

EDUCATION SECTOR LEADERS

Diverse leadership in the education sector is important for both symbolic and practical reasons. Schools are uniquely positioned to influence future leaders: today's youth. The education sector needs leaders who reflect their students' cultural backgrounds and project positive images. Diverse leadership in education can encourage the academic success of visible minority students (Sanchez et al., 2008), while failure to provide positive role models can lead to social exclusion (Ryan & Antonelli, 2007). Visible minority teachers, administrators and principals can promote stronger relationships with visible minority students and the community through the use of culturally responsive pedagogy. Despite this, visible minorities are under-represented in leadership positions in education, and evidence suggests that they face barriers to employment and advancement (Ryan & Antonelli, 2007). The impact of systemic racism in education hiring and promotion has not been adequately addressed (Drolet, 2009).

Methodology

The study examined 12 of 14 directors of the public and separate school boards in Toronto, York and Peel districts. To determine the diversity of school principals and vice principals in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), the study consulted an extract from the Demographic Composition of Toronto District School Board Employees (Herring & Associates, 2007). No new data were released for 2011. The study also looked at boards of governors and executives – including presidents, vice presidents, provosts, and vice-provosts – of colleges and universities based in the GTA.

Findings

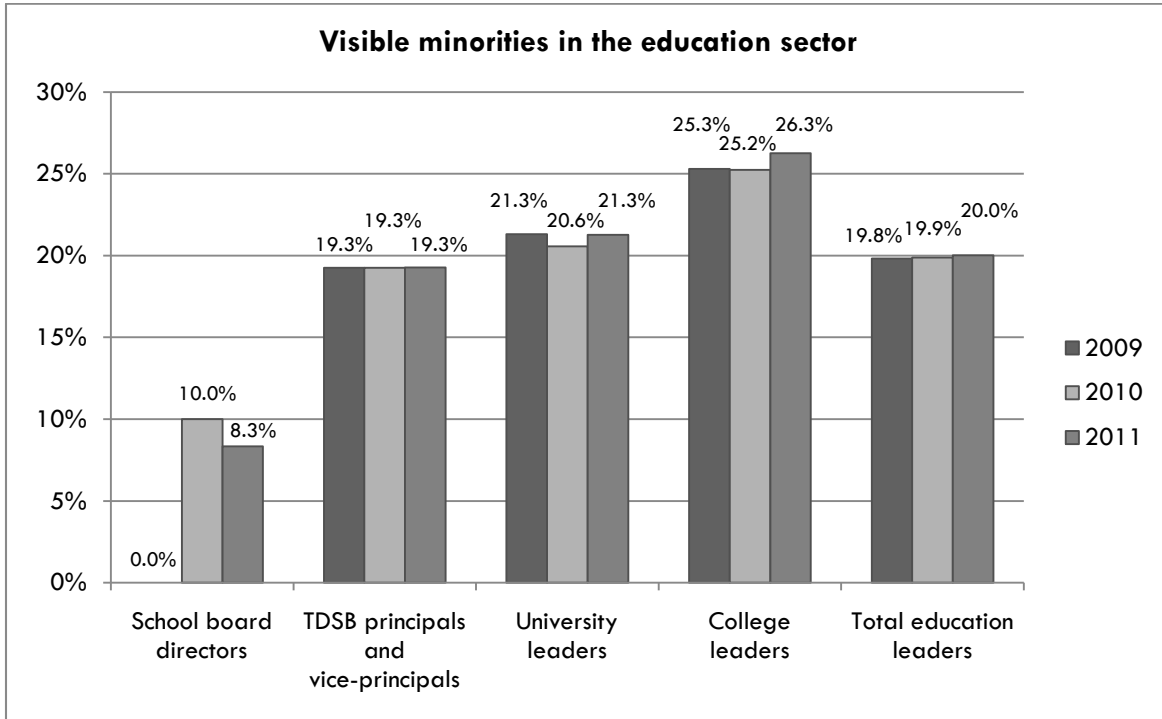
In total, 20% of education leaders are visible minorities, compared to 19.8% in 2009 and 19.9% in 2010.

There is one visible minority school board director in the GTA. This single appointment accounts for the increase from 0% in 2009, to 10% in 2010, and then to 8.3% in 2011. (The later drop is the result of a larger number of directors being analysed in 2011.)

With no data released for the number of principals and vice principals in the Toronto District School Board, there is no change to report. For the purposes of this study, 2011 rates remain at 19.3%.

Of the GTA's 174 university leaders, 37 (21.3%) are visible minorities. This is the same rate as in 2009, and an increase from the 2010 percentage of 20.6%. College leaders are more diverse than their university counterparts: 26.3% are visible minorities in 2011 (see Figure 6). This represents an increase over 2009 levels, when 25.3% of leaders were visible minorities.

Figure 6: Visible minorities in the education sector



Practices that Work in Education

Specific strategies have improved the diversity of education leaders in the GTA.

Count: What gets measured gets done

Educational institutions track and report on diversity in leadership roles. By developing and implementing a series of self-identification surveys, an organization in this sector can measure and track progress over time. For example, the Toronto District School Board’s (TDSB) employment equity office administered a self-identification census to over 37,000 employees in order to understand their demographic makeup and identify gaps in representation.

Set targets

Measuring and tracking the results from self-identification surveys allows the TDSB to benchmark its workforce against the demographic composition of the City of Toronto to meet its goal of equitable leadership representation.

Lead: Make diversity a strategic priority

Senior leadership must make an explicit commitment to diversity if it is to increase the number of visible minority leaders in the education sector. This commitment ensures that the diversity strategy is incorporated into the educational institution’s operational strategies. All the boards of education in the GTA, for example, have diversity strategies in place (TDSB, 2011).

In 1994, York University (2004) implemented a formal protocol regarding the composition, roles, and responsibilities of its board of governors. When the board chooses new members, it performs a gap analysis to assess competencies and determine which skills and capabilities would best complement the ones that already exist on the board (Maytree, n. d.). The board's governance and human resources committee reviews this gap analysis and then proposes individuals who meet the experiential and diversity criteria for membership.

Develop the pipeline

The integration of diversity throughout an organization includes diversity training for all levels of employees. This helps to create a common organizational culture and communicates that diversity is a strategic priority.

Develop and sustain excellent human resource practices

All boards of education in the GTA have implemented employee training to support an inclusive organizational culture (TDSB, 2011).

An organizational culture that values diversity and inclusiveness will increase job satisfaction. More employees will remain with the institution, creating a base from which senior leaders can be identified and further developed, for example, through stretch assignments or by identifying alternative pathways to promotion.

Similarly, focusing training on middle and low-level managers within the organization (i.e., principals and vice-principals), helps to reduce bias in management, encourages the adoption of an attitude that is consistent with the institution's diversity strategy, and gives managers the skills to identify and accommodate differences (TDSB, 2011).