

Improving the prospects of Black and Asian Students

Sharing lessons, Methods & Techniques - Ramada Jarvis Hotel Leicester, 30 October 2002

The day focused on how to turn the performance of Black and Asian students at University into success in gaining employment. The meeting opened with a talk by Dr Shamit Saggarr, a Senior Policy Advisor in the Strategy Unit of the Cabinet Office. He summarised an Interim Analytical Report which analyses the current position of Ethnic Minorities in the labour force. This 230 page report is impossible to summarise here but can be found at:

http://www.strategy.gov.uk/work_areas/ethnic_minorities/index.asp. It is clear from this report that the barriers to equality of performance in the job market are diverse and do not apply to all ethnic minorities in equal measure. There are also clear generation effects which need to be taken into consideration. This information needs to be considered carefully when devising programmes designed to enable students to translate academic success into success in the workplace.

The conference then split into workshops. I attended one entitled "Reaching the hard-to-reach: Mentoring in the Curriculum". The workshop examined the role of mentoring Black and Asian students using the Department of Biological Sciences at Brunel University as an example. The pilot study focused on a second year (Level 2) compulsory module designed to enhance career skills. The module covers CVs and application forms, competencies, recording skills and commercial awareness. It also allows the students to meet and adopt an external mentor, an alumni of the University, who will help the student to identify the skills that they need to become successful. The program allows for training sessions for the mentors prepare them for the mentoring process. This pilot was part of the MERITS project. [The resources from the Pilot are available and freely downloadable](#)

After lunch came the second keynote speaker Emmanuell Kusemamuriwo from the [Equality Challenge Unit](#). This unit focuses on equality issues within the HE sector. Emmanuell spoke to us concerning the role of the Unit in helping Universities to act upon the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000. The Act deals with institutional racism and has important implications for universities.

Then there was then a second series of workshops and I attended one entitled "Making an Impact: A Positive Approach to Marketing and Retention" The title refers to the [Impact program](#) which is a partnership across the Universities Careers Services at the Universities of Bradford, Huddersfield, Leeds and Leeds Metropolitan. The project is lead by the University of Bradford. The project gives focused career advice and guidance to "hard to reach students" through interactions with employers. It is planned to extend this project further to universities in South Yorkshire.

Overall this meeting provided a useful introduction to the current state of work being undertaken to improve the performance of Black and Asian students. However, the issues are complex and still ongoing and it was clear that much work remains to be done if the situation is to improve in the forthcoming years.

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Further details relating to the conference can be found on the [Action on Access](#) website