

C. J., Business Unit at Westminster Adult Education Services

During the M2M study visit in London in June 2009, the project team met with a C. J. from Westminster Adult Education Services (WAES) who is now in a middle management position as head of the Business Unit, and heard his story about how he got to a management position being an immigrant.

As many other students from outside Europe, C. J., coming from the Caribbean to the UK in 2001, had problems obtaining a student visa.. He also experienced that there was no agreement in the Commonwealth that gave students coming from the Commonwealth area any special funding to study in the UK. Consequently, he had to finance his studies with what work he could find. He worked for some time in a Call Centre where they selected employees who had manager potential for internal training. But since C. J. stayed in the UK on a student visa, he could not take part in any internal training because he might not be allowed to stay in the country.

When he had his diploma, he applied for more than 100 jobs but he never got as far as to a job interview. To be employed he needed a work permit and that might take time. He worked for some time on construction sites, cleaned windows etc while he continued to apply for jobs. Finally he was called from a college, and he and another person were invited to a job interview. The other job seeker was a British person with a lot of job experience and C. J. didn't think he would get the job. But he got the job, a combination of business lecturer and a supervisor position.

The job at the college opened up a lot of doors for him; he worked in Britain and during this job he also got into a network for Black professionals. More information about the network can be found at www.nbm.org.uk The main aim of this network was to get as many Non-white persons into management positions as possible and to prepare them for management. The network for Black professionals is a governmental funded network.

The network gave him and other trainees a lot of training and all trainees had a mentor. Having a mentor at the college could also open doors for him. The network trains the mentors and the mentors are not necessarily from ethnic minorities themselves. The network will tell members about positions they can apply for, it pays for the interview expenses and also for a mock interview in order to be well prepared for the real interview and it namedrops members to colleges looking for new employees.

After 18 months at the college, C. J. wanted to move on and a friend gave him the advert for the job at Westminster Adult Education Service. He got the job but again the work permit became an issue. The old work permit belonged to the college and Westminster Adult Education Service would have to get him a new work permit.

According to C. J., the lesson learned is:

- If you are a migrant, you should try to find a person that is like you and understands the challenges
- If you are a migrant, it will work out if the employer is willing to help you
- A vacant job has to be advertised so all possible job seekers from the UK and the rest of Europe can apply for it. if they still cannot find anyone, they will employ someone from outside Europe