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Gender and ethnic segregation in the British labour market: mechanisms of marginalisation and inclusion

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GENDER RESEARCH FORUM

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Key Findings

- Recruitment and promotion are very much based on informal networks in Construction, ICT and Printing.
- These sectors are characterised by low participation of women and ethnic minorities, but high skills shortages. More women and ethnic minorities are being trained than are in employment in these sectors.
- At a macro level, equality initiatives have been implemented in both construction and ICT, but these initiatives have not been taken up by the firms.
- The segregated sectors, though requiring a skilled workforce, are relatively indifferent to formal training and qualifications as the primary means of entry.

Methodology

- This paper is based on the interim findings of an EC-funded research project which sets out to investigate structural and institutional mechanisms that are seen to influence women's and ethnic minorities' marginal position in segregated sectors in Europe. The research seeks to examine the impact of policies and strategies for the inclusion and integration of women and ethnic minorities and pinpoint mechanisms of exclusion, identify differences between sectors in each country and select good practice initiatives.
- The sectors in question are construction, printing and ICT. The health sector is used as control. The position of women and ethnic minorities in these sectors is analysed in six European countries (Britain, Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain).
- Next to an overview of existing data and literature, primary data collection is carried out at macro and micro level. At macro level approximately 12 interviews in each country have been conducted with representatives of employee and employer organisations in each sector, as well as education/training and equal opportunity representatives. Also at European level 6 interviews have taken place. The interviews focus on issues of training and qualifications, recruitment, wage and employment conditions, equality initiatives and forms of regulation.
- At micro level, approximately 50 firms and organisations in each country (12 in each sector) are being surveyed on the themes identified above.

Introduction

This paper is based on research undertaken for the project “Overcoming Marginalisation – Structural obstacles and openings to integration in strongly segregated sectors”, which is funded by the European Commission under the Research and Technological Development Programme of the 5th Framework. The Education, Training and the Labour Market Research Group at Westminster University coordinates the research with the following partners:

- o Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Labour Studies AIAS (the Netherlands),
- o Centro de Estudios Avanzados en Ciencias Sociales, Madrid (Spain),
- o FAOS – Employment Relations Research Centre, Copenhagen (Denmark),
- o Monitor Lavoro, Rome (Italy),
- o VAUST, University of Osnabrück, Germany.

The project began in October 2001 and extends until September 2003.

The overall objective of the project is to identify structural and institutional mechanisms that exist to maintain certain groups of workers peripheral and marginalized to segregated labour markets and to investigate the means for their integration. The study deals with marginalisation regarding gender and ethnicity in three segregated sectors that are male and white dominated and contrasts these with a sector in which women and black ethnic minority workers are more strongly represented than in the labour market at large. The sectors concerned cover both industry and services. More concretely there are two research questions. First, what institutional and structural factors can be held responsible for the segregation phenomenon, and especially hierarchical forms of segregation? This aspect of the research seeks to explore and explain the present situation. Second, “which policies could help overcome marginalisation? The project thus investigates possible means for improvement by looking at good practices and providing policy relevant conclusions. The main areas of analysis are education and training, employment and working conditions, recruitment, benefits and social policy, equal opportunities policies and active labour market policy. Figure 1 (see Appendix) gives a graphical overview of the two processes that underlie the research: the labour supply into the labour market and the job hierarchy within internal labour markets. The research is well equipped to draw some (preliminary) conclusions on the problems women and ethnic minorities face in the labour market and how these contribute to, amongst other factors, a pay and productivity gap.

It must be emphasised that the definition of marginalisation employed is specific to the context of the project. Thus, marginal means excluded from or existing outside the mainstream of the labour market, in particular of specific sectors. Groups such as ethnic minorities and women are situated at a margin or border and incompletely assimilated. A marginal situation in relation to one specific sector in the labour market does not infer that the individual concerned is marginal to society at large. Sectors where parts of the labour force become or remain marginal are segregated sectors.

Segregated sectors

The study is initiated in response to EU employment and equal opportunity policies regarding gender and ethnic minorities. On a European level, measures concerning the improvement of the position of women in the European Labour Markets have been included in policy making and legislation for a number of years. Gender segregation, for instance, has been an issue addressed in EU social policy since the last framework programme for equal opportunities (NOW programmes; EQUAL: Thematic field H: Reducing gender gaps and supporting job desegregation¹). Several projects have been set up, with initiatives ranging from specific schemes aimed at changing the educational choices of young people before they enter the labour market (Austria, France, Germany and Sweden) to setting targets for recruitment in under-represented professions (Sweden and the United Kingdom) and the training of women in entrepreneurship (Austria, France, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom).

For ethnic minorities in the labour market, the same picture cannot be drawn. Ethnic minorities as a disadvantaged group (Member States' interpretations of the reference to ethnic minorities is very varied ("non-nationals", "third country nationals", "ethnic minorities and migrant workers", "national minorities") have not been part of the broad policy agenda as women have and the picture is far patchier: the EQUAL programme, for instance, addresses the integration of asylum seekers only. There is some indication that this is changing: the new Directive (2000/43/C) on equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin to be transposed by the Member States by 19 July 2003 will be an important step forward.

Looking at the most recent development in EU policy, the aim to reduce gender segregation is one of the main areas of the European Employment Strategy (defined for the European Union at the Lisbon Summit in Spring 2000, and since confirmed by the Nice and Stockholm European Councils). It is part of a wider political agenda with the objective of "making the European Union the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy of the world, capable of sustainable economic growth together with more and better jobs and a greater social cohesion" (Joint Employment Report 2001). The EES is based on four pillars of development: Employability, Entrepreneurship, Adaptability and Equal Opportunities. The aim of the last Pillar is to strengthen equal opportunities policies for women and men in the labour market, in order to reinforce the impact of policy under the other three Pillars. This is sought through a gender mainstreaming approach across all four Pillars, reducing gender gaps (unemployment, employment, gender segregation and pay) and policies oriented at reconciling work and family life.

The combating of (sectoral as well as occupational) gender segregation is seen as important by the Commission as it:

¹http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/index

can be partial cause of and has a negative effect on labour market functioning, by excluding many of the best suited and most skilled people from working in the occupations where they would be the most productive. Gender segregation creates rigidity in the labour market, reducing the market's ability to respond to change, and is also a major determinant of wage differentials between women and men. Reducing sectoral gender segregation furthermore plays a major role in the policies aimed at developing job matching and preventing or combating emerging bottlenecks. (Joint Employment Report 2001)

This issue is being addressed by most of the countries that have high levels of occupational and sectoral segregation and that have received a policy recommendation in this field.

Combating sectoral segregation for ethnic minorities is not mentioned as such in the EES, but the combating of discrimination and exclusion is part of the Employability agenda. It calls for “a coherent set of policies to promote social inclusion and combat discrimination in the labour market by supporting the integration of disadvantaged groups and individuals into employment” (Joint Employment Report 2001). The integration into the labour market of three specific disadvantaged groups – people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and migrant workers – is put forward as a particular priority.

At a theoretical level, there has been an extensive debate on segregation at occupational level and its measurement (in the UK, for instance, Crompton and Sanderson 1990, EC 1997, Hakim 1992, Rubery and Fagan 1995, Blackburn et al. 1997, 2000, 2001). However, although mentioned as part of the EU policy on gender segregation, the use of sectoral approaches in the debate of occupational segregation has not been extensive. The debate on occupational segregation has incorporated a variety of theoretical approaches. The importance of contextual factors is developed by Blackwell (2001). Rubery and Fagan (1995) contend that one of the most important divisions in labour market systems is between countries where women quit the labour market to have children (e.g. the UK) and countries with more continuous working patterns (e.g. Denmark), as segregation intensifies over life-cycles. Blackburn et al. (2000, 2001) break down overall occupational segregation into a vertical and horizontal component, and equate gender inequality (as measured by United Nations measurements) with vertical occupational segregation, horizontal segregation measuring “difference without inequality”. The EU policy statements on segregation are mostly in line with Anker’s opinion (2001) that segregation is a major source of labour market rigidity and economic inefficiency that is wasteful of human resources. Also according to Anker, most literature on segregation is not concerned with occupational segregation by sex per se but with its effects on gendered pay differentials, which confuses issues.

Studies about ethnicity and segregation have only emerged during the second half of the 1990s. Studies have revealed patterns of segregation by race and occupation but also vertical segregation amongst black women (Gonäs & Lehto 1999, 53). Overall, there is a greater than average concentration of black men and women in the public sector, while Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi men and women are more likely than average to be self-employed (Sly 1995).

The literature on occupational segregation and ethnic minorities is limited. Unlike in the US, public employment and education do not reduce racial segregation in Britain (King, 1995). The British Labour Force Survey has been used to ascertain the occupations in which ethnic minority women are most highly concentrated but very little is yet known about segregation at work (Gonäs and Lehto 1999, p. 53). With the exception of Black Caribbean workers, occupational sex segregation seems to be lower between women and men in the minority ethnic groups than it is between White women and men (Blackwell 1998). On ethnic minorities, Modood et al. (1997) is one of the most important and most comprehensive publications. Although educational experiences of second generation minorities and whites are comparable, ethnic penalties have not decreased significantly. The concept of ‘ethnic penalties’ is defined by Heath *et al* (2000) as “*all the processes, including discrimination but not limited to discrimination alone, that might lead members of an ethnic group to experience poorer outcomes than British-born whites of the same age and qualifications*”. (Heath et al. 2000). The main explanation for the continued existence of the ethnic penalty is, however, the persistence of discrimination.

Sectors for analysis

The sectors selected for analysis are Construction, Health, IT and Print. Within each of the sectors a typical occupation was chosen so that entry routes, job ladders, career options and possible developments could be exemplified. The occupations selected are carpenter / joiner, nurse, software engineer and printer. The choice of sectors and occupations can be explained by the extent of under (over) representation of women and ethnic minorities as shown in Tables 1 to 2 (see appendix). The terms under and over representation are here used in reference to women and black ethnic minorities’ overall representation in the labour market. In addition, each sector enables further, more specific insight into aspects of employment.

Industry	Services
Construction (Carpenter / Joiner)	IT (Software) (Software Engineer)
Print (Printer)	Health (Nurse)

The data shows the importance of gendered and ethnic segregation. The latter is a relatively new dimension introduced by this project. Although gender segregation is a well-established concept, ethnic segregation is rarely analysed. In fact, in America it is used to denote separation in housing arrangements. Our research shows that ethnic segregation in the main mirrors and even exceeds gender segregation although the IT sector in particular shows that differentiation is important. A report by the Cabinet Office / Performance and Innovation Unit (PIU) (2002) has recently drawn some attention to the situation of black ethnic minority workers in the labour market. This report outlines labour market achievements, problems and developments of ethnic minorities but cannot follow through indications of sectoral distinctions or their underlying causes. It does highlight, however, that there is no evidence of policy initiatives having an impact on ethnic minorities. This project sets out to identify the

processes at work, their effect on the specified sectors and how they can be overcome. In addition to the importance this has for the British case alone, it is the first time that such a comparison is being undertaken at the European level – including Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain. Fundamental difficulties in finding a common definition of what the British call ‘ethnic minorities’ and in accessing the limited amount of data available hinder a straightforward comparison and indicate the extent to which this is an under-researched area.

The empirical evidence presented here is mainly based on a series of macro-level interviews with experts within relevant Trade Unions, Employers’ Organisations, Training Providers, Governmental Departments and NGOs. In these interviews the following issues were addressed: structure and background of the sector (e.g. unionisation, size of firms, productivity, etc), dominant training and educational requirements, skills and occupations in the job, recruitment practices, employment and working conditions, social benefits, the specific situation of women and ethnic minorities with respect to these issues as well as best practice examples. Each national team conducted approximately 12 interviews and additional European level institutions were questioned. Micro-level interviews with 50 cases (firms or other employing organisations) are currently being conducted and more detailed results will be forthcoming.

In addition to the quantitative justifications, there are a variety of other reasons for having included the chosen sectors. For instance, the choice of the construction industry in the countries involved in this study is appropriate because it employs approximately the same proportion of the workforce in each country and is a large and important sector economically. The occupation of carpenters and joiners was chosen because it was considered important to consider the significance of vocational training, especially because various apprenticeship systems across Europe have undergone considerable changes. The “crafts” represent a sizeable proportion of the workforce across Europe and remain a fundamental part of the production process. The British construction industry is characterised by: a large number of very small firms; a small number of large contractors employing few or no operatives directly; a large number of self- and casually employed and; relatively low levels of formal training, in spite of increasingly high skill requirements and skill shortages; and extremely – and disproportionately – low and even declining employment of women and ethnic minorities. There is general recognition that the sector requires complete restructuring in order to improve productivity, health and safety, working and employment conditions, and gender and ethnic integration. This is in contrast to Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands where there is less casual and informal employment, low levels of self-employment, a large proportion of medium-sized firms and far higher levels of training so that the unskilled are an increasingly marginal group. In spite of this higher degree of regulation and training, construction in these countries too remains highly gender and ethnically segregated, with the important exception of painters in Denmark, who constitute 30% of the painting workforce and 50% of trainee painters. In Italy and Spain the sector remains similarly segregated, with the important exception of restoration in Italy, where women are in a majority. The implication appears to be that improving skill and training levels in the industry and the regulation of employment and working conditions will not alone and

necessarily improve integration and that other factors of exclusion are also coming into play.

Health is an interesting sector to compare in Europe because of considerable changes that are presently occurring or that are planned or imminent (e.g. in terms of a reinforcement of purchaser / provider splits in Britain (PPP) and financial crises in most countries) (Egan 2002). In the UK, the NHS provides relatively egalitarian, universal access to health but has weaknesses, for example, in that under-investment in buildings, equipment and staff has left the system struggling to attain the quality levels demanded. Although it is difficult to draw conclusions for the entire health sector because there are such vast differences for women and ethnic minorities (e.g. doctors vs. all other staff), it is clear that nursing and the allied health services are female dominated. The fact that the figures for black ethnic minority workers in the health sector is only slightly above their overall representation in the workforce should ring alarm bells because this is a sector that has traditionally attracted black women. If the figures are no better than the average in the country and the workforce in general, this indicates problems. There is a prevalence of big enterprises, although this does not apply for GP practices. The NHS is one of the largest employers in the country and, in most regions, the local Hospital or Trust is one of the biggest employers. The workforce is remarkably skilled, with only an estimated 15% being unskilled. Health differs from the other sectors in this study in that it has a qualification based entry system, which is comparatively well regulated. However, staff shortages have led to considerable strain and will have to result in change. The attempt to recruit both trainee and fully qualified nurses and other health sector staff from abroad does not guarantee a long-term and stable development. Moreover, the impact of technological change has been to raise expectations of what could be done, whilst simultaneously increasing time and cost requirements.

The UK's "IT software consultancy" is a sector that employs about 350,000 people (Labour Force Survey 2001 Spring quarter, e-skills NTO 2002). The sector's fluctuation over the last years has been extensive, with extremely high demand leading up to the year 2000 but employment generally decreasing since. There has been a rise in unemployment to 5.7% in the ICT industry and 4.1% for ICT staff working across all industry sectors. During 2002 alone, demand for permanent ICT staff fell by 26%, and contract vacancies by 18% (e-skills bulletin). There are only few occupations, such as managers, for which demand is still increasing. The IT sector is a reasonably new, unstructured and deregulated sector consisting mainly of SMEs and micro sized firms. There are no clear definitions and boundaries and the skill requirements are constantly changing. Recruitment and promotion are informal and networking is important. Although many companies have expanded drastically over short periods, they still have the creative networking culture associated with new, innovative and professional enterprises. In terms of the image of the industry and the skills needed, reality does not match perceptions, especially of women; the industry is less technical and experience is rated higher than qualifications (although this does not seem to be as true in Germany and Italy). Together with long hours that make flexible arrangements impossible and the high level of change and pressure, this is seen as an explanation for the lower participation of women. In the IT sector, the segregation patterns of black ethnic minority workers do not mirror the gender divide. Women's participation in the IT sector in the UK is well below the European average

of 34% (in the US it is 44%) whereas the participation of ethnic minorities is not seen as a problem because overall participation is average (although there are differences in employment and training patterns).

Printing is the UK's fifth largest manufacturing industry with an annual turnover of £13.5 billion at the end of 1998 and 207,000 people employed in some 12,000 companies. The future of printing is digital but traditional crafts trades such as machine printers and finishers are still vital. The British printing industry is currently running at 60% of its capacity and further contractions appear likely. However, there are also considerable opportunities, especially if demands in terms of efficiency, IT involvement, and multi-skilling are met. Currently, the prevalence of skilled to non-skilled labour in the entire sector (as opposed to print alone) is only approximately 50:50. The Sector has an ageing workforce and is suffering a declining number of young new entrants. The printing industry has a strong union tradition and used to rely on a closed shop. Developments are now so fast that most of the traditions have gone, e.g. good training and the training boards have disappeared. Printing is now little different from any other manufacturing industry. It is predominantly made up of small firms, albeit with some prominent exceptions (e.g. newspapers). Figures show a reduction of women in the industry and the same applies to ethnic minorities, whose participation rates now tend towards zero.

New skill needs

All the sectors have the characteristic that they are undergoing considerable change, indicated by new skill needs, and are subject to considerable skill shortages. In printing, the main skill shortages are in the machine printing area, that is a traditional craft skill, and to a certain extent print finishing, that is everything to do with stitching, cutting, folding, binding, manufacture of carton, et. Within printing, women tend to be in the least skilled jobs, often unrecognised, and are not generally given the opportunity to train up, for instance to become machine minders. The assumption is often made that women are not interested in training, so only men are offered the opportunity; similar discriminatory practices have been reported in the treatment of black ethnic minority workers. Changing skill needs include, as is also the case for construction, many more machine operatives. At the same time, print workers currently need at least two sets of skills, litho and digital, and constant upskilling is vital.

Construction similarly is subject to considerable skill shortages, with nearly 85% of companies experiencing difficulties in recruitment and 24% reporting inability to bid for a contract or having refused a contract due to shortages of skilled staff. Carpenters and bricklayers are in the shortest supply, but employers also have problems recruiting professionals, plasterers, plumbers and general operatives (CITB 2001). What is increasingly noticeable in this sector is the failure to train in expanding skill areas such as general operatives, plant operators and civil engineering operatives, constituting nearly 30% of the workforce, though having few trainees. Trainees are instead concentrated (86%) in the traditional wood, bricklaying, plastering, roofing, painting, electrical and plumbing trades, though these employ less than 60% of the workforce (CITB 2002c). Another feature is the rapid decline in technical and

intermediate skills training, though there are areas of skill expansion in other countries.

For ICT in 2002, demand for permanent staff fell by 26% and contract vacancies by 18% (e-skills bulletin). Yet skill needs are changing fast and skill shortages are forecast, with 9% of firms anticipating difficulties in recruiting staff at managerial and the professional levels, and an extra need of one million people estimated in the next five years. Unskilled jobs, as also in print and construction, are disappearing and requirements start at NVQ3. Such fast changing skill requirements (“professional skills of today are user skills of tomorrow”) are especially disadvantageous to women who take time out for caring responsibilities.

The health sector differs from the other sectors in that it increasingly relies on higher education as the dominant route into nursing. As a result of skill shortages, other routes have opened up, such as NVQ accreditation of nursing assistants, to provide an opportunity to enter nursing and to close the skills gap between ancillary and graduate staff. The main areas of shortage include intensive care nurses and therapists as well as IT staff, professionals and managers.

The significance of education and training

Our hypothesis in relation to education and training is that vulnerable groups are more dependent on qualifications to prove their ability but experience greater difficulty in gaining access to the education and training necessary. We seek, in particular, to test whether women and ethnic minorities that are dependent on an employer for education and training via, for instance, on-the-job learning and apprenticeship, experience greater difficulty in acquiring the skills necessary than those training in public sector schools and sector training institutions. This is difficult to test, except through micro-level analysis, though there are indications given at macro level. We have also sought to relate qualifications acquired through training to the opportunities for access into employment and promotion.

Research has tended to focus on whether women and ethnic minorities with the same qualifications have identical labour market achievement to their white male counterparts (e.g. Heath et al 2000 for ethnic minorities). Our question is rather whether those groups, though in the same position in the labour market, have the same qualifications as white males. Evidence for construction, for instance, has indicated that women are significantly better qualified than their male counterparts (Wall and Clarke 1996). The implication is that in sectors where white males are over-represented, access without formal qualifications will be significantly easier for white males than for women and ethnic minorities, for instance within the group of software engineers. One reason suggested for this is that white males in traditional white male-dominated sectors can continue to rely on obtaining informal access and learning on the job through their informal networks. In contrast, women and ethnic minorities can rely less on such informal networks and are dependent on formal acknowledgement or proof of their ability. ‘Proving ability’ therefore refers to the need for women and ethnic minorities to have higher levels of qualification than white males as an entry requirement and in order to progress within the sector.

In terms of our segregated sectors, there are difficulties – in part statistical – in ascertaining differences in numbers of trainees for the different groups. For construction 1,522 female trainees (3% of all trainees) and 1,427 ethnic minority trainees (a further 3% of all trainees) entered their first year in 2001, a figure that has remained static over a number of years (CITB 2002). What is evident from our interviews is that concerted efforts made in the industry to improve the integration of women and ethnic minorities into construction training by have met with success, such as for women in local authority building departments (DLOs) and by the long-standing women's training centres; in the Netherlands, attempts to improve the integration of ethnic minorities in the Rotterdam area resulted in a 75% rather than the average 50% completion rate.

For IT software entry via computer science degrees, that is higher education, is critical for women. Labour Force Survey data also show that ethnic minorities in IT software have higher qualifications than whites; whilst over a third of both groups have a first degree, 16.4% of ethnic minorities also have a higher degree compared with 10.7% of whites (Labour Force Survey 2001). However, men appear to be more highly qualified than women, with 53% having a first or higher degree compared with 38% of women. This is perhaps balanced by the higher numbers of women (9.3%) working in IT software who are enrolled on training/education courses. A far higher proportion of ethnic minorities (70%) than whites (46%) also recorded training at work in the last four weeks. The general picture for IT that emerges from the statistics is a general striving for qualifications on the part of women and ethnic minorities.

A similar phenomenon is to be observed in all the other sectors, including health, with a significantly higher proportion of women and ethnic minorities than white males enrolling on courses. In construction, higher proportions of women and ethnic minorities employed have first degrees, NVQ level 3 or NVQ2 compared to white males; for printing – though less marked – a similar picture emerges. And in the health sector, too, women are generally more qualified than men and a higher proportion of ethnic minorities than white males has a first degree (Labour Force Survey 2001).

It is ironic that construction and printing, the most severely gender and ethnically segregated sectors have such serious skill shortages and changing skill needs. This indicates particularly strong obstacles to entry, perhaps attributable to their being both traditional apprenticed sectors. Research indicates that apprenticeships, that is the nature of training, can be an obstacle to entry for vulnerable groups; the female uptake into pharmacy, for instance, increased from the moment the apprenticeship system was abolished (Hassall 2001). For construction, too, there are indications that apprenticeship, because it relies on individual employers preparedness to take on women and ethnic minorities, can have an identical negative influence (Clarke and Wall 1998; Steedman 1998). When training is organised without employer cooperation it appears that this obstacle does not exist. This suggests the need to distinguish sectors/occupations according to the nature of the education and training given, whether it is subject to individual employers making places available or whether it is actively college-based.

Printing maintained a seven-year apprenticeship right into the 1950s and 1960s, at a time when this was reduced to three years for construction and was even disappearing in other sectors. Only in the 1970s did the elite nature of the printing trade begin to break down and only in 1984 was it recognised in the Recruitment, Training and Retraining Agreement that a three-year apprenticeship could no longer be sustained in the traditional way and that a modular system was feasible. Since then, there have been considerations to bring back a training levy, introduced with the industrial training board of the early 1960s and subsequently abandoned, in order to address current problems of training provision and recruitment. The two dominant routes into the sector now are at 16-18 years old on a Foundation or Advanced Modern Apprenticeship or at 21 as a graduate. It is apparent that the reliance on individual employer goodwill to train and take on trainees constitutes a significant barrier to changing, opening up and expanding training provision. For instance, many women working in print do not have qualifications up to NVQ level 3 required to mind machines, but to obtain this cooperation from the employer is needed. In addition, harassment can be a barrier for women into Class I jobs and, to combat this, it is better that any training provided be for at least two women.

Construction similarly has never broken from the dependence on training provision on voluntary individual employer goodwill, though the industry is unusual in having retained an individual training board, CITB, and in having a levy. However, because few large firms employ operatives, subcontracting out all work, few have a new entrant programme and training through modern apprenticeships rests largely, as with printing, on small firms, many of whom have insufficient capacity to take on trainees. An alternative route, particularly for the unemployed, is through further education colleges, which also provide full-time (16 hours per week) construction courses over two (NVQ2) and three years (NVQ3). Increasingly this has become the main route into construction training, for 62% of trainees working towards NVQs in the main building trades, and it is no surprise that many ethnic minorities and women in the industry pursue this route rather than apprenticeship. This route depends, however, on the ability of the trainee to obtain the work experience needed to obtain employment, given that colleges have few if any links with industry. The result is high drop-out rates (40%) from college courses, reluctance of firms to take on trainees or provide work experience, relatively low levels of training and a reliance instead on informal learning on the job.

As part of the attempt to restructure the industry, a systematic attempt is being made to upgrade the workforce through skills certification by means, for instance, of on-site accreditation, so that it eventually becomes “fully qualified” and all operatives will need to have obtained at least NVQ2 in order to enter. Together with this, attempts are being made to improve gender and ethnic integration, in particular through the CITB Curriculum Centres, that encourage girls and those from ethnic minorities to enter, and through Local Collaborative Partnerships of employers, clients, local authorities, women’s training workshops, community organisations and colleges constructed around regeneration projects. This represents an attempt at wider involvement than the individual employer.

In terms of education and training, however, the main obstacle to integration for both construction and printing appears to be the voluntarist and employer-dependent nature of provision, with individual employers reluctant to train and further train and, when they do, to take on women and ethnic minorities. The alternative route, to undertake purely college-based training, is similarly hampered by the difficulty of obtaining the necessary work experience. Both sectors, too, having minimal further training provision except that provided by plant and material manufacturers, though it is recognised that this is required to keep skills up to date.

The situation is more fluid for ICT, not having the long traditions of these industries and tending to rely on buying in skills. Whilst the initial training route is largely through higher education, further training is given greater emphasis and is more concentrated in larger firms: just over 10% of all staff in small (under 25 employees) ICT firms receive training compared with 22% in larger ICT companies. Ethnic minorities give training as the major reason for accepting a temporary contract and this training tends to be longer (2-3 months for 20% of them) than for the women and white males and often a combination of on-and-off the job.

For the health sector, with its much more clearly defined system of entry and qualifications, the situation contrasts strongly. The sector has a levy to fund training that goes to the Workforce Development Confederation, responsible for workforce planning and contracting out training to higher education institutes. In effect, the pressure for more recruitment is thus passed on to the higher education institutions and Admissions Services (e.g. NMAS, the equivalent of UCAS for health), with consequences in terms of the intake. Nursing courses can be used, for instance, as an entry route to citizenship although applicants are either overqualified or not interested in a career in nursing. Education and training is further complicated by what can be termed a 'silo mentality', that exists also with the construction and printing sectors, with little permeability, for instance, to move to professional levels (as there is in the Netherlands) as it is virtually impossible to move from one field of work to another without having to train from scratch.

There is a clearly defined 'job ladder' and promotional structure for nurses from (registered) staff nurse to specialist staff nurse or health visitor, into education and management. Specialisms also have different status and gender domination, for instance, mental health is more male dominated than most other branches (though this is not the case in Spain, where mental health nurses are also mainly female). The Skills Escalator encourages lifelong learning to enable staff to progress, yet there are problems. Nurses from black ethnic minority backgrounds take five years longer than white Britons, especially to reach management levels, and men will also progress much quicker than women. The emphasis on training has also led to an intense competition for courses at the lower levels of the 'escalator'. The importance of further training is that to renew her/his registration (every three years), a nurse has to provide a portfolio, proof of development and of five study days per year. Training is the responsibility of each Trust, but Social Services have induction standards that have to be achieved and working towards these is becoming mandatory. At the same time, staff development, currently not mandatory, is becoming compulsory under the Skills Escalator.

In conclusion, for the three segregated sectors – printing, construction and IT – work experience and learning-on-the-job are, if anything, more important than training and qualifications as a means of entry. As obtaining this remains in the hands of individual – predominantly white male – employers, women and ethnic minorities are seriously disadvantaged. The situation is nevertheless changing, to become more qualification based as the need for more abstract, technical and transferable skills, rather than the specialist and firm-specific skills associated with work-based training, is increasingly recognised. In construction, for instance, the transferable skills, such as the ability to undertake a range of tasks, to read drawings, plan and set out work, are demanded, whilst in ICT the ability to integrate a wider range of soft- and hardware is invaluable, as is knowledge of CAD and SAP. Indeed, in all three sectors “softer” rather than purely technical skills are required, such as problem solving, team communication, flexibility and managerial ability. The more the sectors become based on recognised qualifications and formal training as objective means of entry, the more the integration of women and ethnic minorities will be facilitated.

Recruitment practices

As means of access to employment and promotion, recruitment procedures and related employment policies are important at the organisational level. Entry to employment can take several forms; here we are interested in the impact of informal as opposed to formal recruitment arrangements on the entry of women and ethnic minorities to the sectors and occupations in question. Chart 1 provides a basic overview of the entry routes on a scale from informal to formal. In this study, we explore the view that informal recruitment procedures such as recommendations by families and friends and direct approaches to or from employers are instrumental in excluding women and ethnic minorities. Informal, open and casual recruitment hinders the access of women and ethnic minorities, especially in sectors where they are already underrepresented. A number of explanations can be put forward:

- informal relations and networks which come into play to act as a powerful social force for exclusion,
- tacit discrimination against women and ethnic minorities,
- self-exclusion of people due to being regarded as outsiders in the work environment.

Chart 1. Ways of entry: informal to formal route in employment

Informal	Self-employment in <i>de jure</i> or <i>de facto</i> not regulated area of economic activity (e.g. refurbishing)
	Special form of “first employment” agreements like apprenticeship (handcraft and liberal professions)
↓	Selection by professional agencies, private and public, like job centres, headhunters...
	Common recruitment procedures by firms or organisations themselves via interviews, recruitment procedures, assessments, and selection tests.
Formal	Competitive examination under government supervision

European labour markets have a continuing high reliance on informal recruitment methods (Shackleton and Alpin 1998). The growing importance of interpersonal skills and personal qualities of new recruits is seen as one of the reasons for the prevalence of informal methods. However, informal recruitment practices are deployed more in the private than the public sector and in small companies (large firms having more often specialist departments and operating under economies of scale) as well as in high unemployment areas.

From our observations drawn from the first macro phase of our study, it is apparent that informal recruitment is a particular feature of the construction and IT sectors. In Britain, the construction sector relies on advertisements in local papers, the widespread use of agencies, informal recruitment on sites, and – most important of all – informal networks of contacts of relatives and friends. Recruitment policy depends on the individual firm and our interviews have underpinned the importance of previous experience and of recommendations of existing employees and colleagues as criteria, rather than, in the first place, the qualifications of the recruit. Thus even though the target for the recruitment of women is set at 10% in Britain, without more reliance in recruitment on the formal qualifications on which women and ethnic minorities depend, it is difficult to see how this can be achieved. A similar dependence on white male networks is observable in other countries, such as Denmark and the Netherlands, serving to exclude both groups – women and ethnic minorities.

The dominant methods of recruitment for IT professionals are advertisements (especially by SMEs), graduate “milk rounds” and recruitment agencies (internet gains in importance here). Many IT firms have been expanding rapidly over the last decade, but have retained the informal way of working (not only in selection and recruitment) that characterises young, small start-up companies and still has advantages in a sector reliant on speed of change, innovation and creativity. Applicants for jobs in IT software are mostly young white male graduates. This recruitment profile was not seen as problematic by the sector until recently, but now the skewed effects of recruitment practices are scrutinised by the industry at macro- and micro-level mostly from concern about a skills shortage. At present, the sector is decreasing in terms of employment, but this is seen as a temporary phenomenon and skills shortages are already present. Our interviews revealed that: experience, not formal qualifications, is an important selection criterion and that poaching employees is an issue in the industry. One interviewee claimed that: “There has been a drop from 30% to 20% in women working in IT, due to a lack of new female applicants” (representative, employers’ body, IT industry). This drop in female compared with male applicants is attributed to less confidence concerning their “suitability” for an IT job. For a wide range of IT jobs, interpersonal skills (such as team working, language skills, sales skills, customer related skills, etc.) are as -or more - important as technical skills for new recruits, but this does not seem apparent to the recruitment base, particularly women: “It is not clear to a lot of graduates that you can start a career in IT having done an Arts or Humanities degree”. As a consequence of this “miscommunication” the sector is not tapping into a wide segment of the labour market, such as art or humanities graduates, that is potentially a solution for the skills shortages. Women are also seen to react differently to adverts: “men will apply if they

feel competent in 50% of the skills, women in 80%”. The way in which the industry is portrayed was held to significantly affect recruitment: “The value that women and ethnic minorities are held in is a big problem for recruitment as they do not feel attracted into sectors where they might be discriminated against” (representative, employers’ body, IT industry). Finally, family peer pressure may steer ethnic minorities away from certain professions such as software engineering.

Recruitment practices in the printing industry differ: print has a strong trade union tradition and in the past relied on a closed shop and the internal labour market always had priority over the external. This has changed and, in parallel, the make-up of the industry is now less male and white dominated. The dominant recruitment procedure is nevertheless by word-of-mouth and father-son recruitment, especially in smaller firms. This has been an issue with regard to recruitment and training for women as they will often be overlooked in favour of less or unqualified men. In addition, there is local advertising, and some contacts to older, unemployed but skilled printers through the union, with training courses available for these people to bring their skills up to date. Although these recruitment methods seem quite antiquated, they are not uncommon. In the Danish print industry, recruitment often takes place through the trade union or through informal networks. The use of recruitment agencies in the British printing industry is not common. Retention is not a problem in print and there are high tenure rates for both women and men, reflecting too an ageing workforce indicative of future needs. The trade union, GPMU, undertook a survey on this issue and the average tenure for female union members was eleven years.

The main methods and procedures of recruitment of nurses in the health industry, and especially the NHS, are determined by the NHS careers services and by targeting schools and universities, thus passing on recruitment and selection issues to higher education. Health Service Organisations have well-developed recruitment and equal opportunities advertising procedures and these have been in place for some time. Advertisements will usually be in the professional nursing press, local papers, national NHS electronic-based careers website, as well as being advertised internally. Members of interview panels need to be trained in EO and interviewing, though there is usually a gap between policy and practice and personal discrimination cannot be ruled out. Training and employment in the sector are very closely linked, but there is a recruitment problem, partly due to retention issues and the demographic composition and age structure of workers. For example, a third of all psychiatric nurses are due to retire within the next ten years. In an attempt to tackle the recruitment crisis ‘Back to Nursing’ courses have been introduced. Although these may be beneficial in the short run and alleviate the recruitment crisis to some extent, they will not solve the demographic difficulties. Moreover, the “Positively Diverse” programme aims to recruit ethnic minorities from local communities, although in many cases this will be at lower qualification levels (especially for ancillary jobs and for some administrative jobs).

There are further distinct features of recruitment into the health sector. Recruitment into the NHS relies heavily on “temping”, part-time work and a variety of different agencies, partly due to a very long hours culture. The “Bank system” contributes to this, as a Trust’s own agency, whilst NHS Professionals is the NHS agency for temporary staff.

Another complication, attributable to considerable skills shortages, is the degree of recruiting abroad, though NHS Trusts have to prove that they cannot recruit in the UK in order to get a work permit for staff from abroad. The Home Office has recently reviewed the issue of work permits and deregulation is being considered. Individuals trained abroad have to take a written test as well as an interview, but their qualifications are usually accepted after an assessment. A clear distinction needs to be made between permanent staff and agency staff hired from abroad. Examples of the problems that have occurred in relation to agencies include making overseas nurses pay to become employed in the UK and employing them below their qualification, thus paying them less, and making them take part in upgrading programmes to gain a British qualification.

Informal recruitment, where family and other networks are important, characterises our three segregated sectors, although this has evolved via different routes. A “passive” diversity approach from the industries could be seen as a further recruitment characteristic, although both issues need to be investigated in more detail in our second micro phase of the study. Skills shortages have been an incentive in all the sectors to reconsidering recruitment practices and there is evidence in IT and especially in construction (though not in printing) that this is happening at industry level.

Wages, employment and working conditions

Our hypothesis in this area is: “the more the wage structure is graded and related to the potential skills of the workforce rather than craft-based and related to output, the more inclusive it becomes.” Various research has shown how critical wage relations are to gender and ethnic inclusion, particularly the former (e.g. European Commission 1994). Our task in this research is seen as to systematise this for particular sectors and to show the differences for women and ethnic minorities. The suggestion is that, though women and ethnic minorities may be more qualified and trained than their male counterparts (see section on education and training above), they may be subsumed into a wage system that is relatively indifferent to these qualifications, as under a craft form. The traditional craftworker, for instance, worked to produce a given output, perhaps, as in printing and construction, according to price lists and under the equivalent of a contract for services rather than of employment and maybe responsible for his own social protection, whether to cover sickness, training, holidays or pensions. In contrast, a more developed wage system, such as found in the health sector, is based on the exchange of a given quality of labour, recognised through formal qualifications, and on the potential range of skills possessed rather than on performing the particular job in hand.

In our sectors the closest to the traditional craft form is found in the construction sector, where over a third of workers are employed on a self-employed basis and wages are related to performance rather than qualifications. The form of the wage is critical in particular to entering and remaining in the sector, as gangs on piece or task work are unlikely to recruit women or ethnic minorities of unknown quality to join them and, if they do, are more likely to release them on a “last in, first out” principle.

This explains too the continued segregation of the Danish construction sector, where wages are also based on output in spite of its more regulated employment and working conditions and higher levels of unionisation. In Britain, lack of regulation in construction relates also to general employment conditions and many work long hours, receive no holiday pay and at risk to health and safety (CLR News 1/2002). The industry has higher accident and fatality rates than any other, no part-time employment and none of the benefits that might be supportive to including others. Available information for ethnic minorities reveals that their employment and working conditions may even be worse than for white males, as a higher proportion are employed by agencies or on casual work (Labour Force Survey 2001). There was also a negative response from the industry to the introduction of maternity leave as little benefit was seen to be gained from the retention of women. In Denmark, too, female construction workers have found themselves laid off during pregnancy.

This comparison with Denmark suggests that regulation through collective agreements and higher levels of unionisation are not necessarily supportive of integration. In Britain the industry is fragmented into several unions, competing against each other for membership, with no common agenda, the TUC construction committee having been abolished. The collective agreement signed by those unions – UCATT, TGWU and GMB – has little significance and, though containing a clause on ethnic discrimination, has nothing on gender discrimination. UCATT, the main union with a membership of 120,000, 1% of whom are women, employs 60 white male officers across the country, though female or ethnic minority officers are critical to support a more diverse membership. The unions did, however, successfully oppose attempts by employers to introduce a seasonal category of employment to solve skill shortages on the grounds that there should be full integration of ethnic minorities. The implication is that, whilst unregulated wage, employment and working conditions are a serious impediment to integration, the nature of industrial organisation may itself also provide little support.

The example of the construction sector is indicative: it is not so much the image as the current reality of the industry that is exclusive. Just to contrast it with the health sector reveals the difference with a regulated system where wage rates are embedded – however imperfectly – in a graded hierarchy, relating to different levels of qualification, dependent on formal training and allowing for a certain progression between grades.

Nurses have been reported to be seeking a pay rise of 15% to bring starting salaries into line with those of teachers and police officers (e-politix.com, 4 November 02). Whitely Councils have been in existence since the beginning of the NHS and have become reasonably discredited because they do not enable comparison of the value of one job with another, especially as different Whitely councils have their own measures. In addition, pay scales are often linked to in-house competency frameworks, which makes any comparison with NVQs difficult. The Agenda for Change is to introduce one pay scale for everybody, thus making it possible to compare work of equal value and pave the way for job evaluations. The mapping of all jobs and the development of the wage system began in 1999. However, pay scales have been reviewed periodically and it remains to be seen whether the latest set of changes will be implemented in a positive manner.

Wages are not necessarily seen as the main reason why so many nurses leave the NHS: most of them are dissatisfied with working conditions and find it unfulfilling that they cannot carry out their work in the way they want to. Working and employment conditions, such as work overload or lack of facilities, are therefore critical. The long-hours culture as well as shift work and lack of childcare are concerns. There are regulations in place (for example, the Working Time Directive) and it is only permissible to work for 48 hrs per week for one employer. However, due to the Bank system, it is difficult to control whether work is done for other employers. There have been suggestions to make working options more flexible, but these suggestions have met with a backlash because they were not offered to all workers. There is a glass ceiling for women in the health sector in that men tend to get quicker into, for example, management positions. This is only partly because they do not have career breaks. Additional 'ceilings' exist between women; for example, it will take approximately five years longer for a black nurse to reach grade H in comparison to a white counterpart. This is due to (racial) discrimination and segregation within the ranks of women.

There is further, anecdotal evidence of discrimination in dismissal procedures. Black ethnic minorities appear to have their competence to practice examined much more closely than comparable whites and to be negatively influenced by the selection procedure. The Race Relations Amendment Act will require monitoring of dismissals by ethnicity and should reveal the extent of this problem. Most NHS Trusts should have strong equal opportunities policies and deal strongly with harassment and discrimination where it happens. The position of black ethnic minority workers in the health sector has to be seen in context, as institutional discrimination and racism are due to historical reasons. For instance, when black nurses first entered the health service they were given 'enrolled nurse' status rather than full nurse status – not the equivalent to the British nurses and not reflecting their qualifications. The situation is better now but there is still institutional racism and racial harassment from patients and colleagues.

Employment conditions in the printing industry are reasonably good, especially in larger firms with newer machines where printing is not actually dirty and is mainly computer driven. However, print is mainly made up of small and medium-sized enterprises and these do not always have such good working and employment conditions. The pay gap in the print industry is a result of the skills gap, as most men earn well in the Class I jobs and can also push for additional payments whereas women are not training up. Pay in the sector can be very good: if you are working in a medium-sized enterprise with an 8 to 10 colour press you could be earning £50-60,000 a year as a machine minder, especially with add-ons such as machine extras or shift extras. Workers also push up their wages due to the skill shortages. On paper, equal pay for women who are doing exactly the same job as men may have been achieved, but many women earn less because they have different job titles. Similar problems exist for black ethnic minority workers. There is an agreement in place between employers and unions that there should be pay rises for qualifications at certain grades, though this is not everywhere recognised.

The standard working week in print has been 37½ hours per week since 1980 and some work 36 hours or less. In reprographics in some areas they were only working 32 hours a week a few years ago, although this was the cream of the industry, with private health care, etc. The work environment obviously depends on the type of firm. There are shifts in many companies and contracts for a certain number of hours per year (for example, seasonal work). Most people work a standard week, apart from newspapers where the press is running for more than 20 hours a day. The right to part-time work is a big issue, but the legislation on part-time working will not necessarily benefit women (although it may help men) because sex discrimination legislation is more effective. Part-time work was scarcely known in the industry until a couple of years ago.

As in construction, no employer will admit to discrimination, explaining that women or ethnic minorities simply do not apply. For example, black workers are more likely to be moved to smaller machines when equally qualified white workers come along so that the black worker is not paid more than the white worker. Employers are not primarily or morally concerned with equal opportunities, but have conservative views about recruiting the best people for the sector.

Health and safety is also a big issue, especially in the papermaking sector and the print sections (cutting and chemicals), with many suffering back and shoulder pains from carrying heavy loads. Women suffer in particular from repetitive strain.

ICT differs again in terms of employment conditions, though like construction and printing is dominated by small firms. The sector has seen a considerable decrease in pay since 1999, but is no low paying, with pay tending to be performance-related. Many companies have, however, no structured pay systems, so monitoring is difficult. The average annual rate of pay for all ICT jobs is estimated at £52,000 for 2002, though contract rates fell (Computer Weekly 2002). Working conditions are often characterised by long hours, shift work, lack of flexibility, high levels of change and pressure. Fewer of the 8.6% ethnic minorities employed are employed permanently than whites, and of the 23.5% women employer most work full time and on permanent contracts.

Comprehensive benefits

Social policy and different welfare systems contribute considerably to the position and status of women (and ethnic minorities) in the labour market and society at large. The different frameworks given in the countries included in our project therefore make it possible to question whether women and ethnic minorities covered by comprehensive benefits have more extended labour market opportunities than women and ethnic minorities without such benefit coverage. There are two ways in which these considerations could be relevant to our research: in terms of entry into the labour market (addressing industrial or occupational segregation) and in progressing up a career ladder (hierarchical segregation) (Figure 1). First, social benefits such as unemployment payments or other policy provisions by the state appear to influence labour market opportunities of certain 'vulnerable groups' (i.e. women). There is now sociological evidence that social benefits have a positive impact rather than a negative

one. Persons with greater financial security will also allow themselves longer periods of job search, increasing the chances of finding work that suits them. Moreover, persons in training and or in placements programmes have more information aiding job search, increasing the chances of finding work that suits them. We expected to find this evidence in countries with comprehensive social benefit coverage. Second, the state's policy provisions in combination with comprehensive benefits provided by an employer, such as a health insurance package, attractive pension plans, flexible holiday allowances or training and professional development, could enable individuals to improve their opportunities and with that advance better in their career. This is based on the assumption that individuals with greater financial and employment security as well as better opportunities for professional development will have more options in terms of their career choices and will progress faster. In practice, these two processes overlap considerably. A drawback at this stage of the research is that information on the second process will only become available during the next, micro-level phase. The following considerations are therefore rather preliminary and incomplete.

In the British liberal welfare system characterised by means-tested assistance, modest universal transfers and modest social insurance plans (Esping-Andersen 1990), coverage for process one is comparably low (Fig 1). Recent policies included an even further shift towards deregulation of market principles via a deregulation of labour markets, downward pressure on wages and cutbacks in welfare rights (Clasen et al 1998, 2). The situation is different in Spain, where family policies are vital to explaining the marginalisation of women, and Denmark (and Germany to some extent), where the high level of social security and flexibility is important. However, some differences in terms of the effects of national policies have emerged for the British case. Construction firms and DLOs in Britain that employ and retain women appear to have far better support structures than those that do not, whether in the form of effective implementation of equal opportunity policies, women's committees, or provision for childcare and maternity. Yet at the same time, it is shown above that women and ethnic minorities are far more dependent on firms' formal procedures for recruitment and employment than their white male counterparts.

A clear trend emerges in the distinction between public and private sector employers. For example, only 5% of employers in the IT sector as a whole make provision for all four of the most common forms of family friendly provision (additional maternity leave or pay above the legal minimum, paternity leave, childcare provisions and flexible or non-standard working arrangements) (Skyte, Computing Magazine). Yet according to a survey by Human Resources/Accor Services (Skyte), 71% of public sector employers of IT workers had formal work-life policies in place, against 22% of private employers. The provisions in the NHS would also support this divide. It is too early to know whether the 'Improving Working Lives' programme will be successful but with it the NHS is attempting to lead in the field of social benefits. The National Childcare Strategy section of the NHS Plan is progressive although still not covering all needs and pension benefits are good. However, maternity provisions in the health sector have decreased from a previously high standard. The situation in the Health sector would indicate that the provision of comprehensive benefits does have a (albeit limited) positive effect on the inclusion of vulnerable groups into the sector and on

their progress within the sector. These conclusions will have to be reassessed on the basis of micro-level information.

Active labour market policy and good practice

This project considers active labour market policy (ALMP), especially through education and training instructions and affirmative action, to have a positive impact in combating segregation. ALMP is helpful to reduce industrial segregation via demand-side policy (governments investing in employment for certain target groups in certain industries) and will reduce occupational segregation via supply-side policies (via vocational and professional training). Hierarchical segregation will not be influenced by active labour market policy, except for affirmative action that concretely support target groups above other categories. Process one is therefore far more important for this hypothesis, especially in the UK where policy makers still shy from implementing affirmative action on a broader basis. This is not the case for all countries under investigation. Germany, for example, has an affirmative action policy for the public sector that will see women employed over equally qualified men.

Since the mid-1980s the UK Government has significantly tightened the administration of benefits and reduced the value of benefits in relation to average earnings, while offering greater assistance to jobseekers through various Employment Service programmes (Robinson 1996, vii). One example is the New Deal, targeting those neither in a job nor in education and summoning them to meet an advisor to help them into jobs (Toynbee and Walker 2001, 13/14). Mirroring the Cabinet Office/PUI report (2002), the IT sector revealed that government programmes did not seem to have an impact on the sector in that one of its biggest companies had no established work with ESF-New Deal programmes. This was due to the fact that “irrelevant skills” were being taught that do not address the whole area of customer, communication, and team working skills and instead concentrated only on technical skills. These change so fast that they were also seen to be irrelevant. Apart from this rather worrying finding, no further conclusions on actual programmes can be drawn because none were mentioned during interviews. There are two possible explanations. Following the indications from the IT sector, ALMPs could be irrelevant to the sectors under consideration. Alternatively, the sectors could be ‘blind’ to these programmes because they occur outside the labour market. At the macro-level, social partners and other organisations would not know whether recruits have learned their skills in such programmes. Other programmes in Europe, such as job rotation in Denmark or the German work creation schemes pay employers directly to take on unemployed individuals and train them or enable them to gain work experience. The link between training/development and the labour market is therefore much tighter than in the UK (although the Health sector is an exception here).

Despite these ambiguities at the policy level, there are sectoral initiatives to combat segregation. At industry level in Britain, the construction sector attempts to improve integration and female representation, for instance through the Strategic Forum for Construction, through various projects such as the CITB diversity pilot and Women in Building, through linking with the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) and the Equal Opportunities Commission, and through specialist organisations such as

Women and the Manual Trades and Women's Education in Building and the network of women's training centres. At European level, too, one of the areas of work decided on by the European construction employers, FIEC, is the recruitment of women and ethnic minorities. In the print industry there are similar local collaborative partnerships between the trade unions and CRE officers, although these are not as established and institutionalised. The same can be said for IT, which benefits from project such as WISE or WISE OUTLOOK and where bodies such as e-skills UK (former NTO) are considering how to address the work-life balance or immigrant recruitment. However, evidence from firms within the four specified sectors may give a very different evaluation of ALMP and good practices as well as their importance for women and black ethnic minority workers.

Conclusions

The results of the preliminary and macro level analysis of our research show that the mechanisms of marginalisation and inclusion are not the same for the four sectors in this study nor for the six countries under investigation. There is a different combination of factors playing different roles in each sector and each country. There is thus not only a need to clearly distinguish between these varying patterns but also for further more detailed research at the micro, or organisational, level. Macro-level statistical data has proven to be appealing in terms of posing further questions within the research process, but has been unsatisfactory both qualitatively and quantitatively. Macro level interviews result in a more detailed but still inconclusive picture. It is therefore necessary to conduct micro level research to understand the exact processes that are at play, as this will provide details of the different mechanisms and how they interact, within the context and history of each sector.

In terms of the four sectors in Britain some indicative results include the fact that recruitment and promotion is very much based on informal networks in Construction, ICT and to some extent Printing. The Health sector, in contrast, has a far more formalised training and recruitment route that makes employment more accessible. Partly due to high skills shortages, it seems to be true for all sectors that more women and ethnic minorities are being trained than are in employment. However, only Construction and Printing are characterised by low participation of both women and ethnic minorities. Moreover, the segregated sectors, though requiring a skilled workforce, are relatively indifferent to formal training and qualifications as the primary means of entry. At a macro level, equality initiatives have been implemented in both Construction and ICT, but in many cases firms do not take up these initiatives. This is not to say that such measures cannot have an impact. Our own research on women in construction has shown that where equal opportunities policies are rigorously and proactively enforced rather than just a paper exercise, then they can be effective in, for instance, breaking down gender segregation (Michielsens *et al.*, 1997).

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