Promoting Diversity in Public Education Leadership[*]

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Abstract

This paper discusses proactive approaches for education leadership preparation programs to recruit
and retain minority graduate students. A review of related literature is provided. The paper discusses
barriers that contribute to low incidents of minority principals and minority principal candidates. Rec-
ommendations for creating pathways for the under-represented minorities to enter school leadership
preparation programs are presented. Practical approaches for recruitment and retention of candidates
from under-represented groups are discussed.

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1 Introduction

Schools have increasingly become more ethnically and culturally diverse. Unfortunately, the diversity among
school leaders does not reflect schools' changing demographics. With the current demands from the No
Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, the pressures for accountability and improved student achievement
are clearly established. Effective minority school leaders can greatly impact and contribute to school im-
provement and successful learning for all students. However, a critical first step is the preparation of more
principal candidates who represent and reflect the culture and diversity of our schools. It should be noted

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that, in this paper, the terms, Hispanic, Latino, and Mexican American, are used interchangeably and in accordance with the research findings in order to represent people with backgrounds from or connections to Latin American countries, and minority or minorities are used to represent non-White.

2 School Enrollment

For preparation programs, it is not an easy task to increase the number of minority leaders in public education leadership; however, carefully planned programs must be implemented to provide highly qualified leaders from under-represented groups. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) report, The Condition of Education 2008, the total school enrollment is projected to set new records every year from 2008 to 2017 (Planty et al., 2008). This report indicated that minority students currently make up 43 percent of the public school enrollment, with 48 percent in the South and 55 percent in the West. In the West, the minority enrollment has been exceeding White enrollment since 2003; these increases are reflective of the proportionate growth of Hispanic students.

3 Under-Represented Principal Groups

While these increases have emerged, proportionate increases in minority principals have not occurred. Tourkin et al. (2007) noted that, in 2003-2004, 82.4 percent of the public school principals in the United States were White, while only 17.6 percent were minority principals. On a national basis, 10.6 percent were Black and 5.3 percent were Hispanic. The remaining ethnic groups had less than one percent—American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, multiple races, and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, with the percentage of principals within each group lowering, respectively. Additionally, in nearly half of the states in the nation, 90 percent of the principals are White. Thus, it is safe to say that there are not enough principals of color, and the enrollment of prospective, minority principal candidates in educational preparation programs must become a high priority.

4 Educational Pipeline

The lack of minorities in educational preparation programs is parallel to the educational struggles that racial and ethnic groups have historically endured. Until the Brown v. Board of Education (1954) Supreme Court decision, racial and ethnic groups had been segregated out of educational equity and opportunities. Even after the decision, educational equality and equity were not characteristic of public education. However, the decision increased awareness of inequalities, and racial and ethnic groups fought for their educational rights through continued civil rights efforts (Spring, 2005).

Despite the Brown decision and sustained efforts toward improvement, the gaps in educational attainment among racial and ethnic groups, in comparison to their White counterparts, are still present. For certain racial and ethnic groups, the educational pipeline often ends during the high school years. For example, Planty et al. (2008) noted that the dropout rates for Hispanics and Blacks have remained higher than the corresponding dropout rates for Whites. More specifically, these authors found that the dropout rate was lowest for Whites and highest for Hispanics for each year between 1972 and 2006. Consequently, from a pipeline perspective, shortages at one end of the pipeline will inevitably affect supply at the other end (Foster, 2004). Therefore, the ethnic groups' lower high school graduation rates lead to lower enrollments in higher education, and contribute to a lack of minority teachers who could eventually become prospective principal candidates.

5 Consequences of the Brown Decision

In addition to the educational attainment gaps as a likely cause for the lack of minority candidates, minority principals who were active during the Brown decision were affected by devastating, unintended consequences. While the decision aimed to alleviate educational inequities, the Brown decision resulted in "the firing and

demotion of thousands of Black principals, mostly in the southern and border states" (Tillman, 2004, p.103). Tillman found that certain states, Oklahoma, Missouri, Kentucky, West Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware, closed most of the all-Black schools during the decade after Brown, and over 50 percent of Black principals were dismissed. Also, Tillman emphasized that the loss of these principals contributed to a "loss of a tradition of excellence, a loss of Black leadership as a cultural symbol in the Black community, and a loss of the expertise of educators who were committed to the education of Black children" (p. 113). To date, public education has not recovered from these losses.

6 Specific Roles

Although minority school leaders and candidates are low in numbers, their contributions are critical to student achievement. For minority students, minority school leaders can provide strong role models significant to identity development and future aspirations. For example, Tillman (2004) found that African American principals "led on the basis of their same-race/cultural affiliation and their desire to positively affect the lives of Black students. In most cases, their 'why' was closely linked to their identities" (p. 134). The author noted that relationships between Black principal leadership and Black student achievement exist. In addition, large, statistically significant achievement gains for both Black and White students have been associated with assignments to an own-race teacher (Dee, 2001); for the most part, principals have been successful teachers. Race aside, "there is a strong consensus that the single most critical factor in creating and maintaining high-performing skills is the leadership of the school" (Cistone & Stevenson, 2000, p. 435). Other researchers (e.g., Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Darling-Hammond & Post, 2000) have established empirical relationships between principals' behaviors and student achievement. Effective principals do make a difference in student success.

An effective component of minority students' academic success is a minority principal who serves as a role model for the students. For example, literature on Black principals has maintained that they served as "role models, they provided images that would inspire and motivate Black students" (Tillman, 2004, p. 110). The National Council of La Raza (NCLR) affirmed that Hispanic administrators can serve as role models and provide much needed links between schools and parents (Fisher, 1998). Hispanic principals are highly significant because they provide guidance to students whose parents lack knowledge of the school system. Furthermore, successful minority principals demonstrate to all students that leadership positions are fulfilled by representatives from all ethnicities.

In addition to serving as role models, many of these principals comfortably fulfill their roles by practicing a form of caring that empowers students to identify alternative ways to confront particular situations, rather than attempting to authoritatively control student behaviors (Reitzug & Patterson, 1998). In a study of six Mexican American female principals, Carr (1995) found that their leadership styles involved forms of connectedness and caring, instead of domination and coercion. Magdaleno (2006) explained that "Latino leaders, because of their inherent diversity and humanistic values, are strategically poised to help create a culturally accessible and compassionate society that values people and community before material wealth and individual advancement" (p. 13). In a historical context, minority principals have been found to serve as culturally responsive leaders who work as public intellectuals, curriculum innovators, and social activists who can appeal to the concerns of various groups (Johnson, 2006).

7 Barriers

As the need to recruit candidates for the principalship continues, specific barriers also continue to serve as challenges for the educational system. Because barriers are often rooted in traditions and norms, effective systemic changes require a great deal of time. The review of such barriers across time seems logical. Research released almost 30 years ago related to minorities in educational leadership demonstrate some of today's barriers. Among many findings, Haven, Adkinson, and Bagley (1980) identified the following barriers: (a) lower career aspirations if minorities perceive that the values of the educational system is ignoring or conflicting with their community; (b) high percentages of minorities major in education, but their aspirations

are not encouraged by the educational environment; (c) minorities need more support for aspirations but often receive less; (d) minorities aspiring for the principalship face conscious or unconscious resistance from the educational system; (e) few role models and mentors exist; (f) negative stereotypes; and (g) a lack of research on minority principals and their career aspirations. A review of the current status of public education suggests that barriers common in the past decades are still present. A critical review of these obstacles can provide focal points needed to increase minority leaders in education.

The status of the educational pipeline serves as a primary barrier to needed increases in minority principals. The supply of youth into the educational pipeline is restricted for a wide variety of reasons. Duarte (2000) found that "the high dropout rate, especially among Hispanics, means too many minority youngsters never make it out of high school, let alone into college teaching programs" (p. 22). Similarly research by Vegas, Murnane, and Willett (2001) found that African American, Hispanic, and Native American students reach tenth grade without strong academic skills, which prevents them from graduating from high school. An extensive literature review on minority teacher recruitment, development, and retention highlighted the educational pipeline as a major barrier to increasing minorities in education (Torres, Santos, Peck, & Cortes, 2004). Yet, despite the pipeline barrier, minority groups have demonstrated an interest in pursuing careers in education (Summerhill, Matranga, Peltier, & Hill, 1998). However, early student success and high school achievement are basic to increase minority educators and future leaders.

The limited numbers of minorities who make it to college are strongly recruited by other fields and corporations (Duarte, 2000). Additionally, those who pursue teaching careers and could strive for the principalship, still face a number of underlying barriers. Quiocho and Rios (2000) illustrated some of the challenges:

Barriers to teacher certification include negative perceptions of the profession, inequities in testing and admission into teacher education, and the incongruence of minority group pre-service teachers' experiences with traditional teacher education curriculums. Once minority group members have their credentials, they face discrimination in employment practices, culturally discontinuous school climates and taboos about raising issues of racism, lack of promotion opportunities, and failure of others to recognize their leadership skills. (p. 522)

A necessary condition is the removal of underlying barriers and proactive support for those who would pursue careers within education.

Inadequate salaries constitute a direct and critical barrier that needs attention. Torres et al. (2004) stated that "minority students entering college are attracted to business, science, or math degrees that can lead to more lucrative jobs in the future" (p. 15). Furthermore, minority students who have become teachers have not advanced into leadership positions. A survey of superintendents' found that they "could not find minority applicants, and that few if any minorities ever applied for principals' jobs in their districts" (Whitaker, 2001, p. 86). Such perceptions represent a systemic barrier. Jones (2001, as cited in Grogan & Andrews, 2002) indicated that the nature of the job, insufficient salary, and a lack of mobility of candidates to accept jobs that are open were related factors that influenced the shortage of qualified candidates. Grogan and Andrews (2002) added that a "fourth factor is surely the additional stress of meeting state benchmarks to remain accredited in this era of high-stakes testing and accountability" (p. 237). Significantly, the pressures on principals have not been reflected in the salaries provided, which have contributed to a lack of principal candidates overall and have added to the lack of minority candidates.

The improvement of educational leadership preparation programs is certainly vital to an increased pool of minority principal candidates. Program methods need to be revamped; Grogan and Andrews (2002) affirmed that "Our current programs no doubt serve quite well those administrators who maintain a traditional approach to leadership" (p. 247). An analysis conducted by Young, Petersen, and Short (2002) stressed that traditional preparation programs in educational leadership are no longer adequate. They asserted that changes in schools and society require transformations in leadership preparation; programs need to develop future principals whose skills are aligned with the needs of today's schools. Woodrum (2002) found that minority principals dealt with competing values and expectations. This researcher found that, on one hand, programs taught the need to embrace diversity, but on the other, programs failed to teach how various cultures' perceptions of minority leaders might affect their roles, expectations, and potential challenges

related to a principal's ethnicity. On a similar note, Gardiner and Enomoto (2006) focused on the need for preparation programs to develop multicultural leaders; candidates lack the skills and knowledge to effectively lead in a multicultural school. Preparation programs cannot assume that schools should rely on skilled teachers to address multicultural issues (e.g. English language learners (ELL) teachers, foreign language teachers, or minority teachers). Leadership preparation programs must better prepare principals, especially minority principals, to address the values, needs, and expectations of diverse communities. Principals who lack such skills and knowledge should be expected to exit the profession early or seek employment in schools more aligned with their skills and knowledge.

The transformation of leadership preparation programs will not be easy—such transformations represent significant paradigm shifts. Kottkamp and Silverberg (2003) discussed the difficulty of change with respect to traditions, the need for change, and internal versus external assumptions. They stated:

The tension is so clear here: the internal tension from tacit assumptional depths, pulling back toward the 'course' and club of the old order, the still normative larger culture. The other pole of the tension is toward intentional reconstruction of assumptions that propel us to meet current times and to build with determined intention spaces of difference. (p. 320-321)

A "gap" exists between skills and knowledge developed by principal preparation programs and the skills and knowledge needed by leaders who serve in some of our most needy schools. If programs systematically and routinely address assumptions, needs, and values, then transformation can be expected. Failure to do so will almost certainly maintain the status quo and barriers will proliferate. Leadership preparation programs must develop proactive plans to address the issues.

Another barrier working against minority leaders is racism, which continues to exist both explicitly and implicitly. McCray, Wright, and Beachum (2007) studied the role of race with regard to the placement of minority administrators, particularly African American principals; they used Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a framework. They found that White administrators are placed in all types of schools, diverse or not, while minority principals tend to be placed "in charge of schools that reflect the principal's ethnic and racial heritage" (p. 253). They further cautioned:

Unless university leadership preparation programs acknowledge the historical and current role of race in our society and the field of educational leadership, there will continue to be an underlying supposition within the field of education that minority principals should only be placed and can only lead in schools with a heavy concentration of minority students. (p. 253)

This offers a double-edged sword. On the one hand, research has identified the benefits of minority principals who lead minority-majority schools. Placement of minority principals in schools with a heavy concentration of minority students is highly correlated with improved minority student achievement. On the other hand, if minority principals are only placed in such schools, old patterns of segregation could be reestablished. As previously indicated, all students must realize that leadership positions can be fulfilled by people of all races.

In addition to possible racial placements, ethnic-specific discrimination may occur. For example, Quiocho and Rios (2000) described the following issues:

Latino-specific difficulties associated with immigration status, the challenges associated with language proficiency (and magnified by English proficiency teacher exams) and Spanish language accent prejudices, the lack of culturally empowering knowledge about the Latino culture as part and parcel of school curriculums, and school district reluctance to hire Latino students perceived as too radical because of their advocacy orientation in regard to their local communities. (p. 516)

These issues could certainly work against Latino teachers or prospective minority teachers interested in educational leadership. Torres et al. (2004) found that racism or perceived racism served as a barrier. For example, they noted that multicultural classes were offered but were often superficial, or minority students felt intimidated to speak up or discuss certain issues based on the majority-minority ratio composition of the classes. They noted that a lack of multicultural perspectives in the curriculum exacerbated the barrier for minorities.

Alongside a lack of multicultural perspectives, a lack of specific, solid research is an obstacle to promoting diversity within public education leadership. While barriers can be identified, a lack of sufficient research

on minority leaders, a deficiency of methods to overcome barriers, and ineffective systems supports prevent preparation programs from addressing the needs. According to Brunner and Peyton-Caire (2000), leadership programs fail to focus on women and minorities because, in part, White males are typically dominant in these programs. At a basic level, such research topics may be viewed as dicey for non-tenured junior professors, doctoral students may be discouraged from pursuing such topics, and research on ethnic leadership is restricted because of the very limited population. Torres et al. (2004) highlighted areas that lack research: (a) effective high school programs that can generate interest among young minorities; (b) analyses of minority students' achievement, graduation patterns, and related correlates; (c) optimal conditions for retaining minority teachers; (d) characteristics of effective mentoring program for minorities; and (d) effective courses of cultural awareness. It is evident that research is needed in these and related areas.

8 Funding for Graduate School

A supportive effort toward promoting diversity in public education leadership can occur through funding for graduate school. Many potential candidates for leadership positions in our schools lack the resources to attend graduate school. Typically, candidates have student loans, family obligations, and consumer debts. Given that teachers are paid modestly, it is very difficult to meet the financial obligations associated with graduate school. Most leadership preparation programs hold classes in the evenings, which enable students to work full-time and complete a degree in approximately two years. However, most programs assume that students are responsible for college-related expenses. Several programs have taken proactive steps to support deserving students. Some have established scholarships, some have written professional development grants, and others have established partnerships with local school districts. In each case, the students have received support for part or all of the costs associated with the advanced degrees.

9 Positive Outlook and Recommendations

Despite the existing barriers and weaknesses within leadership preparation programs, many programs have taken proactive steps to promoting diversity within public education leadership. Even though the diversity of school leaders has not kept up with society's changing demographics, the cultural perspectives have changed within some schools. The current diversity of students in schools is not necessarily related to foreign-born students; rather, students are acquiring, practicing, and living among American values that can help them to better navigate and understand the educational system.

Leadership preparation programs should work with practicing public school administrators to develop students' interests in educational leadership; such activities support and guide students into the educational pipeline. College professors could establish proactive approaches with highly skilled minority teachers. A recent study conducted on nine female principals found that the principals had similar characteristics, values, beliefs, and challenges, despite their differences in cultural and ethnic boundaries (Holtkamp, 2002). Leadership programs should help minorities understand that their experiences will not be unique or isolated from collegial support. Leadership preparation programs could provide and/or structure mentor programs for new principals.

It is noteworthy that opportunities for minorities to enter leadership positions are improving. To be specific, the Digest of Education Statistics 2007 (Snyder, Dillow, & Hoffman, 2008) reported that:

The percentage of American college students who are minorities has been increasing. In 1976, 15.4 percent were minorities, compared with 31 percent in 2005 ... Much of the change from 1976 to 2005 can be attributed to rising numbers of Hispanic and Asian or Pacific Islander students. (p. 262)

As the Latino population has increased, the Latino representation in higher education has continued to grow. A study reported in the Digest indicated that from 2000 to 2005, the number of Hispanics enrolled in undergraduate education increased about 30%, a greater increase than that of Whites, Blacks, and Asian/Pacific islanders. The Digest listed that, second to Whites, the students who were Black or Hispanic, earned the most Bachelor's and Master's degrees in the field of education, among the other races or ethnic

groups in 2005-2006. Although the percentages are still low, they do represent a pool of minorities that educational leadership programs can strive to reach.

Along with increases in degree-earning minority students within the field of education, the number of national board certified teachers has grown, particularly in national certification for Black, Hispanic, and Native American teachers (Keller, 2007). Again, these jumps in national board certifications have expanded the number of minority teacher leaders who are possible future principals. Such a chain to leadership is encouraging because there is evidence that minority teachers stay longer, on average, than do White teachers (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2002). Furthermore, the diversity among school faculty can help because "teachers will be more likely to remain employed in a school where there are relatively more teachers of their own race" (Strunk & Robinson, 2006, p. 80). Fenwick (2001) contended that communities without minority associations or other minority teachers will have difficulty attracting new minority candidates.

Clearly, minority teacher recruitment, retention, and development efforts are critical to increase future minority leadership.

Minority teacher recruitment efforts can be fostered by tapping into the paraeducational work force. Piercynski, Matranga, and Peltier (1997) acknowledged the need for schools to recognize and reward their own talent. They offered two approaches: "(1) Develop programs that encourage minorities in their communities to enter the field of education, and (2) encourage capable minority substitute teachers and teachers' aides to become licensed teachers" (p. 206). More recent studies (e.g., Monzó & Rueda, 2001; Monzó, Rueda, & Higadera, 2004) found that, in many schools, paraeducators mirrored the students' cultural and socioeconomic status. Universities can work with principals to encourage paraeducators to become certified teachers. The paraeducators could become teachers and be further encouraged to pursue the field of educational leadership.

Educational leadership preparation programs must prepare administrators to implement collaborative, shared leadership practices. School leaders can determine whether their minority teachers demonstrate a strong commitment to social justice, a strong understanding of teaching and learning, and a demonstrated interest in leadership (McKenzie et al., 2008). School leaders can help to identify and develop teacher leaders that can be recruited into educational leadership preparation programs. As mentioned earlier, minority leaders in education often have the role of social justice-oriented school leaders. Consequently, if administrators work with educational leadership programs to identify potential minority leaders, then "preparation programs can much more quickly move the candidates to learn how to become advocates and leaders of change in schools that will successfully serve students of color, poverty, linguistic differences, (dis)abilities, and various sexual orientations" (McKenzie et al., 2008, p. 118).

As another positive option for promoting diversity within public education, Jones (2001, as cited in Grogan & Andrews, 2002) found that principal preparation programs actually produced over twice the number of candidates as available positions. Jackson and Kelly (2002) highlighted exceptional and innovative programs. They found that these programs had a clear vision that provided students with a strong knowledge base. The programs often used: (a) problem-based learning, (b) cohorts, (c) collaborative partnerships, (d) field experiences, and (e) technology to provide students with the necessary skills for the principalship. In general, "Educational leadership programs that have begun with surfacing values and beliefs, thus clarifying what they truly care about, have been able to create promising alternatives" (Cambron-McCabe, 2003, p. 291). The above characteristics can guide leadership programs to increase minority students.

Mentoring opportunities serve as a critical component to increasing minority leaders. In a study (Méndez-Morse, 2004) of Latina educational leaders' role models and mentors, it was found that these women's role models matched their gender and ethnicity; however, the Latinas' mentors were "constructed with reference to function rather than to gender or ethnicity" (p. 587). These results suggest that mentor relationships do not necessarily have to match gender and ethnicity in order to satisfy the purposes and goals of mentoring. Conversely, same-race administrator mentors can "guide their protégés through the racial and gender barriers they face, based on the mentors' own personal and professional experiences" (Magdaleno, 2006, p. 13). Educational leadership programs must maintain open communication with leaders and build partnerships along the educational pipeline in order to identify mentors who can guide minority candidates toward their leadership goals.

Leadership goals can be achieved, especially if leadership programs address paradigm shifts and related

culture issues. For example, candidates should have a clear understanding of the various dimensions of leadership within a school (e.g. from hierarchal leadership to shared leadership, from manager to instructional leadership). Even more, "paradigms might be strengthened by adding components from other organizational paradigms such as critical race theory (CRT), situational leadership, and leadership for social justice to more traditional leadership paradigms" (Brown, 2005, p. 587). Adding these components to preparation programs could not only help to attract minority groups to leadership, but they could also better prepare candidates for diverse cultural environments, pressures, and expectations of school leaders.

In combination with specific components to preparation programs, there are general skills and knowledge that education leaders need. For instance, Grogan and Andrews (2002) supported integrated approaches within programs and provided various recommendations, such as the acquisition of competencies, practical tasks, daily routines, opportunities for reflection, and paid internships, as part of the preparation process for aspiring school leaders. Unfortunately, some programs assume that principal candidates have or will mysteriously develop leadership skills. Young and Peterson (2002) identified specific areas within educational programs that can help to support the needed reform for leadership preparation: (a) clearly defined and widely accepted leadership goals for programs, (b) effective delivery structures and organizational processes to enhance outcomes, (c) evaluative systems based on outcome-related standards and program enhancement, and (d) meaningful and sustained collaboration among key educational leadership stakeholders. Finally, factors influencing decisions for the principalship are often based on extrinsic rewards (Shen, Cooley, & Wegenke, 2004). This further suggests that salary needs are imperative in helping to attract more minority candidates for leadership positions, so educational leadership programs should work as advocates for salary increases to reflect the efforts and responsibilities of today's school leaders.

It is vital to remember that all of the efforts toward promoting diversity within public education leadership should be aimed at improving academic achievement and success for all students. Concurrently, "Given that the largest potential supply of minority teachers is arguably found in the public schools, identification and systematic study of high school encouragement programs is clearly needed" (Torres et al., 2004, p. 44). Opportunities for students to develop leadership skills within their public education experiences can help students gain interests in the educational field. Furthermore, it is hoped that accountability and school reform efforts through NCLB will make strides in helping all students achieve, thus increasing access to the educational pipeline.

In any case, it seems like the list of barriers is quite extensive and exhaustive in order to overcome the need to increase minority leaders in education. Undoubtedly, there is not a quick-fix solution to the current shortage of minority leaders in education. However, even if one barrier is removed at a time, that single change could provide one more opportunity toward promoting diversity within public education leadership. In the moment of opportunity, lies hope.

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