

## **Employment equity policy frames in the literature: ‘good practice’ versus ‘bad idea’**

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Work organisations considering policies against racial or ethnic discrimination and for recognising diversity can find many different and often conflicting recommendations in the literature, in particular regarding the aim of proportional representation of different ethnic groups. To better understand this controversy, this paper rigorously examines three key theories from a frame-critical and business ethics perspective. It introduces a fundamental threefold conceptualisation of ‘employment equity policy’ (EEP) as a catch-all term for related concepts such as ‘affirmative action’, ‘equal opportunities policy’ and ‘diversity management’, distinguishing between three different organisational goals: equal treatment, equal results and individual recognition. The analysis suggests that different authors emphasise some ‘facts’ rather than others and strategically interpret the limited available empirical research to support their policy positions, mixing both classical and newer ethical reasoning. In the ‘good practice’ frame, human resource management practitioners are urged to take ‘positive action’, to monitor the ethnic composition of the workforce and to formulate target figures to increase the representation of discriminated groups. In the opposing ‘bad idea’ frame, organisations are seriously advised against EEPs with ‘hard’ numerical goals: these policies supposedly are unnecessary and ineffective and have negative unintended consequences. The article draws implications from these findings for future research and practice in the field of EEPs.

**Keywords:** affirmative action; business ethics; diversity management; employment equity; ethnic discrimination; good practice

### **Introduction**

One of the most contentious issues in the literature on anti-discrimination and diversity policies is the question, whether work organisations should aim at equal representation of different ethnic groups (Jewson and Mason 1986; Liff 1997; Glastra, Schedler and Kats 1998; Simon 2005; Lippert-Rasmussen 2008). On the one hand, research shows that most people feel that ‘preferential’ policies should be avoided for the sake of free competition between individuals (Johns 2005; Kirton and Greene 2005; Schaafsma 2006; Wrench 2007; European Commission 2009). Furthermore, opponents (Edwards 1987; Glazer 1987, 2000; Sowell 2004) argue that such ‘hard’ policies do not meet expectations and have all kinds of negative effects. On the other hand, more and more studies hold that ‘positive action’ and accompanying measures aimed at equal representation are not only the right thing to do, but also good for business – usually based on the analysis of the so-called

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'good practice' organisations (Stewart and Lindburg 1997; Verhoef 1997; Wrench 1997, 2007; de Vries, Nuyens, Gründemann, de Bruin and Willemsen 2002; Shaw 2002a,b; European Commission 2003, 2005, 2009; Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid 2003, 2004; de Vries et al. 2005; Kirton and Greene 2005; Trauner and Sohler 2005; de Vries, van de Ven and Winthagen 2007; Div 2008; International Centre for Migration Policy Development 2008). This article combines the frame-critical approach of studying policy controversies with insights from the domain of the business ethics to better understand the issue. The main claim is that there are two opposing policy frames in the literature on 'employment equity policies' (EEPs) aimed at ethnic minorities: the 'good practice' frame and the 'bad idea' frame. These frames not only seem to determine what kind of empirical research is considered relevant, but also what types of policy instruments are distinguished theoretically and recommended to work organisations.

The argument is built up as follows. The first section delineates the field of study by introducing a fundamental threefold conceptualisation of EEPs and separating direct from indirect EEPs. Second, a heuristic interpretive policy model and an analytical strategy are developed on the basis of the theory of frame reflection (Schön and Rein 1994). The empirical body of the text features a detailed examination of three important typologies of EEPs (Glazer 2000; Kirton and Greene 2005; Wrench 2007), including their empirical basis and ethical underpinnings. The article ends with a summary, some limitations to the analysis and a discussion of its implications.

### **Employment equity policies**

This study uses the concept of 'EEP' as a catch-all term for related concepts such as 'affirmative action', 'equal opportunities policy' and 'diversity management' (compare Abella 1984; Thomas 2002; Jain, Sloane and Horwitz 2003; Thomas and Jain 2004). 'Equity' is a normative concept that can be and always is interpreted in various, even conflicting ways (Stone 1988). 'Employment equity' also means different things to different people, but three fundamental meanings may be discerned: equal treatment, equal results and individual recognition. In this interpretation, 'equal treatment' means the absence of direct discrimination and 'equal results' the absence of structural discrimination. Although direct discrimination is intentional (Wrench 2007) and thus presupposes a degree of volition, structural discrimination cannot be reduced to a particular social agent's bias against the disadvantaged group (Williams 2000). Of course, one may combine these two meanings and 'equality of opportunity' is sometimes defined in such a way (European Commission 2007, p. 14; see Liff 1997). This line of reasoning, however, obscures the fact that both concepts of discrimination are ontologically different: in the first meaning, it is essentially an *action*; and in the second meaning, it is essentially a *structure*. Hence, structural discrimination can only be established *post factum*, by looking at patterns of inequality (Jewson and Mason 1986; Banton 1994; Simon 2005), whereas direct discriminators can be 'caught in the act'. Furthermore, the conflation of these two meanings of employment equity risks downplaying a more recent third one: 'recognition of unique characteristics of individuals'. 'Individual recognition' as an ethical goal is mostly associated with diversity management, which is originally not aimed at promoting justice, but at changing the culture of organisations in order to make them perform better – the so-called 'business case for diversity' (Thomas 1990; Agócs and Burr 1996; Kandola and Fullerton 1998; Kelly and Dobbin 1998; Glastra 1999; Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002; Kochan et al. 2003; Jayne and Dipboye 2004; Kirton and Greene 2005; Mor Barak 2005; Ng and Burke 2005; Nishii and Özbilgin 2007).

EEPs exist in two forms: direct and indirect. With direct EEPs, organisations aim at employment equity in their own workforce; indirect EEPs are formulated to bring pressure on other organisations. If they have EEPs, governments typically have both forms, partly to set an example to society at large (Bovenkerk 1986; Dagevos and Beljaarts 1996). Thus, when governments design laws like the affirmative action regulations in the USA, they usually also try to promote employment equity in their own agencies. Work organisations that are not part of the government have indirect EEPs less often, though some (large) companies nowadays put pressure on their business partners to promote 'equal opportunities' or 'diversity' (Mor Barak 2005; Wrench 2007), and some non-governmental organisations of course were founded to campaign on the issue. The analysis here focuses on direct EEPs, because it is situated in the field of organisational rather than political studies. In the remainder of this article, 'EEPs' can thus be read as 'direct EEPs'.

The literature on EEPs in relation to ethnic diversity and discrimination is huge and has quite a long history, but relatively few authors both cover the various strands of employment equity and refer to empirical research to back up their claims (see for example Glazer 1987, 2000; Glastra, Meerman, Schedler and de Vries 2000; Jain et al. 2003; Meerman and Scholten 2003; Taggar 2003; Sowell 2004; Kirton and Greene 2005; Mor Barak 2005; Schaafsma 2006; Wrench 2007). Some 'large *N*' studies were published, but these projects mainly focused on the possible 'equal results' effects of EEPs (Leonard 1985, 1990; Holzer and Neumark 2000; Kalev, Dobbin and Kelly 2006). In-depth knowledge of the implementation of EEPs in actual work organisations mostly stems from case studies with few cases (Jenkins 1986; Jewson and Mason 1986; van Twuyver 1995; Ivancevich and Gilbert 2000; de Vries et al. 2002, 2005, 2007; Essed 2002; Essed and de Graaff 2002; Janssens and Zanoni 2005; Subeliani and Tsogas 2005). As Dobbin recently argued, 'employers and regulators are still choosing strategies based on spin, rather than evidence' (2009, p. 21). This article aims to contribute to the literature by offering a 'meta-analysis' of three major EEP theories (Glazer 2000; Kirton and Greene 2005; Wrench 2007), using the theory of frame reflection as well as insights from the field of business ethics to examine their theoretical, empirical and normative characteristics systematically.

### **EEP frames: theory and methodology**

Frame-critical analysis is tributary to scepticism as a philosophy in which human beings are deemed incapable of knowing the 'truth' of something. Consequently, analysis and politics are no separate and distinctive activities and research is, just like political life, full of paradoxes: two apparently contradictory interpretations of a policy may both be true (Stone 1988; see Yanow 2000, 2003). According to the theory of frame reflection, policy disagreements are disputes that 'can be settled by recourse to evidence to which all of the contending parties will agree' (Schön and Rein 1994, p. 3). Policy controversies, in contrast, 'are immune to resolution by the appeal to the facts' (1994, p. 4), because they arise out of conflicting 'frames': stories told about troublesome situations 'in which the author describes what is wrong and what needs fixing' (1994, p. 24). Policy frames not only determine what facts are more relevant than others or even what counts as a fact, but also how to interpret them, even when the parties to a controversy focus their attention on the same facts (1994, pp. 4–5, 23). In other words, policy frames provide guidance from data to recommendations as well, from what 'is' to what 'ought' (1994, p. 26).

Even though the frame-critical approach was originally designed for professional policy contexts, it may also be used to analyse a highly politicised academic field such as

the field of EEPs. This article rigorously examines three key typologies of EEPs, based on the assumption that the latent issues at stake in a field of enquiry will somehow become crystallised in its main theoretical constructs. It employs a heuristic policy model that distinguishes five common elements in policy frames: goals, instruments, effectiveness, context and unintended consequences. The first three elements stem from the basic 'rational' model: the definition of the problem that needs to be tackled, the actions and the physical resources needed, and the evaluation of the effects of a policy (McGinn and Borden 1995, p. i). The other elements are more 'sceptical'. Contextual factors after all are often emphasised to argue that a certain policy only works under certain conditions or that it is not really effective at all. Likewise, unintended consequences – an established topic in policy studies (Hirschman 1991; Engbersen and van der Veen 1992; Engbersen 2009) and EEP studies (Appelt and Jarosch 2000; Glastra et al. 2000; Lorbiecki and Jack 2000; Von Bergen, Soper and Foster 2002; Jonkers 2003) – are frequently invoked to advise against a certain proposal.

The question of course is how to determine whether the differences between the three selected theories of EEPs are expressions of a frame conflict. In substantive terms (i.e. what the frame conflict is about), several normative issues may be derived *a priori* from some of the main traditions in the business ethics literature: deontology, utilitarianism, stakeholder theory (Legge 1998; Liff and Dickens 2000; Spence 2000; Winstanley and Woodall 2000; Woodall and Winstanley 2000) and Kohlbergian developmentalism (Trevino 1992; Logsdon and Yuthas 1997). The employment equity goals of individual recognition and equal treatment, for example, seem to be more in line with the deontological or Kantian emphasis on the basic rights of individuals than the norm of equal results. In the abstract, the latter goal is more easily reconciled with the utilitarian or teleological emphasis on the consequences of policies and the conditional acceptance of treating individuals as means to ends, depending on 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number'. A different, but related issue concerns the balance between the elements in the heuristic policy model: some authors will probably judge the morality of a certain policy by the inherent 'goodness' of its goals (the deontological emphasis on motives and intentions), whereas others will look mainly at actual experiences in terms of effectiveness, context specificity and unintended consequences (the position of utilitarianism). In a stakeholder approach, the question is: consequences for whom? (Logsdon and Yuthas 1997; Legge 1998) How important are the interests of ethnic minority groups compared to, for example, organisational survival? This ethical tradition predicts that different frames prioritise different stakeholder interests and thus takes a less unitarist position. Finally, the developmental perspective, based on the psychological work of Kohlberg (1969), highlights the dynamic and historically contingent status of organisations as moral actors. It predicts that organisations exhibit different levels of moral development: most of them aim at accepted societal norms and legal compliance (the conventional level), whereas others 'proactively' try and promote certain principles of justice (the post-conventional level) (Trevino 1992; Logsdon and Yuthas 1997). Given the differences in the legal status of the three strands of employment equity – equal treatment being established more strongly – different authors will probably formulate different expectations for organisations, especially businesses. Obviously, moral reasoning with the use of these ethical theories is very complicated. It is exactly the function of a concrete policy frame to give the elements of what would otherwise be an overwhelmingly complex reality a coherent organisation (Schön and Rein 1994, p. 26).

In procedural terms (i.e. how to find the different frames), the analysis consists of three consecutive steps. After the next section, on the selection of the three typologies of EEPs,

the overall argument will be constructed in three different sections corresponding with these analytical steps. The first, mainly theoretical step is to describe the goals and instruments of EEPs distinguished and recommended by the different authors to understand their respective policy positions. Secondly, the evidence base underlying the different policy stances is scrutinised. To what extent are the recommendations based on empirical evaluations of EEPs, including their effectiveness, the role of contextual factors and unintended consequences? The third section analyses the empirical observations that qualify rather than support the authors' positions. If policy frames 'execute the normative leap' from data to recommendations (Schön and Rein 1994, p. 26), then it is crucial to determine what facts apparently become less relevant than others when it comes to advising policymakers and human resource management (HRM) practitioners. This analytical procedure is both more practical and more convincing than focusing on evidence that is left out completely. In line with the social–constructivist approach of this article, no attempt is made to determine whether the different policy positions are 'correct' or not. Instead, the question is whether the different theories can be interpreted as expressions of a normative frame conflict in order to better understand the controversy on the aim of proportional representation of ethnic groups in the literature on EEPs.

### Cases: three main typologies of EEPs

The argumentation of this article is based on a comparison of three key publications in the field of EEPs aimed at ethnic minorities: Glazer's 'Affirmative Action and "Race" Relations: "Affirmative Action" as a Model for Europe' (2000), *The Dynamics of Managing Diversity – A Critical Approach* by Kirton and Greene (2005), and Wrench's *Diversity Management and Discrimination – Immigrants and Ethnic Minorities in the EU* (2007). Their selection can be justified with four related arguments.

First and foremost, these publications were selected on the basis of theoretical quality. The typologies of EEPs in the three texts are wide ranging and conceptually lucid, as they cover a great variety of EEP goals and instruments in a structured way. Secondly, as they are relatively recent and refer to a substantive body of empirical research, the three works provide an overview and synthesis of the current evidence base concerning EEPs. The detailed analysis of the three theories in subsequent sections will substantiate these arguments.

Given the publication record of the authors, thirdly, they can be considered as experts in their domain. Glazer (co-)authored several books on issues of ethnicity, immigration and social policy in the USA (Glazer and Moynihan 1963; Glazer 1983, 1987, 1988, 1997), whereas Greene and Kirton (2009) have recently published a monograph on diversity management in the UK and various articles on equality, organisational diversity and the role of trade unions (Kirton and Greene 2002, 2006, 2009; Kirton, Greene and Dean 2007). It should be noted that their work (including the typology of EEPs) also deals with non-ethnic dimensions of difference (Kirton and Greene 2005). Wrench is the (co-)author of several texts on anti-discrimination policies in Europe (Wrench 1996, 1997, 1999, 2005, 2007; Wrench and Modood 2000). Fourthly, the argument can be made that these authors are quite influential, both inside and outside academia. Glazer has been one of the most prominent critics of affirmative action in the USA ever since his 1975 book *Affirmative Discrimination* (1987) and his typology of EEPs (1987, 2000) has inspired other influential opponents such as Sowell (2004). Greene is both a scholar and a 'committed trade union activist' (Greene and Kirton 2009, p. 251). In the second edition of

their textbook – ‘leading’ according to the authors (Greene and Kirton 2009) – Kirton and Greene (2005) aim to provide a basis for students as well as a resource for researchers and HRM practitioners. Wrench is Head of Sector Research and Analysis at the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), principal author of its annual reports and coordinator of the agency’s information network on racism and xenophobia (RAXEN). His typology of EEPs was further developed and refined for activist and policy use (Taran and Gächter 2003 in Wrench 2007, p. 43).

In addition, it should be noted that the differential geographical focus of the three texts underlines the international nature of the debate on EEPs. As a positive unintended consequence, the frame-critical analysis of this important theme in the domain of HRM may benefit from having an international and comparative dimension (see Brewster, Tregaskis, Hegewisch and Mayne 1996; Brewster 2007).

### **Comparing typologies: goals and instruments of EEPs**

The first step in the frame-critical analysis is a systematic comparison of the typologies of EEPs in the three selected publications (Glazer 2000; Kirton and Greene 2005; Wrench 2007). To this end, the typologies are summarised in tables with the first two elements of the heuristic policy model: goals and instruments.

Kirton and Greene (2005) distinguish between four types of EEPs (see Table 1). Their classification is a ‘continuum’, ‘moving from approaches which can be characterized as reproducing inequality, to tackling discrimination, through to actively promoting equality and valuing diversity’ (2005, p. 206). The numbers and labels express the hierarchical nature of the scheme, also in normative terms: Kirton and Greene advise against the first, negative approach and recommend the fourth, comprehensive proactive approach. This corresponds with the cumulative and sequential nature of the typology and with their conviction that the most important goal of EEPs is fighting structural discrimination (2005, pp. 205–218). The comprehensive proactive approach explicitly aims at this goal (i.e. equal results) and advocates ‘positive action’, the use of target figures, and ethnic monitoring as instruments to reach it (amongst others, see Table 1). Kirton and Greene also incorporate some of the central elements of diversity management (individual recognition, making cultural allowances and the business case for diversity), arguing that they could contribute towards reaching more equal outcomes.

In a business ethics perspective, it is interesting to note the similarities between these types of EEPs and Kohlbergian levels of moral development of organisations (Trevino 1992; Logsdon and Yuthas 1997). The cumulative and sequential nature of the typology mirrors the way in which higher order levels both incorporate and transcend lower order levels of moral judgement (Trevino 1992, p. 447). Kirton and Greene also distinguish between fulfilling social and legal obligations and going beyond compliance in order to actively promote certain conceptions of justice. In their EEP theory, policies at the conventional level aim at equal treatment (i.e. preventing direct discrimination, as stipulated by existing laws) and policies at the post-conventional level aim at equal results (i.e. fighting structural discrimination). According to Kohlberg, such ‘principled level thinking’ is more desirable than lower level judgements (Kohlberg 1981 in Trevino 1992, p. 447).

Wrench describes his typology of EEPs as ‘a classification of levels or stages of anti-discrimination activity in organisational measures’ (2007, p. 115; see Table 2). Like the typology of Kirton and Greene (2005), his theory of EEPs incorporates several elements of Kohlbergian moral reasoning and the recommended sixth policy type, called ‘diversity

Table 1. Kirton and Greene's typology of EEPs.

<i>Goals</i>	<i>Instruments</i>
<p><i>Type 1: The negative approach</i> In the negative approach, employment equity (equal treatment, equal results or individual recognition) is not an organisational goal (see Kirton and Greene 2005, p. 207).</p>	<p>In the negative approach, there are no policy instruments. The organisation 'may (consciously or unconsciously) practice discrimination' (Kirton and Greene 2005, p. 207).</p>
<p><i>Type 2: The minimalist/partial approach</i> The minimalist/partial approach aims at equal treatment and individual recognition. 'This organisation will declare itself to be an equal treatment employer, and will probably follow management fashion and claim to value diversity' (Kirton and Greene 2005, p. 207).</p>	<p>The minimalist/partial approach entails no more than a statement of intent (Kirton and Greene 2005, pp. 206–207). It can therefore be described as a policy with a goal but without instruments.</p>
<p><i>Type 3: The compliant approach</i> The compliant approach aims at equal treatment, i.e. fulfilling legal obligations by preventing direct discrimination, partly by not recognising group differences at all (individual recognition). 'Paradoxically, this organisation may have switched to the individualist language of diversity in order to downplay social group-based disadvantage and discrimination' (Kirton and Greene 2005, p. 207).</p>	<p>The central instrument of the compliant approach is the formalisation of recruitment and selection procedures, but this type of EEP may also involve training programmes for discriminated groups and ethnic monitoring to determine its effects on the composition of the workforce (Kirton and Greene 2005, pp. 207–211).</p>
<p><i>Type 4: The comprehensive proactive approach</i> The comprehensive proactive approach aims at equal treatment, individual recognition, and equal results, but the latter goal (i.e. fighting structural discrimination) is the most important (Kirton and Greene 2005, pp. 206–218). The policy is 'comprehensive proactive' not only because of the combination of employment equity goals and the many possible instruments, but also because it emphasises the 'business case for equality and diversity' (Kirton and Greene 2005, p. 206).</p>	<p>The central instrument of the comprehensive proactive approach is 'positive action': recognising (historical) discrimination and doing something extra for discriminated groups in order to compensate for it (Kirton and Greene 2005, p. 206). Positive action should be accompanied by the formulation of target figures and ethnic monitoring (Kirton and Greene 2005, pp. 207–208). Apart from the instruments of the compliant approach, this type of EEP may also involve taking outreach measures and making cultural allowances (Kirton and Greene 2005, pp. 209–211).</p>

management/mainstreaming', is practically identical (Wrench 2007, p. 43). The hierarchical nature of the typology is expressed in different ways. First, the different policies are ordered on a single overarching dimension, from 'the "soft" end' to 'the "harder" end' (2007, p. 98). Second, the typology is cumulative in terms of goals and instruments: higher order policies may contain (a combination of) lower order policies. Wrench has thus arranged the different EEPs by level of ambition: levels 5 and 6 are 'more ambitious' (2007, p. 51) and diversity management/mainstreaming is the 'most ambitious of all' (2007, p. 55). The different levels, thirdly, represent different kinds of awareness: they do not simply add up, but together form the basis of something new. Thus 'positive action' depends on the 'recognition' of historical discrimination, an 'ambitious development of consciousness' (2007, p. 55), and diversity management can be identified

Table 2. Wrench's typology of EEPs.

<i>Goals</i>	<i>Instruments</i>
<p><i>Level 1: Training immigrants/minorities</i> This type of EEP may have an anti-discriminatory effect (more equal results), but it is not assumed that organisations train immigrants or minorities for this reason (see Wrench 2007, pp. 43, 123).</p>	<p>The central instrument is formal training for target groups 'to improve their education and skills, and to help them learn the language, culture and customs of the new society, and the appropriate ways of behaving, as well as how to operate in the labour market' (Wrench 2007, p. 43).</p>
<p><i>Level 2: Making cultural allowances</i> This type of EEP may also have an anti-discriminatory effect (more equal results), but it is not assumed that organisations make cultural allowances for this reason (Wrench 2007, pp. 43, 122).</p>	<p>This type of EEP involves two instruments: training staff members to improve their interactions with colleagues and clients and making allowances for specific religious or cultural needs of minority groups within the organisation (Wrench 2007, p. 43).</p>
<p><i>Level 3: Challenging racist attitudes</i> This type of EEP aims at equal treatment, i.e. fighting direct discrimination, though only indirectly because it focuses on people's attitudes rather than behaviour (Wrench 2007, p. 43, 122).</p>	<p>Challenging racist attitudes can take two forms: training to reduce people's prejudices and publicity/information campaigns (Wrench 2007, p. 43).</p>
<p><i>Level 4: Combating discrimination</i> This type of EEP aims at equal treatment, i.e. combating direct discrimination, because it aims to address discriminatory behaviour (Wrench 2007, p. 43).</p>	<p>The central instruments of this type of EEP are formalisation of recruitment and selection procedures, training on how to comply with anti-discrimination legislation and introduction of disciplinary measures against discrimination within the organisation (Wrench 2007, p. 43).</p>
<p><i>Level 5: Equal opportunities policies with positive action</i> This type of EEP aims at both equal treatment and equal results, but the latter goal (i.e. fighting structural discrimination) is the most important. It is 'a combination of the above approaches in a general equal opportunities package' (Wrench 2007, p. 44).</p>	<p>The central instrument of this type of EEP is 'positive action': recognising (historical) discrimination and doing something extra for discriminated groups in order to compensate for it (Wrench 2007, p. 44). All instruments of the other levels may be included, supplemented by target figures, ethnic monitoring, outreach measures and mentoring of minority workers.</p>
<p><i>Level 6: Diversity management/mainstreaming</i> Diversity management/mainstreaming aims at equal treatment, individual recognition, and equal results, but the latter goal (i.e. fighting structural discrimination) is the most important (Wrench 2007, pp. 44–45, 123).</p>	<p>A standard instrument of this type of EEP is making cultural allowances (Wrench 2007, p. 71). Apart from that, diversity management/mainstreaming 'can include many or all of the elements of the other approaches and adds diversity philosophy and practice to this, mainstreamed in a whole-organisational approach' (Wrench 2007, p. 44).</p>

Note: This table is based on Chapters 3 and 6 in Wrench's book and summarises his more elaborate classification of employment discrimination (Wrench 2007, pp. 116–117).

by its 'philosophy' (2007, p. 60), 'commitment' (2007, p. 63) or 'language' (2007, p. 52). Finally, Wrench hypothesises that the typology constitutes 'a sequence of chronological stages': organisations may not recognise the structural aspects of discrimination immediately, but first pass through a 'supply-side conscious', a 'multicultural awareness' and an 'anti-racism awareness' (2007, pp. 54–55). In short, Wrench recommends diversity management/mainstreaming because it prioritises the right 'hard' goal (equal results), because it is the most encompassing type of EEP, and because it represents the highest and newest level of organisational consciousness.

Though his recommendation is similar, Wrench emphasises motives and intentions in judging the morality of a certain policy more explicitly than Kirton and Greene (a deontological or Kantian position). This is shown by the first two types of EEPs in particular: both may have an anti-discriminatory effect (more equal results), but since these activities are not undertaken for the 'right' reason (i.e. fighting structural discrimination), they are classified at the bottom of the hierarchy. Concomitantly, Wrench subtly sides against the utilitarian or teleological tradition of judging policies in terms of their consequences (Legge 1998; Winstanley and Woodall 2000), arguing that the anti-discriminatory effects of an organisational policy partly depend on its justification or 'underlying rationale' (Wrench 2007, p. 123). It is time, Wrench holds, to recognise 'that *the right kind of diversity management* has at least the potential for improving and mainstreaming genuine anti-discrimination and equality issues to the benefit of previously excluded minorities' (2007, p. 137, emphasis added). Wrench recommends diversity management if its primary goal is equal results rather than individual recognition.

Glazer (1987, 2000) makes a distinction between three different types of EEPs (see Table 3). Like the other two typologies, Glazer's classification is hierarchical and features a clear policy recommendation, but his position is almost diametrically opposed to the one adopted by Kirton and Greene (2005) and Wrench (2007). According to Glazer, work organisations considering EEPs should aim at eliminating direct discrimination by practising 'neutrality in treatment' (2000, p. 139). Equal treatment is a matter of principle, he argues, and should be pursued regardless of the question whether it leads to equal results. The latter goal is 'unrealistic', because it assumes 'that there is an "expected" employment figure for each ethnic or racial group in the absence of discrimination' (2000, p. 143). More substantive equality for (historically) discriminated groups can be a positive indirect effect of non-discrimination and soft affirmative action, but should never be aimed at directly with hard affirmative action involving 'certain numerical goals' (2000, p. 141). Glazer does not object to soft affirmative action, but he insists that 'some degree of special concern or preference' (2000, p. 139) should not be accompanied by target figures and ethnic monitoring.

In ethical terms, Glazer seems to adopt a deontological or Kantian position on the importance of individual rights and the immorality of treating individuals as means to ends: they should not be treated differently on the basis of certain group-level target figures. Like the other authors, Glazer seems to judge the morality of a certain type of EEP by its goal: he is indifferent towards policy instruments like outreach measures and targeted training if they aim to compensate for (historical) discrimination (2000, p. 139), but he strongly opposes the same instruments if they aim to achieve target figures (2000, p. 141). The next section on the actual implementation and evaluation of EEPs, however, shall argue that his policy position is also strongly based on utilitarian reasoning and elements of stakeholder theory.

Table 3. Glazer's typology of EEPs.

<i>Goals</i>	<i>Instruments</i>
<p><i>Type 1: Non-discrimination</i></p> <p>This type of EEP aims at equal treatment, i.e. eliminating direct discrimination (see Glazer 2000, pp. 139–140).</p>	<p>The central instrument of this type of EEP is 'neutrality in treatment' (Glazer 2000, p. 139). Ideally, this means the 'employment of persons with certain levels of skill' (Glazer 2000, p. 140).</p>
<p><i>Type 2: Soft affirmative action</i></p> <p>This type of EEP aims at equal results, i.e. fighting structural discrimination, though only indirectly because it 'eschews the attempt to reach a specific numerical goal' (Glazer 2000, p. 141).</p>	<p>This type of EEP goes beyond neutrality in treatment 'to call for some degree of special concern or preference' in order to compensate for (historical) discrimination (Glazer 2000, p. 139). Soft affirmative action may involve two instruments: outreach measures and targeted training.</p>
<p><i>Type 3: Hard affirmative action</i></p> <p>This type of EEP aims at equal results, i.e. fighting structural discrimination, because it aims to achieve 'certain numerical goals' (Glazer 2000, p. 141).</p>	<p>The central instrument of this type of EEP is setting 'a target, a goal, a number so and so many blacks, Hispanics, or women by such and such a date' (Glazer 2000, p. 141). In order to measure the success of the policy, hard affirmative action usually also involves ethnic monitoring. Outreach measures and targeted training may be included as well.</p>

In summary, the first step in the frame-critical analysis of the three key publications involved a systematic comparison of the different types of EEPs distinguished and recommended by the authors. The analysis revealed several similarities and differences. Taken as a whole, the three typologies order the different types of EEPs in a hierarchical way, distinguishing between different 'levels' (Wrench 2007, p. 115), between 'negative' and 'proactive' policies (Kirton and Greene 2005, p. 207), or between 'soft' and 'hard' types of EEPs (Glazer 2000, p. 141; see Wrench 2007, p. 98). All authors support the goal of equal treatment in principle, but Kirton and Greene (2005) and Wrench (2007) argue that work organisations should also explicitly aim at equal results (i.e. fighting structural discrimination). In fact, the latter authors' recommended that policy type categorises some of the central elements of diversity management (individual recognition, making cultural allowances and the business case for diversity) as policy levers in the process of attaining equal results. In other words, Kirton, Greene and Wrench argue that individual and organisational interests could to a certain extent be aligned with the employment equity goal of substantive equality between different ethnic groups. The central difference between the recommendations concerns the issue of target figures and the related instrument of ethnic monitoring. Glazer agrees with Kirton, Greene and Wrench that EEPs may go beyond equal treatment in order to compensate for (historical) discrimination and what he calls 'soft affirmative action' (2000, p. 141) would fall under the other authors' definition of 'positive action' (Kirton and Greene 2005, p. 207; Wrench 2007, p. 44). Glazer, however, seriously advises against 'hard' numerical goals, whereas Kirton, Greene and Wrench argue that positive action should always be accompanied by the formulation of target figures and ethnic monitoring to determine its effects on the composition of the workforce.

### Comparing evidence: empirical evaluation of EEPs

The second step in the frame-critical analysis of the work of Glazer (2000), Kirton and Greene (2005) and Wrench (2007) is a comparison of their evidence base. Based on the theory of frame reflection and the ethical theories, it is expected that the different authors consider some 'facts' more relevant than others, depending on their position.

Glazer's evidence base is scrutinised first. His references to actual experiences can be categorised with the three remaining elements of the heuristic policy model: effectiveness, context and unintended consequences. The effectiveness of both soft affirmative action and hard affirmative action, Glazer argues, is unclear as econometric studies in the USA have had varying results (2000, pp. 151–152). In other words, he doubts whether these EEPs lead to more substantive equality, as they are supposed to. Glazer also emphasises the independent role of a number of contextual factors to demonstrate the possible futility of affirmative action policies: they may be both unnecessary and ineffective (2000, p. 152). Blacks, for example, have experienced an impressive improvement in their social and economic situation in the past decades, but this may be explained by the growth of the American economy, the decline in racist sentiment, the migration of Southern blacks to the North and West, and laws prohibiting direct discrimination (Sowell 1981 and Thernstrom and Thernstrom 1997 in Glazer 2000, pp. 151–152). His central objection to hard affirmative action is based on the negative unintended consequences of numerical goals in the USA: societal controversy and resentment against discriminated groups (Glazer 2000, p. 138). According to Glazer (2000, p. 141), it is generally believed that target figures lead to the selection of one person instead of another on the grounds of group membership. This idea implies that, in practice, directly aiming at equal results conflicts with the employment equity norm of equal treatment. Since, according to the author, the American public finds the latter norm more important, EEPs with numerical goals lead to a negative public debate on 'quotas' (2000, p. 143). Concomitantly, hard affirmative action may actually harm the interests of minority groups by increasing the antagonism and resentment them (2000, p. 138).

Kirton and Greene (2005) and Wrench (2007) also use empirical evidence to support their recommendations, but in a different way. Whereas Glazer (2000) concentrates on the case against the policy he dislikes most, the other authors focus on the positive potential of their favoured type of EEP. According to Kirton and Greene, some evidence of the efficacy of proactive policies can be inferred from the finding that workplaces with these policies employ proportionately more ethnic minorities than do those without (Cully, Woodland, O'Reilly and Dix 1999 in Kirton and Greene 2005, p. 209). The principal empirical strategy of both Kirton and Greene (2005) and Wrench (2007) is to highlight the so-called 'examples of good practice': work organisations with 'proper' policies and some degree of success (Wrench 2007, p. 52). As Kirton and Greene argue, good practices are important 'to provide encouragement and inspiration to key actors in other organisations' (2005, p. 210) and they find them by reviewing both the academic and practitioner journals on EEP experiences in the UK. Wrench draws his cases from several big research projects on diversity and anti-discrimination in the workplace, initiated by the International Labour Office (see Wrench 2007, p. 30 for an overview of the ILO project), the European social partners (Wrench 1997), the European Business Network for Social Cohesion (Stewart and Lindburg 1997) and the European Commission (2003, 2005). As the so-called 'business case for diversity' predicts, good practices supposedly succeed in contributing to the fight against structural discrimination and improving organisational effectiveness simultaneously.

As in the previous section on goals and instruments of EEPs, the similarities and differences between these authors can be formulated in business ethical terms. In general, utilitarian reasoning is inevitable when actual experiences are used as 'evidence' to support moral judgements (see Legge 1998). Glazer (2000), however, emphasises the sceptical elements in the empirical evaluation of affirmative action, whereas Kirton and Greene (2005) and Wrench (2007) concentrate on positive, intended effects: EEPs with numerical goals have 'worked' in at least some individual organisations. Glazer supports equal treatment as a Kantian universalist principle, but his focus on the negative unintended consequences of numerical goals can be defended with both a stakeholder approach and utilitarian theory. What are the indirect effects on the disadvantaged groups that are supposed to benefit from these controversial policies and on society at large? In Glazer's view, hard affirmative action partly exacerbates the condition it wishes to remedy and the disruption of societal harmony is too high a price to pay. The other authors' strategy to highlight good practices or 'best practices' (Kirton and Greene 2005, p. 207; Wrench 2007, p. 69) corresponds with the deontologist's notion that moral rules (and consequent actions) must be capable of being consistently universalised (Legge 1998, p. 367; Woodall and Winstanley 2000, p. 281). In other words, as in HRM studies in general, good practices are supposed to be applicable everywhere (Legge 1998; Marchington and Grugulis 2000; Woodall and Winstanley 2000). The unitarist underpinnings of best practice approaches (Marchington and Grugulis 2000) can also be understood in the Kantian ethical tradition, in which moral reasoning is the same for all (Legge 1998). Few people would reasonably oppose good practices in the field of EEPs, because they promote ethnic equality and organisational effectiveness at the same time. Finally, in Kohlbergian terms, organisations should strive towards equal results to exhibit the highest 'post-conventional' level of moral development.

In summary, this section showed that the issue of proportional representation of ethnic groups may indeed constitute a policy controversy in Schön and Rein's (1994) sense, as different authors emphasise some 'facts' rather than others in order to support their policy stances. For Glazer (2000), quantitative 'large *N*' studies have failed to prove the effectiveness of hard affirmative action, whereas contextual factors and unintended consequences have been documented convincingly. Numerical goals – 'whatever their good intentions' (2000, p. 139) – should, therefore, be avoided *in practice*. Kirton and Greene (2005) and Wrench (2007) point at individual success stories that could and should be replicated elsewhere. In line with the deontological nature of their theories, the latter authors' advice does not depend on circumstances and possible side effects, because the proposed policy type is the preferred course of action *in principle*.

### Comparing policy frames: 'good practice' versus 'bad idea'

The third and final step in the analysis is a close look at the 'less relevant facts' in the three texts, as the theory of frame reflection predicts that the different authors will make empirical observations that qualify rather than support the recommendations to HRM practitioners and policy makers.

First the element of effectiveness. Kirton and Greene (2005, p. 210) and Wrench (2007, pp. 53, 62) highlight the so-called 'good practices' to inspire other organisations to take similar actions, but according to the authors themselves the number of good practices is 'limited'. 'What is striking,' Kirton and Greene write (2005, p. 210), 'is that articles about equality initiatives in both the academic and practitioner journals tend to use the same few companies as examples'. The research projects cited by Wrench together yielded

about 40 case studies, but information on the actual implementation of EEPs was scarce and very few organisations demonstrated some success in increasing the number of ethnic minority employees (Wrench 2007, p. 52). As far as Glazer is concerned, at various places in his work he argues that hard affirmative action may have (small) positive as well as negative effects on target groups, implying that EEPs with numerical goals are not *totally* ineffective (2000, p. 138; see Glazer 1987, p. xxi). As all authors note the lack of sufficient empirical proof, it seems that the deadlock in the debate on the effectiveness of EEPs aimed at equal results is to some extent rhetorical. Based on different ways of moral reasoning and different pieces of evidence, however, they come to opposing conclusions – a strong indication that a frame-critical analysis of their theories is appropriate.

Then the influence of contextual factors. According to Glazer (2000, p. 152), affirmative action in the USA has been both unnecessary and ineffective, due to the role played by other factors in the economic rise of the black population. Technically, in his argumentation, context is a control variable showing that the relationship between EEPs and ethnic minority participation may be spurious. According to Kirton and Greene (2005) and Wrench (2007) context also plays a role, but in their theories it has a moderator function: rather than substituting the association between policy and participation, contextual (social, economic and legal) factors strengthen this relationship (see Baron and Kenny 1986). Just like Glazer (2000), Kirton and Greene (2005, pp. 214–219, 294–296) and Wrench (2007, pp. 44–45, 127–138) recognise the importance of wider social attitudes and the economy, but they argue that a continuing decline in racist or xenophobic sentiment and the alignment of employment equity with broader business goals would make EEPs more effective, rather than redundant. Finally, Glazer (2000, p. 151) believes that laws should focus on banning direct discrimination as a matter of principle, irrespective of their distributive consequences. According to the other authors, in the future both direct and indirect EEPs should focus on numerical representation in order to strengthen each other's effectiveness (Kirton and Greene 2005, p. 167; Wrench 2007, p. 127). When it comes to contextual factors too, then, it seems that similar information is put to different uses in the three theories. All authors agree that certain benevolent circumstances exist, but they draw different conclusions from them.

The framing of the typologies also becomes apparent by analysing the theme of unintended consequences. For Glazer, the most important argument against hard affirmative action is the negative public debate in society at large, due to the belief that it breaches the norm of equal treatment (2000, p. 141). Glazer, however, undermines his own argument by noting that 'those for affirmative action support it with a passion and commitment that politically has outweighed *the lukewarm majority that is against it*' (2000, p. 146, emphasis added). In other words, the controversy thesis may be overstated to some extent. Given the differences between their recommendations, it is telling that Kirton and Greene (2005, pp. 214–217) and Wrench (2007, pp. 94–98, 107) agree with several of Glazer's points. Firstly, treating all individuals the same is 'the generally favoured principle' (Kirton and Greene 2005, p. 214) and, secondly, policy action on specific social groups violates this principle. As a result, thirdly, EEPs with numerical goals may have negative unintended consequences for the target groups themselves, because these policies may lead to resentment from dominant groups and stigmatisation. Apparently, however, according to Kirton, Greene and Wrench, the benefits of target figures prevail over their drawbacks. All authors agree on the controversial nature of EEPs aimed at equal results, but only for Glazer this is the decisive factor in advising against them.

Summing up, this section argued that the deadlock in the debate on the effectiveness of target figures is to some extent rhetorical and that certain contextual factors and

unintended consequences are acknowledged by all authors – crucially, however, they interpret them differently and reach opposing conclusions. The third step in the analysis thus confirmed the idea that the theories reflect different EEP frames. Given their policy position and principal empirical strategy, the frame of Kirton and Greene (2005) and Wrench (2007) may be called the ‘good practice’ frame. Their central recommendation is that work organisations should aim at equal results (i.e. fighting structural discrimination), because doing so is morally right and in their own interest. Glazer’s (2000) opposing policy frame may be called the ‘bad idea’ frame, because the thrust of his argument is about the negative aspects of the kind of EEP championed by the other authors. From an ethical perspective, these policy frames are paradoxical. Due to the focus on the ‘underlying rationale’ of EEPs (Kirton and Greene 2005, p. 214; Wrench 2007, p. 123), in the good practice frame the morality of *policies* seems to be the key concern. In contrast, in the bad idea frame (Glazer 2000), the central argument is that policies with good intentions may have bad consequences in *practice*.

## Conclusion

The body of this article systematically compared three major theoretical works in the literature on EEPs aimed at ethnic minorities, using a frame reflective approach as well as insights from the field of business ethics. The conclusion summarises the consecutive analytical steps taken and discusses some of the limitations and potential implications of the study.

The first, mainly theoretical step was an in-depth analysis of the typologies of EEPs created by Kirton and Greene (2005), Wrench (2007) and Glazer (2000). The three typologies order the different goals and instruments of EEPs hierarchically and enshrine clear policy positions. In the ‘good practice’ frame, the recommended type of EEP explicitly aims at equal results, i.e. fighting structural discrimination (Kirton and Greene 2005, pp. 217–218; Wrench 2007, pp. 122–123). The central instruments of EEPs should be ‘positive action’, target figures and ethnic monitoring (Kirton and Greene 2005, pp. 206–208; Wrench 2007, p. 44). In the ‘bad idea’ frame, organisations are seriously advised against ‘hard’ affirmative action with numerical goals (Glazer 2000, p. 141). Instead, the recommended goal of EEPs is equal treatment, i.e. fighting direct discrimination (Glazer 1987, 2000).

In the second step, the evidence used to support these opposing recommendations was compared. In the good practice frame, the principal empirical strategy is to give examples of individual work organisations with the right kind of policies and some degree of success in improving ethnic minority employment (Kirton and Greene 2005, p. 210; Wrench 2007, p. 52). These ‘good practices’ could and should be replicated elsewhere, also because they provide support for the so-called ‘business case for diversity’. Glazer (2000), conversely, downplays the effectiveness of EEPs aimed at equal results. In the USA, these policies may have been both unnecessary and ineffective, due to the independent role of demographic, economic, social and legal contextual factors (pp. 151–152). Most importantly, Glazer argues that EEPs with numerical goals should be avoided because of their negative unintended consequences: societal controversy and resentment against discriminated groups (2000, p. 138). The comparison confirmed the frame-critical expectation that the different authors consider some ‘facts’ more relevant than others, depending on their position. Whereas Kirton and Greene (2005) and Wrench (2007) focus on the positive, intended effects of their favoured type of EEP, Glazer (2000) concentrates on the empirical case against the policy he dislikes most.

The third step involved an analysis of the 'less relevant facts' that do not unequivocally support the 'normative leap' from data to recommendations (Schön and Rein 1994, p. 26). It revealed that the deadlock in the debate on the effectiveness of EEPs aimed at equal results is to some extent rhetorical, as both parties to the controversy acknowledge the limitations of their own evidence. In addition, Kirton and Greene (2005) and Wrench (2007) recognise the importance of contextual factors, just like Glazer (2000), but these factors qualify rather than strengthen their moral judgement of EEPs. Their recommended policy type would work even better under certain benevolent (social, economic and legal) circumstances, but these circumstances are still hypothetical. Finally, Kirton and Greene (2005, pp. 214–217) and Wrench (2007, pp. 94–98, 107) agree on the controversial nature of EEPs aimed at equal results and certain corresponding negative unintended consequences. Even though Glazer (2000, p. 146) himself provides indications that the controversy thesis may be overstated, it is for him the decisive factor in advising against target figures and ethnic monitoring. In the good practice frame, apparently, this drawback does not outweigh the benefits of the recommended policy type.

The business ethics perspective deepened the understanding of the different ways of framing judgements of EEPs, including their paradoxical nature. Both frames combine classical deontological/Kantian and utilitarian/teleological reasoning, but the 'mix' of elements varies and different elements of newer ethical approaches can be inferred. The universalist and unitarist underpinnings of the good practice frame (Kirton and Greene 2005; Wrench 2007) correspond with the deontologist's notions that moral rules (and consequent actions) must be capable of being consistently universalised and that moral reasoning is the same for all (Legge 1998; see Marchington and Grugulis 2000; Woodall and Winstanley 2000). At the same time, good practices are also considered attractive because they stem from actual experiences (a utilitarian position) and because they promote organisational effectiveness (i.e. organisational survival, one of the preoccupations of stakeholder theory, see Legge 1998). The preference for group-level equal results does not resonate well with Kantian individualism, but by situating their recommended EEP at a Kohlbergian 'post-conventional' level (Kohlberg 1969; Trevino 1992; Logsdon and Yuthas 1997) Kirton and Greene (2005) and Wrench (2007) can argue that it both incorporates and transcends 'conventional' EEPs aimed at equal treatment. Glazer recommends equal treatment as a matter of principle (a deontological position), but the thrust of his argument is utilitarian by emphasising the futility of EEPs aimed at equal results and the negative public debate on 'quotas' (2000, p. 143). The argument that the interests of discriminated groups may even be harmed by these policies (Glazer 2000) can be defended with a stakeholder approach. Paradoxically, given its emphasis on the right intentions, in the good practice frame (Kirton and Greene 2005; Wrench 2007), the major concern seems to be the morality of *policies*; whereas in the bad idea frame (Glazer 2000), the main argument is that good intentions may turn out to have bad unintended consequences in *practice*.

There are of course limitations to the approach taken for the study. First, it is unclear to what extent the differences between the theories are the result of conscious efforts to frame EEPs in a certain way rather than another. Due to its emphasis on societal stability, for instance, Glazer's argument is inherently conservative (Hirschman 1991), but to what extent is the good practice frame inherently 'radical'? As Jewson and Mason (1986, p. 326) argue, radicals may primarily support controversial EEPs for the sake of consciousness raising, i.e. to keep structural discrimination on the agenda (see Noon 2007). It would also be interesting to investigate whether the frames reflect distinctive 'European' and 'American' attitudes: towards individualism and organisational/business autonomy in

general (see Brewster 2007) and 'ethnicity', 'diversity' and 'discrimination' in particular. The sceptical underpinnings of the approach could be seen as another limitation. No attempt was made to determine whether the different policy positions are 'correct' or not and the theoretical possibility of an alternative EEP frame based on the norm of individual recognition was not explored. In connection with this, the study may be situated relatively far from the day-to-day realities experienced by HRM practitioners: not only because of its abstract, meta-analytical character, but also because of the assumed attractiveness of individualistic notions of diversity in business organisations (see Kirton and Greene 2005, p. 214). Future frame reflective research could involve interviewing a sizable number of actors with various backgrounds (including academics, human resource managers, CEOs, politicians and business consultants) from different regions to examine the popularity and embeddedness of these and perhaps other EEP frames. It could also broaden the topic by including indirect EEPs and other target groups.

An important implication of the analysis is that work organisations should view the policy recommendations in the literature on EEPs and ethnic diversity sceptically, in particular regarding controversial instruments like target figures and ethnic monitoring. Just like the major theories investigated here, they probably depend on limited evidence and the adoption of specific ethical arguments. Some EEP instruments are controversial in neither frame, like outreach measures to increase the pool of applicants and targeted training to help ethnic minorities compete on the labour market (Glazer 2000, pp. 140–141; Kirton and Greene 2005, pp. 206–211; Wrench 2007, p. 43). Their effectiveness, however, is still unclear. EEP researchers should pick their words carefully and base their recommendations on the strongest available evidence and transparent ethical reasoning. Theoretically, perhaps the tendency to order many different EEP instruments like formalising selection procedures, making cultural allowances, mentoring, diversity training and formulating target figures (amongst others) along a single overarching 'continuum' should be suppressed, as long as such a hierarchical typology reflects normative preferences more than empirical observations.

Secondly, then, more organisational experiments and longitudinal (rather than cross sectional) research projects are needed to broaden and deepen the evidence base in the field of EEPs. Future research should acknowledge the partly complementary nature of the good practice frame and the bad idea frame by focussing on both the benefits and the drawbacks of a variety of EEPs. Explicitly incorporating the different elements of the heuristic policy model (goals, instruments, effectiveness, context and unintended consequences) in the research design may also increase the willingness of work organisations to participate. Ironically, both frames would 'lose out' if work organisations would resort to a negation of the existence of different societal groups, because a purely individual focus makes fighting either direct or structural discrimination meaningless (Jewson and Mason 1986; see Banton 1994; Liff 1997; Simon 2005; Noon 2007). According to some scholars (Kirton and Greene 2005; Wrench 2007), business-case arguments could be used to further the employment equity agenda, but more research into actual experiences with EEPs is necessary to see to what extent organisational effectiveness and social justice can be aligned (Taggar 2003).

At a strictly moral level, finally, the analysis of this article implies that work organisations considering EEPs will continue to face difficult dilemmas. This holds for the balance between group recognition and individual recognition, but also for the recognition of diversity in the first place, as both ethnic and non-ethnic dimensions of difference fundamentally challenge the norm of equal treatment by exposing the merit principle as a social construction that may not operate equitably (Liff and Dickens 2000, pp. 86, 98; see Jenkins 1986; Kirschenman and Neckerman 1991; van Dijk 1993; Johns 2005). In general,

a given set of HRM policies and practices may be viewed in very different lights, depending on the ethical position adopted (Legge 1998). Human resource managers should utilise their own moral frames of reference, as well as prevailing norms internal and external to their organisation, to determine the right kind of EEP. This will probably involve even more 'mixing' of EEP approaches and ethical models than in theory (Jewson and Mason 1986; Cockburn 1989). As 'there is no one way to be ethical in this area' (Winstanley and Woodall 2000, p. 6), researchers should be as transparent as possible in the ethical stances taken. The mutual recognition of the similarities and differences between both policy frames could form the basis of more intense professional and scientific conversation and even cooperation in the field of EEPs.

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