

# Points of view from Denmark

## - meeting in London, Great Britain

### **Diversification in definition of target group and initiatives**

Donald Lush, WAES, told about the necessity to hunt up the experiences and results with different efforts for different target groups to be able to do better, to adjust the methods to specific needs and resources. One question he raised was why the drop out rate among black is higher than among the population in general. As WAES demonstrated, we need to know how the group of pupils is combined and how they can be described in relation to preconditions, resources and needs. From Norway we were told that relatively many immigrants are dyslexic.

“Trust, opportunity, patience”, said Mario from Leith’s Corporate Catering

“Networking, mentoring, listening”, said Gilbert from Shell, who also stressed individual behaviour - not cultural behaviour - as his focus of attention in his personal development and successful carrier.

Once again, there is no single tool, no single method that fits all immigrants. To be able to grasp these differences in advices, experiences, documented successes, we need to be much more aware of the offsetting needs, motivations and resources. Diversity management must be seen in a much broader sense and not only in relation to ethnicity, gender, religious orientation etc.

These testimonials gave us new perspectives and new examples to the fact that we continuously need to refine our way of perceiving the very diverse group of immigrants. We need to track down the resources, the barriers, the preconditions related to smaller and smaller groups – moving towards more and more individually adjusted efforts. Some methods are shown to be very effective – to some target groups and not to others. What is the triggering element? What is the common characteristic among the people to whom it shows effective? Questions we need to ask ourselves in every development of new projects and in every evaluation of running projects.

### **Catching rabbits**

In the presentation of the work at WAES we heard about the continuously changing financial situation and the continuously changing demands as to what goals to obtain when it comes to the services defined by the local authority. Policies change. Target groups are changing – new immigrant groups arrive, the old ones have reached to new levels of integration demanding new efforts and renewed attention.

Once again a reconfirmation: the area of integration of immigrants into the society and into the labour market is in continuously movement and process. Following, we do need to keep in shape to catch rabbits!!! But which ones? As many as possible? Just enough? – to do what? – to survive? – to be able to develop new ideas and new giving relations? Only the ones fitting to our defined values and mission? And what does it mean to our brand?

This rabbit chase we often detect in our discussions in relation to specific projects and services as well as when something new has happened at the political or socio economic agenda.

## **Organizational development**

Due to a growing priority towards business customers (among other reasons), WAES is establishing a new department or centre within the organisation. Chris Joseph told about the need of a new type of organisation that could address and hold two different target groups: business customers and the citizens in the local community. Therefore, two different products are on the agenda: 'business solutions' and 'services'.

We have met the same need for changing the organisation in language schools in Denmark. They are met with new demands from a kind of customer that take ever bigger parts of the manpower – the business customers. At the same time, they get fewer and fewer customers – newly arrived immigrants with prepaid tuition - via the municipalities.

In this process, themes like why and how both being a teacher and a salesman, branding the organisation to these two customers with diverging needs and demands are to be dealt with.

## **Network – a win win situation**

Chris from WAES told how he had got his job at WAES via the Network for black professionals. Here he got informed about the vacant position and he was counselled as to how to apply for the position. The network works a bit like a mentor relation. One person takes care of another and helps and guides. The network is established to help education institution to recruit among black people.

It was inspiring to hear how companies – in relation to their equal policies and diversity policies - see it as an advantage to have this direct contact to certain target groups. And how individuals in certain groups see it as an advantage to act as each others network and communication organ.

We got inspired to try to establish a network between professionals with immigrant background within the technical schools and business schools. The Danish Government has put up a target that four percent of the employees in the public sector should be immigrants and descendants from third countries. To reach that goal, the schools need help to get in contact with this group of potential employee. At the same time, and after inspiration from London, this network can also be of help to the immigrants. They can be each others door openers, they can guide each other as to how to enter these working places when they feel their ethnical or cultural background to be a kind of barrier.

## **Handling discrimination**

In Great Britain, discrimination is on the agenda in a much different manner than in Denmark. Here you find policies, restrictions, tools to prevent and handle it. And you find a relatively open communication about discrimination and an involvement from the labour marked parties.

In Denmark, discrimination does not take much space on the labour market agenda. We do have a complaint body for discrimination at national level. It does work, but the capacity is limited and the communication about its existence is still way too little. In addition, none of the labour marked parties are involved. As a consequence, ownership, commitment and involvement are likewise not sufficient.

When visiting the companies, very few of them – especially the small and medium sized ones - know how to cope with discrimination if they experience it or if they find themselves in a

conflicting situation with ethnic minorities involved. To people who feel discriminated at, it can be very difficult to find help and to feel taken seriously.

This theme needs to be taken much more seriously in the public and political debate. Discrimination does exist – also in Denmark. Ethnic minorities do get discriminated against, companies does discriminate. At the same time, some companies do their best to prevent and tackle discrimination even though not in a sufficient manner, and some people do feel discriminated against even though it does not necessarily have anything to do with discrimination. All scenarios exist, all scenarios are possible and all scenarios have to be dealt with.