

ILTS- Training for equal opportunities

Introduction

A number of strategies have been put forward in the fight against racial inequalities and for achieving equality of opportunities for black communities in Britain. Examples include; campaigning on a single issue (eg anti-deportation), taking part in spontaneous urban disturbances (substantial aid programme has been announced by the central government for Lozells/Handsworth since the disturbances last September), community self help, trade unions and political actions, changing the legislation, and finally training and education. The purpose of this essay is to focus on the last of these strategies only as space does not allow an in-depth analysis of all different approaches.

I shall consider the effectiveness of Industrial language training services (ILTS) in promoting access and equality of opportunities for its target group since its inception in 1974. ILTS is the only nationally funded training scheme that develops and deliver training in equal opportunities through a network of local units in all the local authorities with significant size of black/Asian population. ILTS reflects the society and other institutions in the sense that it is not a monolithic organisation and therefore it includes a range of views and philosophies that is reflected in the type of training it offers. An examination of its development, historically provides an interesting insights into how the needs of the black community have been perceived by those who fall into the general category of anti racist.

Earlier this year the Manpower Services Commision (MSC) published its final report of the review of industrial language training services. This is very much a report by 'outsiders' about the management and policy issues effecting ILTS rather than a detailed analysis of the effectiveness of its training provision.

This essay is intended,in part, to fill This gap. It begins by discussing the economic and political context in which ILT scheme was established. It then, traces the development of ILTS training in order to evaluate their effectiveness. The essay also attempts to locate the factors which gave rise to the adoption of particular training philosophy. The last section of the essay will discuss the role of the training in implementing equal opportunities policies within the workplace. This choice of topic for my second essay emerged from the issues raised in my

earlier essay. It is natural that having worked with Birmingham ILTS for the last seven years as a trainer in the areas of equal opportunities provision that I should take this opportunity to critically examine the effectiveness of the ILT scheme. The discussion also draws heavily on the experience of colleagues in the scheme, as well as various working papers, documents, and reports published by regional networks of ILTS. I have also used general current British and American literature on the theme of equal opportunities and anti racism training

Background to the establishment of ILTS.

ILTS was set up as a national organisation in 1974 with the aim of providing basic in-company English language training for workers for whom English was a second language. Those local authorities, with significant number of workers for whom English was a second language were encouraged to set up ILT units with the financial support being provided by section 11 of the local government act 1966. However, only a few local authorities responded, others preferred to offer some sort of English language classes for all ESOL speakers rather than specifically for those at work using.

A year later, in 1975 national centre for industrial language training (NCILT) was set up with funding provided by the department of employment with the aim of providing support and advice to individual units and the local authorities. By late 1978, partly as a result of some of the local authorities dragging their feet due to financial reasons (local authorities had to match Home Office's funding by 50%) a coordinated national scheme to be funded under section 11 arrangement would not be possible because of the very bureaucratic method of administering such funding . There was, therefore a need to move away from a bureaucratic local authorities led "red tape" driven scheme to one where new initiatives could be developed in response to the changing need, the responsibility for managing and funding the scheme was taken over by the emerging Manpower Services Commission (MSC).

There was also the debate about whether ILTS delivered education or training. As education is said to have general long-term goals and training is associated with specific short-term objectives then it was more important and appropriate for ILTS to be funded by the MSC rather than section 11. The former was in the business of employment and training and could therefore provide greater scope and flexibility for the ILTS.

At present ILTS have a budget of around £2.5 million for 30 units employing about 150 training staff. There are additional admin and technical support staff attached to most of the units. All the ILT units are in those local authorities that have significant number of black/Asian (second language speaking residents within the boundaries. This includes London and the South East, the West Midlands and parts of East Midlands, Lancashire, Greater Manchester and, Yorkshire.

As mentioned earlier the original remit of ILT was to provide in-work language

training for those workers who spoke English as their second language. That remained the focus of ILT training until very recently. In fact, within the scheme, there are certain units who still regard language training as a priority. What was the rationale for setting up ILT as a national scheme? And more importantly, why only recently in the mid 70's, given black workers (with language difficulties) had already been settled in Britain since the early 50s? I hope to take up these questions a little later. There is no doubt how the government saw the existence of ILTS;

".....These decisions (to provide 100% funding from the MSC) reflects the importance the government attached to the improvement of industrial language training service and its recognition of the contribution the service makes to racial equality's policies....."

(John Grant- parliamentary Under Secretary of state to employment).

The government clearly saw ILTS as an integral part of its racial equality thrust. It was thought that the means of achieving racial equalities was by having black Asian workforce competent in English. The extent and the nature of discrimination against black community in Britain was beginning to pile up. For example the PEP now PSI survey has shown that black workers had the worst jobs, were paid the lowest and, worked in antisocial hours. ILT scheme only became a national service with the aim of overcoming disadvantages faced by black workers in the mid 70's even though migrant workers (with language support needs) had been employed in the key manufacturing sector since the mid 50's in significant numbers. Unfortunately this was at a time when the recession was beginning to bite and had a significant impact on the these workers' employment prospects.

Once out of work, these black workers faced an uphill struggle as shown by the 1974 PEP report. For example, 46% of black job applicants inquiring at the factory gates were discriminated against, whilst in the case of written applications for advanced non manual jobs the figure was 30% and for those answering advertisements by telephone for skilled jobs 20% were discriminated against. Other studies in the 70s confirmed this tendency. Furthermore, since then, there is nothing to suggest that the situation faced by black workers has improved even when language was not a problem;

'.....there is no evidence of a significant reduction in discrimination where 2nd and 3rd generations (of black job seekers) are concerned. Industrial tribunal cases often concern young black people born and educated in this country..... with the same education background and qualification as their white peers face much the same sort of discrimination as their parents did....." (Ollerearnshaw S. 1983)

For over a decade, with a wealth of evidence to the contrary, ILTS

has naively believed that the main obstacle in overcoming racial inequalities faced by black workers was their inability to articulate adequately. When evidence of the type mentioned above was beginning to be accepted by ILTS, the way forward was thought to be to make white managers, supervisors and trade unionists aware of the level of disadvantage faced by the black workers.

To go back to the question of why ILT scheme was only set up in the mid 70's and not in the mid 50's when the demand for language training was real and much greater than the 70's. It cannot be attributed to the government's claim that they were genuinely committed to improved communications at work, because if that had been the case then ILT scheme would have been set up in the 50's to help settle new arrivals to a strange country. Some would argue that the section 11 provision is an indication of the government's commitment to improving communications. (see my second essay on Section 11 for further discussion)

Section 11 funding was not introduced up to a decade after the first settlers had arrived and that there is no indication that section 11 was ever used in any significant way to provide language training for second language speaking workers in employment. One must look to other possible factors that may have influenced the central government to fund the national scheme to improve communications at the place of work.

In the early and mid 70's there was a growth in militancy amongst black workers up and down the country. This was in response to lower wages and generally poor working conditions they experienced compared with the white workers. This led to a number of small, but politically very significant, strikes organised by black workers in the face of opposition from both management and white trade union members and full-time officials. The effects of these strikes, especially in areas in East Midlands (Mansfield Hosiery and Imperial Typewriter) was to force the trade unionists to review their attitudes towards black workers' working conditions and wage levels. It would appear certain employers also began to alter their attitudes in relation to black workers working conditions.

Earlier in the late 1960's, both the TUC and CBI were criticised by the Home Affairs Select Committee on immigration for not doing enough in relation to the problems faced by black workers in employment. The CBI, together with the TUC had campaigned against the introduction of legislation to combat racial discrimination on the grounds that it would interfere with normal industrial relations.

During this period trade unions were also beginning to be alarmed at the growth of ultra right wing cells in factories spreading propaganda against not just black workers but also against the "communist" trade unionists. TUC and its affiliated unions began a programme of education for members to counter the arguments of some of the neo-fascist groups. By 1977, TUC was fully supporting the ILT scheme to provide education and training at the place of work. There were other factors which created a right climate for ILT to be introduced. For example, in

1976 Race Relations Act, besides establishing a distinction between direct and indirect discrimination for the first time, also introduced the concept of positive action. This enabled employers to provide language training for specific groups of workers.

Many have argued that the introduction of ILT scheme was a part of government's (both Labour and Conservative) strategy of managing, rather than combating, racial discriminations. For example, on the one hand the government had introduced a series of 'racist' immigration controls, whilst on the other, funding was being made available to assist black people to settle (assimilate) in Britain. It had helped to organise, firstly Commonwealth Immigrants Advisory Council and later the National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants. The Race Relations Acts and the creation of the CRE (even though ineffective in many respect) is part of the acceptable face of managing racism.

The establishment of ILT scheme can be explained, according to an early NCILT working paper in terms of;

".....a response to governmental guilt (justified) in lack of action on integration of immigrant population....." (P Martin 1978)

ILTS provision in the early stages

Up till very recently ILT training has been based on the 'deficit' model. This model focussed on black/ Asian second language speaking individuals in employment who lacked jobs related English language and communication skills. These deficiencies in black workers (in practice Asian workers) were identified, by not only by the managers and supervisors but also by ILT trainers using very simple (and questionable) communication assessment tools. Very rarely were black workers asked about their perception and needs. In the early period of the ILT scheme improvements in job effectiveness and productivity was the main aim of the training. Promotion of equal opportunities or better employment prospects for Black Asian workers was not raised or discussed by either ILT tutors or by the management.

The focus of the ILT scheme, then was seen as one of providing language skills which would thereby improve migrant workers' job effectiveness and open up better job opportunities. It was thought that improvement for migrant workforce would come not, from any structural or policy changes in the organisation itself but rather from the adaption of the existing system by migrant second language speaking workers. The assessment of the organisation's internal communication system that was undertaken by ILT trainers was not with the view to change it but as a means of enabling migrant workers to understand it and hopefully conform to it. One therefore, finds examples of exercises which put the responsibility for change on the shoulders of migrant workers only.

For example, Tom Jupp, who was the director of NCILT, explains in his book "Industrial English" that trainers should;

“.....tell Asian students that..... English people may feel angry if someone speaks other languages in front of thembecause they (might) think they're being talked about.....”

Therefore the Asian workforce was taught;

“.....a simple formula to use to let native English speaking people know when speaking to a fellow Asian in a foreign language ...Excuse me speaking my language.....” (Jupp and Hodlin” 1975)

The standard ILT training package included training sessions for white managers, foremen and supervisors as well as trade union reps. Often referred to as “Background seminars” the training for white workers in position of authority would initially be seen as a backup for the language training being provided to the migrant workers at the same time. The context of this training normally included presenting stereotypical information of Asian migrant workers both in their countries of origin and in the UK on. These seminars often over-emphasised on the differences between migrant and white host communities.

By the beginning of 1980s some sections of ILTS were beginning to question the value of ‘information giving’ sessions;

“.....it was becoming clear that in certain workplaces particularly in the northwest and the north information based training did not always lead to long term changes in workplace policy, practice and attitudes....” (A Murray and R Chandola 1981)

The same tutors go on to argue that better communications should not be the main objective of ILT training. They mention South Africa and some rural American southern states as an example where;

“.....effective communications has not led to good relations between races (and) there is no necessary connection between good communications and good race relations.....” (A Murray and R Chandola)

ILT in the 80's

In the early 1980's ILTS involvement in the private manufacturing sector had declined due to the recession, which had led to significant redundancies amongst the migrant Asian workers. As often is the case, research, development and training budgets are often cut as a result of recession. This meant limited training programme which some of the ILT units continued to offer for the migrant workers were often delivered in workers's own time before or after their shifts.

More and more ILT units began to diversify their training offer. The focus of the training was beginning to shift from language training for migrant workers in the manufacturing sector to cultural awareness training for white managers and supervisors as well as for service delivery staff in the public and statutory sector. These included local authorities departments such as housing, social services, libraries, environmental health, health service and civil service as well

as the voluntary sector such as the Citizens Advice bureaux. Black and Asian communities were still perceived to be a problem by staff working in these public sector organisations such as health care worker, the housing officer or a job centre clerk.

As an example of how the focus of ILT training changed from 'background informational sessions' to an equal opportunities training mode, I would like to discuss the training carried out by Birmingham ILTS (BILTS) for Birmingham Housing Department.

In 1983 Birmingham Housing department identified the training need for its staff under the title of "working with ethnic minorities". BILTS ran a number of courses for staff with appreciable regular contact with Asian migrant clients. Some of the participants volunteered themselves for the training, others were nominated by their managers, some unfortunately, against their will.

The aims of the training was;

".....to help participants develop skills, knowledge, and awareness to ensure a fair and effective service to clients and members of the public from ethnic minorities groups."

The programme covered the following areas;

- awareness of housing department policies on equal opportunities' for example the policy on racial harassment
- awareness of what is involved in communicating in another language
- appreciation of other cultures and lifestyles

BILTS carried a review of the impact of its equal opportunities training programmes with Birmingham Housing Department at the end of the first year. It also took into account the review of the broader developments in equal opportunities training generally nationally as well as the impact of the anti racist training on ILT staff themselves. BILTS concluded that culture/ information based training probably did more harm than good in providing a platform for better understanding the needs of the migrant communities for the service providers.

it was decided to establish the principles of training first.

As a result, the training programmes were redesigned in terms of delivery (from lectures and talks to case study and group work approach, building on the existing knowledge of individual members of the group) and context ('soft' information on culture was dropped in favour of making available, if needed, information on legislation, policy and the extent of racial inequalities. It was also agreed to establish a clear understanding and expectations of the programmes by

both, the participants and trainers

The following objectives were added to the the previous model, as follows;

- awareness of the anti black attitudes in society and in institutions.
- awareness of the way that accepted customs and practice in an organisation can give rise to discrimination against black people.

It was interesting that during the pre-course meetings the question of policy and legislation was seldom raised, even to the present day most staff explain their 'training needs' in terms of understanding ethnic minority culture and to less extent communications. Normally the only people to raise the issue of policy and legal requirement were the senior officers who, unfortunately, very rarely took part in the training itself. In the second lot of courses in 1985, a good part of the morning sessions were used up to clear up any misunderstanding about the aims of the course between the tutors (awareness of white housing offices' attitudes towards black clients) and most of the participants' (information on the lifestyle of their black clients).

Whilst ILT tutors were reluctant to provide detailed information on the culture of black communities, enough information, which was relevant to their needs, was available. As peppard says;

".....The importance of information giving should never be underestimated. But the choice of factual material must be carefully made and priority given to materials most relevant to the jobs needs of the trainees." (N Peppered 1983 page 156)

I mentioned here the need to have a sensible approach to the type and amount of 'cross cultural information' because other trainers in this area who were following the Katzian 'Racism Awareness Training' (RAT) were very opposed to providing any information at all. I shall come back to the RAT later but first there are some observations to be made of the project with the housing department.

Firstly all the courses were of two days' duration plus an additional (optional at first) third day which came after a gap of about two to three weeks. The third day was optional to the two days of cultural awareness training. It was felt that the third day would be offered to those who were interested in exploring the issue of race related policy for their specific department. However, as the focus of the two day block training changed from cultural awareness to equal opportunities (Race) the third day was no longer optional but was considered essential and integral part the two days training. It needs to be stressed that even at this stage, though more work was done on policy issues the emphasis was still on changing the trainees' attitudes. As the courses progressed, the trainers felt that was an unrealistic aim given the shortage of time and the relatively junior position of the course participants. Most of the courses were now organised on a residential basis and there was a noticeable difference between course members' level of

participation and engagement on these courses compared with the few non residential courses which were still being delivered. On the non residential courses there was a much greater scope for distraction from the housing department's day-to-day problems.

Secondly, though the project had the full backing of the senior managers, they were not, unfortunately, involved in the delivery of it. The housing race relations advisor and a member of the training section were present all the time. Normally a senior member of the management team was present to 'kick off' and to 'blow the final whistle' for the course. This token participation by the senior management meant that there was only limited impact of the training as all the objectives of the training could not be met, as Chester illustrates;

"....vigorous and continuous endorsement by top executives and organisational managers can help remind everyone of the high priority the programme has for the organisation itself. This cannot be accomplished by the mere window dressing of having a highly placed authority come to kick off dinner and then fade.
(Chester 1976)

Thirdly, the groups tended to be very diverse in terms of their job roles and their level of responsibility. This meant that whilst some aspects of the training was generic for all participants there were areas which were not appropriate to all or were only marginally relevant to some.

Fourthly, the trade union viewpoint was missing from the entire project. It is felt necessary to involve them in any future programmes not because trade union representatives had developed good strategies for tackling racial inequalities (though some had) but because they are an important part of the policy making process in the department and because occasionally the positions they adopt (in protecting their members' terms and conditions of employment), can give rise to the creation of discriminatory practices which reinforce racial inequalities.

Fifthly, there was a debate as to whether the training ought to be compulsory or voluntary. Again if the organisation does not normally have a culture of comprehensive training programmes, by making race related training compulsory especially for employees who have not been involved in negotiating or planning it can create problems for the trainers;

"....If powerful white workers are not themselves involved in training we not only have a captive audience, but we have captive audience bound to resent the exercise of superior power that has defined them as the races problem. In such circumstances, trainers should expect resentment, resistance, apathy, potential withdrawal and attack. (Chester 1976 page 73)

This outcome was evident, not so much with the housing department's training but with other similar training offered to the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) Skill Centre staff at about the same time. At the end of 1984/85 training programme BILTS recommended that in order for the training to be effective

there was a need to start off by training elected members on the housing committee together with the senior management team. This recommendation was not, unfortunately accepted immediately by the senior offices until the beginning of this year when it was hoped to involve the senior staff in the process of examining current policies and practices. BILTS has now shifted the focus of the training from the attitude change model to an organisational change one.

As mentioned earlier, ILTS trainers themselves were becoming dissatisfied with the lack of progress with the training programme. Furthermore as the focus of the training is to change attitudes, it was impossible to evaluate the usefulness of the training. ILT scheme was beginning to learn from the vast experience of such training that had been going on since the 1970's;

Institutions are more than just the sum of all the individuals who work in it. What then is the role of training in providing equal opportunities to black communities in Britain? Chester discusses this role;

"Changes in individual racial attitudes develop as result for institutional change, not as a precursor of them. What does this mean for the trainers? At most, it suggests that if we lack the power, skills and the will to change the organisations and communities in which we work and play, all our other training, educational programmes are wasteful distractions. At least it suggests that a focus on organisational change must be part of some race training education programmes. But not included just to help sustain individual changes, included because that is where work must be done for important things to happen, regardless of individual change. (Chester 1976 page 105)

The debate about the focus of the training (between 'personal' change and 'whole institutional change' has polarised the ILT scheme. How has this come about? There are a number of factors that have contributed to this debate within ILT. Firstly by 1983, there was beginning to be a change in the type of ILT personnel. More black (some grassroot activist), were being recruited into the scheme. This reflected the debate and the situation outside in the society as a whole, ie equal opportunities in employment was becoming an issue. The significant growth of Black ILT personnel together with the 'explosive' growth in Racism Awareness Training (RAT) raised questions about the ability of ILT to deliver such training in this area, as only black trainers could deliver RAT, it had profound effect on the scheme because over 2/3 of the trainers (about 100) were white. Whilst some ILT sections went over completely to the RAT approach basing their training on the guilt feeling of the individuals, others found themselves at a different point of the spectrum with RAT on one end and the 'organisation change' model on the other.

Space doesn't allow a detailed discussion on the merit or demerits of RAT training but some observations have to be made because within local authorities there is tremendous scope for training on equal opportunities and if time and energies and resources which were deployed effectively then it is crucial to adopt

the right approach in training. Ahmed Gurnah was one of the first critics of the RAT training in Britain, in his article entitled 'The politics of racism awareness training', he concludes;

'.....It is doubtful that RAT can even achieve its modest objectives to start anti-racist actions and instead stands a good chance of diverting that action or even harming it. There seems no clear strategic route from the kind of consciousness raising session to political action. This is not meant to imply that anti racist education and anti racist consciousness training is ineffective and harmful. Quite the contrary both are extremely important; But needs to be done in the context of concrete action. Otherwise the undoubted sincerity and energies of some of these trainers is wasted, misused and, becomes harmful and sometimes it is even unethical". A Gurnah 1985 page 6)

Future of ILTS

In its conclusion to the review of Industrial Language Training Services final report the MSC felt that;

- Evidence indicated that ILTS provides high quality common flexible common relevant and practical training.
- according to some outside bodies including those of community groups ILT staff did not generally have the specialist skills and experience required to work in the area of anti racism training.
- although over the years, demand for language training has declined, some sections of ILTS and outside bodies thought the need for language training will continue for sometimes. (MSC 1986)

In response to these findings the six ILT units in the West Midlands have prepared a response document which challenges some of these conclusions and the evidence which is used to support it;

"There is an assumption in the review that racism awareness training is ineffective and therefore not worthy of ILTS attention. But we know that there are a number of very interesting models of anti racist training developing in the ILT scheme and we see an important role for ILT in further developing this work in response to an increased demand. (West Midlands ILT 1986)

There is no doubt that all the ILT units in the West Midlands see their work mainly in the areas of equal opportunities training within the local authorities and voluntary organisations. There have been attempts to penetrate the private sector in the past in relation to equal opportunities work but without much success. However since the disturbances in Lozells and Handsworth it has become comparatively easier to discuss these issues with private manufacturing employers.

Now that most of the ILTS are moving towards effective equal opportunities

training what are the existing constraints on them;

Firstly, ILTS need to shed off its 'Jack of all trades' image because the consequences of this is that trainers often lack the in-depth knowledge about the organisation and are not even aware of some of the issues related to training in that area.

Secondly the role of training has to be put in its right context/perspective. To do this, a lot more work is needed in establishing contacts with the other 'agents of change' who are trying to bring about change in this area. This means looking at, where the possible, support for change may come from both within and from outside the organisation.

Birmingham ILTS have recently reviewed its work and have decided to make promotion of equal opportunities in workshops for senior managers (backed by an ongoing involvement with that organisation for at least 12 months a priority). It has decided not to provide training for training sake and would be looking for commitment to change as a prerequisite. It has also decided to focus on a few large organisation and to carry out in depth research into the nature of racial inequality locally.

The work with senior members of the staff is recommended because equal opportunities is a policy issue and therefore policymakers need to be trained to take responsibility for monitoring, evaluating and implementing the policy. The focus of training in future will be on two key issues;

- Recruitment for employment and promotion
- Spending by the organisation on goods and services.

BILTS, further recognises that during the process of developing and implementing equal opportunities approaches in any organisation, specific training needs will emerge. This would meet the needs of different sections of the organisation ie;

- policy writers,
- police implementers in employment and
- Policy implementers in service delivery
- Policy monitors

It would be unrealistic of BILTS to assume that they can provide training for all the different sections, therefore it is essential for ILTS scheme to work with organisations in a consultancy role by training in house trainers.

Conclusion

This essay began by tracing the development of ILTS as a national scheme. It

suggested that the introduction of ILTS should have taken place in the mid 1950's and 60's when the language training needs were significantly greater than in the 1970's and 80's. The essay also argues that the establishment of ILTS should be seen in the context of government's policy towards the black community in Britain. This policy, on the one hand, introduced measures which would aim at overcoming the disadvantage faced by black workers (Race Relations Acts, Section 11 funding, CRE, ILT) whilst on the other hand introducing tougher immigration controls (racist in practice, if not in design) thus creating second class status for them and their dependents.

The essay then went on to look at the early developments of ILTS provision. The philosophy behind by ILT training was in line with the social policy of, first assimilation and then integration and now there are moves towards anti racist approaches. The essay also tried to identify the factors that had helped to give different directions to the work of ILTS. Now there is 'space' created for anti racist activities by using equal opportunities platforms in mainly local authority department but also to some extent with the voluntary and private sectors. I argued that training on equal opportunities needs to be viewed as a 'mean to an end' and not 'the end' itself. my view is that ILTS in the West Midlands region have moved in the right direction but this is not the case in all the other regions.

In the end, ILTS can only claim to be contributing to anti racism and equal opportunities policies and practices if the employment prospects of, and service delivered to, the black community improves.

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1 July 1986

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