

## **Diversity management in ISS Facility Services A/S, Denmark: Strategies for and experiences with ethnic minority managers**

During the M2M study visit in Copenhagen, hosted by the Association New Danes in March 2009, the M2M team met with Nina Voigt, project manager in the Centre for Diversity in ISS Facility Services A/S and with Hassan Jama Duale and Leonora Jensen, managers to be in ISS. The goal of the ISS branch in Denmark is to have 300 managers with immigrant background, or "new Danes" in 2011. To obtain this goal, ISS has initiated a programme called "ISS apprenticeship" aiming at recruiting and training future managers of immigrant background. Related to this goal, a Centre for Diversity has been established at ISS.

### **Short about ISS**

The ISS Group was founded in 1901 as a Danish security company. The company later entered the cleaning market and has through time added services to its competencies, becoming one of the world's largest facility service groups today.

ISS is one of the world's largest providers of facility services and offers cleaning services, property services, catering services as well as security services. The company has operations in more than 50 countries in Europe, Asia, North America, South America and Australia, and employs more than 470 000 people.

### **Why is ISS aiming at having more managers with immigrant background? Recruitment and retention**

The most important reason for why ISS took up this programme is recruitment and retention. ISS foresees difficulties in recruiting enough employees in the future and seeks to recruit more employees with immigrant background. Managers with immigrant background have better networks among immigrants, and they will be better positioned to recruit employees with immigrant background. Qualifying and recruiting workers with immigrant background to positions in management will also provide these employees with a greater job satisfaction and motivation. It is also an efficient mean to keep good employees stay in ISS.

Very few employees in ISS with an immigrant background rise to a management position. Today, about 10% of the managers in ISS have immigrant background and this is the situation that ISS wants to change with their apprenticeship programme.

The organisation has four management levels:

1. top management: 10% has immigrant background (the Chief Executive of ISS is originally from the Netherlands)
2. regional directors: 1 out of 70 are of immigrant origin
3. customers' boss: a manager on this level has 10 managers under him-/herself. On this level five managers have immigrant origin
4. partly manager/partly manual worker: On this level 10% of the service managers (100% management) and 28% of the supervisors are New Danes (up to 50% management).

## **Image**

Another reason is that ISS traditionally has had a bad image. The image of ISS has been that it is a cleaning company, and cleaning is work that has low prestige in society and in the labour market. There are many immigrants among the employees because native Danes don't want to do this work. 4000 of the employees in ISS have immigrant background. This makes 40% of the work force. 90 % of them are from non-Western countries and 90 % are first generation immigrants. In addition, there is a turnover rate of 50%, which is not an unusual phenomenon in this sector. Most of the workers with immigrant background come from Turkey but there are also many workers from Poland, Pakistan, Thailand and Somalia.

Raising workers with immigrant background to management positions also has a political aspect by contributing to secure social cohesion.

## **The main barriers**

The first step in the efforts of recruiting more managers with immigrant background was to identify the main barriers and to find ways to overcome these. ISS has investigated own organisation's structure and culture to identify the barriers that workers with immigrant background aspiring to management positions meet. ISS has also reflected on what "manager potential" really means, and if this is complementary with the composition of the existing work force, the aim of having 300 managers with immigrant background by 2011 and the necessary competences required from a manager.

ISS have identified the main barriers to be

- lack of sufficient language skills; the workers often do not master Danish well enough
- managers' tendency to hire new managers that resemble themselves; this implies that native Danes are likely to recruit other native Danes
- customers' reactions; managers are afraid of customers' reactions to managers of immigrant origin
- minority behaviour; what happens to a person if you are always made aware of the fact that you come from a minority group? This is related to media's tendency to focus on criminality among immigrants etc.

The factors mentioned above are what ISS call the X-factor. The X-factor is what makes it so difficult for immigrants to become managers although they are predominant in lower level jobs in the organisation. The X-factor is the reason why immigrants have to make a bigger effort than the native population to fulfil their aspirations.

ISS has gathered and structured their experience and reflections concerning managers with immigrant background:

- they have typically not attended to standard management programmes
- the drop-out rate among new Danes on management programmes is higher than among native Danes

- most managers of immigrant background have no prior education – (this is also the case for native Danish managers at a low level)
- ISS lacks an answer as to how to detect new Danes with manager potential
- a new Dane has to be very talented to be identified as a potential manager
- ISS has decided to focus on employees that have the right personal qualifications whether or not they have a formal educational background, and irrespective of their language skills.

### **How ISS is going to achieve its goal: The ISS apprenticeship programme**

There are several training programmes in ISS to qualify and recruit managers. Among those programmes is ISS apprenticeship, a training programme developed by ISS to qualify new Danes as managers. Before the training programme starts, the organisation searches to find employees that could be potential, future managers whether or not they have the obvious, required educational or linguistic competences or background.

The training consists of six of weeks of education alongside an experienced manager, a master. The master is never the worker's own closest superior. The masters are selected by the managers above them in the hierarchy and the masters are trained and prepared for the task.

Employees can apply to take part in the programme, but most of them are asked by their superior. Being recruited by a superior implies recognition and an appreciation of the employee and is an important motivational factor. The worker receives his or her full salary during the training period. The participants in the training programme follow the master three days a week and go to normal class training two days a week. They are taught Danish, accountancy, conflict solving, communication skills, management skills, digital competences, etc. They also practice Danish one hour every day with their master.

At the end of the training period there is a final evaluation. During the final evaluation the participants are also asked to reflect upon the question whether they really want to become a manager. If the answer to this is "no", they can go back to their old job. Nearly all participants want to become a leader after the programme. Only 2 out of 42 participants have preferred to stay with their old job. So far a bit more than 50% have actually started in a manager's position. ISS hopes to see this percentage rise to about 70% with time. It often takes several months from an employee has undergone the training until she finds or gets a manager's position.

The masters function as ambassadors. If a master says about an employee that she is good, it is easier for this person to get a better job.

All managers in ISS are being trained in diversity management. This training comprises awareness of diversity and non-discrimination. All who want to improve their Danish language skills may have language training.

The group of apprentices is gathered after the apprenticeship period has ended. This is important so that they can share their experiences and support each other. It is also important that the participants keep in touch with each other after the end of the apprenticeship in order to develop a job related network. New Danes often lack such networks and that is an obstacle for their developing a career since networks is one of the most important means to find a new job.

The HR-index is a tool to measure how managers in ISS perform, for example related to recruiting New Danes as managers. The managers are not entitled to bonuses if they don't reach their goals.

### **Experiences**

Since the autumn 2007, the number of managers with immigrant background has increased from 93 to 171 (April 2009). From having the attitude that candidates are "hard to find" ISS now has waiting lists of employees who want to participate in the apprenticeship programme. The reason for this is that managers see that it works, and that immigrant workers have been inspired to participate. It is also important that the participants' closest superiors have no extra expenses if a worker takes part in the programme. The financing of the participation is charged the top management's budget.

It is equally important that the top management supports the programme since this implies that the programme is rooted in the organisation.

ISS has experienced that the training programmes with employees of immigrant origin only are more efficient than courses with mixed participation (new Danes and native Danes). The feedback from the participants confirms that the participants feel more secure this way. They profit more from the training programme because they quit the "minority behaviour" that most of them have, either consciously or not, when they are together with native Danes. They are less anxious to make a fool of themselves and less embarrassed because of poor Danish skills.

Except from classes in Danish language skills, this training programme is identical to the training in programmes with mixed participation where 90% of the participants are native Danes.

According to the two participants and managers to be in the apprenticeship programme that the M2M team met in Copenhagen, language is the main key to entering the labour market and to developing a career when you are an immigrant. They were asked several questions, for instance if being selected to the apprenticeship programme had altered their relationship with their work mates in any way. This seemed not to be the case. It also seemed quite clear that setting up programmes that allow employees to acquire new competences and to make a career in the organisation or enterprise, is an efficient way of developing loyal employees.

So far the apprenticeship programme has only been implemented in Denmark and not in the other countries where ISS is represented.

