LOOKING IN-'TER'-MULTICULTURALISM: COMPARING THE FEDERAL AND QUÉBEC PROVINCIAL DISCOURSES AND PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

This paper compares policy statements and programs arising from the federal government's multiculturalism branch with that of the Québec Ministry of Immigration and Cultural Communities which focuses on interculturalism. It is suggested that the differences between the two are far less important than some observers would have us believe and that proponents of interculturalism should look more carefully at what the Government of Canada does when it comes to addressing diversity before taking aim at multiculturalism.

Many Québec observers contend that the province's way of dealing with immigration, integration and diversity is different from that of the government of Canada. Québec characterizes its approach as intercultural as opposed to multicultural, which underlies the policy and program adopted by the federal government. Québec experts claim that the fundamental difference between the two is not only a matter of theory but also practice. In theory, interculturalism aims at promoting cross-cultural interaction between a defined majority group and various identifiable minorities. By contrast, multiculturalism purportedly supports the cultural heritage of various identifiable minority groups, and in doing so does not take into account a majority/minority relationship. In practice therefore the government of Québec would be supporting cross-cultural exchange while the government of Canada would be funding the language and cultural programming of ethnic minority groups. In both cases presumably there would be support for diversity training although in the case of interculturalism there would be some emphasis on educating the minority about majority cultures and values. When examining the programs supported by the federal government and the Québec government, the practice does not seem to flow from the theoretical difference just described and yet some Québecers insist otherwise. It can only be assumed this insistence arises from a failure to sufficiently examine the programs offered by the two levels of government.

If we follow the theory, the intercultural approach would offer softer acknowledgement and/or recognition of the importance of minority ethnic identities than does the government of Canada. Paradoxically, Québec's intercultural approach is overseen by a Ministry that more explicitly recognizes the ethnic communities (the Ministry of Cultural Communities and Immigration) than does the Federal government (Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration). Even the relevant section of the Québec Charter of Rights more directly acknowledges the ethnic communities than does that of the Canadian Charter of Rights...

In fact both levels of government work towards similar goals. Both approaches work at preventing conflict between communities and both the federal and Québec government have roughly similar anti-racism action plans. There is likely more sharing of strategy and best practices between the two levels of government than some might assume and there are program partnerships on such issues as Black History Month and the week of Actions Against Racism.

Below we compare some of the language that is employed by the federal and Québec governments in describing their goals and objectives when it comes to interculturalism and multiculturalism.

The challenge of an intercultural Québec as described is that the provincial government is described as a collective one that aims to achieve societal harmony by favouring the adoption and maintenance of values and principles that unite all citizens of Québec and do so by respecting the individual, cultural and religious differences.

The federal government describes the policy of Canadian multiculturalism as "…fundamental to our belief that all citizens are equal. Multiculturalism ensures that all citizens can keep their identities, can take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging. Acceptance gives Canadians a feeling of security and self-confidence, making them more open to, and accepting of, diverse cultures. The Canadian experience has shown that multiculturalism encourages racial and ethnic harmony and cross-cultural understanding. Through multiculturalism, Canada recognizes the potential of all Canadians, encouraging them to integrate into their society and take an active part in its social, cultural, economic and political affairs." [1]

Both the Québec intercultural and federal multicultural policies also have an important programmatic dimension that invites various individuals and organizations to submit projects and proposals in support of the respective objectives pursued within each program. Le Programme d'appui aux relations civiques et interculturelles (PARCI) est un programme d'aide financière à l'intention des organismes qui réalisent des projets visant le développement ainsi que le maintien de relations harmonieuses et constructives entre les groupes et personnes de toutes origines qui forment le Québec d'aujourd'hui.

Les objectifs spécifiques auxquels les projets doivent répondre sont :

- Développer chez les personnes immigrantes et les membres des communautés culturelles la connaissance et la compréhension de la société québécoise : son histoire, ses valeurs et ses institutions démocratiques ;
- Développer chez les Québécoises et Québécois la connaissance et la compréhension de la réalité pluraliste de leur société ainsi que de la contribution des communautés culturelles au développement social, économique et culturel du Québec ;
- Prévenir et combattre les préjugés, la discrimination, l'intolérance, le racisme et l'exclusion basés sur la couleur, l'origine ethnique ou nationale, l'appartenance culturelle ou religieuse des personnes ;
- Prévenir les tensions intercommunautaires, et en faciliter la résolution le cas échéant, en soutenant le rapprochement interculturel.[2]

For its part, all the rhetoric aside about the profound differences between the two policies, the multiculturalism program supports initiatives that are similar to those identified in Québec's intercultural program. The principal difference, however, lies in the majority-minority dynamic that underlies the intercultural program where, for example, it distinguishes between sensitizing cultural communities to Québec realities on the one hand and on the other sensitizing Québecers to the pluralistic realities of the society. How the very ethnically diverse Montreal English-speaking population fits into this dynamic is difficult to determine.

- **Ethno-racial Minorities Participate in Public Decision-Making**
  Assist in the development of strategies that facilitate full and active participation of ethnic, religious, and cultural communities in Canadian society.

- **Communities and the Broad Public Engage in Informed Dialogue and Sustained Action to Combat Racism**
  Increase public awareness, understanding and informed public dialogue about multiculturalism, racism and cultural diversity in Canada.
  Facilitate collective community initiatives and responses to ethnic, racial, religious, and cultural conflict and hate-motivated activities.

- **Public Institutions Eliminate Systemic Barriers**
  Improve the ability of public institutions to respond to ethnic, religious and cultural diversity by assisting in the identification and removal of barriers to equitable access and by supporting the involvement of these communities in public decision-making processes.

- **Federal Policies, Programs and Services Respond to Ethno-racial Diversity**
  Encourage and assist in the development of inclusive policies, programs, and practices within federal departments and agencies so that they may meet their obligations under the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act.*

One keen analyst who has worked both in the federal multiculturalism program and the Québec Ministry of Immigration and Cultural Communities believes that: the differences between multicultural and intercultural polices are more semantic than real. Amy Nugent (2006) contends that: "Popular discourse and much academic analysis seem to take their cue from the adoption of the word interculturalism itself, suggesting a different approach to that of multiculturalism, further suggesting cohesion and integration over fragmentation and atomization. The policies and their broad aims do not reveal this difference. Rather, it is evident that the policies are very similar in their origins, aims, and evolution. Each policy is limited by individual fundamental rights and freedoms as guaranteed in bills of rights and by the jurisdiction's respective language laws…"

INTERCULTURAL RELATIONS POLICY?

It is worth noting that there is no single document or policy statement on "interculturalism" in Québec however the Ministry of Cultural Communities and Immigration says the policy is built upon the principles of the Québec Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1975), the Charter of the French Language (1977) and the Policy Statement on Immigration and Integration (Let's Build Québec Together-1990). Interculturalism is intended to be based on values and principles that underpin the cohesion of the society. Each Québecer is supposed to subscribe to these values – in other words they should adhere to the human rights and language Charters respectively.

One of the important dimensions of Québec's intercultural program is the need to sensitize immigrants to the socio-cultural realities of the society. In introducing immigrants to Québec society the official documentation furnished to new arrivals makes virtually no mention of the existence of English-speaking communities across the province. In its February 2005 guide "Learning about Québec: Guide for my Successful Integration" – intended for use by new arrivals, the Ministry of Cultural Communities and Immigration identifies the following values and foundations upon which Québec society is based:

UNDERSTANDING THE VALUES AND FOUNDATIONS OF QUÉBEC SOCIETY

To successfully adapt to your new environment requires an understanding of the fundamental values of Québec society.

Québec is a democratic, French-speaking, pluralist society. To adapt to and fully participate in this new environment, you must be prepared to discover and respect the fundamental values expressed in the *Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.* The Charter defines the right to equality, prohibits all forms of discrimination, and specifies the political, judicial, economic and social rights of citizens.

Québec's political system is based on freedom, equality and citizen participation in associations and political parties. Native-born and naturalized citizens, both, elect their representatives at all levels of government in general elections. The state is secular. The separation of political and religious powers is a fundamental value of Québec society.

Québec society favours settling disputes through negotiation. The violent expression of ethnic, political or religious rivalry or hatred is not tolerated. All Québecers, both native-born and immigrants, have the right to freely choose their lifestyle, values, opinions and religion. Everyone has the responsibility to obey all laws, even those that are incompatible with their religion or personal values. The Québec government condemns racism and is committed to encouraging the full participation of everyone in the economic, social and cultural development of Québec, regardless of colour, religion, ethnic or national origin.[3]

In 2008, the Québec Minister of Immigration and Cultural Communities established a five-year plan entitled « **La diversité : une valeur ajoutée :** Plan d'action gouvernemental pour favoriser la participation de tous à l'essor du Québec, 2008-2013. » The plan describes intercultural relations as relatively harmonious in Québec. It adds however that daily interaction in diverse settings can be affected by prejudice towards certain cultural communities and by attitudes of rejection, hostility or exclusion.

It vaunts the merits of a real intercultural dialogue. Ce dialogue inviterait « …non seulement de connaître et de comprendre les autres cultures, mais aussi de repenser ses propres valeurs, ses attitudes et ses comportements. Les

personnes qui participent à des activités de rapprochement interculturel peuvent ainsi mieux résister aux préjugés, relativiser les différences culturelles, faire une analyse plus adéquate des situations et adopter des comportements plus respectueux des droits de tous. »

Les conditions propices au rapprochement interculturel doivent être mieux aménagées. Les échanges entre personnes de toutes origines sont à encourager, de même que la participation à des projets communs. Une meilleure connaissance de l'apport de l'immigration et de la contribution des Québécois des communautés culturelles à l'essor du Québec contribuerait à éliminer des préjugés, à faire comprendre les besoins et les aspirations de chacun et à permettre des échanges sains et constructifs, dans le respect des différences.

The Québec Ministry insists upon the need to enhance openness to diversity. To do so it proposes two measures :

(1) renforcer la compréhension de la réalité des Québécois des communautés culturelles et à souligner leur apport à la société québécoise. En effet, une meilleure connaissance de la réalité des divers groupes qui composent la société québécoise fait partie des conditions essentielles à des échanges positifs et à l'établissement de liens de solidarité et de coopération dans le cadre de projets communs…développer une compréhension réciproque et à jeter les bases de projets communs. Le sentiment d'appartenance de tous à la société québécoise en sort renforcé.

(2) souligner les efforts exceptionnels de personnes, d'entreprises et d'institutions en matière de rapprochement interculturel et de lutte contre le racisme et la discrimination. Puisqu'elles servent de modèles pour l'ensemble des Québécois, cette reconnaissance permet d'encourager celles qui ont su innover dans divers milieux et de stimuler les initiatives, tout en faisant connaître plus largement un certain nombre de pratiques exemplaires.

Does such thinking differ markedly from the discourse and approach adopted by the federal government around multiculturalism? An examination of federal programming in the same area does not bear out the difference. The 2010 Multiculturalism Grants and Contribution Program, administered by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, is entitled Interaction which aims at supporting the mandate of Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* by assisting the socio-economic integration of individuals and communities and their contributions to building an integrated and socially cohesive society. Funding under the program will be directed at events that foster intercultural/interfaith understanding, civic memory and pride and respect for core democratic values. Eligibility is based on the demonstration of involvement of more than one single cultural, religious or ethnic community and establishing concrete opportunities for positive interaction among them; fostering intercultural or interfaith understanding, civic memory and pride, and/or respect for core democratic values.

Below is an example of a list of eligible events nearly all of which require partnerships across communities something that most certainly contradicts the charge that federal multiculturalism promotes ethno-specificity. The one possible exception to the emphasis on cross-cultural exchange is support for Black and Asian History Month. Perhaps paradoxically the Québec Ministry also supports the former despite the appearance that it is group specific.

- a "citizenship day" event for young people, organized by a coalition of faith, ethnic or cultural groups.
- musical events that bridge ethnic, cultural or religious communities.
- a sporting activity involving members of various ethnic, cultural or religious communities.
- interfaith dialogues that bring together representatives of Canada's faith groups.
- intercultural dialogues to share cultural heritage, traditions and viewpoints.
- public education events that foster intercultural or interfaith understanding, civic memory and pride, and/or respect for core democratic values.
- community-based celebrations of the historic contributions to Canada of particular ethnic, cultural or religious groups, including in support of initiatives such as Asian Heritage Month and Black History Month.[4]

Is there some evidence to support the contention that Québec interculturalism makes for more harmonious cross-cultural relations than Canadian multiculturalism? If, as some observers insist, this is so than it would be fair

TABLE 1: Total Positive view of selected relationships by Percentage for Canadian Regions, October 2011

TOTAL POSITIVE	MARITIMES	QC	ON	MB/SK	AB	BC
Relations Between Jews and Non-Jews	55%	45%	62%	56%	56%	55%
Relations Between Visible Minorities and Whites	57%	68%	53%	46%	59%	59%
Relations Between Muslims and Non-Muslims	34%	30%	29%	25%	27%	31%

Source: Association for Canadian Studies, Leger Marketing, October 5 2011highlights/quick_facts/number_of_applicants.php (2011).

to assume that Québecers would see such relationships in a more positive light since the relations evolve in an intercultural as opposed to a multicultural context. Yet survey evidence is at best mixed on the basis of such a test. As observed below, in a survey conducted in October 2011 by the firm Leger Marketing for the Association for Canadian Studies, while Québecers have a more positive view around that state of relations between whites and visible minorities, they are more negative when it comes to relations between Jews and non-Jews and hold roughly similar views over relations between Muslims and non-Muslims when compared with opinion held elsewhere in Canada.

MEDIUM AND MESSAGE: MULTICULTURALISM AND INTERCULTURALISM

While there has been little systematic analysis in the media of the terms multiculturalism and interculturalism, the former has clearly been the object of much greater attention not only outside of Québec but within the province as well. A quick scan of the number of references to the two terms within French and English print media in Québec illustrates the substantial gap in their respective number of references. In the Gesca chain of papers (i.e. La Presse, Le Soleil, Le Droit etc.) over the twelve months February 2011 to February 2012 there were some 430 stories that made reference to the term multiculturalism, www.cyberpresse.ca over the same period in Le Devoir www.ledevoir.com there were approximately 95, the same number as there were in the Montreal Gazette. www.fpinfomart.ca. Many of the stories were negative in tone. But the intercultural alternative was the object of relatively few media references in the province where it is regarded as the cornerstone for the policies aimed at addressing issues of diversity. There were 60 references to the term in the Gesca chain, 34 in Le Devoir and 22 in the Montreal Gazette. Former Québec Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Benoit Pelletier correctly observes that multiculturalism generally does not get favourable press in Québec. He also rightly points out that it has gotten a significant share of negative press outside of Québec with the Globe and Mail going as far as to call for the outright abandonment of the term multiculturalism (Benoit Pelletier, « La délicate gestion de la diversité » 22 juin, 2011[5].

Still, the media in Québec and elsewhere have not gone out of their way to campaign for the virtues of interculturalism as a discursive alternative and/or the new mantra to redefine our approach to addressing diversity. That's probably a function of the term not being well understood both outside of Québec and within the province.

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT MULTICULTURAL POLICY

A survey conducted by the firm Leger Marketing for the Association for Canadian Studies reveals that some ninety percent of Québecers acknowledge an inability to identify a single project that is funded under the multiculturalism program (ACS-Leger Marketing, June 2010). The figure is indeed high for the population of a province whose opinion makers insist that the people are massively opposed to multiculturalism. Similarly, in the rest of the country nearly half of the population admit being unable to name anything that arises from the multicultural program. And amongst those who did suggest programs arising from multiculturalism quite often the things they identified were incorrect.

Yet another survey reveals that if the distinction between multiculturalism and interculturalism is clear to several Québec opinion makers the province's population is far less certain as to the difference. A survey conducted by the firm Leger Marketing for the Association for Canadian Studies in May 2011 reveals that some 53 percent are not clear on the difference between multi and interculturalism with 35 percent declaring they know the difference and 12 percent not offering a response.

It has been suggested that the section of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms that calls for the government of Canada to preserve and enhance the multicultural heritage of Canadians is unpopular with many Canadians. Yet when roughly the same formulation is offered in a survey to Québecers it meets with substantial approval from them. That should not be interpreted as implying that various aspects of accommodation of minority cultural and/or religious expression are supported by Québecers. Previous surveys have revealed that a majority of Québecers are unsupportive of selected expressions of religious identities. That said, the term multicultural does not appear to bother Québecers as much as observers sometimes suggest.

If the term interculturalism has not caught on with the general public it is also because it appears poorly defined beyond the emphasis on cross cultural exchange. Clearly support for cross cultural exchange is not something that separates Québecers from other Canadians as there is wide support for such exchange. The difference appears to centre around the preferred partners for such exchange with Québec officials suggesting that it should focus on majority and minority dialogue while federal officials wanting to build dialogue where inter-communal problems or prejudices persist. It is unclear however whether that distinction is applied in practice by government around the basis for cross-cultural exchange. There has been little research done to examine what the actual role of government is in regards to cross-cultural exchange and dialogue.

Can we measure the commitment to interculturalism? Although there is no specific barometer that measures the degree of cross-cultural activity it is possible to consider the degree of contact between identifiable groups (be they majority or minority). This can be tested by considering such things as actual contacts with members of particular groups, the number of friends one has of diverse backgrounds, the diversity of the workplace, whether someone would like to live in a culturally diverse neighbourhood, the degree to which someone has been involved in a cross-cultural exchange, etc. Based on national surveys that have asked such questions, Québecers do not appear to be more interculturally engaged than other Canadians. Demographic considerations such as the regional concentration of Québec Francophones in areas where there are relatively few ethnic minorities undoubtedly play an important role in this regard, nonetheless, it raises questions about the presumed difference between Québecers and other Canadians when it comes to interculturalism in practice.

Not surprisingly therefore, the youth wing of the governing Québec political party and the leader of the opposition agree that the concept of interculturalism needs to be better defined before introducing any law that reflects such an approach (La Presse canadienne, 15 août 2011).

MULTICULTURALISM, INTERCULTURALISM AND QUÉBEC LANGUAGE AND ETHNIC MINORITIES

How are Anglophone and Allophone Québecers reflected in intercultural discourse and practice as adopted by provincial authorities? It remains unclear. Since the cross-cultural element of the intercultural program is guided by the idea that it is Francophones that are responsible for immigrant integration it follows that support for intercultural exchange implies fostering contact between the minority ethnic communities and the French-language majority. In theory therefore the impression that is often offered is that Québec interculturalism stresses cultural exchange and the promotion of the bilateral relationship between 'rooted' Francophones and minority ethno-cultural groups. It is not clear whether in programmatic terms this is how intergroup relations are constructed in Québec. It is not clear that this is the way relationships evolve on the ground.

As observed, both the federal multicultural and Québec intercultural policies and programs are guided by a set of principles that are not binding upon the population so that individuals and institutions within Québec can choose the approach to the management of diversity that they feel is best suited to their demographic circumstances and their identity needs. As the English-speaking community of Québec does not have a single dominant ethnic group, the bilateral "logic" of an intercultural approach is not easily adapted to its circumstances and hence the multicultural model may be more appealing.

Institutionally, Québec's English language organizations do not incorporate the vocabulary of interculturalism within their mandates. In its mission statement on diversity, the English Montreal School Board is more inclined to use the term multiculturalism. It describes its approach as follows: "The EMSB welcomes and respects the ethnic and cultural diversity of its student population. It is estimated that more than 50 different cultural groups are represented within the EMSB. Our goal is to foster the successful integration of ethno-cultural groups into social life through various means, including the provision of in-service training for staff, and the development of methods for creating learning environments free of prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination."…"A "Glossary of Key Terms" in the area of Multicultural Education has been developed and distributed to schools to familiarize administrators, teachers and staff in general with terms such as anti-racist education and heritage languages. A revised 1999 edition of the international calendar, containing the dates of religious and national holidays worldwide, was also prepared and distributed to all schools".[6]

When taking into account the important percentage of immigrants that are English-speakers it is inevitable that English-language institutions will be involved in the process of managing diversity. Failure to acknowledge this reality will dash any hope for a consensus amongst all Québecers around best practices in the management of diversity and the accommodation-however reasonable-of recent immigrants. Ultimately it may encourage immigrants to see some institutions as more accommodating and/or inclusive than others with the inevitable consequences for the integration process.

In an editorial entitled "Inter/multiculturalism, and what's really at issue", the Montreal Gazette suggests that differences between the two are exaggerated and that the champions of interculturalism give the impression that the principal challenge is for immigrants to adapt to Québec culture when instead more attention needs to be directed at the presence of cultural communities in Québec's public institutions where Anglophones, Aboriginals and other ethnic minorities accounting for roughly 20 percent of the population, constitute only six percent of provincial civil servants.[7]

Amy Nugent "Demography, national myths, and political origins: perceiving official multiculturalism in Québec" Canadian Ethnic Studies Journal / Fall, 2006

CONCLUSION

At the root of the presumed difference between the Canadian multicultural and Québec intercultural discourse and the action to which they respectively give rise is the emphasis on cross-cultural exchange. Discourse around interculturalism presumes that cross-cultural initiatives are either absent or insufficient to the program arising from the multicultural model. Yet as demonstrated above this is not the case for Canadian multiculturalism which makes interaction between communities a priority. It might be argued that such programming is not consistent with the philosophy of multiculturalism and therefore the Canadian approach should not be described as multicultural. Yet since the 1980's there been an interethnic and interracial relations component to Canadian multiculturalism discourse and program. Intellectual rigour demands that those who insist Québec interculturalism is the superior model examine the program and practice and demonstrate that the difference amounts to more than just political rhetoric.

NOTES

[1] http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/multiculturalism/citizenship.asp.

[2] http://www.micc.gouv.qc.ca/publications/fr/dossiers/PlanActionFavoriserParticipation.pdf.

[3] www.immigrationQuébec.gouvqc.ca/publications/en/divers/learningaboutQuébec-dynamique.pdf.

[4] http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/multiculturalism/funding/events.asp.

[5] www.cyberpresse.ca/le-droit/opinions/chroniqueurs/benoit-pelletier/201106/29/01-4413665-la-delicate-gestion-de-la-diversite.php.

[6] (http://www.emsb.qc.ca/en/services_en/pages/multiculture resourcecentre_en.asp).

[7] may 28, 2011 http://www2.canada.com/montrealgazette/features/viewpoints/story.html?id=0b911dbf-7279-438c-b476-67f6592eb2b8.