

Harmesh Manghra



Speaking Hindi, Harmesh Manghra, retired Inspector of Education, recounts the various stages of his career, including his time with Birmingham Industrial Language Training Services in the early 1980s. Part of the "Multilingual Memories: Recollecting Birmingham ILT" project.

Hello, my name is Harmesh Manghra. I came to this country in 1977. So, I was born in Calcutta. There I studied Bengali from fourth to sixth class. But I am a Punjabi, my parents were Punjabi. So, after sixth class I came to Punjab. So there I took admission in a Punjabi school where I got the opportunity to study Sanskrit - till eighth, ninth, tenth class. After that I graduated, in which my optional subject was Hindi, after that I did an MA in English Literature and I came here to the UK.

So after working for two years in the post office etc I did teacher training, but I did not get a job. At that time inflation was very high and people were not getting jobs, so - - during that time someone saw my curriculum vitae and called me and said that we need people like you, because at that time the government had a scheme that the minority ethnic employees, the workers, should be taught useful English so that their productivity is good, they do their work properly and don't waste their employer's work. So I worked there for two years from 1 January 1983 to December 1984; so our job there was to go to the factories and first see what the work is, then we made a scheme accordingly and taught the students.

So in this way, a kind of foundation was laid there, so I have progressed a lot from there. I would like to tell you a little about it. So after that I worked at Garrett's Green College for two years. Our aim there was to teach English to the minority groups who had come from other countries and give them vocational skills training. So our aim was to educate

as many people as possible in the colleges here and along with that, make the colleges also make various changes and facilities to encourage minority groups and communities in.

After that, from January 1, 1987 to April 1996, I worked at Tile Hill College, Coventry. And in that, I did the same work in Coventry as I had done in Birmingham - so I opened many centres there too, taught English to people there, then I taught people in colleges, we created facilities for them in colleges. We used the method of creating college facilities. So during this time I was seconded for two days - it was a project of the National Further Education Unit, Staff Development for the Multi-Cultural Society, the aim of which was to train colleges and training institutions so that they could understand the minority communities, what their needs are, what their problems are, and make programmes for them.

I was very lucky to get that opportunity - because I got the opportunity to visit seventy colleges in ten local authorities. After that I got an appointment in Walsall Adult Education Service where I was the programme manager - there too the aim was to find out how to bring in the minority communities, how to design programmes for them, and how to train the staff. With this in mind we opened IT computer centres in twenty-five centres and trained people; then we started family learning and ESOL classes in many schools. During this time, my local authority, Walsall, sponsored me for management training, so I first completed a Diploma in Management Studies and then a Master of Business Administration degree from Birmingham City University.

After doing that, I got the opportunity to be the acting principal there for six months. After that, I got a chance to work in a new government organisation - it was an inspectorate - to inspect and evaluate the quality of publicly funded courses and training. So, after working there for six years, I became Her Majesty's Inspector at Ofsted, which is an independent body that inspects schools, colleges and children's centres in education.

So I got the opportunity to lead more than 400 inspections. I led them and my team went with me and I got that opportunity. What happened with that was that I was fortunate enough to go to various parts of England and prepare a report after talking to the managers and students there.

So in the same way, when Covid was going on in 2020, I retired from there and went to Sandwell College which was our local college - I was the Director of Quality and Change Enhancement there. So, after two years and three months, when their inspection went well, I retired from there. Then I was a Governor at Leicester College for a year. That experience was very good for me.

So after that I got a job here locally. In Birmingham there is a local community training provider, the local government provides funded training there - so they told me that they needed me, so these days I am the executive chairman of that group, and we'll see what happens for a while. First of all this has been the mission of my life - even after retiring

twice, the mission of my life is how to give opportunities to the people who leave their world, their home, their country and come here, how to guide them - so when I get some spare time, I help people.

Thank you