

Education Sector Leaders

Overview of Research

Education plays a key role in helping students prepare for their future. Leaders who reflect students' cultural backgrounds are necessary to project a positive image of visible minorities to students from an early age, even before they enter the workforce. Diverse leadership in the education sector has both a symbolic and practical importance. Diversity among teachers and academic leaders promotes education policies and teaching practices that promote a civic culture inclusive of diversity (Butler, 2000).

According to Lumby et al. (2007), “a powerful commitment to equality and diversity is viewed by many as integral to progressing further education’s strategic mission. The sector has long been committed to such values, historically focused on an inclusive approach to education and training.” In higher education, in particular, it is essential to developing critical thinking. “The incorporation of diversity into pedagogical practices in higher education changes societal mind-sets and challenges the structural arrangement of persons in society” (Campbell, 2000). It has been a high priority in Ontario for more than a decade (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008).

Research shows that:

- Diverse leadership plays an important symbolic role in shaping the aspirations of young people (Blau & Stearns, 2003). Failure to provide positive role models can lead to social exclusion, which carries with it very high social and economic costs (Ryan et. al. 2007).
- Under the right conditions a more diverse leadership has the potential to raise the performance of the sector to the benefit of learners, staff and the business community (Aguirre & Martinez, 2002).
- Visible minority school leaders can be strong role models to visible minority students and can help promote minority students’ academic success, which in turn is essential to economic and social development (Sanchez et al., 2008).
- Visible minority teachers and administrators also have the capacity to promote stronger relationships with visible minority students and communities. In part, this is a consequence of “cultural synchronization”—superior ability to read and understand students’ language, cognitive abilities, worldviews and communication styles (Ryan et. al., 2007).
- Principals in high schools set the tone for diversity practices. In general, white principals are perceived as being less effective in doing this than visible minority principals (Carr & Klassen, 1997). Visible minorities are better positioned to deliver culturally responsive pedagogy and to help prepare students to succeed in a world that tends to marginalize them (Ryan, et. al. 2007).

Unlike the US, research shows that in Canada six of the highest achieving groups at the post-secondary level are “racialized” (i.e., visible minorities) (Herberg, 1990). In addition, immigrants to Canada (a high percentage of which are visible minorities) are more highly educated than the average Canadian-born citizen.

In spite of this, visible minorities are under-represented in leadership positions in the education sector and there is evidence that they face many barriers to securing employment and advancing (Ryan et. al., 2007).

While many post-secondary institutions have employment equity offices, their impact is variable and problems of systemic racism have not been effectively addressed (Drolet, 2009). In addition, the composition and autonomous nature of hiring and promotion committees makes it challenging to implement practices to promote diversity.

Yet, there appears to be progress. At colleges and universities, the processes for appointing boards of governors have increasingly incorporated diversity along with other criteria in recruiting and assessing candidates (Maytree, 2008).

Methodology

First we collected data on school board directors of public and separate school boards in Toronto, York and Peel districts. We obtained data on 11 of 18 individuals.

For school principals and vice-principals in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), we referred to an extract from the *Report of Workforce Census* (Herring, 2007). The figures were validated by the Toronto District School Board.² Finally, we identified board members and executives (presidents, vice-presidents, provosts, and vice-provosts) of GTA-based colleges and universities demographic data were collected through an online search. We obtained information on 256 of 313 leaders (82%).

Findings

The following table (Table 15) is an analysis of the visible minority representation among School District Directors as compared to the visible minority population they serve in the different regions. Among the individuals for whom there were data (11 of 18) we found no School District Directors who are visible minorities although one appointment begins in June and will be reflected in next year's tally.

Table 15: Visible Minorities in Education – School District Directors

School District Directors	Population % Visible Minority	Total Number	Total Analyzed	# Visible Minority	% Visible Minority
Toronto District School Board	47%	2	1	0	0%
Toronto Catholic District School Board		4	4	0	0%
York Region District School Board	37%	2	1	0	0%
York Catholic District School Board		3	1	0	0%
Peel District School Board	50%	4	3	0	0%
Peel Catholic District School Board		3	1	0	0%
Total	45.8%	18	11	0	0%

Visible minorities comprise 19% of the Toronto District School Board principals and vice-principals as identified through a survey (Table 16).

² Pardeep Singh Nagra, Manager, Employment Equity Office.

Table 16: Visible Minorities in Education – Toronto District School Board (TDSB) Principals and Vice-Principals

Toronto District School Board (TDSB)	Total Number	Total Analyzed	# Visible Minority	% Visible Minority
Principals and Vice-Principals	1004	924	178	19%

Table 17 is an analysis of the visible minority representation among college and university leaders. While the boards of governors are elected, college executives (presidents and vice-presidents) make up the senior executive. Visible minorities are more than one quarter (27%) of college boards and 20% of college executives compared to 24% of university boards and 11% of university executives.

Table 17: Visible Minorities in Post-Secondary Education - College and University Leaders

College and University Leaders	Total Number	Total Analyzed	# Visible Minority	% Visible Minority
College Executives	34	25	5	20%
College Boards of Governors	99	62	17	27%
College Total	133	87	22	25%
University Executives	42	38	4	11%
University Boards of Governors	138	131	32	24%
University Total	180	169	36	21%
College and University Leaders Total	313	256	58	23%

Table 18 is the overall visible minority representation in the education sector which shows college leaders to be the most diverse, with a total of 25% visible minorities among the leaders analysed.

Table 18: Visible Minorities in the Education Sector

Education Sector	Total Number	Total Analyzed	# Visible Minority	% Visible Minority
School District Directors	18	11	0	0%
TDSB Principals and Vice-Principals	1004	924	178	19%
College Leaders	133	87	22	25%
University Leaders	180	169	36	21%
Total	1335	1191	236	20%

Leading Practices

- Explicit commitment to diversity is essential. In the *Principle of Participation and Equal Chances*, the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) outlines its commitment to diversity for its teachers and principals, encouraging leadership opportunities for its diverse staff. It also created an Executive Officer of Student and Community Equity position in August 2005, the first regional school authority in Canada to do so. The TDSB has developed policies and procedures to ensure that its hiring and promotion practices are bias-free and “promote equitable representation of [its] diversity at all level of the school system” (TDSB, 2007).
- The University of Toronto has a Vice-President of Human Resources and Equity signalling that diversity is a critical strategic issue for the institution. Among its many leading practices are an employee engagement survey, extensive data collection and benchmarking, and transparent sharing of results including areas of strength and weakness (Hildyard, 2008).
- A strategic focus on diversity at the board level has paid off for colleges and universities. Seneca College uses a detailed competency matrix of the skills and experience needed to complement the existing board. In an effort to promote diversity, Seneca solicits applicants from its alumni, from major employers of its graduates, and from its education partners both in Canada and abroad.
- Since 1994, York University has also had a protocol regarding the composition of the board, its roles and responsibilities. The board’s Governance and Human Resources Committee reviews membership and balance on the board and recommends new appointments to the Executive Committee based both on experiential and diversity criteria from its community and alumni. In the last three years, 50% of the new external governors are visible minorities (Maytree, 2008).
- Diversity training is critical within organizations and boards of directors to ensure that strategic directions are translated into practice and that a culture of inclusiveness is promoted. At the University of Toronto, equity, diversity and proactive recruitment are priorities in a three-day training program for new administrators.

Leadership in Action

G. Raymond Chang, Chancellor, Ryerson University and Chairman, CI Financial

G. Raymond Chang has been a supporter of Ryerson University for many years. He has been a member of the Board of Governors since 2001 and became Chancellor in 2006. A passionate advocate for life-long learning, he received an honorary doctorate from Ryerson in 2005. He has been a significant contributor to the G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education, which is named in his honour.

A successful businessman, G. Raymond Chang is Chairman of CI Financial (CI). In his 25 years at CI and together with three partners, he took the company from a small money manager with \$5 million in assets to one of Canada's three largest investment fund companies with more than \$80 billion in fee-earning assets. Chang joined CI in 1984 as Vice-President and Chief Operating Officer and was promoted to President and COO in 1994. Two years later, he became President and Chief Executive Officer. He was appointed Chairman in 1999.

As well as making his mark as a leader in the corporate sector and in the education sector, Chang devotes time and support to good works in the community. He is an active member of the Board of Directors of the Toronto General & Western Hospital Foundation. His generosity allowed for the creation of the Gladstone and Maisie Chang Chair in Teaching of Internal Medicine at the University Health Network, named for his parents. Chang also established a fellowship to train West Indian doctors at the University Health Network. He is also a Governor of the Royal Ontario Museum.

Chang also supports good works in Jamaica, the country of his birth. He has assisted farmers to become self-sufficient by providing start-up capital, and on-going advice on markets. He has been a generous benefactor of continuing education and young adult learning, particularly at St. George's College, his alma mater high school, as well as the University of the West Indies. He also helped to initiate a ground-breaking collaborative distance education program, between Ryerson and the University of the West Indies, for nurses in the English-speaking Caribbean. Most recently, Chang funded a chair in family medicine at the University of the West Indies. He has also invested in areas of commerce, manufacturing, agriculture and tourism in Jamaica and Canada, and sits on the board of Grace, Kennedy and Company Limited. In 2003, he was honoured with the Prime Minister's Medal of Appreciation for Service to Jamaica. In 2008, he was appointed Special Consultant to the Government of Jamaica, by the Prime Minister of Jamaica.

Chang's advice to aspiring leaders: "Believe in the best of the human spirit and that we all have the ability to extend ourselves well beyond our boundaries, whatever they may be or, wherever we may be."

Vicki Bismilla, Vice President Academic and Chief Learning Officer, Centennial College of Applied Arts and Technology

Vicki Bismilla has been the Vice President, Academic and Chief Learning Officer of Centennial College since 2005. Her experience includes corporate operations, diversity training and leadership, academic policy and change management. Previously she has been a teacher and principal. She was also Education Officer for the Ministry of Education and Superintendent of Education for the York Region District School Board. In her role as Superintendent, she initiated 20 equity programs and committees to form an infrastructure for the board to address issues of equity and, as a result, was honoured with their Excellent Employee Award in 2004.

Bismilla initiated the province-wide Equity Committee for Supervisory Officers from boards across Ontario and taught the Supervisory Officer Qualification Program. She has chaired international conferences on equity issues and won the Province of Ontario Volunteer Service Award in 1998 which marked her volunteer service as President of the Board of Directors for the Scarborough Women's Centre. She has been profiled in the Who's Who of Canadian Women for five years.

Bismilla was born in South Africa into a family involved in the anti-apartheid movement through the Natal Indian Congress. She graduated from the University of South Africa with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English Literature and Drama and immigrated to Canada in 1970. Since then, she has completed her Honours Degree in English Literature, her Masters Degree in Education and her Supervisory Officer's Certification. She is presently engaged in doctoral studies at OISE in the field of Second Language Education to benefit ESL college students. Bismilla lives in the Scarborough community where she contributes to a number of voluntary organizations including the Scarborough Hospital Board of Directors.

Bismilla's advice to aspiring leaders: "Always remember that you can make a difference. You can change the world, if you want to. Change begins right here in the communities in which we live and work. And remember to mentor others along your pathway - lift as you climb."