



## **Research Report Summary**

# **The Employment of Members of Ethnic Minorities: An Employer's Perspective**

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This document summarises the third of three research reports resulting from a project funded by the European Social Fund and the University of Bolton which sought to contribute to an understanding of why ethnic minority graduates find it more difficult to obtain employment upon leaving UK higher education institutions. The first report deals with the analysis of a large data set concerning differences in perceived difficulties in obtaining a job, occupational values and influences on type of job targeted. The second report concerns graduates' job-seeking behaviours and their outcomes and details how some of the factors considered in the first report relate to these behaviours and outcomes. The final report summarised here, considers matters from the perspective of the employer, reporting the findings of a qualitative investigation of recruitment and selection policies and practices, and employer perceptions of the advantages of, and barriers to, the employment of ethnic minority people in their organisation.

The aims of this part of the project were:

- (1) To investigate the extent to which employers' policies and procedures conform to Commission for Racial Equality guidelines on good practice with respect to: (a) recruitment and selection; and (b) managing the workplace environment.
- (2) To investigate employer perceptions of: (a) the advantages of, and barriers to, the employment of ethnic minority people in their organisation; and (b) why their company is either successful or unsuccessful in achieving a representative workforce
- (3) To investigate relationships between employers' equal opportunity policies and procedures, managers' perceptions of a representative workforce and their company's success in achieving it.

The data considered in the report took the form of a mixture of open-ended and closed-ended responses supplied by representatives of three companies who completed an online questionnaire asking about their company's strategies for attempting to ensure proportionate ethnic minority representation in their workforce. Among areas considered were practices for advertising vacancies, post-advertisement selection and recruitment procedures, pro-active activities to encourage ethnic minority applications, and record keeping procedures. The questionnaire also elicited data concerning difficulties encountered in employing members of ethnic minority groups, and barriers and advantages that employers perceived with respect to the employment of members of such groups.

In the report all three companies are shown to espouse the ideal of having an equitable mix of ethnic groups as employees of their company, but are shown to implement procedures to achieve this goal to differing degrees. The example of one company shows that given sufficient corporate will and resources, and the channelling of these into recruitment strategies that are recommended by organisations such as the Commission for Racial Equality it is possible to achieve an ethnically balanced workforce. However, the example of another company (an alcoholic drinks producer) shows that even though a company may have a desire to pursue a policy of equality, the nature of a company's business may make the company doubt the viability of achieving such a goal.