

Black Leadership Initiative and Senior Leadership Development Participant Tracking Project

The aim of the project was to gather tracking data on the career development of Black and minority ethnic managers (BME) within the further education (FE) sector who had formerly participated in the two major positive action programmes, namely the Black Leadership Initiative (BLI) and the Senior Leadership Development Programme (SLDP).

The Black Leadership Initiative

The BLI was established following the report of the Commission for Black Staff in Further Education which identified the significant under-representation of Black staff at all levels in FE. The BLI is a positive action scheme that seeks to redress the balance by offering opportunities to develop BME staff as leaders in FE.

The Black Leadership Initiative (BLI) has three main strands of activity: mentoring, secondment and work shadowing:

Mentoring

Mentoring partnerships match BLI participants with experienced senior college managers from other colleges. Mentors offer tailored one-to-one support designed to empower the participant. Mentees are assisted to identify appropriate development goals and to achieve them.

Secondment

Secondment partnerships allow participants to spend from one term to one year in a middle/senior management role at an FE college or related institution. Secondees are matched to a role that will provide them with the experience they require.

Work Shadowing

Work shadowing opportunities are offered with OFSTED and with local Learning and Skills Council offices. Each shadowing opportunity lasts between one and two weeks and enables participants to see how a key sector organisation relates to FE colleges and also to gain some valuable knowledge and experience.

In addition, the BLI has run career development workshop days that assist participants in key career development activities.

The Senior Leadership Development Programme

The Senior Leadership Development Programme (SLDP) is a personal and professional development programme aimed at people seeking to become principals and chief executives in the further education sector. The programme seeks to improve the calibre and capability of educational leadership across the sector. It focuses on the interrelationship between practice and theory. It is a modular programme with residential and review modules and also includes an 'executive exchange' work shadowing element. The duration of the programme is normally 12 months.



Methodology

Tailored questionnaires were designed for each programme and sent, in May 2005, to the 100 BME managers who had participated within the BLI since its inception in 2003 and the 8 BME managers who had participated in the SLDP since its move to the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL) in 2004.

The questionnaires were designed to find out the level and type of job the individual had prior to their participation in either of these two programmes and the level and type of job they now possessed. Participants were asked the extent to which they believed that their participation in either of these programmes accounted for any changes in level and type of job since they had undertaken the BLI or the SLDP.

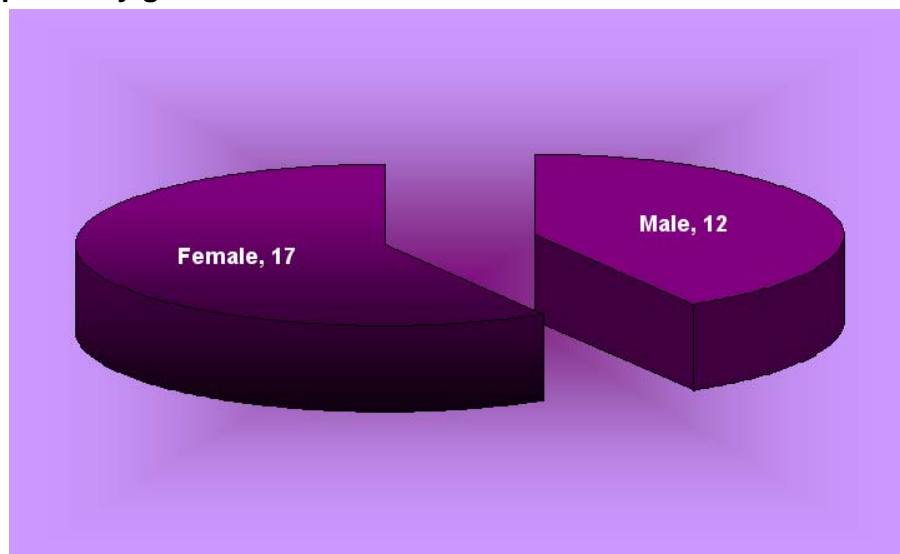
Completed questionnaires were received from 29 participants. Twenty-six of these were participants on one or more BLI programme and 3 were SLDP participants.

Results

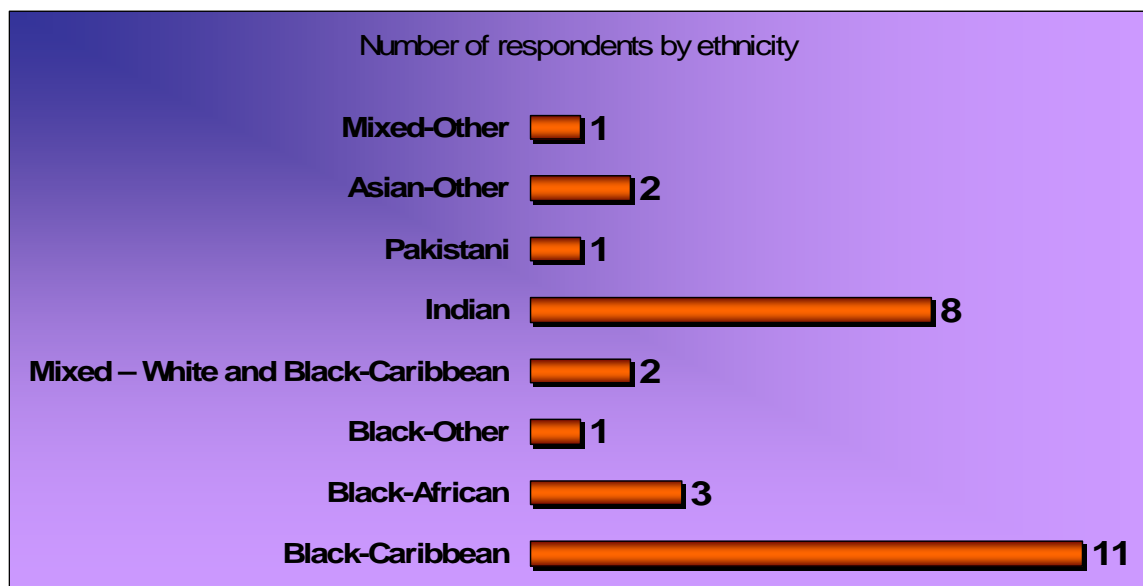
The results of the project mirrored its purpose. Since the key aim was to enable the tracking of participants' careers, a spreadsheet has been created containing the appropriate information. In addition, however, the gathering of this information has enabled an initial analysis of the impact of the BLI and SLDP on participants' careers, fulfilling the second element of the project's purpose. Key data from this analysis is provided below.

Key data

Respondent profile by gender

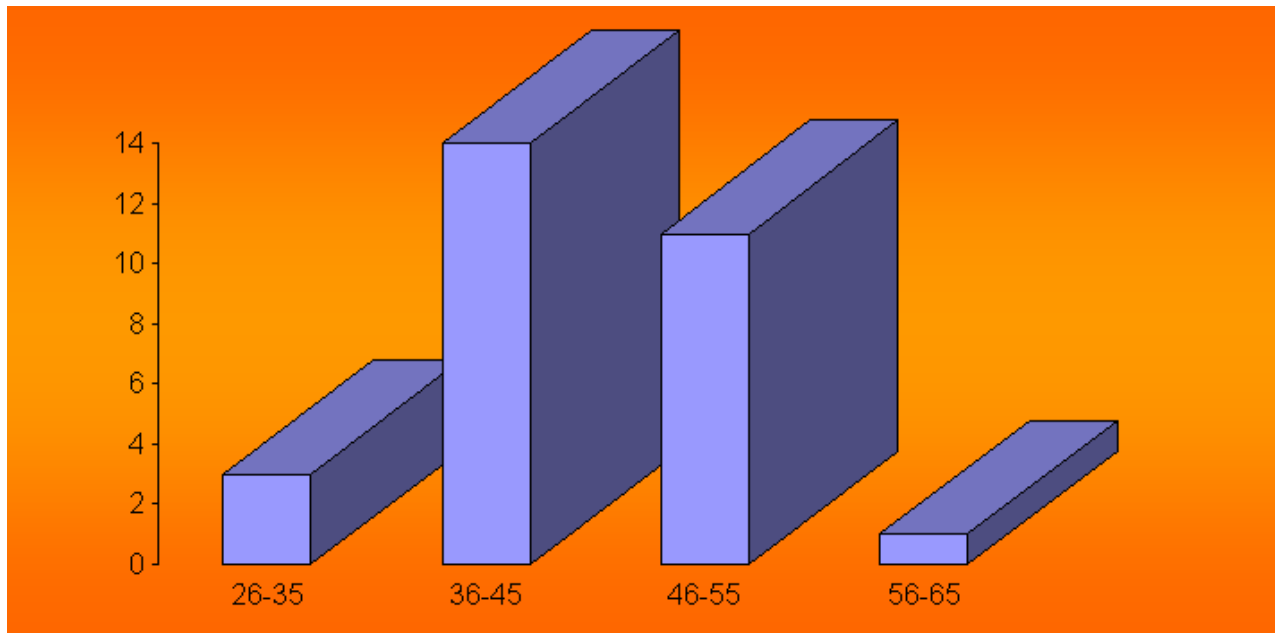


Respondent profile by ethnicity



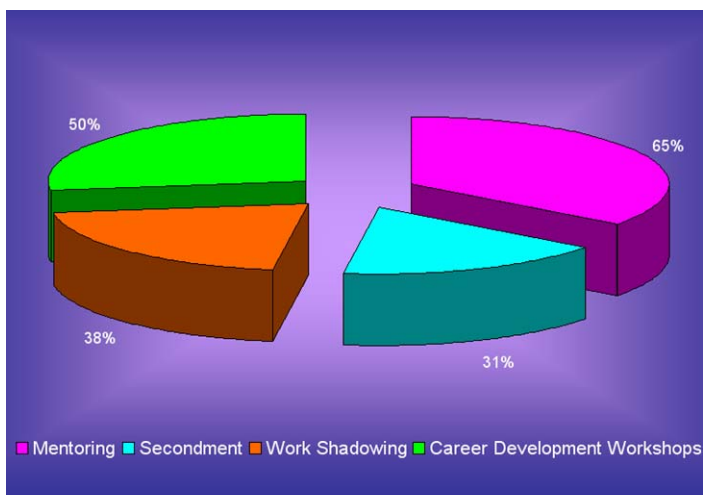
Key data cont'd

Respondents age profile



Programme undertaken

Of the two programmes being considered, only the BLI has different strands to its programme. The chart below shows the percentage of respondents who had been/are involved in the four main strands of the BLI. The figures overlap due to some respondents participating in more than one project.



Career changes

Sixty-two per cent of respondents had experienced some kind of job change. Of those respondents, 82 per cent had experienced a promotion or job enlargement (62 per cent

promotion; 19 per cent job enlargement). Forty-four per cent had moved to a new organisation (either within the college sector or outside of it).

Contribution of the BLI

Eighty-eight per cent of respondents considered that the BLI had made a 'great' or 'positive' contribution to their career change (69 per cent 'positive'; 19 per cent 'great').

Qualitative responses

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide textual support to their responses to a number of questions. These were the questions that asked whether the BLI/SLDP had made a contribution (or not) to their career change, whether the BLI/SLDP had made any other contribution to their career, and the extent to which the respondent believed they would have any impact in the future.

Some respondents felt that their participation in the programme had led to their increased exposure within their own organisations and outside of them, thus potentially placing them in a better position for any promotion/job change opportunities that arose. Related to this was an often-expressed view that participation had led to excellent networking opportunities, again within and outside of their organisations.

Some participants felt that they had benefited from the opportunity to observe, work with and meet with members of their organisation's senior management team. This had enabled them to develop a better insight into issues at that level within organisations and external issues that affect their organisations. Thus it had enabled them to look at issues with a broader perspective. Again, working with the senior management team had also increased their exposure and provided opportunities for networking.

Participants also referred to the increased confidence and self-esteem that participation had given them. This increased confidence represented itself in their increased willingness to discuss issues with senior colleagues, increased confidence in their own abilities and increased confidence to seek more senior positions.

Respondents also reported an increased confidence in expressing themselves since the programme had left them feeling less 'isolated' - some respondents reported that, previously to their participation in one of the programmes, they had felt isolated and alone. Some participants had met many others who had shared similar experiences to them and had gained strength from that.

Many participants believed that their skills, knowledge and experience had also improved through participation, thus making them more attractive to potential employers both internally and externally. Participants also reported that participation had caused them to focus more clearly on their career goals and what they wanted to achieve. They felt more able to focus on doing the right things to advance their career. Many also now had increased aspirations to achieve more with their career.

Recommendations

- The recommendations of the report are concerned with taking forward the tracking data project. In this respect, the recommendations are as follows:*
- An attempt should be made to improve the response rate for returning the questionnaires. The number returned represents a reasonable response rate but the project will benefit from this being increased. This could be achieved by using more 'face-to-face' opportunities to request participation in the project where these opportunities arise. Since this research project will be revisited over time there is no reason why more respondents should not be sought.*
- For existing participants in the tracking project, a revised questionnaire should be issued to them 12 months after the initial questionnaire was issued. This questionnaire can be shorter and should focus on changes in participants' careers since the completion of the previous questionnaire.*
- The questionnaire can then be issued at 12-monthly intervals and a profile built up of the changes in participants' careers over time.*

The full report is available on the Network for Black Managers' Web site at:
www.nbm.org.uk.

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