



Ontario Institute for Education Leadership

Ontario Leaders Collaborating for Student Achievement, Equity and Well-being

STRENGTHENING EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AWARENESS

Sensitive Situation

It's Monday morning and one of your vice-Principals, Fatima Amir sent you an email, titled *Sensitive Situation* with a request for you to give her a call. Fatima, an East Indian Canadian, was hired as a teacher with the board two years ago. She was recently promoted to the role of vice-principal. When you call Fatima, her voice sounds unsteady and her words suggest that she is exhausted. She discloses that she considered whether connecting with you was even a good idea but having thought it over for the past two days continues to be concerned. It was an incident that took place last Friday that has left her feeling that she needs to tell someone, even if it might appear that she is being too sensitive or that she is creating more challenge for you as principal.

She confided that while picking up a package at a neighbouring school, she was confronted by a teacher, with whom she had previously worked. The teacher expressed his dissatisfaction that Fatima had been appointed vice-principal instead of him. This exchange occurred in the foyer of the school where a number of staff were gathering. The teacher openly and loudly stated "You? They hired you as a vice-principal? I have been here for years and got passed up and they hire you?" With a sarcastic grin, he followed up with, "Well I guess we know why you were hired. I'm not diverse enough for the hiring team. Figures." He then stormed away indignantly. Fatima said she was shocked and speechless. She left the school feeling all kinds of emotion from surprise and embarrassment to deep sadness and fear. She was unable to process what had taken place such was the level of unwarranted disrespect she just experienced.

Now, she is turning to you, her principal, for advice on what steps to take to ensure that something is done about how she was treated. She wants an apology from this teacher. More importantly she shares that she is exhausted from constantly feeling that she must prove herself as a racialized leader. She is frustrated because it has been her experience that these incidents which are blatant examples of discrimination are not taken seriously enough by the board.

The principal shared Fatima's concern with the supervisory officer.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS:

1. As Fatima's principal what do you do?

2. As her supervisory officer, how do you react?

3. What microaggressions are evident in this situation?

4. Why do you think Fatima was worried about coming forward to voice her concern?

5. How does your district value diverse experiences in leadership and how is this communicated?

6. How do we ensure that district decision makers are representative of diversity? Who is at the table when decisions are made about criteria and selection processes for candidates?

7. How do colonialism and Eurocentric ways of being active drive education as an institution?
