

SETTING TIMETABLES FOR CHANGE AND NUMERICAL TARGETS WITHIN BOARDS OF EDUCATION

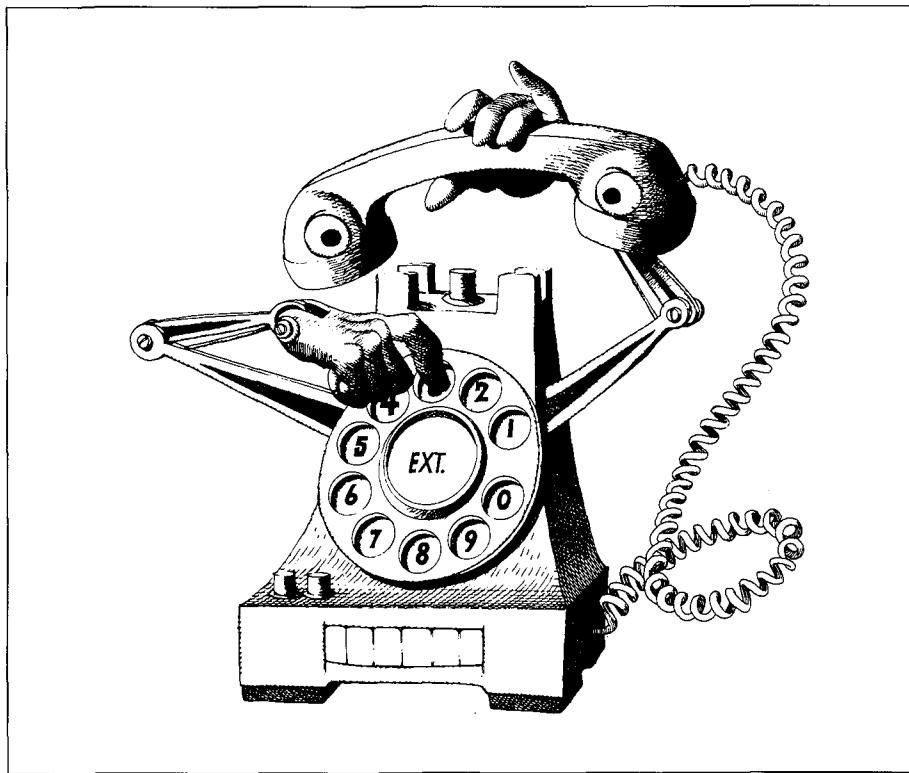
Shelagh Inwood Luka

En tant que salariées du conseil scolaire, les enseignantes se trouvent reléguées au niveau primaire et sont limitées dans le nombre de sujets qu'elles peuvent enseigner; au niveau administratif, elles sont sous-représentées dans les positions salariées comprenant plus de responsabilité. Les femmes dans le personnel non-enseignant, ou de soutien, occupent la majorité des postes peu rémunérés, comme secrétaires et commis de bureau.

Un conseil scolaire en Ontario, qui s'est engagé à changer cette distribution inégale, a établi des buts d'action positive, y compris des cibles numériques et un horaire pour la nomination de femmes à des postes administratifs clés. Shelagh Inwood Luka rapporte la politique d'action positive pour les salariées du conseil scolaire de North York.

Since boards of education as employers require a large variety of services, they present a microcosm of the position of women in the paid workforce, with two notable exceptions: there is a balance in the overall numbers of women and men employed by most boards, and significant numbers of women work as teaching staff in well-paid positions relative to other education jobs held by women. However, within the teaching staff women are clustered at the lower grade levels and are limited in the range of subjects they teach. Within the administration, they are under-represented in paid positions of added responsibility: principals, vice-principals, and supervisory officers are predominantly male; virtually no female directors of education can be found.

The hidden workforce in boards of education – the non-teaching or business and operations staff – often comprises close to half of all board employees. In this employee group, women make up nearly all the low-paid secretarial and clerical staff, nearly none of the better-paid caretaking, transportation and maintenance trades workers, and few of the highest-



paid middle and top level managers and supervisors.

One Ontario board of education's commitment to changing this unequal distribution pattern has resulted in the setting of affirmative action goals, including numerical targets and timetables for appointing women to key administrative positions. In 1975 the Board of Education for the City of North York approved an affirmative action policy for women employees. For the next few years efforts were concentrated on education and awareness-raising for all employees, on development of unbiased personnel policies and practices, and on the provision of encouragement, support and training for women seeking advancement.

Women, as always, did their part: by 1983 there was a large resource pool of well-qualified, competent women ready for promotion. Annual statistics, however, showed that the overall rate of

change in the proportions of women was painfully slow (in the case of principals) or non-existent (in the case of vice-principals). Over the five year period between 1979-80 and 1983-84, the proportion of women principals had risen from 2.5% to 9.2%, and there had been no change in the proportion of female vice-principals (15.6%). There were no supervisory officer appointments during this period. At this rate it would take over 30 years to raise the proportion of women principals to 50%. It became clear that without managerial accountability, no real change could happen.

In May of 1983 North York trustees approved a recommendation to establish affirmative action goals and timetables. In February 1984 they gave final approval to a ten-year plan which included goals for business and operations staff: hiring targets for non-traditional jobs; a job exchange program; the establishment of

bridging positions between clerical and managerial jobs; and an assessment of future needs related to the impact of technology on existing positions. Numerical targets were set for the appointment of vice-principals, principals and supervisory officers. Accountability for specific goals was assigned to appropriate senior officials; while overall accountability rests with the director of education, the Board's chief executive officer.

Within North York, there were three distinct perceptions which influenced reaction to the concept of numerical targets. Some employees believed that affirmative action for women was going too far too fast, and that women were getting all the jobs. This perception seemed to arise from the notion that more than one woman in any senior level position was inappropriate. A second perception was that the affirmative action policy was having no real impact on the inequitable distribution of women; attitudinal change in the system was not translating into behavioural change in corporate decisions concerning leadership. These diametrically opposed perceptions were reinforced by the fluctuating and unpredictable rate of appointments of women to the high visibility positions of vice-principal and principal.

The third perception was grounded in the belief that affirmative action, like any other legitimate corporate goal, could best be implemented if specific, measureable results were expected and accountability for those results was clearly designated.

The approved numerical targets met some of the expectations of each group, in that they were reasonable (based on the proportion of fully-qualified women eligible for a targeted position), results-oriented (expressed in both percentage and number of appointments expected to go to women), and measureable (making it possible to evaluate progress toward senior management's achievement of the goal of equitable distribution).

Establishing the timetables required analysis of projected retirement and attrition rates. Since well over half of the present incumbents in targeted positions are scheduled for retirement by 1995, it seemed possible to achieve the 50% long-term goal by then. The first targeting year was the 1983-84 school year, with 1 September 1993 the end of the targeting period. Annual reports, a full review at the end of the fifth year, and a provision to permit review and modifications at any point were also part of the plan.

Calculating the actual targets is quite straight-forward: statistical data showing the numbers of qualified women and men in the two eligibility pools for each of the positions are used to set the percentage of appointments expected to go to women during the upcoming school year. A factor of 10% to "pull" the statistics up to date is

Eligibility Pools for Principal	Resource Pool	10% Pull Factor
1. Primary Pool: vice-principals	20% F	+ 2%
2. Secondary Pool: administrative interns	50% F	+ 5%
Total		<u>7%</u>

The total Pull Factor (7%) is added to the Primary pool percentage to set the Targeting Rate. In this example, the rate is 20% + 7% = 27%.

Long-term success depends on meeting annual targets: increased proportions of women in turn mean increased targets in

added to the resource pool data since this data is derived from the previous year, whereas the targets are being set for the following year. The assumption is that the proportion of qualified women will continue to increase at least 10% each year. The following is an example of how the targeting rate is calculated:

future years. While progress may be very slow initially, the rate of increase will speed up in the latter part of the ten-year period – provided the early targets are met. As of September 1985, North York has completed two of the ten targeting years, with the following results:

Position	Target Year	Targets		Appointments	
		Rate	Number	Rate	Number
Supervisory Officer	1983-84	14.7%	1	20.0%	1 of 5
	1984-85	16.1%	1	0.0%	0 of 1
Principal	1983-84	22.1%	3	21.4%	3 of 14
	1984-85	21.8%	3	41.6%	5 of 12
Vice-principal	1983-84	54.4%	10	36.4%	7 of 19
	1984-85	57.2%	11	63.2%	12 of 19

While it is early to judge the effectiveness of the targeting process some general problems with the plan have already been identified, and are being carefully monitored. One result of the impact of the monitoring process may have been the improvement in meeting the vice-principal targets in the second year.

Ideally, targets should be set in addition to replacements of women incumbents who resign, retire or are promoted. Without such a provision – and North York does not have it – targets can be met while the proportion of women can actually decrease in a given position. If, for example, six openings for principal generate a target of three women, but at the same time two women principals retire, one is promoted and one resigns to work elsewhere, then there would be fewer women principals even with the three new appointments.

A second problem can be that a numeri-

cal target in effect becomes a maximum rather than a minimum number. In such a situation, it might well be more effective to set a fixed percentage – for example, 60% of all new appointments – until the long-term goal is reached. Consideration should be given to this approach whenever targets are being developed.

Finally, there is the danger that complacency can set in; many individuals who have worked long and hard in support of affirmative action may assure themselves that the approval of formal targets automatically brings with it a guarantee of successful realization of the long-term goals for women. Communication of progress, or the lack thereof, becomes even more important in a voluntary numerical targeting program. Affirmative action practitioners will find, perhaps to their surprise, that new vistas for creative approaches proliferate as new issues and new barriers arise!