

Teacher and Administrator Diversity in Canada: Leaky Pipelines, Bottlenecks and Glass Ceilings

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How diverse is the current elementary and secondary teacher and administrator workforce in Canada? Is it as diverse as the student population? How can we best account for differences, if any, between the two groups? Should we be concerned about such differences, if they do exist? Answers to these questions are becoming more urgent as Canada's population continues to become more visibly diverse. Over the past four decades, the percentage of "visible minority"¹ residents has increased dramatically, from 5% in 1981 to 13.4% in 2001 (Tran, 2004; Statistics Canada, 2005b).² If Canada's Aboriginal population of 976, 305 is included in the 2001 numbers, then the proportion of non-white citizens swells to 16.7% (Statistics Canada, 2003) of the total population.³ As the diversity of the general population has increased, so has the student population, particularly in the metropolitan areas (Harvey & Houle, 2006). In some of these urban school districts, the visible minority population exceeds 50% of the total student population (Cheng & Yau, 1999).

Has the educator workforce kept pace with the increasing levels of this diversity? Evidence from other Western countries like the United Kingdom and the United States indicates that it has not. In both countries, the numbers of non-white educators continue to fall further and further behind the numbers of non-white students (Bariso, 2001;

¹ The Canadian Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour." We use the term "visible minority," "minority" or "ethnic minority" to refer to the above groups in Canadian, American and British reports. The terms "of colour," "racialized," "non-white" and "minoritized" are used to refer to all non-white groups, including Aboriginal groups.

² Some reports of the visible minority population in 2001 round off the number at 13% (e.g. Tran, 2004). However, if the percentage is calculated on the basis of the actual numbers (29, 639, 030 and 3, 983, 845 as enumerated in Statistics Canada, 2005d), it comes to 13.44%.

³ A subsequent adjustment of the Aboriginal population has placed their number at 1,066, 500, 3.6% of the total population (Statistics Canada, 2005d). This would raise the percentage of people of colour in Canada to 17.0%.

Ladson-Billings, 2005; National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2004). Can we expect this same trend in Canada?

The other associated question is why this should be an issue at all. Should Canadians be concerned if the diversity in the educator workforce does not match that of the student population? Our position in this paper is that we ought to be concerned over differences between the two groups because there are many good reasons for having a diverse workforce. We elaborate on these reasons below.

This paper explores diversity in the educator workforce. First, it examines the reasons for promoting diversity among teachers and administrators. Second, we look at the extent to which educator workforces in Canada and elsewhere compare with the diversity in student populations. This is followed by an explanation for the differences between the two groups. Finally, we suggest ways in which educators and policy makers can work towards increasing diversity in teacher and administrator numbers.

The Benefits of a Diverse Educator Workforce

The rapid increase in the visible diversity of student populations in Western countries is increasingly being accompanied by calls for a similar escalation in teacher and administrator complements. Academics, educators and policy makers are at the forefront of those issuing such calls (e.g. King; 1993; Solomon, 1997; National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force, 2004). School districts and government agencies have also got into the act, developing policies that direct employees to do what they can to ensure that they hire educators that complement student diversity. The Toronto District School Board (2007), one of the more diverse schools districts in Canada, for example, has developed policies and procedures that ensure that its “hiring and promotion practices are bias-free, and promote equitable representation of our diversity at all levels of the school system.” These individuals and agencies promote these policies because they believe, like Sleeter (1993) and Solomon (1997), that race does matter in pedagogical responses to “difference”. Sleeter (1993), in fact, provides empirical evidence that indicates some white teachers may not be appropriately equipped to meet the challenges associated with teaching in a diverse school and classroom setting. On the other hand, many academics note that teachers and administrators of colour are in a better position to meet the needs of all students in diverse settings. Much of this literature is written in the context of African American education in the United States. Even so, much of it is applicable to Canada.

Scholars and educator practitioners in United States, the United Kingdom and Canada provide a number of solid reasons for increasing diversity in the ranks of teachers and administrators. They make their case on the strength of symbolic, relationship-related, pedagogical and political reasons.

Symbolic Reasons

One set of reasons for promoting a diverse educator workforce revolves around the symbolic impact of representation. The extent to which people of colour are represented or not represented in the ranks of teachers and administrators carries with it considerable significance. Two arguments accompany this symbolic orientation – an ethical one and a practical one. The ethical argument hinges on the “rightness” of representation in the educator workforce. Like everyone else, people of colour have a legitimate right to gain employment in the teaching profession (Bariso, 2001; Villegus & Lucas, 2004; King, 1993; Henze, Katz, Norte, Sather & Walker, 2002; Brown, 1999). This is only proper in the democracies in which we live. In this sense, representation is a symbol that reflects the type of communities and societies in which we live. So it is only right and proper in a democratic and fair world that we have proportional representation among teachers and administrators. Failure to achieve this end in our schools does not speak well for our democratic values.

The second argument – the practical one – follows closely from the ethical one. It says that representation in the educator workforce will have an impact on what and how students learn. Current representational arrangements send messages to both white and non-white students; they learn from the hierarchies that they observe in school and elsewhere. In situations where there are few non-white teachers and administrators, children – both white and non-white – get the message that schools are doing little to counteract the stratification that exists in the wider society (Villegus & Lucas, 2004). They learn that white people are better suited to occupy positions of authority in their communities, and furthermore, that this racial inequality is natural and normal. Not surprisingly, these arrangements can alienate students of colour from the education process and sabotage their motivation. On the other hand, the presence of teachers and administrators of colour can be a source of inspiration for students. A number of researchers cite of the importance of non-white role models (Bariso, 2001; Villegus & Lucas, 2004; King, 1993; Solomon, 1997; Klassen & Carr, 1996; Dei, 1996; Henze et. al., 2002; Brown, 1999, 2005). They note that not only can such role models inspire students of colour, but that they can also engender a more positive sense of self-worth. At least one Canadian study has supported this role-model hypothesis. In his study of teacher candidates and teacher graduates, Solomon (1997) found that non-white teachers were committed to the role-model idea. Role models inspired them when they were students, and years later in their current positions as teacher role models, they were convinced that they could make a difference in the lives of their students.

These arguments apply to administrators at least as much as they do to teachers (Brown, 1999, 2005). Administrators occupy a superior position in school hierarchies and the presence or absence of people of colour will have an impact on students. But non-white teachers and administrators can make a difference in the lives of students in other areas. One of these is in the type of relationships they can establish with students, colleagues and communities.

Relationship Reasons

Another strong reason for establishing a diverse educator workforce is that many non-white teachers and administrators have the capacity to engender unique relationships with students of colour and the communities in which they live. A number of scholars have made this argument when making the case for increasing the numbers of African American teachers and administrators in the United States (National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force, 2004; Villegus & Lucas; Irvine, 1990; King, 1993; Henze et. al., 2002; Nuby & Doebler, 2000; Murtadha & Watts, 2005; Foster 2005, Gooden, 2005; Lomotely, 1987, 1993). They use terms like “cultural synchronization” (Irvine, 1990), “fictive kinship” (Foster 2005) and “homphily” (Lomotely, 1987) to describe the nature of the unique connection that African Americans have with one another. Foster (2005), for example, contends that African Americans share a common culture that revolves around a fictive kinship. Acquired during formative socialization years, this kinship engenders a collective sense of brotherhood and sisterhood that binds all African Americans. As part of an integrated network, they feel and communicate a sense of collective identity through the activities in which they are engaged, the behaviors that they exhibit and the symbols that they employ.

This unique connection allows African American teachers and administrators to relate to students and parents of African heritage in ways that others educators may find difficult. One of the consequences of this relationship is that at the classroom level, teachers generally have higher expectations of African American students than their white colleagues (National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force, 2004; King, 1993). This is because they are able to understand and communicate with these students in ways that their fellow educators cannot. On the other side of the coin, those teachers who are not culturally synchronized with students are more likely to misinterpret or denigrate students’ languages, physical movements, cognitive styles, nonverbal cues, and worldviews. This in turn can lead such teachers to underestimate African American students’ intellectual capacities (Nuby & Doebler, 2000). African American administrators are also able to connect with students and communities in helpful ways. Like African American teachers, they tend to be committed to the education of Black students, understand students and have confidence in their ability to learn (Gooden, 2005). They also can establish fruitful relationships with the communities that they serve. In fact, Murtadha & Watts (2005) contend that community engagement has historically been central to Black educational leadership in the United States. African American administrators have traditionally formed fraternal orders, literacy groups, and organized church congregations to support collective interests. Unfortunately, some of this has been lost over the past few decades (Foster, 2005).

While the context of diversity in Canada differs somewhat from the United States, we can still learn from the literature that focuses on one particular group. Even though non-white educators and students may identify with a range of cultures, they all share the experience of being marginalized (Foster, 1993). In this sense, non-white teachers and administrators can identify with and understand one another’s situations, and at least in some ways, forge helpful relationships. These relationships will assist teachers and administrators in the pedagogy that they adopt or promote and in the political strategies that they endorse.

Pedagogical Reasons

There are solid pedagogical reasons for establishing a diverse educator workforce. To begin with, the relationships that non-white teachers establish with non-white students will enable them to devise teaching strategies that will help the latter to learn (Solomon, 1997). Many will be equipped to deliver a culturally relevant pedagogy that makes use of subject content that is related to the life, experience and cultures of their students. The knowledge that many non-white teachers have of students and their communities and backgrounds can assist them to build bridges between what is familiar to students and the new content that they are expected to learn (Villegus & Lucas, 2004). In doing this, non-white teachers will be in a good position to choose interesting and relevant material, design instructional strategies that engage students in culturally appropriate ways, employ analogies based on students' experiences, and use evaluation techniques that allow students to display their knowledge in ways that are familiar to them (Irvine & Armento, 2001). Administrators also have a role to play, even though it may involve activities outside of the classroom. Administrators of colour can use their knowledge of, and relationships with students and the community to advocate for appropriate kinds of pedagogy and also provide support for teachers.

The culturally responsive pedagogy that non-white teachers are equipped to provide can generate positive learning experiences. Solomon (1997) contends that a good relationship between student and teacher, appropriate cultural and cognitive strategies, the creation of a positive and dynamic learning environment and an inclusive curriculum will likely produce better learning outcomes for students of colour. The National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force (2004) concurs with Solomon. It maintains that increasing the numbers of teachers of colour will improve student achievement. It goes on to show that current data illustrate that higher numbers of educators of colour will generate improvement in attendance, discipline, dropout rates, overall satisfaction with school, self-concepts, cultural competence and students' sense of the relevance of school. Finally, it maintains that in the limited studies that do exist, students of colour tend to have higher academic, personal and social performance when they are taught by teachers of colour.

The relationships that non-white educators are able to establish with non-white students and communities will also assist them to bring a political orientation to their teaching and leading.

Political Reasons

Many teachers and administrators of colour are particularly well positioned to prepare students of colour to confront a world that marginalizes them. Their own experiences with oppression will have provided them with awareness of injustice, and in many instances, the desire and capacity to help others understand and do something about it. Many educators of colour are generally prepared to enable students to recognize racial oppression and to find ways to combat it. This political role surfaces more often in the

literature that addresses the work of administrators rather than teachers. Murtadha & Watts (2005), for example, observe that African American leaders have traditionally linked the struggle for education with social justice. For these individuals, leadership meant fighting to overcome barriers associated with poverty, racism and slavery. They saw their struggle as a moral one geared to acquire resources where few existed, and to create opportunities for children and adults to learn when many of them had given up. According to Pollard (1997), many African American administrators continue to follow this path, advocating for their students and communities and fighting oppression.

Both teachers and administrators of colour can accomplish these political ends in a number of ways. In the classroom, teachers of colour are in a good position to employ emancipatory pedagogy to engage students in critical reflection about social injustice (King, 1993), authenticate student voice by moving cultural knowledge from the margins to the mainstream (Solomon, 1997), introduce inclusive curricula (Solomon, 1997), demystify the hidden curriculum (Klassen & Carr, 1996) and work with students to develop collective strategies for taking action against oppression (Klassen & Carr, 1996). Non-white teachers and administrators are also well placed to influence white students and colleagues. Among other things, they can help dispel common and harmful stereotypes (Solomon, 1997), educate students, teachers and parents about different cultures and diversity issues (Solomon, 1997; Henze et. al., 2002), serve as cultural brokers to help students navigate their school environments (National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force, 2004) and intervene when necessary on their behalf (Solomon, 1997).

Clearly, strong reasons exist for promoting a diverse educator workforce. Teachers and administrators of colour are particularly well placed to ensure that all students benefit from their formal education. But the mere presence of a more diverse educator workforce will not necessarily ensure a richer school culture or that all students will have a better experience. Just because a teacher or administrator is non-white does not mean that he or she will automatically provide a better educational environment for white and non-white students. Not all educators of colour will prove to be exemplary teachers or administrators (See for example, Bowen, 1998). On the other hand, we should not overlook the potential contributions of white teachers and administrators; many will have much to offer students of colour (Cizek, 1995). But these teachers and administrators – no matter how dedicated and skilled they are – can only take their talents so far (Solomon, 1997). While many may enrich the experiences of all of their students, white educators cannot stand as symbols like teachers or administrators of colour can. Nor will they be in a position to understand, communicate or identify with students of colour in the way educators of colour are able to. The bottom line is that educators of colour have much to offer students, colleagues and communities; the presence of a diverse educator workforce has the potential to make our schools better places. The question remains, though, how diverse is this workforce in Canada? The next section explores this question.

Methods

The data on population, student and educator numbers were retrieved from articles on the subject, census data, and a survey. Many of the articles cited below referred to census data; some of these reports and the conclusions that they reached revolved exclusively around these data (e.g. Merchant, 2000; Harvey & Houle, 2006). We also retrieved census data directly from original sources like the National Center for Education Statistics in the United States and Statistics Canada. Some data were readily available online or in published reports. Other information was more difficult to track down and we had to adopt other strategies. For example, after unsuccessful attempts at retrieving information about the racial/ethnic breakdown of the educator workforce in Canada, we contacted Statistics Canada directly and it provided us with a number of useful websites and helpful data about teachers. However, we were unable to find any census data about race/ethnicity and principals. As it turned out, the only information we were able to generate on principals came from a survey that we circulated.

The survey was initially designed to illicit information from principals about the inclusive practices that were employed in their schools. In this paper we employ the demographic data that we obtained. A number of questions inquired about the diversity of the principal respondents, as well as the teachers and students in their respective schools. We also asked about the location and size of the school, and the nature of the community that it served. We constructed both electronic and paper versions of the survey. However, only a few of the latter were completed and we ended up not using them. We employed *Survey Monkey*, a program for creating online surveys. It allowed us to post the survey on a website. Individuals wishing to participate in the study had to visit the website and fill out the survey. Principal associations across the country were contacted and asked to let their members know about the survey site. We also advertised it in a number of professional journals. In all, 464 principals filled out parts of the survey. Initially we sought to use information on the diversity of the teacher and student populations, but we did not use it because of the low numbers of participants who filled these items out and the errors the respondents made. Moreover, the low level of diversity in the teacher population also made it difficult to find significant differences and relationships in the analyses. In the end we used only the questions that inquired into the race of the principals and their location in rural or urban areas.

There were a number of limitations associated with the survey. The main limitation involved the population itself – the small numbers of principals of colour made comparisons difficult. Another limitation was that administrators had to self-report and estimate the diversity in their student and teacher populations. Their estimations were not always accurate – many reported numbers that added up to more than 100%. Also, most of the responses were from the “Central Provinces” – Quebec and Ontario – so we did not use the surveys – few as they were – from other parts of the country.

Student and Workforce Diversity

How diverse is the educator workforce in Canada and other Western countries? Is it as diverse as the current student population? The evidence below indicates that in the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada, the numbers of educators of colour have

not kept pace with the phenomenal growth in the numbers of students of colour. In fact, where the numbers are available, it appears that the ratio of “visible minority” or “minority” educators to “visible minority” or “minority”⁴ students is falling, and in some instances, dramatically so.

The proportion of educators of colour to students of colour in the United Kingdom and the United States continues to decline. A number of scholars and reports in the United Kingdom have expressed concern over this condition for some time now (Swann, 1985; Troyna, 1993; Siraj-Blachford, 1993; Bariso, 2001; Carrington et. al., 2005). In 1988, the Commission for Racial Equality found that only 2% of teachers were of minority origin, while the 1991 Census indicated that despite the increasing minority population, the percentage of minority teachers was only 2.5, with no indication that these numbers would change in the near future (Bariso, 2001). This disparity, however, is not unique.

The situation in the United States is similar; the proportion of minority teachers and principals continue to decline relative to the minority student population. While the percentage of students of colour continues to rise dramatically, the percentage of teachers and principals of colour in the educator workforce continues to fall, prompting scholars like Irvine (1990) to inquire about “disappearing black educators.” On the other hand, the number of students of colour continues to increase dramatically, from roughly 15% of the total student population in 1970 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1998) to 29.6% in 1986 (NCES, 2005) to between 38.2 % (NCES, 2006) and 41.3% (NCES, 2005) in 2003, a change of roughly 26% in 33 years. By 2035 the minority population will exceed 50% (Villegus & Lucas, 2004). This contrasts dramatically with the 2003-2004 total complement of principals (15.9%) and teachers (16.3%) of colour (NCES, 2006) and the trajectories of these populations.

Table 1 illustrates a number of significant differences among students, teachers and principals of colour in the United States. First, a significantly higher proportion of teachers, administrators and students of colour populate schools in central city areas than in urban fringe and rural areas. The second important difference is that students of colour constitute a much higher proportion of the total student population than both administrators and teachers of colour in all three areas. Third, the proportional of principals and teachers of colour has declined between 1993-94 and 2003-04. In some instances these declines have been significant. Finally, the decline in the proportion of the principal population has been greater than the decline in the teacher population.

Table 1

Minority Proportion of Principals, Teachers and Students in Urban and Rural Areas in the United States by Percentage

	Central City	Urban Fringe/	Rural/
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		Large Town	Small Town
Principals 1993-94	43.2	27.8	18.7
Principals 2003-04	37.6	12.0	9.1
Teachers 1993-94	31.6	19.7	17.0
Teachers 2003-04	29.5	12.6	9.8
Students 1993-94	--	--	--
Students 2003-04	64.0	31.0	22.5

(Merchant, 2000 from *Schools and Staffing in the United States: A Statistical Profile 1993-94* and NCES, 2006)

Canada displays some of the same trends. Even though numbers about educators and students are not as accessible as they are in the United States, the available information indicates clearly identifiable patterns. The most obvious is that Canada is becoming much more visibly diverse than it once was. While the Canadian-born visible minority population should not be overlooked, the increase in racial diversity is due mostly to changing immigration patterns. Before adjustments in immigration policy in the 1960s, most immigrants came from European countries, particularly the United Kingdom (Boyd & Vicker, 2000). Since that time, the vast majority has emigrated from non-Western countries. Of the immigrants who have come to Canada since 1991, 80% have been visible minorities and 70% are of Asian heritage (Harvey & Houle, 2006). This visible minority population is increasing much faster than the white population. Between 1996 and 2001, it swelled by 25%, six times faster than the entire population, which increased by 4% during this same period. While the visible minority population sat at 13.3% of the total Canadian population in 2001, experts predict that it will blossom to between 19% and 23% by 2017 (Statistics Canada, 2005a). Most of these immigrants settle in the Metropolitan areas. Indeed, 73% of immigrants who arrived in Canada settled in the three largest cities – Montreal, Vancouver and Toronto. The visible minority populations of these cities⁵ are 22.7%, 49.0% and 42.4%, respectively (Statistics Canada, 2007a). In the very near future the visible minority populations of Toronto and Vancouver will exceed 50% (Statistics Canada, 2005b). Even now, more immigrants than Canadian-born citizens reside in Toronto and Vancouver.

Canada is also home to many native-born residents of colour. One of the fastest growing groups not included in the “visible minority” category is the Aboriginal people. Statistics Canada (2005d) considers Aboriginal people to be those who identify themselves as “North American Indian, Métis or Inuit, and/or are a Treaty Indian or a Registered Indian as defined by the Indian Act of Canada and/or are members of an Indian Band or First Nation and/or who have Aboriginal ancestry”. Estimates of the Aboriginal population range between 3.3 and 3.6 of the total Canadian population (See footnote 3). Forty-five percent of these live in urban areas (Harvey & Houle, 2006). Two noteworthy characteristics of Aboriginal people include their growth and age. The

⁵ This does not include the metropolitan areas around the cities. The visible minority proportion for the metropolitan areas of Montreal, Vancouver and Toronto are 13.5%, 36.8%, and 36.8%, respectively (Statistics Canada, 2007a).

numbers of Aboriginal people are increasing at a rapid rate. By 2017 it will have swelled by 35%. The percentage of Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan and Manitoba at this time will have risen to 20.7% and 17.6% of the respective populations (Statistics Canada, 2005d). Aboriginal people are also younger than the rest of the population. Thirty-three percent are below the age of 15, compared to 19.8% of the rest of the population (Statistics Canada, 2005d), and children up to 10 account for 40% of the urban Aboriginal population (Statistics Canada, 2007c). This has consequences for education. Across Canada Aboriginal children account for 5.2% of the total school population (Harvey & Houle, 2006).

The number of students, teachers and administrators of colour are not as easy to discern. Even so, some useful information is available. Urban centers, for example, have a high percentage of school-age children who are “visible minorities.” In Toronto and Vancouver almost half of this population were immigrants or a visible minorities in 2001. In other metropolitan areas in Canada, this proportion is between 15% and 22% (Harvey & Houle, 2006). Numbers from one urban school district may serve to illustrate the changing nature of diversity in these areas. For example, over the years from 1987, through 1991 to 1997, the proportion of white secondary students in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB)⁶ shrank from 62% in 1987, to 54% in 1991, to 47% in 1997 (Cheng & Yau, 1999). The largest of the visible minority groups in 1997 included students who identified themselves as East Asian (19%), Black (10%), South East Asian (7%), South Asian (7%), Middle Eastern (3%), Latin American (3%), bi/multi racial (3%) and Aboriginal (2%) (Cheng & Yau, 1999). Overall, 42% of all students were born outside of Canada, almost half of the students were non-native speakers of English, and they represented over 70 language groups (Cheng & Yau, 1999).

Information on Canadian educators of colour mirrors patterns found in the United States. Even though Canadian agencies do not keep records as detailed as the Americans, the data that are available point out that the number of Canadian educators of colour has not kept pace with the increase in the numbers of people of colour in the general and student population. It illustrates that the proportion of principals and teachers of colour is significantly less than the diversity in the student population. Accounts of diversity in the teacher force are far and few between. Citing 1996 Census numbers, one such report recounts that 5.57% of the total Canadian elementary/secondary teaching and counseling population were visible minority or Aboriginal (Moll, 2001). More recent data on the 2001 Census illustrate that the percentage of teachers and counselors of colour in the elementary and secondary school workforce has not changed all that much, even though the numbers in the student and general population have increased quite a bit.

⁶ Formerly, the Toronto Board of Education (TBE).

Table 2Visible Minority Teacher⁷ and General Population in Canada and Selected Provinces and Cities

	Total Teacher Labour Force	Visible Minority Teacher Population	Percentage Visible Minority Teachers	Percentage Total Visible Minority Population	Percentage Difference
Canada	412,955	22,415	5.4	13.4 ⁸	7.6
Quebec (Prov)	96,190	2,690	2.7	6.9	4.2
Montreal	42,905	2,305	5.3	13.5/22.7 ⁹	8.2/17.4
Ontario	162,240	12,055	7.4	19.0	11.6
Toronto	62,950	9,260	14.7	36.8/42.4	22.1/27.7
B.C.	52,055	4,645	8.9	21.6	12.7
Vancouver	25,730	3,935	15.2	36.8/49.0	21.6/33.8

(Sources: Statistics Canada 2005b, 2007a, 2007b)

Table 2 illustrates a number of significant differences in populations. The first, and most obvious, is that there is a significance difference between the percentage of visible minority teachers and visible minority students across Canada, in the three most populous provinces and in the three largest cities. Second, a much higher proportion of visible minority teachers teach in larger cities than in the general Canadian, Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia populations. In British Columbia, 84.7% of the visible minority population work in Vancouver. In Toronto and Montreal, the visible minority teacher populations constitute 76.8% and 85.6% of their respective provinces' total visible minority teacher workforces. But while these cities are home to more of these teachers, the percentage of the teacher workforce of the visible minority population is even smaller than it is throughout the respective provinces. This proportion shrinks even more when the metropolitan communities are excluded from the city numbers.

Numbers on the diversity of Canadian principals are difficult to find. Individual school districts may have some information, but they do not readily advertise them. The Toronto Board of Education is one of the few that has some numbers on record. In 1982, it reported that it only had 3 non-white principals, 8% of the total. Five years later little had changed. It indicated that it 6% of its principals and 11% of its vice-principals were visible minorities (Cheng, 1987). Our survey indicated that current percentages were even lower. Table 3 indicates that only 12 of the 294 principals who responded to race/ethnicity item on the survey self-identified as visible minority. Of these, 3 indicated

⁷ The category that we employ from Statistics Canada (2007b) is "Secondary and Elementary Schools Teachers and Educational Counsellors"

⁸ This number does not include the Aboriginal population.

⁹ The numbers are for metropolitan areas/ and the actual city numbers.

that they worked in “rural areas”, while the remaining 9 stated that they worked in schools in urban areas.

Table 3

Numbers and Percentages of Visible Minority Principals in Urban and Rural Quebec and Ontario

	Urban	Rural	Total
Total Number of Principals	211	83	294
Number of Visible Minority Principals	9	3	12
Number of White Principals	202	80	282
Percentage of Visible Minority Principals	4.2	3.6	4.0

While we need to be cautious about making general statements from the 294 cases above, there are some striking differences. First and foremost, is the meager number of visible minority principals. Only 4.0% (12) identified themselves as visible minorities. While the percentage is slightly higher in urban areas, the numbers of visible minority principals are so small generally, that we really cannot make any generalizations about urban/rural differences.

Data from the United States and Canada display similar trends in the numbers of students, principals and teachers of colour. The most obvious is that the proportion of the general visible minority population and of students of colour in the general population is much greater than the proportion of racialized elementary and secondary educators. In other words, there are many more students of colour than there are educators of colour. And even though more educators of colour work in urban areas, their numbers pale in comparison to the numbers of students of colour in cities. While the total percentages of principals (15.9) and teachers (16.3) are roughly similar in the United States, teachers outnumber principals of colour in Canada, that is, if we take the survey results at face value. The availability of longitudinal data in the United States allows us to conclude that, despite calls for increases in the numbers of educators of colour, the percentage of these educators relative to the percentage of students of colour is actually decreasing. Canada does not accumulate such detailed information. However, given that it mirrors the United States in most other patterns with respect to these groups, it would not be out of order to speculate that the percentage of educators of colour to students of colour is also decreasing. But if there are such good reasons for increasing the numbers of educators of colour why are there so few? If educators and policy makers continue to promote diversity among teachers and administrators why has progress been so slow? The next section attempts to answer this question.

Leaky Pipelines, Bottlenecks and Glass Ceilings

Over the years, scholars have advanced a number of explanations for the meager numbers of educators of colour. Some employ metaphors to help clarify their theories. One popular metaphor that American academics use to understand the absence of educators of colour in the United States is the “leaky pipeline” (Villegus & Lucas, 2004; Brown 1999). They visualize their education system as a pipeline that transports students from one place to another, in much the same way that these devices deliver oil or water. Ideally, students enter the education pipeline as young children and are moved along through the elementary, secondary and post-secondary systems and into the world of work where, as adults, they take up positions as teachers and eventually administrators. The problem in the United States, however, is that the pipeline does not work as it is supposed to – it leaks. Students spill out at a number of places along the route. So by the time the various cohorts reach their final destination, their numbers are considerably depleted. The reduced numbers, however, represent a skewed cross-section of the population – more often than not students of colour are the ones who spill out of the system along the way. In the end, this spillage significantly diminishes the potential pool of teachers and administrators of colour.

Research suggests that the pipeline metaphor is useful in helping us understand why there are not more educators of colour in the United States. Here the pool of potential educators is systemically eroded at every step of the schooling journey. The evidence is pretty clear. Students of colour – most obviously those of African and Hispanic heritage – perform less well academically, drop out in greater numbers and attend post-secondary institutions in fewer numbers than their white counterparts (Lee, 2002; NCES, 2005). This happens because they attend institutions that systemically marginalize them from the time they enter until they leave them. For many years now students of colour in the United States have been taught by teachers who expect little, treated in ways that stifled their learning, subjected to exclusive curriculum that distanced them from learning, and exposed to interaction styles that clashed with their cultures (Villegus & Lucas, 2004). These negative experiences have left enduring impressions, even on those students who have managed to survive the system (Gordon, 1994). Fewer and fewer of these students are unable to shake the unfavorable views they have of teaching and schools; many of them avoid teaching as a career option and opt for other vocations (Nuby & Doebler, 2000; King, 1993; Villegus & Lucas, 2004), further depleting the pool of potential educators of colour. But even those who choose the teaching profession continue to face significant obstacles. For example, fewer than 50% of African American teacher candidates who have successfully completed their post-secondary education pass teacher tests (National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force, 2004). More than this though, the mere prospect of taking the test dissuades many others from even taking this step. The difficulties people of colour experience do not end once they have secured a teaching job. Forty percent of them leave the profession before completing five years of teaching (Villegus & Lucas, 2004).

The leaky pipeline metaphor appears to explain what happens to potential teachers and administrators in the United States. An unfriendly system of education leaves students of colour by the wayside at every step of their way – they leak out at every turn. By the time that the potential workforce of students of colour gets to a point

where they can enter (or remain in) the teaching or administrator ranks, it is considerably reduced. In the end, there are just not that many candidates to choose from. Can this metaphor illuminate what is happening in Canada? The available evidence indicates that it is appropriate, but only to a point. Other metaphors may be more helpful.

At first glance, it appears that the leaky pipeline does not reflect what is happening to potential teachers of colour in Canada. Unlike the United States where it is clear that many students of colour – in particular those of African and Hispanic heritage – do not make it through the school system, Canadian students of colour appear to succeed in greater numbers. What evidence there is suggests that more visible minority students have higher aspirations and achievement rates than their American cousins. Immigrant students – who constitute a greater proportion of the general population than they do in the United States – do as well as Canadian-born students colleagues on math and reading achievement tests at elementary and secondary levels (Woswick, 2001, 2004), and they aspire to go to university in greater numbers (Taylor & Krahn, 2005). Moreover, five of the six highest achieving groups at the post-secondary level are “racialized” (Herberg, 1990). But Canadian universities are not the only source of post-secondary graduates of colour. Many well-educated immigrants now come to Canada; as many as 4 out of 10 already have university degrees (Taylor & Krahn, 2005). Indeed, immigrants are now more likely to have a university degree than Canadian-born citizens. Thirty-four percent of immigrants who are between the ages of 35 and 44 have degrees, compared with 19% of Canadian-born citizens (Galabuzi, 2006). Within the education system, visible minority teachers have more academic credentials than their white colleagues (Blais & Ouedraogo, In Press)

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that the Canadian education system does not lose particular groups of students along the way, that is, that it does not leak. Evidence suggests otherwise. Harvey & Houle (2006), for example, maintain that the success of some groups tends to mask the underperformance of others. Although there are no comprehensive “race-based” achievement data, selected studies of participation in particular programs point to patterns among student groups. For example, they indicate that the education system appears to place students of African and Aboriginal heritage at a distinct disadvantage. Research shows that African and Aboriginal students tend to be overrepresented in less challenging, basic and general level courses and underrepresented in advanced and university-bound options. They also drop out in greater numbers than other students (Wright, Tsuji & Dhanota, 1981; Wright, 1985; Paquette, 1991; Brown, 1993; Anisef & Johnson, 1993; Gilbert & Orok, 1993. Cheng & Yau, 1999; Tait, 1999; Statistics Canada, 2007c). Other detailed ethnographies and studies illustrate in greater detail the difficulties that these students experience in school (See for example, Solomon, 1992; Die et. al., 1996). On the other hand, some groups of Asian students appear to succeed in greater numbers than students of African and Aboriginal heritage.¹⁰ They tend to be enrolled in the more challenging and university-bound secondary school courses in

¹⁰ In contrast to a common belief, not all Asian students achieve high academic standings. See for example, Lee (1996).

greater numbers than other students (Paquette, 1991; Wright, Tsuji & Dhanota, 1982; Wright, 1985).¹¹

Evidence from the above studies suggests that the dynamics associated with the development, recruitment and employment of educators of colour in Canada differs from what happens in the United States. The pool of potential Canadian educators of colour does not diminish along the way to the extent that it does in the United States. While some groups struggle, others persevere. But what also distinguishes Canada from the United States is the presence of many well-educated immigrant professionals, the product of a selective immigration process that favours them (Harvey & Houle, 2006). So while the ranks of potential educators of colour may be reduced by a system that disadvantages some groups of students, the many professional teachers that arrive from other countries also replenish them. Teaching is the fourth largest profession among immigrants (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2003). In contrast to the United States, Canada appears to have a comparatively more substantial pool of educators of colour from which to draw. While the education system responsible for developing teachers may be leaky, it need not depend entirely on itself for generating educators of colour. Leaky elementary, secondary and post-secondary educational institutions are not exclusively responsible for the low numbers of educators of colour. Part of the problem, it seems, lies elsewhere.

One of the reasons that there are so few educators of colour in Canada is that teachers of colour have difficulty finding jobs in their profession. This problem is particularly acute for internationally educated teachers (IETs). A recent study commissioned by the Ontario College of Teachers (2006) describes the experience of Ontario IETs – those who have managed to successfully pass the province’s licensing requirements – as “dismal” and the outcomes of their job searches as “disastrous.” The report claims “despite the fact that they (IETs) are highly experienced in teaching, many of them appear shut out of their profession” (p. 23). It found that IETs are 6 times more likely than other Ontario graduates to be unemployed in their first year of teaching, 10 times more likely to be unemployed because they could not find a teaching job, 3 times more likely to be underemployed, 3 times more likely to be in daily occasional teaching and, and 3 times less likely to have found a regular teaching job. Only 1 out of 5 (20%) have found teaching jobs, and of those, more than half (57%) are teaching only on an occasional daily basis. Even new Canadians who held high-demand qualifications in secondary math, physics or chemistry or French did not fair any better. Their overall unemployment rate is 43%, compared with 3% of Ontario graduates who specialize in French language. This lack of success is even the more striking, given their prior teaching experience. Almost all IETs (96%) report one or more years of teaching in

¹¹ But even students of colour who achieve high marks, move on to, and graduate from university, do not have ideal educational experiences. Like other students of colour, they also routinely experience discrimination in schools. In their study of Canadian schools, Ruck and Wortley (2002) found that all racial/minority groups were significantly more likely than White students to perceive discrimination in terms of various aspects of their treatment at school. The difference for the higher achieving students is that they persevere with their studies even in the face of this discrimination.

another jurisdiction prior to certification in Ontario. One of the study participants summed the immigrant experience well up by stating “There is an undeniable preference for non-immigrant teachers over immigrated ones. This fact despite the experience and qualifications I hold” (Ontario College of Teachers, 2006, p. 28).

The situation for Ontario-based internationally educated teachers is not unique; they are not the only well-educated professionals who experience difficulty getting into the Canadian workforce. In 2001, 70% of all immigrant professionals had difficulties finding work (Galabuzi, 2006). Like Ontario teachers, these professionals experience problems both with hiring and regulating processes. Most professions, trades and occupations in Canada require prospective employees to meet set standards of performance or demonstrated ability before issuing licenses to them. In many cases, though, these regulators are not familiar with international education, training, or professional standards. Little information about licensing processes, too few reliable tools for assessing credentials and other prior learning, the lack of competency-based licensing and language testing, inadequate bridging, supplementary training and internship opportunities, the limited transparency in licensing process, the absence of feedback and appeal processes, and the costs associated with the various steps place the prospect of acquiring a professional license out of reach for many well-educated immigrants (Galabuzi, 2006). Some try to acquire licenses and fail; others simply are not in a position to enter into licensing activities. What is particularly striking about the IET numbers cited above, is that they account just for those individuals who have managed to get through the stringent regulating process. There are, no doubt, many others who were unable or unwilling to acquire their teaching license. Many of these professional teachers, like their fellow internationally educated professional colleagues, find themselves in other less challenging and lucrative areas of work. Of those who do not find work in their first 3 years after immigration, 90% will end up permanently in other sectors (Galabuzi, 2006). Many of these jobs will be in lower end, semi or non-skilled areas.

Internationally educated professionals face other significant hurdles once they manage to acquire their licenses. Most significantly, they have to convince potential employers that they can do the jobs for which they have been trained and, in many cases, successfully practiced in other countries. As the numbers indicate, however, Canadian employers continue to be skeptical. Like the general public, they believe that immigrants from “third-world countries” hold inferior “human capital.” Employers find immigrants less attractive than Canadian-born and trained job seekers because of their short stay in the country, the lack of Canadian qualifications, low language and communication facilities, and their inability to “fit in” (Galabuzi, 2006). These disproportional hiring practices also extend to racialized groups generally. Despite their comparative educational qualifications, in 1996 racialized groups had an unemployment rate of 16% compared to 11% in the rest of the population. Galabuzi (2006) concludes that discriminatory practices in the labour force dictate racialized group members do not get fair economic and occupational returns from their educational attainments.

Two institutional dynamics complicate efforts to increase the number of educators of colour in Canada – inequitable schooling practices that persistently disadvantage some groups of students and discriminatory licensing and hiring practices. While the numbers of internationally educated teachers coming to Canada may replenish a somewhat depleted pool of potential educators of colour, they do not translate into actual teaching positions. Educators of colour, particularly immigrant teachers, encounter significant obstacles in their quest for work. The leaky pipeline metaphor, however, only goes so far in accounting for the meager numbers of educators of colour. Other metaphors may be more useful. One of these is a bottleneck. Jimenez (2003, p. f9) characterizes this dysfunctional process as a “bottleneck.” She says “Canada is recruiting the right kind of people, but they are stuck in a bottleneck, as the agencies and bodies that regulate the fields of medicine, engineering, teaching and nursing struggle to assess their qualifications.” But the bottleneck metaphor also does not adequately capture the dynamics of the process. Bottlenecks simply slow progression down; eventually, though, all things pass through. This is not necessarily the case for IETs and other racialized groups. While some may eventually land a teaching job, many others will not. In this sense a bottleneck metaphor is not appropriate because many potential teachers of colour will never get through the “bottleneck.”

A “glass ceiling” metaphor accounts more completely for the intractability of employment dynamics in the education system. Ceilings are barriers; they limit how far one can proceed in a particular direction. Scholars often use ceiling metaphors to illustrate how particular individuals and groups are prevented from moving up organizational hierarchies or stepping into prestigious jobs. For example, these metaphorical ceilings prevent women from occupying high-level managerial positions. (Arfken et. al., 2004; Livingstone & Pollock, 2004; Wilson, 2002). The same thing happens to IETs. Despite their qualifications, these teachers encounter a barrier that prevents them from gaining employment in their chosen profession. They bump up against this ceiling, and they can go no further. More often than not, they will eventually find themselves either unemployed or underemployed in jobs for which they are overqualified. But the ceiling that these educators encounter is no ordinary ceiling. It is glass, and so it is invisible, at least to some – more often than not, those who buy into the liberal ideal that everyone will be able to compete on an equal footing for what the world of work has to offer. Among those who fail to notice this ceiling are those who belong to groups who are not impeded by these barriers, like white English-speaking males, and those who come to a new country full of hope, like many IETs (see for example, Ogbu, 1994). But as many IETs will soon discover and many members of racialized groups who have been in the system will already know, the competition for jobs and other rewards is not fair (Anisef et. al, 2003). It occurs on unequal ground and routinely favours some groups over others. And so for many educators of colour, a job in the teaching profession will be forever out of reach, unless of course action is taken to change the system that spawns the barriers.

Working Towards a Diverse Educator Workforce

The Canadian educator workforce displays considerably less diversity than the current general and student population. Despite calls for increasing the number of elementary and secondary teachers and principals of colour, the quantity of these educators continues to pale beside the numbers of students of colour in Canada, particularly in the largest cities. These shortages can be traced to two institutional shortcomings – inequitable schooling practices that limit the number of students willing and able to enter the teaching force and discriminatory licensing and hiring practices that prevent those who have already completed their teacher education programs from entering the profession. Because these are such significant barriers, changing the current situation requires action on both local and global fronts. Progress can only be made if educators, policy makers and regulators attend to dysfunctional elements of the system that hold back potential educators of colour, but such progress will not likely stand for long if everyone does not also target the inequitable institutions and communities that have spawned these problems.

Scholars have provided a number of solid suggestions for getting more students and community members of colour interested in teaching profession, making it possible for them to enter teacher training programs, and getting them licensed to teach. These include introducing programs that train potential teachers while they are employed, exposing students at a young age to teaching as a profession, educating para-educators, distributing scholarships and grants, and forgiving loans (National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force, 2004). Accomplishing these ends requires that schools of education actively recruit students of colour, that they provide adequate support for these students once they begin their university programs, and that they collaborate with school systems (Villegus & Lucas, 2004; Nuby & Doebler, 2000). A number of Canadian faculties of education have recognized the disparity between the teacher and educator workforce and have begun to strategically diversify their teacher candidate cohorts. Questions remain, however, about the way in which their diversity-related policies will be interpreted and how well they will actually work. Preliminary research indicates that these efforts need to be accompanied by greater attention to aligning information that applicants receive with application instructions and technology (Stead, 2007).

Educators, policy-makers, administrators and regulators also need to pay more attention to the licensing and hiring procedures and practices. Devising fair licensing practices requires that those responsible make sure that candidates are provided with adequate information about the process, ensure that their methods for assessing credentials and prior experience are reliable, introduce competency-based licensing and language testing, provide adequate bridging, supplementary training and internship opportunities, make the licensing process transparent, provide feedback to candidates and make sure that appeal processes are in place (Galabuzi, 2006). Alternate routes to licensing should also be considered (Villegus & Lucas, 2004). Those involved in both licensing and hiring processes also need to make sure that they have adequate knowledge of other systems and be aware of their inherent stereotypical biases and prejudices. They need to know that many of their common-sense assumptions about standards and practice may routinely disadvantage professionals of colour.

Diversifying Canada's educator workforce will also hinge on making schools and communities more equitable places. Increasing the number of teachers and administrators of colour will also require that more students of colour make it through the system. Currently, not enough students of colour graduate from post-secondary educational institutions. Educators and policy-makers need to understand that schools do not work for some groups of students and they need to assist others so that they too can recognize these inequities. Understanding, however, is not enough; they also need to act if they are going to make educational institutions more inclusive for those who are consistently excluded. This work also must go hand-in-hand with making local and global communities more inclusive and equitable. Indeed fair educational, licensing and hiring practices can be sustained only if the communities in which they occur are also equitable and inclusive places.

A more diverse educator workforce has much to offer our educational institutions, our students and our communities. If we truly value diversity then we owe it to ourselves to find ways to increase the numbers of teachers and administrators of colour in our education systems. This may prove to be a challenging endeavor, but it is one well worth pursuing.

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