can be considered genuinely progressive
- Policy and politics emphasises the need to be tough on perceived abuses of immigration control whilst simultaneously promoting and facilitating increased labour migration
- Distinction between 'good' and 'bad' migration
- Although there are some progressive elements within the current UK approach, there continues to be a strong tendency to conceptualise migration as a problem that needs to be managed
- This is associated with contradictory and confused policy approaches and contradictory and confused public attitudes creating a vicious - rather than virtuous - cycle

Focus on controlling rather than facilitating immigration.

Tendency to distinguish between 'good' and 'bad' migration which does not reflect the complexity of migration and is confusing to the public.

DISADVANTAGES OF CURRENT
UK APPROACH TO MIGRATION

Disconnect between immigration policies and international development and foreign policy.

Failure to make connections between migration politics and policies aimed at cohesion, reducing segregation and tackling racism.

Underlying principles of a progressive framework (1-5)

- Mechanisms of economic migration to the UK should be open, transparent and non-discriminatory
- Seeking protection from persecution and human rights abuse is a fundamental right and must be respected
- Migration should be linked to international development goals
- Family reunion is a human right and a key mechanism for facilitating long-term integration
- The regularisation of migrants already living in the UK without legal status is necessary to prevent their exploitation, to facilitate integration and increase public confidence

Underlying principles of a progressive framework (6-10)

- Integration policies should provide access to the labour market and participation in political and civil structures
- All people residing in the UK should have access to civil and social rights, health, education and housing
- Migrants are experts on migration
- Racism by host communities in the UK is not the fault of migrants
- The impact of policies to manage migration should be properly evaluated, particularly where different policy measures have been implemented in quick succession

GROUP DISCUSSION

- Can we/ do we agree on the principles?
- Where is there agreement / disagreement?
- Are there any principles around which there is consensus?
- Which principles are most contentious / contested?
- Do the areas of agreement and disagreement reflect differences in departmental or policy responsibilities and/or approaches?

Implications of the principles for policy and practice

- Important to agree the principles before focusing on the implications of the principles for policy and practice
- Policy and its perceived / anticipated outcomes and consequences often detracts from the key question of what it is we are actually trying to achieve
- The policies taken in relation to one aspect of the migration process will inevitably have an impact on another so it is important that the principles are considered together i.e. a 'pick-and-mix' approach can never be genuinely progressive
- There may not be agreement about how to devise and deliver the policies that reflect these principles BUT policies do need to be grounded in some underlying principles if they are to be coherent, internally consistent and deliver socially just processes and outcomes

Towards a more progressive approach

- A genuinely progressive approach to migration requires better and braver political leadership at the local, regional, national and international levels
- An essential first step is to inject a good dose of reality into the public and political debate around migration
- This narrative should include a more global / international component which emphasises that immigration is an inevitable part of the process of globalisation and is closely connected to economic and political conditions in other parts of the world

DEVISING NEW
POLITICAL
MESSAGES ON
MIGRATION

There are a variety of different kinds of migration including economic migration, forced migration and family reunion. None of these are inherently good or bad. Their impacts - both positive and negative - are largely a result of the way in which they are managed.

Immigration is not at the root of all UK's social and economic problems and is manageable.

Immigration is an inevitable part of the process of globalisation and is closely connected to economic and political conditions in other regions of the world.

Immigration, properly managed, may provide important answers to some of the UK's most intractable proximate and longer-term dilemmas.