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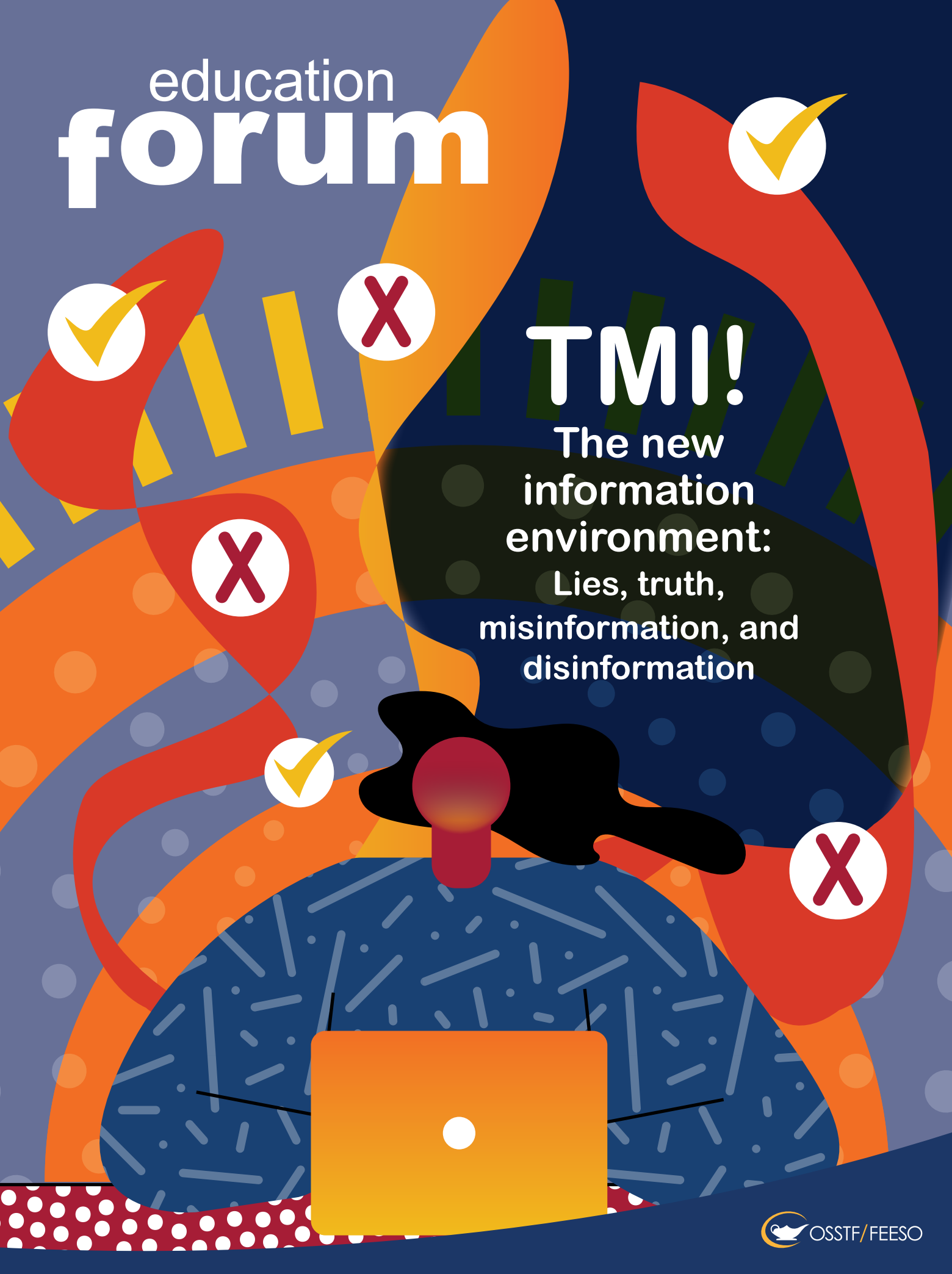

TMI!

The new information environment:

Lies, truth, misinformation, and disinformation

OSSTF/FEESO

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education forum

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The hope of togetherness

Embracing the challenges, sharing the successes

By the time this issue is published we will hopefully be back to something closer to our pre-pandemic selves. For me, the summer brought with it significant time to heal, rest, and rejuvenate personally and professionally. I know it did the same for many of my colleagues in publicly-funded education and in the greater labour movement. We have come through, blurry-eyed and changed, but also hopefully optimistic about where we can go as a society that prioritizes wellness, equity, and care for others. Personally, one event in particular reminded me of what we have lost and what we have gained.

Our Presidents' Symposium ran August 17–20 this summer, and as a member of the delivery team, I found myself on-site for the production of the virtual event. Even with all social and physical distancing protocols in place, it was still a remarkable experience to work again with people in physical proximity to me. It was a boon to my soul to feel the creative energy and comradery in the workspace; something I know many of us lost as we moved to our virtual and locked-down lives. Despite the long days and nights delivering the event in August, I left feeling recharged, particularly by the strength of teamwork and the power of collaboration. I left thinking of how the pieces of our lives are all so deeply entwined, and how vital social interaction is to our shared humanity.

This issue of *Education Forum* explores a lot of what it means to work collaboratively and to be a force for unity. In "Closing the gap" the UNHCR's Lauren La Rose posits the vital role education plays in youth development, especially for youth in refugee camps around the world. She writes of the creative ways educators are delivering learning to youth in camps, ensuring students can still access education, often one of the most normalizing elements of a refugees' chaotic existence in a refugee camp.

Similarly, Lana Parker and Helen Liu move us through the challenges students face as they navigate the often mis- and disinformation-filled life of social media, in "The new information environment: Lies, truth, misinformation, and disinformation." The piece exposes some long-term dangers of online information sharing and cites the growing inequalities that our COVID-19 existence has highlighted. It urges education and institutional knowledge to grow to include the multiliteracies youth will need as we move back to our in-person lives, while still engaging with the now boundless world of online information sharing.

We read in Derik Chica's article "The SRO program: Whose experiences are we centring?" the reasons we stand against normalized, systemic racism. His personal stories of experiencing targeted racism and his work dismantling the School Resource Officer program in the Toronto District School Board demonstrate how to reclaim power and recentre the experiences of Black, racialized, and Indigenous youth in our schools.

I see judy mckeown's piece "Social media for social change: Using untraditional modes of communication to dismantle anti-Black racism within OSSTF/FEESO" as a template for moving between online and in-person activism. She details the transformational power of online organizing, especially as a tool for dismantling anti-Black racism and other colonial structures. We have seen the efficacy and accessibility of online activism and are reminded in this piece of its continuing power and the ways online organizing will shape the new reality of in-person activism. This mix of online and in-person activism will be a doubly powerful tool as we head into the provincial election cycle this spring. It will take the village of labour to work together, virtually and in-person, to bring about the political change we so desperately need if we want to remove the Conservative government from power in this province. This is how we will protect and enhance our publicly-funded education system and the other social programs we hold dear in a just society.

I hope this issue provides you with some inspiration to become engaged, to re-engage, or to change how you engage in your post-pandemic life. I hope it brings you a reminder of where we were and where we can go. I also hope this issue arrives to you in wellness and provides a bit of hope for a better, brighter, more equitable, and safer tomorrow.

In solidarity,

Tracey Germa, Editor
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L'espoir de se rassembler

Accepter les défis, partager les réussites

Au moment de publication de cet article, nous aurons regagné une existence qui ressemblera de plus près, espérons-le, à notre vie pré-pandémie. Personnellement, l'été m'a apporté le temps nécessaire à la guérison, au repos et au renouvellement personnel et professionnel. Je sais qu'il est de même pour bon nombre de mes collègues œuvrant au sein de l'éducation financée à même les deniers publics et du mouvement syndical dans son ensemble. Nous y sommes arrivés, un peu étourdis et changés, mais également optimistes, espérons-le, à savoir où nous pouvons nous diriger à titre de société qui accorde la priorité au bien-être, à l'égalité et à la compassion envers autrui. Il y a un événement particulier qui m'a rappelé nos pertes et nos gains.

Notre Symposium des présidences a eu lieu du 17 au 20 août cette année et à titre de membre de l'équipe organisatrice, je me suis trouvée sur place pour la production de l'événement virtuel. Même avec les protocoles de distanciation sociale et physique en place, ce fut une expérience remarquable de travailler à nouveau avec des gens à proximité physique de moi. Cela a été une bénédiction pour mon âme de ressentir l'énergie créative et la camaraderie dans un lieu de travail; des éléments que bon nombre d'entre nous avons perdu alors que nous sommes passés à notre existence virtuelle et confinée. Malgré les longues journées et soirées à gérer cet événement en août, je me suis sentie ré-énergisée, surtout par la force du travail d'équipe et le pouvoir de la collaboration. J'ai quitté en songeant comment les parcelles de notre vie sont toutes profondément liées les unes aux autres et dans quelle mesure l'interaction sociale est essentielle à l'humanité commune.

Le présent numéro d'Education Forum explore en grande partie ce que signifie de travailler dans la collaboration et d'être une force pour l'unité. Dans l'article « *Closing the gap* » Lauren La Rose du *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)* explore le rôle vital des éducatrices et éducateurs dans le développement des jeunes, surtout celles et ceux qui se trouvent dans des camps de réfugiés partout dans le monde. Elle décrit les façons créatives à laquelle l'éducation dispense l'apprentissage aux jeunes dans ces camps, faisant en sorte que les élèves peuvent quand même accéder à une éducation, qui constitue souvent un des éléments les plus normalisant de l'existence chaotique des réfugiés dans ces camps.

D'une façon semblable, Lana Parker et Helen Liu nous transportent à travers les défis auxquels font face les élèves alors qu'ils naviguent la vie des médias sociaux, souvent truffée de désinformation, dans « Le nouvel environnement d'information : Mensonges, vérité, mésinformation et désinformation ». Cet article jette la lumière sur certains des dangers à long terme du partage de l'information en ligne et cite les inégalités croissantes que notre existence COVID-19 a souligné. Il exhorte l'éducation et le savoir institutionnel à s'élargir afin d'y inclure la multi-alphabétisation dont les jeunes auront besoin alors qu'ils regagnent la vie en personne, tout en s'engageant dans le présent monde maintenant sans borne du partage de l'information.

Nous notons dans l'article de Derik Chica intitule, « *The SRO program: Whose experiences are we centring?* », les raisons pour lesquelles nous nous dressons contre le racisme systémique normalisé. Ses récits personnels du racisme ciblé auquel il a été assujetti et son travail dans le démantèlement du Programme d'agent de liaison dans les écoles, au sein du *Toronto District School Board*, expliquent comment reprendre le pouvoir et recentrer les expériences des jeunes Noirs, racialisés et Autochtones dans nos écoles.

Je vois également l'article de judy mckeown « *Social media for social change : Using untraditional modes of communication to dismantle anti-Black racism within OSSTF/FEESO* » comme étant un modèle à suivre pour passer de l'activisme en ligne à l'activisme en personne. Elle parle en détail du pouvoir transformationnel de l'organisation en ligne, surtout comme outil pour démanteler le racisme anti-noir et les autres structures coloniales. Nous avons été témoin de l'efficacité et de l'accessibilité en ligne et cet article nous rappelle son pouvoir incessant et les façons auxquelles l'organisation en ligne façonnera la nouvelle réalité de l'activisme en personne. Cette combinaison d'activisme en ligne et en personne s'avérera sans aucun doute un outil puissant alors que nous entamons le cycle de l'élection provinciale au printemps. Il faudra des efforts concertés pour travailler ensemble, virtuellement et en personne, afin d'apporter les changements politiques dont nous avons tellement besoin si nous tenons à sortir le gouvernement Conservateur du pouvoir dans cette province, protégeant et améliorant ainsi notre système d'éducation financé à même les deniers publics et les autres programmes sociaux qui sont importants au sein d'une société juste.

J'espère que ce numéro sera pour vous une certaine source d'inspiration à vous engager, à vous réengager ou à changer votre façon de vous engager dans votre vie post-pandémie. J'espère qu'il vous servira de rappel d'où nous étions et d'où nous pouvons aller. J'espère également que le présent numéro vous retrouve en santé et qu'il vous offre un peu d'espoir pour un avenir meilleur, plus positif, plus équitable et plus sécuritaire.

En toute solidarité,

Tracey Germa, rédactrice en chef
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Photo credit: michaelhurcomb.com

The SRO program
Whose experiences are we centring?

by Derik Chica

Around Ontario, school boards have been opting to remove police officers stationed at schools, a program known under a few different names, but most commonly as the School Resource Officer (SRO) program. These terminations have occurred because grassroots community advocacy and activists have called to centre the experiences of Black, Indigenous, and other racialized students as well as undocumented students who feel unsafe or uncomfortable with police in schools. It was an honour to be a part of the local Toronto movement that began this province-wide and international campaign to stop police officers from being stationed in schools.

I am a Latinx individual with Indigenous ancestry. I grew up in Toronto and over the past few years, have been listening and learning about experiences around Ontario and Turtle Island. In Toronto, I am a lead guidance counsellor in a low-income and highly racialized area, supporting Black, Latinx, and many racialized students through barriers within our education system. I attempt to use my privileged position to bring stories not often heard in dominant spaces to the forefront. That is what I hope to do here.

I am not without my own stories. For high school, my family moved to a wealthy area in Toronto called Richmond Hill. At the age of 15, I was stopped by the police before entering my house because my friends and I looked "suspicious." I was asked—at the time I felt I was forced—to show my identification that proved I lived in my home. The cops then apologized and explained the suspicion saying they were being cautious. I was left confused but didn't think anything of it since it seemed normal at the time. Racism should not be normal.

Artwork: Ronda Allan

At the age of 24, I was driving my Chevrolet Volt and was stopped by the police. The reason for the stop, apparently, was that I was driving "suspiciously" and the cop was concerned the car was stolen. I showed my documentation and was allowed to leave. I questioned this interaction in my own mind but continued without an official complaint because again, it seemed normal. Racism should not be normal.

There have been various incidents of police racism that my friends and I have experienced; we knew they were messed up, but we continued on with our lives as though they were normal. From having multiple police cars at a small reggaeton charity party, to having police officers repeatedly question friends because they "matched the description of the suspect," racism is a normal part of life for many of us. Although I am well aware of my rights now, and understand the privilege I have as a light-skinned individual who is viewed as a professional by dominant society, I still get uncomfortable around police officers.

In 2012, I began a partnership program, Student Connections, between York University's Black Student Alliance, the Organization of Latin American Students, and my home school. The idea was to build relationships between secondary and university students who have similar experiences of marginalization. Part of the program was that the students would visit the university and get tutored in their academic areas of need. One day, I received a phone call from the supervisor on-site: "there's been an issue with the police."

Students were tutored on the third floor, and a couple of students were hanging out by the stair railings that look down on the first floor. They accidentally bumped a bag on the railing which fell to the first floor and landed near some police officers. The officers angrily went up to the third floor and, according to the student and supervisor reports, started threatening students with attempted murder charges. Keep in mind these students were attempting to break down barriers to get into university. The officers resorted to saying the students would not be allowed on York University property again. This was an empty threat the police had no power to enforce. But it was still a threat.

When I received the call, I immediately asked the supervisor to get all witnesses to write statements and inform parents. We went through the proper processes with the Office of the Independent Police Review Director (OIPRD), but our understanding was that a thorough investigation was done and complaints were dismissed because of an independent third witness who discounted the allegations. This is why many of us don't trust the system.

This trust of the system has been deteriorated for many Black, Indigenous, and racialized people through their stories of oppression. Desmond Cole, Black activist and author of *The Skin We're In: A Year of Black Resistance and Power*, says it best: "We demand justice and we get process." Nations

like Canada were built on ideologies of white supremacy and colonialism and thus, those ideologies permeate throughout our systems. A great podcast to learn more about this is Canadaland's COMMONS (The Police episodes).

Schools should be places of nourishment, development, and anti-oppression with caring adults. Police officers are held to their own standard through their own institutions. In schools, they may work with administration to attempt to support students, but they must answer to their own policies and procedures. The policing system contradicts what we want our education system to be.

This is not to say there should not be consequences for actions within education. However, an education model should look at those consequences through the lens of nourishment, development, and anti-oppression with caring adults, and not punishment. We should encourage transformative and restorative justice and not facilitate a school to prison pipeline.

I encountered a situation that illustrates the clash between the policing institution and the education institution. Under the *Education Act*, students without legal immigration status in Canada, undocumented students, have a right to education. In one of my past schools there was an undocumented student who was a school leader. Canada Border Service Agency (CBSA) officers were looking for them and asked our local SRO if the student was at the school. The SRO had to comply with the CBSA officer despite knowing that students should learn in peace and not with fear of being deported at school. This resulted in the CBSA officer waiting just outside school property. An SRO in a school directly contradicts the sanctuary status of the school because of their active partnership with CBSA. A great resource about this issue is No One Is Illegal's report *Often Asking, Always Telling*.

It's not an opinion whether police in schools cause harm. While some may debate it theoretically, to the student that sits across from me in my guidance office describing the police brutality that they experienced, or the student who has their home or neighbour's home raided at 4 a.m. in the morning, or the student who is frequently interrogated while walking home, there is no debate to the triggering effect that occurs when a police officer is stationed in a school.

> It becomes a question of whose experiences are we centring.

A Toronto District School Board (TDSB) report that recommended the termination of the local SRO program demonstrated that the majority of students felt safe with a police officer at the school. However, 11 per cent said the presence of a police officer intimidated them, and 14 per cent said they felt watched and targeted. This is not a majority vs. minority issue. It's an issue where students who are already facing other barriers and marginalization feel unsafe or uncomfortable with police officers, directly contradicting the type of learning environment we want to create for our students.

I have heard some people attempt to tackle this problem through reformative approaches, supporting the improvement of police-community relationships. However, it is my belief, and the belief of many Black and Indigenous activists and advocates, that it is not the school's responsibility to tackle that issue and the policing institution must take responsibility and show commitment to that on their own (if it's even possible). We have enough equity and anti-oppression issues to tackle as education workers than to commit time and resources to other institutions.

Another comment I frequently hear is: "That's not the case in my school/area. Police have fine relationships with students and the community." While I would not claim to know those relationships everywhere, I think it goes back to: "Whose experiences are we centring?" What do students with experiences in the justice system think of police? Students living in poverty? Black and Indigenous students? Students who skip class and engage in delinquent behaviour? Students who are self medicating using substances that can lead to addiction or dependence? Refugees from police-states or undocumented students? If we want to close the opportunity gap in our schools, it's important to centre these students in our decisions and take an equity-focused approach and analysis to any research. This is what we, as community members, encouraged the TDSB to do as they conducted and published their report recommending termination. This move was applauded and reported internationally, with reporters and activists from the United States reaching out to organizers for guest speaking events and deeper learning.

It's important to note that schools have many types of relationships with local law enforcement. This article is specifically critiquing the type of relationship where police officers are stationed at a school or stationed at multiple schools. However, my hope is that the critique in this article can be used to examine other types of relationships and we can move closer to having schools that engage every student through transformative and restorative justice.

Derik Chica is a teacher in District 12, Toronto and is a member of the Black Persons and Persons of Colour Advisory Work Group and is a vice-chair on the Educational Services Committee.

TMI!

The new information environment: Lies, truth, misinformation, and disinformation

C'en est trop!

Le nouvel environnement d'information : Mensonges, vérité, mésinformation et désinformation

Lana Parker, PhD
Helen Liu

In *Education Forum*'s fall 2020 issue, Chris Samuel asked, "How do you write about facts in the era of Trump, Brexit, and Ford?"[i] In this time of information abundance, and for educators in particular, an extension of this question might be: What are the implications of lies, truth, misinformation, and disinformation for students and for teaching? With a near constant online presence[ii] and extensive use of social media, students are developing new literacies and meaning-making habits that aren't always visible in their in-school behaviours. In this article, we look at the new information environment, changing patterns of student behaviours, and implications for pedagogy.

Dans le numéro de l'automne 2020 d'*Education Forum*, Chris Samuel posait la question, « Comment écrire sur les faits dans l'ère Trump, Brexit et Ford? »[i] En cette période d'abondance d'information et pour les éducatrices et les éducateurs en particulier, on pourrait élaborer sur cette question en disant : Quelles sont les implications des mensonges, de la vérité, de la mésinformation et de la désinformation sur les élèves et sur l'enseignement? Leur présence en ligne presque incessante[ii] et leur forte utilisation des médias sociaux font en sorte que les élèves développent de nouvelles littératies et habitudes de création de définitions qui

/suite à la page 15

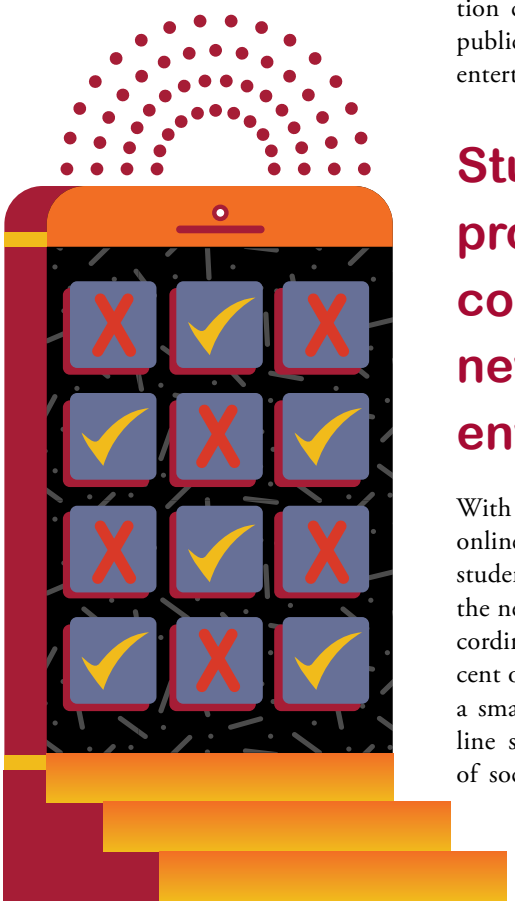
Artwork: Gabriela Rodriguez

The new information environment

The new information environment is characterized by virtual spaces that are prone to overwhelming mis- and disinformation, posing risks and real-world consequences to society. Misinformation consists of information that is false or contradictory to expert knowledge, while disinformation is a deliberate effort to knowingly present and circulate misinformation in order to gain power, money, or status.[iii] Consumers of such information can be influenced by the opinions and attitudes expressed online.

On a global scale, mis- and disinformation has become a public health threat during COVID-19 and wreaked havoc on political processes, including elections in Canada, Britain, and the U.S..[iv] Throughout the pandemic, mis- and disinformation ranged from damaging health advice, such as the recommendations to consume bleach and disregard mask use, to politically-driven conspiracy theories about the origins of the virus and how it spreads. This misinformation played a major role affecting the public health behaviours of people, such as their willingness to obey public health measures or get vaccinated.[v] False and misleading information online also had a notable influence on people's political beliefs, as various tactics, like conspiracy-motivated propaganda and imposter accounts, played a significant role in the American 2020 election.[vi]

Even when an individual takes it upon themselves to fact-check information, which can reduce the spread of mis- or disinformation, it is common for many to base their decisions on pre-existing attitudes, values, and political feelings.[vii] In that vein, young people are particularly susceptible, especially when the mis- or disinformation comes from sources with a large public following or is embedded within entertainment content.



Students as producers and consumers in the new information environment

With increasing amounts of time spent online and changing patterns of usage, students are inherently vulnerable in the new information environment. According to a *Pew Research Report*, 95 per cent of teenagers have or have access to a smartphone[viii], with many using online spaces as their preferred method of socialization. For many, social media has become the primary source for encountering information, affirming beliefs, and staying up to date on global news.[ix] In addition, students have moved into a more dynamic interaction with the information environment as both consumers and producers.[x] This is a major generational shift, as youth are moving away from conventional media content that has been vetted according to journalistic standards, to an unfiltered and open marketplace of ideas. On one hand, this new information environment offers benefits, including the ability to form new communities and to organize social movements locally and globally, as seen with both Greta Thunberg's Fridays for Future climate activism and the more recent Black Lives Matter movement. On the other hand, the mostly unrestricted environment means that information is subject to manipulation in covert and harmful ways. These manipulations—through bot accounts, algorithmic screening, hidden monetization, filter bubbles, and echo chambers—can have a major influence on how students come to understand key issues. It shapes their early beliefs and their overall identity formation.

Our recent study revealed that both teachers and students were grappling with how to navigate the onslaught of information. Teachers shared how difficult it was to help their students parse truth from the overwhelming misinformation about COVID-19 and the emerging Black Lives Matter protests in online classes. Students also expressed their frustration and dismay at how much conflicting information was present in their feeds. This raises an important question: if our students are frequently facing mis- and disinformation in their everyday lives, how are they learning about it in school?

In our classroom observations and conversations, students and teachers made note of interesting trends and gaps in education, which align with key points discussed in Chris Samuel's post-truth piece. Samuel noted that fact-checking can moderate false beliefs. In our analysis of student understanding,

we see that students are consistent in applying some level of fact-checking technique when working in an academic context (e.g., on school research papers), but don't consistently transfer that knowledge to their personal social media engagements. Despite the assumption that high engagement levels with social media equates to high levels of literacy or digital proficiency, this is not always the case. Most students acknowledged that they possess little to no knowledge of the types of manipulations that saturate their virtual worlds. Notably, when asked how they determine if information on social media is reliable and true, students said that one of their strategies is to see how prevalent that information is. When held against Vosoughi et al.'s[xi] findings that lies spread more rapidly than the truth, this strategy presents a clear problem: students use pervasiveness as a gauge of trustworthiness, yet algorithms and human behaviour combine to propagate lies more quickly than the truth. Samuel also wrote that fact-checking—though effective at reducing misinformation—does not significantly change political beliefs. This resonates with teachers' comments that it is difficult to change students' minds about established beliefs, especially if the beliefs are shared by celebrities or are iterated in echo chambers on Instagram and Twitter. This corresponds with Samuel's third point: perceptions of a person's credibility outweigh actual truthful content. As students strive to make sense of online information, one of their other common strategies is to base their evaluation on whether the link was shared by someone they trust, follow, or with whom they share affinities.

What do these shifts mean for pedagogy?

In our study, students expressed that schools have a responsibility to prepare them for the complexities of the new information environment, but many remain uncertain that any meaningful change is forthcoming. This skepticism is not unfounded, as Ontario curricula remains outdated and fails to mention the complexities of online engagement in any context. Our conversations with students revealed that their in-school education about social media was limited, often framed in the context of pragmatics (e.g., how to use the technology), or safety, bullying, and privacy. By consequence, most of their learning was dependent on trial and error, help from their peers, or the individual efforts of teachers who put in the time to incorporate these emerging literacy considerations into their own subject areas. Another major absence from the curriculum, particularly the English and Social Sciences curricula, is significance of affect and its role in literacy and identity formation.[xii] In our research, teachers discussed the significance of the relationship between emotion and knowledge, especially as students choose who to follow and believe based on early affinities. Despite noting how difficult it can be to change students' established beliefs and values, teachers also expressed that the classroom can be an opportunity for students to be introduced to new ideas and information, fostering an environment where they can engage in meaningful and critical discussions and debates about current events and issues.

Education systems need to embody a multiliteracies approach that incorporates all the complex strategies that can help students foster meaning from and interpret information in various social

contexts. While we, as educators, don't all have to become avid users of technology or even participants in the social media sphere, there is pedagogical value in seeking to better understand the trends, challenges, and implications for how students make meaning and develop beliefs. In addition, it would be helpful if the next iterations of Ontario's curriculum documents incorporated these new understandings of how virtual communities and literacies play a significant role in learning. More attention to how contemporary issues are taken up in these environments and more intentional classroom debates could foster the skills necessary for students to better navigate shifting information landscapes. This could include learning about mis- and disinformation, bias, technological manipulations, and consumer and producer culture. More comprehensively, it would mean recognizing the opportunities to embrace multiliteracies across curriculum areas, including: literacy and emotion, identity, and value formation; literacy and multimodality; and critical literacies.

The current lack of focused education jeopardizes social progress by allowing existing inequalities to compound. Such inequities are not limited to in-school success, but, more broadly, to political and social power. Beam et al. found that internet skill and ability to navigate information spaces can contribute to an individual's willingness and ability to engage with political or social matters. Students who may benefit from a focus on relevant learning may be able to effectively recognize, comprehend, and apply critical skills when engaging with sociopolitical information they encounter. Conversely, students who are not given opportunities to engage with that learning in school can become less likely to participate in the sociopolitical sphere, which can exacerbate growing inequalities in citizen engagement.[xiii] To bridge this gap, there needs to be a call for action on an institutionalized level, where equal opportunities to teach and engage students with multiliteracy pedagogies can occur evenly across the system. Anything less leaves our students adrift, navigating whole worlds of information that increasingly render them isolated and vulnerable.

Lana Parker, PhD is an Assistant Professor at the University of Windsor and the editor of the *Journal of Teaching and Learning* and **Helen Liu** is a PhD candidate at York University, researching media, adolescent development, and international students.

i Samuel, C. (2020). Fact-checking in a post-truth world. OSSTF/FEESO *Education Forum*. education-forum.ca/2020/11/26/fact-checking-in-a-post-truth-world

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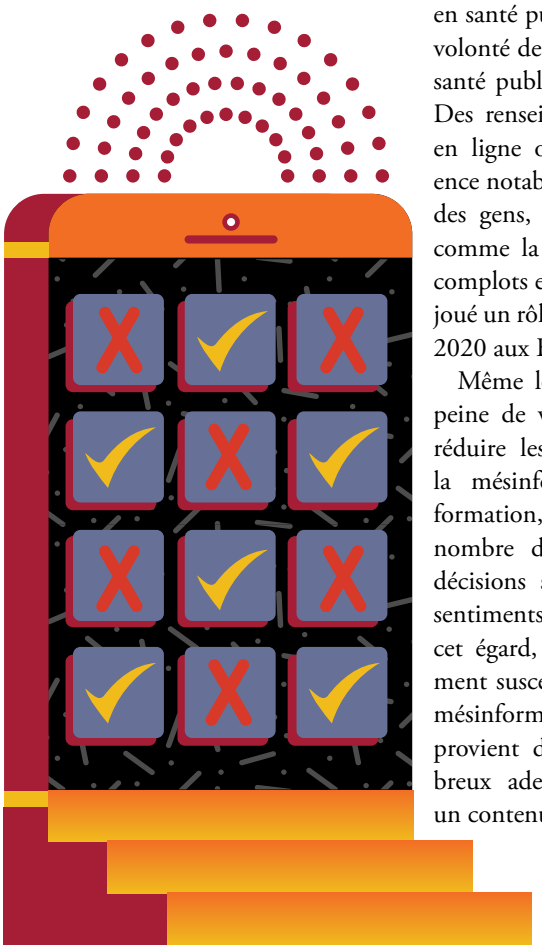
/suite à la page 11

ne sont pas toujours visibles dans leur comportement à l'école. Dans cet article, nous examinons le nouvel environnement de l'information, l'évolution des tendances dans le comportement des élèves, ainsi que les implications pour l'enseignement.

Le nouvel environnement d'information

Le nouvel environnement d'information est caractérisé par des espaces virtuels qui sont propices à une quantité accablante de mésinformation et de désinformation, posant ainsi des risques et des conséquences réels à la société. La mésinformation consiste en de l'information qui est fausse ou contradictoire aux connaissances des experts, alors que la désinformation constituent un effort délibéré de présenter et de faire circuler une désinformation dans le but de s'approprier du pouvoir, une richesse monétaire ou un certain statut.[iii] Les consommateurs de tels renseignements peuvent être influencés par les opinions et les attitudes exprimées en ligne.



À l'échelle mondiale, la mésinformation et la désinformation sont devenues une menace à la santé publique au cours de la pandémie de la COVID-19 et ont fait des ravages dans les processus politiques, y compris les élections au Canada, en Grande-Bretagne et aux États-Unis.[iv] Tout au long de la pandémie, la mésinformation et la désinformation allaient de conseils de santé dommageables comme les recommandations d'ingérer de l'eau de Javel et de ne pas tenir compte du port du masque, à des théories du complot au sujet des origines du virus et comment il se propage. Cette mésinformation a joué un rôle important dans l'influence du comportement en santé publique des gens, comme leur volonté de se conformer aux mesures de santé publique ou de se faire vacciner.[v] Des renseignements faux et trompeurs en ligne ont également eu une influence notable sur les croyances politiques des gens, alors que diverses tactiques, comme la propagande motivée par les complots et les comptes imposteurs, ont joué un rôle important dans l'élection de 2020 aux États-Unis.[vi]

Même lorsqu'une personne prend la peine de vérifier les faits, ce qui peut réduire les risques de propagation de la mésinformation ou de la désinformation, il est commun pour bon nombre d'entre eux de fonder leurs décisions sur des attitudes, valeurs et sentiments politiques pré-existants.[vii] À cet égard, les jeunes sont particulièrement susceptibles, surtout lorsque cette mésinformation ou désinformation provient de sources qui ont de nombreux adeptes ou sont intégrés dans un contenu divertissant.

Les élèves comme créateurs et consommateurs dans le nouvel environnement de l'information

Puisqu'ils passent de plus en plus de temps en ligne et en raison de l'évolution des modèles d'utilisation, les élèves sont intrinsèquement vulnérables au nouvel environnement de l'information. Puisqu'ils passent de plus en plus de temps en ligne et en raison de l'évolution des modèles d'utilisation, les élèves sont intrinsèquement vulnérables au nouvel environnement de l'information. Selon un rapport de *Pew Research*, 95 pour cent des adolescents possèdent ou ont accès à un téléphone intelligent[viii], et bon nombre utilisent des espaces en ligne comme leur méthode préférée de socialisation. Pour beaucoup, les médias sociaux sont devenus la principale source pour trouver de l'information, affirmer les croyances et se garder à jour sur les nouvelles internationales.[ix] De plus, les élèves sont maintenant passés à une interaction plus dynamique avec l'environnement de l'information, tant comme consommateurs que créateurs.[x] Il s'agit d'une importante réorientation générationnelle, alors que les jeunes délaissent le contenu des médias conventionnels qui a été vérifié en fonction des normes journalistiques, pour un marché ouvert d'idées non filtrées. D'un côté, ce nouvel environnement d'information offre des avantages, y compris la capacité de former de nouvelles communautés et d'organiser des mouvements sociaux sur les plans local et mondial, comme cela a été le cas de l'activisme sur les changements climatiques *Fridays for Future* de Greta Thunberg et plus récemment, le mouvement *Black Lives Matter*. L'envers de la médaille, c'est que les en-

vironnements qui sont surtout non restreints font en sorte que l'information est sujette à la manipulation, de façons dissimulées et néfastes. Ces manipulations—par l'intermédiaire de comptes robotisés, de triage algorithmique, de monétisation cachée, vos bulles de filtre et vos chambres d'écho—peuvent largement influencer comment les élèves viennent qu'à comprendre les enjeux clés. Ils façonnent leurs croyances précoces et la formation globale de leur identité.

Notre étude récente a révélé qu'autant le personnel enseignant que les élèves éprouvaient de la difficulté à naviguer ce grand flux d'information. Le personnel enseignant a indiqué dans quelle mesure il était difficile d'aider les élèves à déceler la vérité parmi la vaste mésinformation au sujet de la COVID-19 et les manifestations émergentes de *Black Lives Matter* dans les cours de recherche en ligne. Les élèves ont également fait part de leur frustration et de leur désarroi devant tellement de renseignements contradictoires qui se trouvaient dans leur source de nouvelles. Cela soulève une importante question : si nos élèves font souvent face à de la mésinformation et à de la désinformation dans la vie de tous les jours, comment apprennent-ils à ce sujet à l'école?

Dans nos observations et conversations en salle de classe, les élèves et le personnel enseignant ont noté des tendances et lacunes intéressantes en éducation, qui s'alignent avec des points clés avancés par l'article de Chris Samuel intitulé *Fact-checking in a post-truth world*. Chris Samuel a noté que la vérification des faits peut limiter les fausses croyances. Dans notre analyse de la compréhension des élèves, nous voyons que les élèves sont uniformes dans l'application d'un certain degré de vérification des faits lorsqu'ils travaillent dans un contexte académique (p. ex., sur des travaux de recherche scolaires), mais ils ne transfèrent pas uniformément ces connaissances à leurs engagements dans les médias sociaux. Malgré la supposition que les degrés élevés d'engagement dans les médias sociaux entraînent des niveaux élevés de littératie ou de connaissances dans le domaine numérique, ce n'est pas toujours le cas. La plupart des élèves reconnaissaient qu'ils possèdent peu ou pas de connaissances concernant les types de manipulation qui saturent les mondes virtuels. Notamment, lorsqu'on leur a demandé comment déterminer si l'information dans les médias sociaux est fiable et vraie, les élèves ont affirmé qu'une de leurs stratégies est de déterminer dans quelle mesure l'information est répandue. Lorsque comparée aux constatations de Vosoughi et al.[xi] que les mensonges se répandent plus rapidement que la vérité, cette stratégie présente un problème évident : les élèves se servent du caractère persuasif comme mesure de fiabilité, or, les algorithmes et le comportement humain font équipe pour répandre des mensonges plus rapidement que la vérité. Chris a également soulevé que la vérification des faits—bien qu'efficace à la réduction de la mésinformation—ne changent pas considérablement les croyances politiques. Cela vient appuyer les remarques du personnel enseignant qu'il est difficile de changer l'avis des élèves au sujet de croyances établies, surtout si ces croyances sont partagées par des vedettes ou sont répétées dans des chambres d'écho sur Instagram et Twitter. Cela correspond au troisième point de Chris Samuel : les perceptions du caractère crédible d'une personne outrepassent le contenu véritablement juste. Alors que les élèves s'évertuent à décortiquer l'information en ligne, une de leurs autres stratégies communes est de baser leur évaluation sur le fait que le lien a été partagé par une personne à laquelle ils font confiance, pour qui ils sont des adeptes ou avec qui ils partagent des intérêts.

Que signifient ces nouvelles orientations pour la pédagogie?

Dans le cadre de notre étude, les élèves ont indiqué que les écoles ont la responsabilité de les préparer pour les complexités du nouvel environnement de l'information, mais bon nombre d'entre eux demeurent incertains à savoir si des changements pertinents sont imminents. Ce scepticisme n'est pas sans fondement, puisque les curriculums de l'Ontario demeurent désuets et manquent de mentionner les complexités de l'engagement en ligne dans tout contexte que ce soit. Nos conversations avec les élèves ont révélé que leur éducation scolaire au sujet des médias sociaux était limitée, souvent cadrée dans un contexte pragmatique (p. ex., comment se servir de la technologie), ou de la sécurité, de l'intimidation et de la protection de la vie privée. Par conséquent, la plus grande partie de leur apprentissage dépendait de la méthode « essais et erreurs », l'aide des pairs ou les efforts individuels des membres du personnel enseignant qui prennent le temps d'inclure ces considérations émergentes en littératie dans leurs propres domaines d'enseignement. Une autre importante lacune dans le curriculum, surtout les curriculums des sujets English et des sciences sociales, est l'importance de l'émotion et de son rôle dans la littératie et la formation de l'identité.[xii] Dans nos recherches, les membres du personnel enseignant ont discuté de l'importance de la relation entre l'émotion et les connaissances, surtout alors que les élèves choisissent qui suivre et qui croire, en fonction de ces affinités. Bien qu'ils aient noté à quel point il était difficile de changer les croyances et les valeurs établies des élèves, les membres du personnel enseignant ont également indiqué que la salle de classe peut être un lieu propice à introduire de nouvelles idées et des renseignements aux élèves, favorisant un environnement où ils peuvent s'engager dans des discussions et des débats pertinents et critiques au sujet d'événements et de questions de l'actualité.

Les systèmes d'éducation doivent adopter une approche multi-littératie qui inclut toutes les stratégies complexes qui peuvent aider les élèves à comprendre et à interpréter de l'information dans divers contextes sociaux. Bien que nous, comme éducatrices et éducateurs, ne soyons pas tenus de devenir des utilisateurs invétérés de la technologie ou même de participer à la sphère des médias sociaux, il y a une valeur pédagogique à tenter de mieux comprendre les tendances, les défis et les implications de comment les élèves interprètent de l'information et développement des croyances. De plus, il pourrait s'avérer utile si les prochaines itérations des documents du curriculum de l'Ontario incluaient ces nouvelles constatations du rôle des communautés et littératies virtuelles dans l'apprentissage. Une plus forte attention sur la façon à laquelle les enjeux sont discutés dans ces environnements et des débats plus délibérés en salle de classe pourraient favoriser les compétences nécessaires chez les élèves, leur permettant de mieux naviguer la réorientation des paysages de l'information. Cela pourrait comprendre un apprentissage sur la mésinformation, la désinformation, les idées préconçues, les manipulations technologiques et la culture du consommateur et du créateur. D'une manière plus globale, cela signifierait de reconnaître les occasions de s'ouvrir aux multi-littératies sur tous les secteurs du curriculum, y compris : la littératie et l'émotion, l'identité et la formation de la valeur; la littératie et la multi-modalité; et les littératies critiques.

Le manque actuel d'éducation concentrée met en danger les progrès sociaux en permettant aux inégalités actuelles de se former. De telles inégalités ne se limitent pas à la réussite à l'intérieur de l'école, mais dans un contexte plus large, au pouvoir politique et social. *Beam et al.* a constaté que les aptitudes à l'Internet et la capacité de naviguer les espaces d'information peuvent contribuer à la volonté et la capacité d'une personne de s'engager dans les questions politiques et sociales. Les élèves qui pourraient bénéficier d'une concentration sur l'apprentissage pertinent peuvent être en mesure de reconnaître, comprendre et appliquer efficacement des aptitudes critiques lorsqu'ils s'engagent avec l'information sociopolitique qui leur est présentée. Inversement, les élèves qui ne sont pas exposés aux occasions de s'engager dans cet apprentissage à l'école deviennent moins aptes à participer à la sphère sociopolitique, ce qui peut empirer les inégalités croissantes dans l'engagement des citoyennes et des citoyens.[xiii] Afin de combler cet écart, il faut un appel à l'action au niveau institutionnalisé, où les occasions égales d'enseigner et d'engager les élèves au moyen de pédagogies multi-littératie peuvent être mises en place d'une façon uniforme à la grandeur du système. À défaut de quoi, nous laissons nos élèves à la dérive, naviguant des mondes entiers d'information qui les rend de plus en plus isolés et vulnérables.

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[Voir les notes en fin de texte, à la page 14.]

SOCIAL MEDIA FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Using untraditional modes of communication to dismantle anti-Black racism within OSSTF/FEESO

by judy mckeown

...Not me using Twitter and Instagram professionally after disparaging both platforms as frivolous and superficial for so many years.

...I don't know who needs to hear this, but social media being used as a tool of oppressed people to dismantle oppressive systems must be respected and encouraged.

...I mean, normalize marginalized people determining how they choose to communicate and navigate structures steeped in colonialism and white supremacy.

People who frequent Twitter may recognize these italicized words and phrases as popular clichés that are used on the platform to cleverly convey whatever it is they wish to communicate to their followers and a wider audience.

While I have not used any of this phraseology myself, I have, over the past year, become enamoured with the reach of social media where social movements are concerned. I first witnessed the impact of Twitter in May 2020 when a group of OSSTF/FEESO members from District 19, Peel came together to create and launch a petition demanding that our District make a commitment to dismantle anti-Black racism in the wake of the Ministry's *Review of the Peel District School Board* and the corresponding directives. This petition was shared on Twitter and has garnered a modest 134 likes but resulted in the gathering of over 21,000 signatures. As I watched the support for dismantling anti-Black racism within the union grow, I also realized the potential that social media has. Crowdsourcing ideas, disseminating resources, cross-District organizing, and catalyzing and crystallizing substantive change are just a few ways that social media is a transformative tool for education workers who actively fight to eradicate anti-Black racism and white supremacy in union spaces. More specifically, social media is a tool for those who have been historically excluded from decision-making tables and provides concrete ways for traditionally silenced voices to be amplified.

Twitter as a site for planting and sowing seeds of activism in District 19

When education workers in Peel look back on the 2019–2020 school year, many will recall work-to-rule, the transition to emergency distance learning, and the Peel District School Board being placed under Ministry of Education supervision. I will remember all three of these defining historical moments, but will also always give reverence to how working during a global pandemic propelled me into the Twitterverse and (union) activism. For me, pre-pandemic, Twitter was a place to scroll for the news and to see what other education workers were sharing about their practice. It was a place to post pictures showcasing the work that was being done at my school's boys' club, and that was it. That quickly changed when a group of approximately twenty education workers, galvanized by their disdain for the insidiousness of anti-Black racism in education, came together to demand systemic change within our District, using #D19WeDemandAction. This hashtag was part of a Twitter campaign (i.e., an organized Twitter Storm) that aimed to put pressure on the local executives to make material changes in relation to dismantling anti-Black racism instead of simply writing statements. Ahead of our annual general meeting (AGM) in June 2020, this group of education workers aimed to garner support from our wider membership, encouraging members to use their voices for change at this important meeting. The hashtag was a success and education workers from different Districts and Bargaining Units who are part of the Twitter community joined in to show their support. Our visibility on Twitter translated into institutional change, as members crafted and passed a motion for a position on the executive that was wholly devoted to dismantling anti-Black racism.

Fuelled by Zoom organizing and Twitter engagement, the changes in my District were a direct result of this local group's first foray together into collective action on social media. But, it was far from the last. Twitter quickly became the site of social change for the group as we fought for three time-release positions earmarked for dismantling anti-Black racism and intersectional oppression. To achieve this, we had to rally support to call a general meeting so members could vote on this change to the structure of our local executive unit, including moving from six time-released executives to nine. Even though we achieved this historic win with overwhelming support from the members in virtual attendance, Twitter remained a space that we continued to return to so we could take the temperature of members and gather their support. Hashtags like #OSSTFTimeIsNow, #MyOSSTF, #Big3RepMe, and #DisruptInD19 also assisted in bringing attention to systemic issues in the union that could be better tackled if Black voices were centred and valued rather than tokenized and co-opted. These hashtags brought more victories, such as the appointments of the Dismantling Anti-Black Racism Executive Team (DABRET), the passing of a levy increase in May 2021 to ensure the continuance of the roles occupied by the DABRET, and the transformation of the Disrupting Anti-Black Racism Advisory Committee (DABRAC) from an ad hoc to a fully-funded standing committee. Twitter has been a driving force in changing the literal faces represented in District 19 as a result of the combination of using it as a site to share information and build a critical mass of anti-racist educators who are willing to advocate for social justice. Unable to use traditional mapping techniques or gather in person because of COVID-19 restrictions, Twitter became the conduit for dismantling both anti-Black racism and white supremacy.

Twitter as connector: Cross-District leadership and transformation

Twitter can sometimes feel like being in a large room of people screaming about the issues that matter most to them. Many on this platform have a main theme and stick to it, for the most part. Both my personal Twitter account, @MzMcKeown, and our DABRAC account, @disruptingABR, focus solely on exposing anti-Blackness and promoting practical ways to dis-

Artwork: Gabriela Rodriguez

mantle anti-Black racism and intersectional oppression. The beauty of being in this proverbial room of screaming people is that it creates opportunities for shared understanding and collaboration across Districts. As grassroots members of District 19 fought for historic gains in our local, members from other Districts looked on in genuine awe and appreciation. Moving from quiet observation to making inquiries via direct messages (DMs) on Twitter, cross-District collaboration was born. Some OSSTF/FEESO members were interested in how they could make changes to their local constitution so they, too, could tackle anti-Black racism in similar ways to District 19, while others were interested in how our goals could align to make change at the provincial level at the Annual Meeting of the Provincial Assembly (AMPA). For a handful of Districts, Twitter connections have translated into committees that focus on addressing anti-Black racism and oppression, executive positions that aim to create more equitable and just union spaces, and clear pathways that we can take to make systemic and lasting change. Regardless of what aspect of Twitter has inspired people to move to action, what remains consistent is that this social media platform has connected us and made free exchange of ideas and reciprocal support a distinct possibility.

Airing dirty union laundry: Critiques of Twitter activism

While there has been free exchange of ideas grounded in shared vision and goals among anti-racist education workers, there has been much scepticism about the use of a forum as public as Twitter to openly grapple with deeply entrenched issues within OSSTF/FEESO. Some institutional or establishment unionists have expressed concerns that, by naming and attempting to address anti-Black racism and white supremacy within the union, we are sowing division and providing 'union-busters' the errant thread they need to pull on in order to unravel all of the gains workers have won over the years. Nothing could be further from the truth. Part of being a unionist, in my view, is having the desire to ensure the most marginalized workers are centred and protected. In education unions, this should also extend to wanting to improve public education for all students, with a laser focus on the ones who are made most vulnerable by systems of oppression. How do we achieve this? Accountability. And there can be no accountability without transparency. And this is why we tweet. We tweet to force others to confront some hard truths, and we do so unapologetically in our own voices. We do so to compel fellow unionists with positional power to do better, even if it is in a manner that some are not used to contending with. In sharing our raw, lived experiences via Twitter, we know we are reaching a large number of people, some of whom are completely unaware of existing inequities within union circles. The goal is to have difficult knowledge serve as a catalyst for change, and Twitter casts a wide enough net to inform a critical mass of unionists who can do just that. Always remember: it is unconscionable to ask oppressed people to suppress or repackage their truths for the greater good, which often simply means for the powerful and privileged. Instead, new vocabularies of activism, including spaces like Twitter, must be accepted as sites where those who have been oppressed can share ideas, reject attempts at their dehumanization, and make non-negotiable demands.

Doing it for the gram: Instagram as a medium for teaching and learning for social justice

While social media on the whole has the capacity for activism, I have found that the visual-driven nature of Instagram lends itself quite well to sharing information in quick, bite-sized pieces. From images with thought-provoking quotations, infographics that elucidate anti-racist practices, to promoting important resources, Instagram is a platform that provides opportunities for teaching and learning about dismantling anti-Black racism. Many of the tweets that were first formulated to inspire reflection in those following me on Twitter were later turned into visually pleasing Instagram posts with detailed captions. It is the caption option that allows for further exploration of the original thought, something more difficult to achieve on Twitter because of character limits and the reality that not everything should be a thread. Even though posts are often not commented on, frequent dialogue definitely takes place in the DMs. This is a space where many education workers have felt comfortable enough to pose questions, ask for clarification, or simply share related anecdotes of affirmation or struggle. In my role as OSSTF/FEESO's first ever Dismantling Anti-Black Racism Training Officer (DABRTO), this type of dialogue gave me the chance to assist education workers across the province, but also helped me to further refine and develop resources that members needed to effectively work to eradicate anti-Black racism in education. Based on members' interactions with me, I decided that sharing resources was needed so education workers could have easy access to texts such as the Try This Instead series, a three-part resource that features salient forms of anti-Black racism and how to deal with them in video, infographic, and booklet format.

And, even though my primary focus on Instagram has been to feature images that inform, it has also become a place to feature podcasts that I have been a guest on so education workers can learn from how others make their thinking visible, especially when critically interrogating anti-Black racism in education and unionism. It will also become the home for a new (hopefully) monthly podcast hosted by me, called D19 Dialogues: Blue Table Talk, that will explore how our local continues to work towards dismantling anti-Black racism. Moving forward, one of the best ways to engage people in this learning might be combining the visual with oral communication. The most natural extension of Instagram, if brave enough, would be TikTok. However, that platform certainly is not for the faint of heart or those with limited editing skills, like myself. So, the next best thing will be engaging

in Instagram Live, with the aim of cultivating organic interaction, impromptu discussions, and new ways of organizing and building an anti-racist union. Embracing the means by which oppressed people choose to communicate is how we will all get free.

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Wading through the swamp water

Experiences and approaches as a woman leader in labour

An interview with Patty Coates, OFL President

by Tracey Germa

I recently had the opportunity to sit with Patty Coates, the president of the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) and OSSTF/FEESO member from District 17, Simcoe to discuss her role as the first female president of the OFL, the challenges and possibilities labour currently faces, and the importance of worker solidarity in the face of COVID-19.

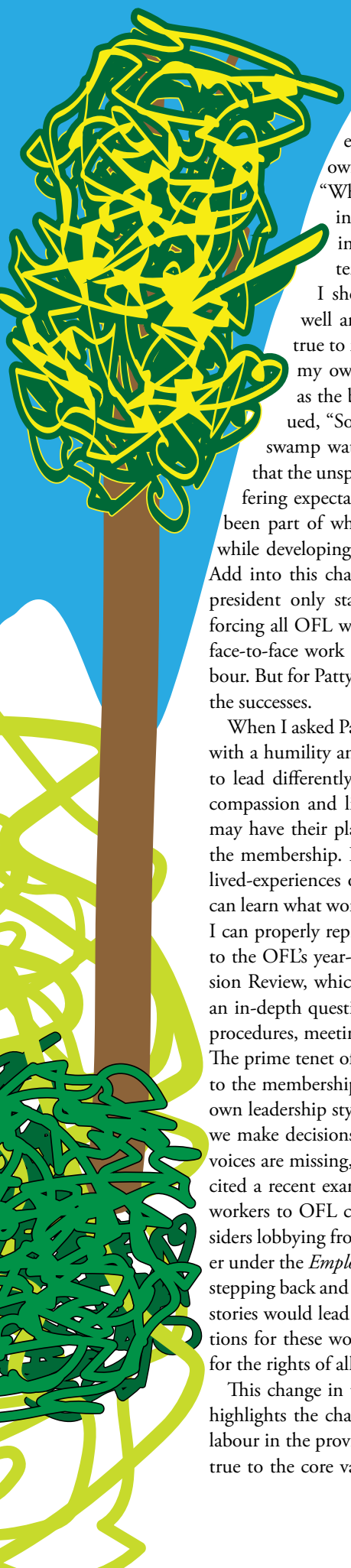
The OFL is the uniting labour body of workers in Ontario and serves as a centralizing force for union organizations in the province and a representative body at the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC). The OFL, in tandem with local Labour Councils around the province, lobbies for better labour laws and employment standards, fights to maintain worker protections, advocates for better working conditions for all workers in Ontario, and strives to elect a progressive provincial government. As a member of the OFL, OSSTF/FEESO has a number of representatives who sit on a variety of committees and in a variety of elected positions.

Patty Coates, president of the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL)
(Photo provided by the OFL)

Patty Coates was elected to the position of OFL president in 2019. Previously she served four years as the Secretary-Treasurer of the OFL, and cut her teeth as a labour activist starting when her Educational Assistants Bargaining Unit (now called the Education Workers Bargaining Unit) organized and joined OSSTF/FEESO in 1995. Patty became the fledgling Bargaining Unit's vice-president at their formation and moved to the role of president of the group in 1998. Through her time as an OSSTF/FEESO activist, Patty was involved as the Status of Women liaison to Provincial Council, a Provincial Councillor, a member of the Collective Bargaining Committee (now the Protective Services Committee), and a variety of advisory workgroups. One of her fondest memories is from 2015 when she was running for election to Secretary-Treasurer of the OFL while at the same time working as part of our provincial support staff bargaining advisory workgroup. The OFL convention and bargaining were happening simultaneously that week, and luckily at the same hotel. Patty fondly remembered how this was a solidifying moment for her, one where she knew she was on the right path, doing all she could to support the workers of Ontario.

I asked Patty about the challenges she faced and still faces as a woman in this leadership role. With the incredible increase in representation of women at labour's table in Canada and Ontario, her role is one that echoes the slow changes we hope to see. We now have female leaders of Ontario's four main education unions—OSSTF/FEESO (Karen Littlewood), the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario—ETFO (Karen Brown), the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association—OECTA (Barb Dobrowolski), and the Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens—AEFO (Anne Vinet-Roy). Females are also at the helm of the Canadian Union of Public Employees—Ontario School Board Council of Unions—CUPE–OSBCU (Laura Walton), the Canadian Union of Postal Workers—CUPW (Jan Simpson), and the CLC (Bea Bruske), in addition to those unions representing primarily female workers, such as Services Employees International Union Healthcare—SEIU Healthcare (Sharleen Stewart), and the Ontario Nurses' Association—ONA (Vicki McKenna). Patty's first thought was that the face of leadership does not yet sufficiently represent the workers. She noted that we must continue to push for greater representation by Indigenous, Black, and racialized leaders and that the move to having more female leaders is a reminder that change, while slow, is possible when we take the time to listen to one another and to centre voices other than those of the status quo. Patty reminded me that the unionized labour force in Canada is now 53 per cent female, yet the percentage of female leaders lags well behind that. Similarly, the face of union leadership remains significantly whiter than the workforce, and Patty recognizes this change must happen more quickly and that we cannot be our best if union leadership does not look like the workers it represents.

Artwork: Ronda Allan



The personal challenge that Patty noted as one of her hardest is finding and maintaining her own unique voice as a leader. She said, "While I have broken the glass ceiling in the OFL, I still have shards of glass in me. I've been given the advice, often by male leaders around me, that I should be strong. And while that's all well and good, I have to also find and be true to my own style. I have to be able to use my own skills of listening and considering as the basis of my leadership." Patty continued, "Sometimes it's like wading through the swamp water before finding the shore," noting that the unspoken rules and processes, and the differing expectations on her as a female leader, have been part of what she has had to carefully navigate while developing her own unique style of leadership. Add into this challenge the fact that Patty's tenure as president only started months before the pandemic, forcing all OFL work online, away from the grassroots face-to-face work that is so important to organized labour. But for Patty, the challenges are far outweighed by the successes.

When I asked Patty about her successes, she answered with a humility and a considered pause: "Women tend to lead differently, we often bring a different level of compassion and listening to the table. Fists on tables may have their place, but I don't believe they do with the membership. I have to step back and listen to the lived-experiences of the members; it is the only way I can learn what workers need and it is the only way I feel I can properly represent them." She drew my attention to the OFL's year-long internal audit, its Anti-Oppression Review, which is taking the organization through an in-depth questioning and revamping of its policies, procedures, meeting norms, and engagement strategies. The prime tenet of this review is to step back and listen to the membership. She plants this work deeply in her own leadership style: "I'm still flawed, of course. When we make decisions, I have to step back and ask whose voices are missing, who do we need to hear from?" She cited a recent example of bringing in the voices of gig workers to OFL consultations as the government considers lobbying from Uber to create a third tier of worker under the *Employment Standards Act.* Patty knew that stepping back and letting Ontario's gig workers tell their stories would lead the OFL to the best possible protections for these workers and would help the OFL fight for the rights of all gig workers.

This change in the type of labour we see in Ontario highlights the changes we are also seeing in organized labour in the province. For Patty, this means remaining true to the core values of worker safety, worker rights, and job protections, extending those to the new face of labour. While recognizing the diversity of our workforce, we must also embrace the uniting force of bettering the lives of all workers in the province. Patty's goal is to continue to increase the OFL's presence in the lives of workers—to make the OFL the dining-room name that workers speak of when they speak of being safe, protected, and respected. This means continuing to build capacity between all affiliates, but it also plays into Patty's belief that we must listen more to on-the-ground workers and centre their experiences in our fight for better working conditions for all. She said, "We have amazing activists across this province, but we also have workers who have the one issue that is the most important to them, and we must be able to harness that focus to bring more workers in as activists for what matters to them. We have people whose primary focus will be affordable child-care, access to expanded health care, long-term-care needs, or paid sick leave. This is where listening to the experiences of the worker must take us; I believe in the same things workers care about and we need their experiences to help shape our advocacy and policy."

The COVID-19 pandemic has shifted how the OFL can engage with and listen to the workforce it represents, but it hasn't all been for the worst, says Coates: "The switch to online meetings does mean that we've been able to better hear from our rural, northern, and remote workers and communities. It means we have shifted how we do outreach, and while nothing can replace the power of face-to-face organizing and activism, being online has given us a new perspective and access to some voices previously unheard. And some of these new voices are now able to be activists because they can work online to engage and shake up the system that is trying to hold down workers." She continues: "The pandemic has also led to the recognition of other front-line workers: grocery workers, personal support workers (PSWs), and delivery folks, for example. Finally the greater public sees their value and this will help the OFL fight for fair wages, paid sick leave, and other worker protections. Their stories are being told and their experiences are being valued like never before."

Before letting Patty go, I asked her about how being an OSSTF/FEESO member has impacted her leadership style. She highlighted the uniqueness of her position in 1995 as her Bargaining Unit was organizing with the Federation: "My experience of representing educational assistants in a Catholic board within OSSTF/FEESO was the first time I realized the power of my voice and of the individual story. We worked to educate the leadership at the time to move them from slogans that focused on the 'public school system' to the now much more accepted 'publicly-funded education system.' We showed the leadership that their membership was greater than

what they saw and greater than who they were really representing. So that early challenge has always been a reminder to me that I have to be willing to see beyond my immediate view, I have to have conversations and listen to all the members I represent."

Patty also pointed out the amazing line of femtors that have helped shape her and who have encouraged her along the way. From local leaders and comrades, through to provincial and now federal female leaders and activists, Patty credited much of her success to other women who have taken the time to encourage her, share with her their strategies, and also just be there to hear about the good and the difficult times. She noted that, "This also means changing how we see the idea of support play out. Is it providing childcare so a colleague can go to a union meeting or event, is it offering support when a woman is in leadership and is juggling family and other obligations, or is it remembering to check in regularly on one another to make sure we're ok? COVID-19 has been a wake-up call for many of us; we're seeing how the work-life balance can severely impact our mental health." This mindset change also includes women being willing to support one another without fear of losing our own positions of power, and for Patty, this recentring of notions of power parallels her leadership style of letting others tell their story and sharing the empowerment that comes when we are united in our fight for the rights of all workers.

Tracey Germa is the editor of *Education Forum* and education-forum.ca.

Poster: Audrey Bourque

The importance of resolving workplace conflict

Restoring healthy working relationships

by Kate Davidson

Conflict is

a normal part of human relationships and is certainly common in the workplace. Employees who find themselves embroiled in workplace conflict tend to suffer more than most people realize. Disputes can take a toll on mental health, can affect things like sleep and eating habits, and the effects can spill over into their home life. Furthermore, it makes individuals vulnerable to engaging in unprofessional behaviour and may attract the attention of management. OSSTF/FEESO created the Mediation Services Resource Bank (MSRB) to assist members who find themselves stuck in workplace conflict.

I am the vice-chair of the MSRB, a group of twelve OSSTF/FEESO members from different job classes across the province. We are frontline members working in a variety of education settings who volunteer to support our colleagues in finding solutions to conflicts and restoring healthy working relationships. The MSRB assists over a hundred members a year to settle their differences and return to amicable professional relationships. It has a very high success rate in working with members experiencing one-on-one conflicts as well as those in large groups.

L'importance de régler les conflits au travail

Rétablir des relations de travail saines

par Kate Davidson

Les conflits

font partie intégrante des relations humaines et sont certainement fréquents au travail. Les employés qui se retrouvent mêlés à un conflit professionnel ont tendance à souffrir plus que la plupart des gens ne le pensent. Les conflits peuvent avoir des répercussions sur la santé mentale, sur des éléments comme le sommeil

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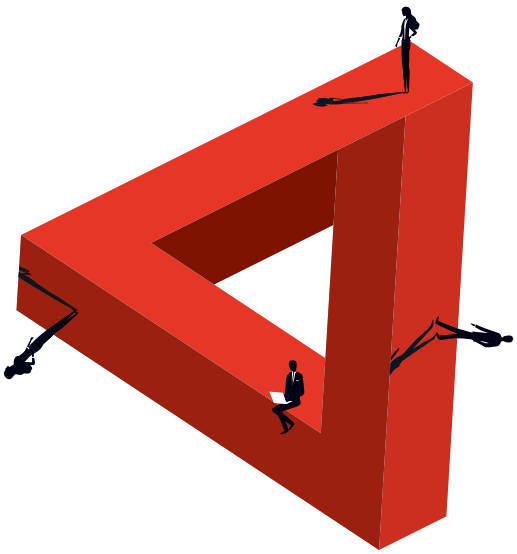
The MSRB was created almost 25 years ago when OSSTF/FEESO realized that their members mired in workplace conflict were vulnerable to employer discipline and dismissal. The program finds members from a variety of experiences and backgrounds, provides them with intensive training in current conflict resolution theory and training, and then sends them out to assist members in addressing their workplace conflicts. As far as we know, we are the only union in North America that provides this service.

If a member finds themselves in a conflict with one or more colleagues, they can speak to their worksite union rep or call their local District office to discuss the issues and find out if a referral for mediation might be helpful. Mediation services are available in English and French, to both small and large groups of OSSTF/FEESO members, and the service is always free and confidential.



I cannot overemphasize the significant negative impact that workplace conflict can have on both the individuals directly involved and on the workplace community. We have heard stories of members sitting in their cars before work, dreading walking into their building. Others have experienced so much trauma that they have been unable to work or even voluntarily transferred work locations to escape conflict. Well-meaning colleagues often find themselves involved and taking sides as they seek to support a friend, and sometimes an entire staff may find themselves split over what was originally a disagreement between two colleagues. Our mediators are able to identify the key players in a dispute, provide them with a safe place to deal with their conflict, and guide them through the conversation.

Going into mediation may sound intimidating or provoke feelings of anxiety, but this is normal. It is important to know that mediation offered through the MSRB is completely confidential and no records are kept. Our only goal is to support members to better understand each other's perspectives and to identify proven strategies that can be used to resolve the conflict and then move forward to rebuild healthy working relationships.

Once a referral for mediation has been received, it is reviewed by the chair of the MSRB and then assigned to one of the twelve mediators. When I am assigned a mediation, my first step is to connect with each of the people involved and have a private phone conversation to understand their perspective of the conflict, explain the mediation process, and learn their hopes for the outcome of mediation. A mediation will only go ahead if all of the members are willing to engage in conversation, hear the other's perspectives, and work toward solutions. Mediation involves difficult conversations that often have a lot of emotion behind them, and my primary role is to ensure there is a safe space for a respectful dialogue. If there is any indication that a member is not motivated to work toward resolution in a genuine and considerate way, the mediation would not go ahead.

On the day of the mediation, we meet in a neutral location such as the District office or a meeting room at a hotel. We begin by establishing ground rules that will guide the process. Next, each person recounts their perception of the conflict without being interrupted, sharing the impact the conflict has had on them and the intentions behind their actions. Mediators are trained to identify common interests through asking questions and reframing issues. Often people in conflict are working toward

Artwork: Marcela Sleizer

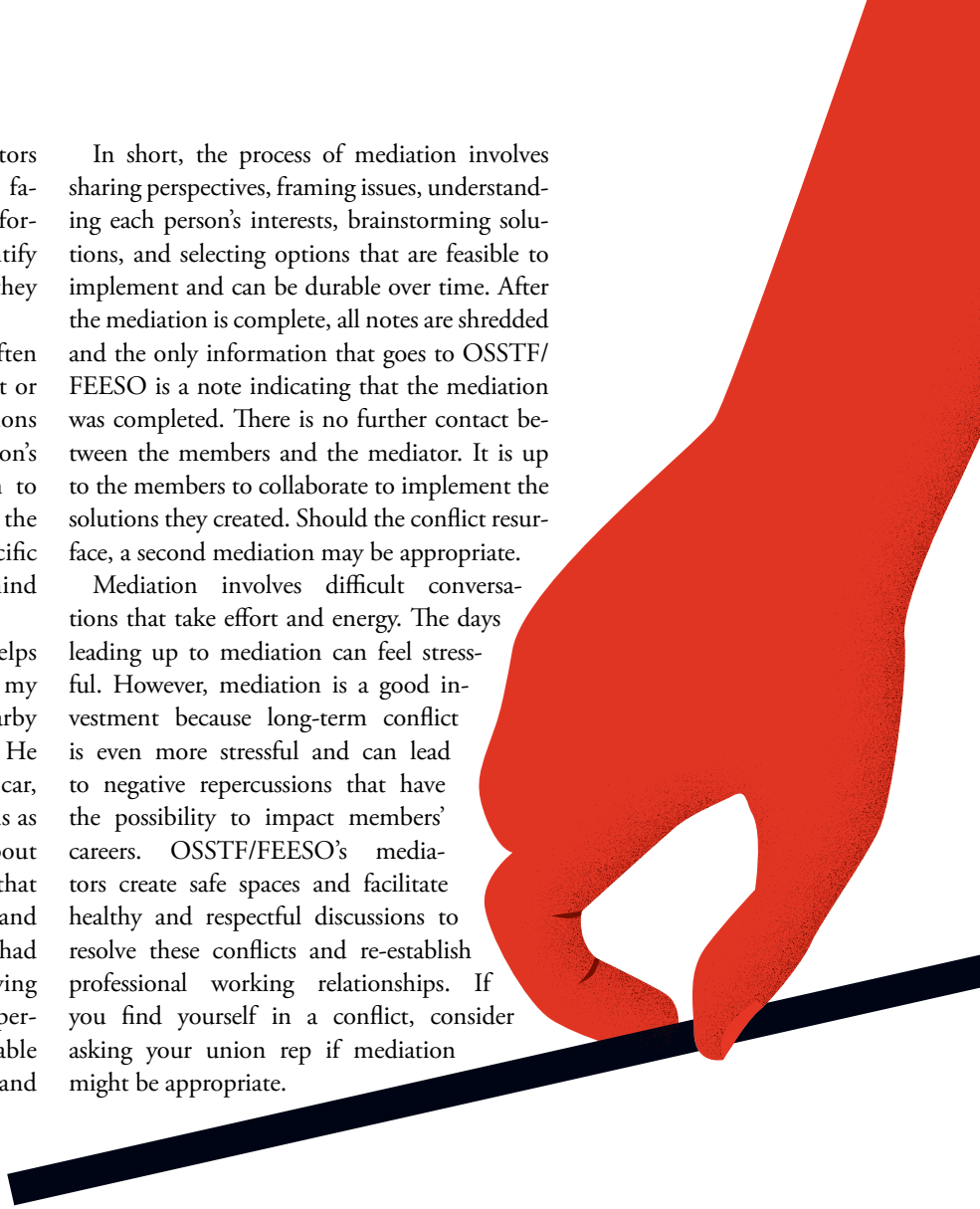
the same goal but in different ways. Mediators do not impose solutions; we are skilled at facilitating conversations and synthesizing information in a way that helps members identify their relationship goals and the strategies they want to use to move forward.

When people are in conflict, they are often stuck at a surface level of a particular event or series of interactions. They make assumptions about the intentions behind the other person's actions while expecting the other person to understand their own. Mediation provides the opportunity for both sides to discuss specific situations and understand the reasons behind each other's actions.

Let me share a personal example that helps to illustrate this concept. A few years ago, my partner and I were heading out to a nearby gym, and I was in a rush to get there. He scraped the snow off the windshield of the car, but did not do a great job. I interpreted this as him being lazy and rushing, not caring about me. When I asked him about it, he shared that his intention was to do a good enough job and be quick so we could get there sooner. He had noticed that I was rushing and he was trying to help. Suddenly this action that I had perceived as inconsiderate changed and I was able to see that he was motivated by caring and trying to help me. The situation diffused from one of conflict to one of connection. Although this example is of a simple conflict, it illustrates how our interpretation of people's intentions based on their actions can be wrong. Mediation helps us understand the thought processes that underlie another's behaviour. Understanding is more important than being right and proving another wrong; it diffuses hard feelings and opens a path to finding solutions.

In short, the process of mediation involves sharing perspectives, framing issues, understanding each person's interests, brainstorming solutions, and selecting options that are feasible to implement and can be durable over time. After the mediation is complete, all notes are shredded and the only information that goes to OSSTF/FEESO is a note indicating that the mediation was completed. There is no further contact between the members and the mediator. It is up to the members to collaborate to implement the solutions they created. Should the conflict resurface, a second mediation may be appropriate.

Mediation involves difficult conversations that take effort and energy. The days leading up to mediation can feel stressful. However, mediation is a good investment because long-term conflict is even more stressful and can lead to negative repercussions that have the possibility to impact members' careers. OSSTF/FEESO's mediators create safe spaces and facilitate healthy and respectful discussions to resolve these conflicts and re-establish professional working relationships. If you find yourself in a conflict, consider asking your union rep if mediation might be appropriate.



Kate Davidson is a Psychological Associate, former president of District 19, Peel PSSP, and is currently working for the Waterloo Region District School Board and is now a member of District 24, Waterloo PSSP. She is the vice-chair of MSRB and a long-time mediator on MSRB.

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et les habitudes alimentaires, et les effets peuvent se répercuter sur leur vie privée. De plus, ils rendent les individus vulnérables à un comportement non professionnel et peuvent attirer l'attention de la direction. OSSTF/FEESO a créé la Banque de ressources en services de médiation (BRMS) pour aider les membres qui se trouvent coincés dans un conflit en milieu de travail.

Je suis vice-présidente de la BRSM, un groupe de 12 membres d'OSSTF/FEESO provenant de différentes classifications d'emplois à travers la province. Nous sommes des membres de première ligne travaillant dans une variété de milieux d'enseignement et nous nous portons volontaires pour aider nos collègues à trouver des solutions aux conflits et à rétablir des relations de travail saines. La BRSM aide plus d'une centaine de membres chaque année à régler leurs différends et à retrouver des relations professionnelles amicales. La BRSM a un taux de réussite très élevé dans son travail avec les membres qui vivent des conflits individuels ainsi qu'avec ceux des grands groupes.

La BRSM a été créée il y a près de 25 ans lorsqu'OSSTF/FEESO a réalisé que ses membres embourbés dans des conflits en milieu de travail étaient vulnérables aux mesures disciplinaires de l'employeur et au congédiement. Le programme recherche des membres possédant des expériences et des antécédents variés, leur offre une formation intensive sur la théorie et la formation actuelles en matière de résolution de conflits, puis les envoie aider les membres à régler leurs conflits en milieu de travail. À notre connaissance, nous sommes le seul syndicat en Amérique du Nord à offrir ce service.

Si un membre se trouve en conflit avec un ou plusieurs collègues, il peut s'adresser au représentant syndical de son lieu de travail ou appeler son bureau de district local pour discuter des problèmes et savoir si une orientation vers la médiation pourrait être utile. Les services de médiation sont disponibles en anglais et en français, pour les petits et grands groupes de membres d'OSSTF/FEESO et le service est toujours gratuit et confidentiel.

Je ne saurais trop insister sur l'impact négatif considérable que les conflits au travail peuvent avoir tant sur les personnes directement concernées que sur la communauté de travail. Nous avons entendu des histoires de membres assis dans leur voiture avant le travail, redoutant d'entrer dans leur établissement. D'autres ont vécu un tel traumatisme qu'ils ont été incapables de travailler ou ont même volontairement changé de lieu de travail pour échapper au conflit. Des collègues bien intentionnés se retrouvent souvent impliqués et prennent parti, ils cherchent à soutenir un ami et parfois tout le personnel peut se retrouver divisé sur ce qui était à l'origine un désaccord entre deux collègues. Nos médiateurs sont capables d'identifier les acteurs clés d'un conflit, de leur fournir un endroit sûr où aborder leur conflit et de les guider dans la conversation.

Se lancer dans une médiation peut sembler intimidant ou provoquer un sentiment d'anxiété, mais c'est normal. Il importe de savoir que la médiation offerte par la BRSM est totalement confidentielle et qu'aucun dossier n'est conservé. Notre seul objectif est d'aider les membres à mieux comprendre le point de vue de l'autre et à identifier des stratégies éprouvées qui peuvent être utilisées pour résoudre le conflit et ensuite aller de l'avant pour reconstruire des relations de travail saines.

Une fois qu'une demande de médiation a été reçue, elle est examinée par le président de la BRSM, puis attribuée à l'un des 12 médiateurs. Lorsqu'une médiation m'est confiée, ma première démarche consiste à communiquer avec chacune des personnes concernées et à avoir une conversation téléphonique privée pour comprendre leur point de vue sur le conflit, expliquer le processus de médiation et connaître leurs attentes quant à l'issue de la médiation. Une médiation ne peut avoir lieu que si tous les membres sont disposés à engager la conversation, à écouter le point de vue de l'autre et à rechercher des solutions. La médiation implique des conversations difficiles, souvent chargées d'émotion, et mon rôle principal est de veiller à ce qu'il y ait un espace sûr pour un dialogue respectueux. S'il y a la moindre in-

dication qu'un membre n'est pas motivé pour travailler à la résolution d'un problème d'une manière authentique et attentionnée, la médiation n'aura pas lieu.

Le jour de la médiation, nous nous réunissons dans un lieu neutre, comme le bureau du district ou une salle de réunion dans un hôtel. Nous commençons par établir les règles de base qui guideront le processus. Ensuite, chaque personne raconte sa perception du conflit sans être interrompue, partageant l'impact que le conflit a eu sur elle, et les intentions derrière ses actions. Les médiateurs sont formés pour identifier les intérêts communs en posant des questions et en recadrant les problèmes. Souvent, les personnes en conflit visent le même objectif, mais de manière différente. Les médiateurs n'imposent pas de solutions; nous sommes compétents pour faciliter les conversations et synthétiser les informations de manière à aider les membres à identifier leurs objectifs relationnels et les stratégies qu'ils veulent utiliser pour aller de l'avant.

Lorsque les gens sont en conflit, ils sont souvent bloqués à la surface d'un événement particulier ou d'une série d'interactions. Ils font des suppositions sur les intentions qui sont à la base des actions de l'autre personne, tout en attendant que l'autre personne comprenne les leurs. La médiation donne l'occasion aux deux parties de discuter de situations spécifiques et de comprendre les raisons qui soutiennent les actions de l'autre.

Permettez-moi de vous donner un exemple personnel qui aide à illustrer ce concept. Il y a quelques années, mon partenaire et moi nous rendions à une salle de sport voisine et j'étais pressée d'y arriver. Il a gratté la neige sur le pare-brise de la voiture, mais n'a pas fait un excellent travail. J'ai pensé qu'il était paresseux et pressé et qu'il ne se souciait pas de moi. Lorsque je lui ai demandé ce qu'il en pensait, il m'a répondu que son intention était de faire un assez bon travail et d'être rapide pour que nous puissions arriver plus tôt. Il avait remarqué que j'étais pressé et il essayait de m'aider. Soudain, cette action que j'avais perçue comme un manque d'égards a changé et j'ai pu voir qu'il était motivé par la compassion et qu'il essayait de m'aider. La situation est passée d'une situation de conflit à une situation de connexion. Bien que cet exemple soit celui d'un simple conflit, il illustre comment notre interprétation des intentions des gens sur la base de leurs actions peut être erronée. La médiation nous aide à comprendre les processus de pensée qui sous-tendent le comportement d'autrui. La compréhension est plus importante que le fait d'avoir raison et de prouver à l'autre qu'il a tort; elle atténue les rancœurs et ouvre la voie à la recherche de solutions.

En bref, le processus de médiation implique le partage des points de vue, la formulation des problèmes, la compréhension des intérêts de chaque personne, un remue-méninges pour trouver des solutions et la sélection d'options qu'il est possible de mettre en œuvre et qui peuvent être durables dans le temps. Une fois la médiation terminée, toutes les notes sont déchiquetées et la seule information qui parvient à OSSTF/FEESO est une note indiquant que la médiation est terminée. Il n'y a plus de contact entre les membres et le médiateur. C'est aux membres de collaborer pour mettre en œuvre les solutions qu'ils ont créées. Si le conflit refait surface, une deuxième médiation peut être appropriée.

La médiation implique des conversations difficiles qui demandent des efforts et de l'énergie. Les jours précédant la médiation peuvent être stressants. Cependant, la médiation est un bon investissement, car les conflits à long terme sont encore plus stressants et peuvent entraîner des répercussions négatives qui ont la possibilité d'affecter la carrière des membres. Les médiateurs d'OSSTF/FEESO créent des espaces sécuritaires et facilitent des discussions saines et respectueuses pour résoudre ces conflits et rétablir les relations de travail professionnelles. Si vous vous trouvez dans un conflit, pensez à demander à votre représentant syndical si la médiation pourrait être appropriée.

Kate Davidson est associée en psychologie, ancienne présidente du District 19, Peel PPSE et travaille actuellement pour le *Waterloo Region District School Board* et est maintenant membre du District 24, Waterloo PPSE. Elle est vice-présidente de la BRSM et médiatrice de longue date au sein de la BRSM.

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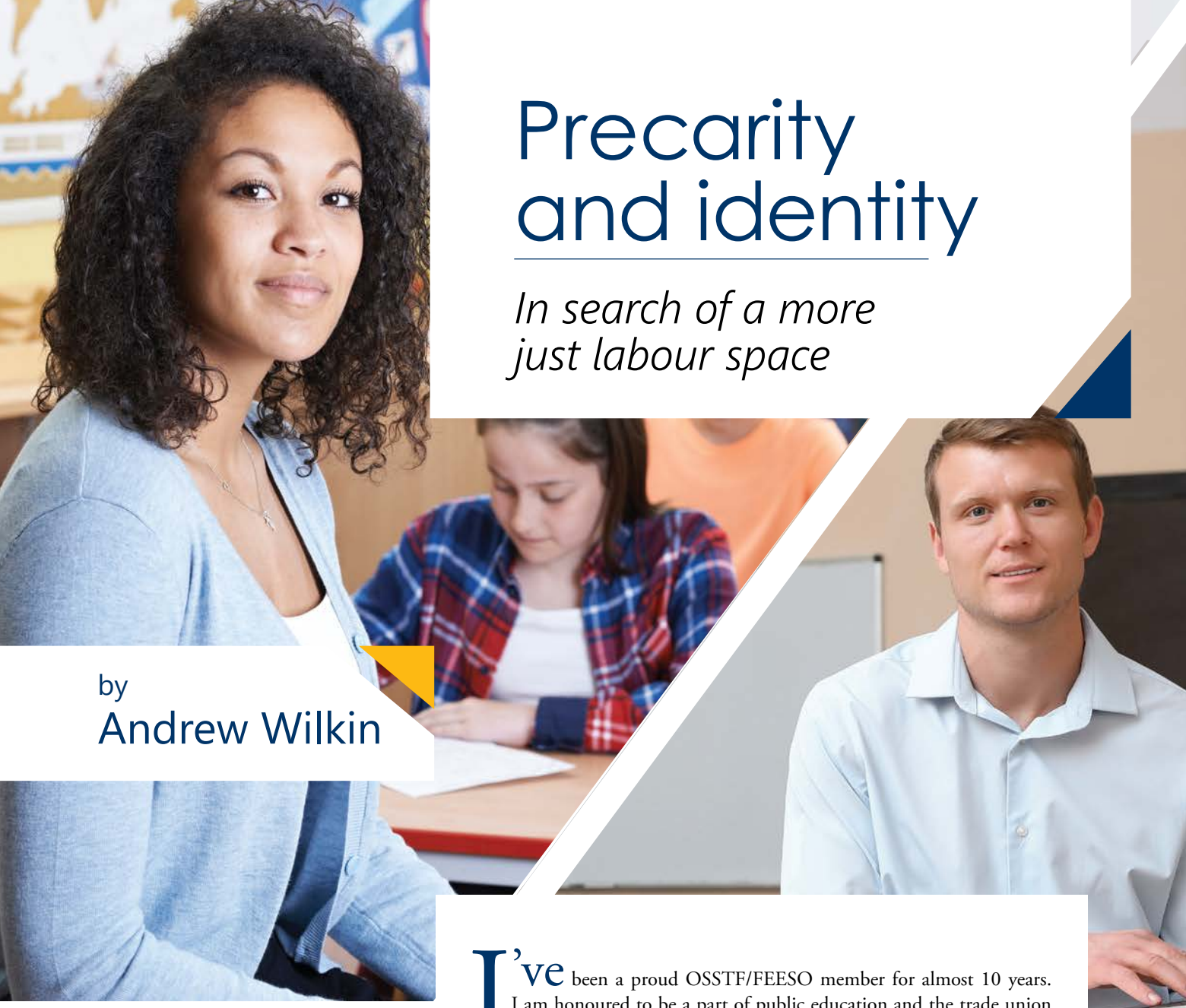
Precarity and identity

In search of a more just labour space



by
Andrew Wilkin

I've been a proud OSSTF/FEESO member for almost 10 years. I am honoured to be a part of public education and the trade union movement. Admittedly, my involvement with my local has been limited. That is not out of disinterest, but out of my own uncertainties around my precarious employment status as a teacher with an occasional teacher/long-term occasional (OT/LTO) contract. Building an identity as a teacher with an OT/LTO contract has never felt right, as I've always hoped the position would be temporary and I'd soon be hired into a permanent position. These uncertainties about my own workplace status have negatively impacted my identities as a public school teacher, a union member, and a person living in a society that describes itself as meritocratic and democratic. Importantly, I know I am not experiencing these issues alone; there are an estimated 50–100 thousand un(der)employed teachers (elementary and secondary) in Ontario (Mindzak, 2016).

Teachers with an OT/LTO contract make up approximately 34 per cent of local OSSTF/FEESO Bargaining Units.

Teachers with an OT/LTO contract make up approximately 34 per cent of local OSSTF/FEESO Bargaining Units.

This does not even take into consideration the workers in adult day school, or all education workers in the system for that matter, who are also struggling with precarity and job security. Ontario's public secondary education system has a significant number of highly skilled and trained teachers and education workers, many of whom live in states of constant uncertainty regarding their employment futures and work identities.

My own lingering questions and the demoralizing employment numbers encouraged me to apply to McMaster University's School of Labour Studies, PhD programme in 2017. My goal was to study some of the differences between teachers with different labour contracts, and how these differences were impacting their personal and professional lives. My general concern was that these different labour contracts were a growing sign of larger structural changes in Ontario public secondary education, specifically, and within global education trends, generally. These changes and trends can broadly be connected to movements for greater laissez faire economic policies, implemented in various forms globally and locally, and known by many policy researchers as neoliberalism.

I first read of neoliberalization during my MA studies in critical pedagogy. One of my professors at the time was educational scholar, Henry Giroux. He powerfully highlighted how neoliberal policy priorities such as privatization, deregulation, and commodification, were drifting into and impacting the American public education system. He would also connect these changes to a larger neoliberal project that sought to reduce the public sector, progressive movements, and organized labour's ability to improve the lives of all people.

One of Giroux's lessons pertained to the neoliberal trend of corporations using progressive and socially just language and representation on the one hand, while fighting and suppressing equity initiatives within their own workforce as well as degrading the environment, on the other. Critical pedagogy was partially about highlighting these economic and social contradictions to students, and then empowering them to engage and challenge the contradictions. From this experience, I fell in love with critical pedagogy, passionately wanted to learn more about it, and to pursue this pedagogy in my practice as a high school teacher.

I first began teaching shortly after the release of 'Growing Success' and other resources such as the 'Think Literacy' course guides and 'Restorative Justice' trainings. I was very excited about all of these tools. The Ministry of Education documents and board initiatives that I was reading, following, and learning from were extremely encouraging to me. I saw them as a sign that public education was heading in a socially just direction. Schools were, thankfully and rightfully so, becoming sites of research-supported and much needed social justice initiatives—at least rhetorically.

On the labour side, however, recent research by myself and others suggests that hiring and working conditions are becoming more unjust and inequitable. For the students, equitable and inclusive values of instruction and assessment have been shown to be in their best interest, as well as in the interests of the larger democratic society.

Helping all youth, especially vulnerable youth, succeed and reach their educational goals is why so many of us became teachers.

Helping all youth, especially vulnerable youth, succeed and reach their educational goals is why so many of us became teachers.

Yet, from my early research (an online survey with 579 participants and one-to-one interviews with 37 volunteers, all secondary school teachers in Ontario), many teachers, both permanent and occasional, do not feel that the values of equity and inclusion have been applied to the workers, either in the hiring process or their day to day working conditions.

The early data from my research points to a labour dynamic where, as a percentage, greater numbers of precarious, racialized, and female teachers with OT/LTO contracts, are working in the lower levels of a segmented labour sector, under a comparably larger percentage of white male colleagues with permanent contracts. Unfortunately, this study does not include much data on neurodiverse teachers nor adult day school teachers—both areas in much need of additional study. My limited data indicates that teachers that identify as neurodiverse or have an adult day school contract, may also be experiencing greater levels of precarity. According to my online survey, many teachers with a permanent contract are "keeping up without any (financial) problems," whereas 25 per cent of the workers in the survey with an OT/LTO contract are "having real financial problems and falling behind." Most teachers with an OT/LTO contract who took my survey were classified as "precarious."

Precarious labour is inequitable for many and contradicts an equitable workplace environment. An inequitable hiring and employment scenario in public education seems contradictory to the inferred values embedded in progressive academic and instructional rhetoric. These contradictions between student learning rhetoric and employment reality may have problematic outcomes for student success, an authentically equitable public education system, and overall democratic culture.

Indeed, Abawi and Eizadirad (2020), in their article "Bias-Free or Biased Hiring?," also point to an inequitable hiring situation, with a focus on racialized teachers. Eizadirad and Portelli (2018) explain:

Artwork: Marcela Sleizer

"So long as the hegemonic discourse of bias-free hiring as a strategy for closing the teacher diversity gap and promoting a diverse teacher workforce is intact without a candid dialogue on race, power relations, and ongoing legacies of Canada's settler-colonial past and present, the teacher diversity gap will persist through the guise of meritocracy and its neoliberal discourse with constant reference to saturated terminology such as accountability and choice."

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My early fieldwork backs up these findings. There is an overrepresentation of precarious, racialized, and female workers with OT/LTO contracts when compared to those same demographics amongst workers with a permanent contract. Building on previous research by the Directions Evidence and Policy Research Group, which reported that Regulation 274 (Reg. 274), which placed strict limits on teacher hiring practices in Ontario, had made some improvements in hiring but still had many drawbacks (Saldaris, 2014), it would seem that the Reg. did not go far enough. Interestingly, Reg. 274 appears to have been applied differently across the various school boards. That some teachers working for some boards might have had an equitable experience with Reg. 274, while other teachers with other boards were left feeling that Reg. 274 was structuring in their precarious status, is a recipe for animosity, division, and mistrust. Now that Reg. 274 is no longer, the issues with inequitable hiring remain. However, this is only the tip of a larger public educational sector employment issue, and that issue is: Public education in Ontario is funded under the premise that it is primarily for youth and primarily to facilitate their passage into the flexible demands of a neoliberal labour market that is seeing increases in precarious work.

Another labour scholar, Stephanie Ross, writing in this publication, *Education Forum*, in 2017 also drew attention to increasing precarity in Ontario public education and the negative impacts that this has on the health of workers. (See "The rise of precarity," *Education Forum* winter 2017, vol. 43, issue 2). Ross, referencing the research into precarity by Lewchuk and the PEPSO Project, highlights how individuals can internalize their employment status as opposed to connecting it to larger labour market restructuring, "Many lose confidence and self-esteem as they blame themselves for their lack of success in the labour market." This also highlights a major contradiction in education: the simultaneous effort to encourage lifelong learning and an intrinsic appreciation of education, while also believing that because of the demands of the larger economy, we only need funding for a given number of students and enough teachers for the number of "bums in seats." This latter logic places teachers in the role of only being

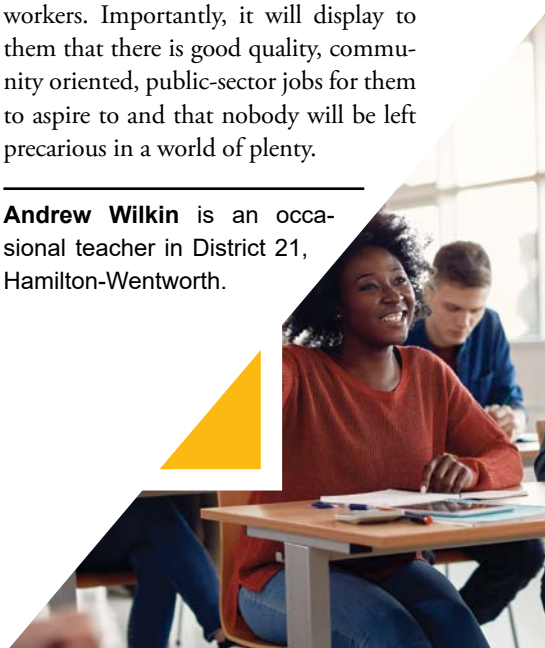
needed according to the dictates of certain type of economic vision.

The neoliberal vision of education is one that views teachers, students, workers, and people as commodities. Neoliberalism views public education as a system that should be kept on an austere budget and privatized whenever possible; as opposed to a vision of education that is funded at levels which enable it to expand, grow, and align with optimal learning conditions and an equitable and inclusive knowledge economy. If that means one teacher and an educational assistant for every five or ten students (as is the case in elite New York City private schools), then that is what should be. In a democracy, public education must not be seen as an investment for a neoliberal commodifying function, but as an investment into a non-monetized democratic and civically engaged culture. These best practice funding policies and their subsequent school environments are more likely to facilitate an educational system and a larger social culture that is conducive for authentic and rich lifelong learning, as well as fostering a democratic and civically active culture. Forms of lifelong learning that are geared to an economy that commodifies teachers, students, and people, may not lead to an intrinsic appreciation of education, nor a democratic society.

To help subvert these larger neoliberal policies, public education unions and their allies must argue for a radically renewed vision of public education. From an environmental and health standpoint, the climate crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic are showing we need new forms of social organization. From an economic, technological, and political angle, the Fourth Industrial Revolution and automation will drastically restructure the world of work and of school. The massive 'reserve army' (to use Marx's term) of teacher labour in Ontario can help with this new vision. There is past policy such as the *Bank of Canada Act*, that could be used to help fund the revolution in education that myself and many others are calling for. There is research from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) that shows a way forward during the multiple crisis of climate change, the pandemic, and rising inequity. There is polling from the Broadbent Institute that shows a majority of Canadians support policies such as a Wealth Tax, to help pay for measure to reduce socio-economic inequality and fund a Just Recovery to the Pandemic (www.broadbentinstitute.ca).

The pandemic, the climate crisis, and the Fourth Industrial Revolution have shown that is time for us to dream of our ideal education system and begin its implementation. Yes, these dreams and their realization will benefit us as workers. However, they will also create a growing labour sector in the public knowledge economy for future workers that will be a pathway to good, unionized jobs. As global communication and interaction increases, it will also help facilitate equitable local and global community collaboration and integration through enhanced public knowledge systems. Imagine walking into public schools where class sizes are no larger than 10 students. Imagine walking into libraries or community centres where there is a teacher available for various forms of help. Imagine local civic councils, sites of higher learning, and community groups, with the ability to use a pool of teachers to help with projects and research. Now, imagine what a better society we would have. This is all affordable and possible. It would be a reality that aligns with long needed language of intersectional justice, equity, inclusion, and decolonization. Finally, as W.E.B. Du Bois reminds us, "children learn more from what you are than what you teach." Therefore, this new and more just labour space would also be a more hopeful educational experience for students. Seeing teachers as not precarious, but equally valued regardless of gender and/or race, will show students that equity and inclusion applies to all workers. Importantly, it will display to them that there is good quality, community oriented, public-sector jobs for them to aspire to and that nobody will be left precarious in a world of plenty.

Andrew Wilkin is an occasional teacher in District 21, Hamilton-Wentworth.



CLOSING THE GAP

With millions out of school, exploring why education must be a priority for refugees

by Lauren La Rose

Access to education is a basic human right, yet as students across Canada attend classes on a daily basis, the same can't be said for millions of refugee children around the world who are out of school. From primary to post-secondary education, access to all levels of schooling sadly remains an aspiration rather than a reality for far too many forcibly displaced children and adults.

According to the 2021 education report released by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), close to half of all refugee children—48 per cent—remain out of school. UNHCR data suggests that while 68 per cent of refugee children attend primary school, gross enrolment plummets at the secondary level to an average of 34 per cent. The statistics also reveal that girls lag behind boys when it comes to access to education. While 35 per cent of refugee boys were enrolled in secondary education, only 31 per cent of girls were. According to the UNHCR *Her Turn* report, refugee girls often encounter greater challenges to find—and keep—their places in the classroom as social and cultural conventions often result in boys being prioritized over their female peers to attend school. What's more, refugee girls face greater marginalization as they get older in addition to a growing gender gap in secondary schools.

The state of post-secondary schooling paints an even starker portrait of how few refugees are pursuing higher learning. Only five per cent of young refugees are enrolled in some form of higher education, compared to 37 per cent of their non-refugee counterparts globally.

UNHCR was created in 1950 during the aftermath of the Second World War to help rebuild the lives of millions of Europeans who fled or lost their homes during the conflict. Seven decades on, the number of people who have been uprooted due to conflict, violence, and persecution has soared to record highs, and doubled in the past decade from 41.1 million in 2010 to 82.4 million in 2020. Of that total, more than 26 million are refugees—around half of whom are under the age of 18.

A substantial proportion of refugees are living in prolonged refugee situations which have lasted 20 years or more, implying that significant numbers of refugee children are living in these environments for the entirety of their school-age years. What's more, COVID-19 has further heightened challenges for accessing education.

Prior to the pandemic, a refugee child was already twice as likely to be out of school as a non-refugee child. There are concerns those figures are set to worsen, as many prospective students may not have opportunities to resume their studies due to school closures, difficulties affording fees, uniforms or books, lack of access to technologies, or because they are being required to work to support their families.

Just as students and educators across Canada have found resourceful ways and means to ensure studies can continue during COVID-19 lockdowns, refugees, teachers, governments, and UNHCR's partners in countries have done the same. From a mobile classroom pilot project in Bolivia for Venezuelan refugee and migrant children, to lessons broadcast from a local radio station at Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya, and the distribution of smart devices preloaded with content for use as exam study aids for students in Uganda, there are countless inspiring examples of innovation, invention, and collaboration to help displaced children continue their education during the pandemic.

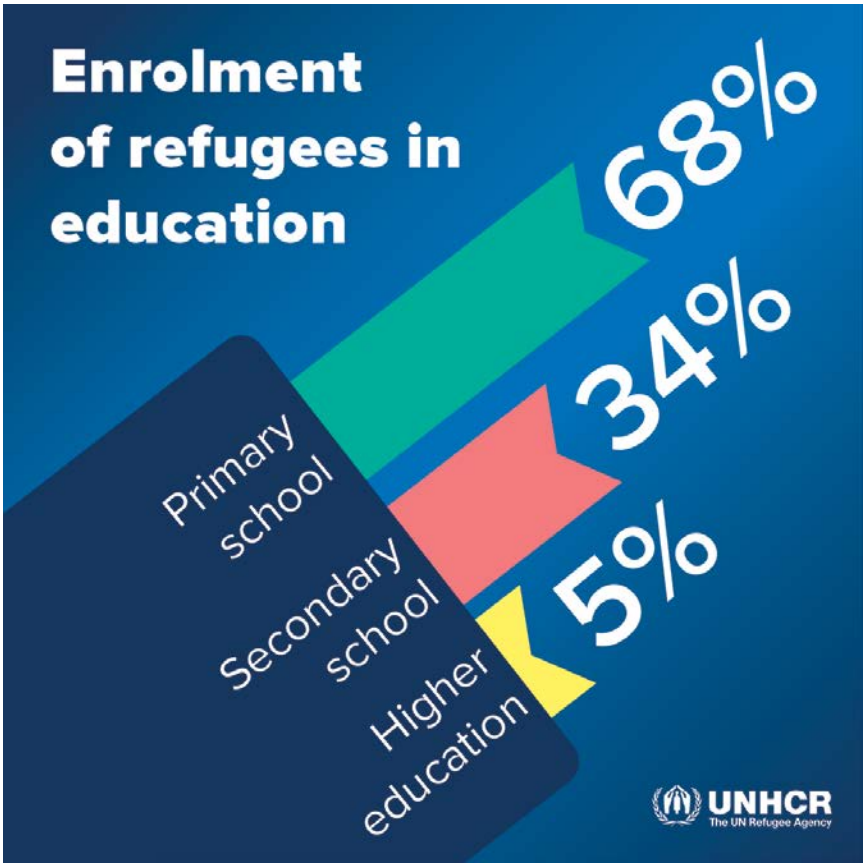
UNHCR is mandated to provide international protection and humanitarian assistance to displaced people around the world. But safeguarding the rights and wellbeing of refugees and displaced communities doesn't happen in isolation, and UNHCR's work in support of education is no different.

Working in tandem with governments and international organizations, UNHCR seeks to ensure quality protective education for refugee children and young people everywhere. To help address the significant hurdles displaced children may face in pursuing education, UNHCR has worked to improve access and retention of children in primary school through cash grants and vouchers, capacity building for teachers, expansion of safe learning spaces, and strengthening partnerships with key education partners.

At the secondary level, UNHCR supports a range of initiatives designed in close consultation with refugee youth including: Accelerated Education (AE) programs for those who may have missed out on substantial amounts of schooling; improved quality of education through digital technology; relevant technical and vocational training and basic literacy and life skills courses.

UNHCR is staunchly committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the UN, which includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals essential to promoting peace and prosperity while also seeking to protect the planet. Among them, UNHCR continues to strive towards Sustainable Development Goal 4 to help ensure inclusive, equitable quality education and promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all.

The framework for achieving this critical milestone is outlined in *Refugee Education 2030: A Strategy for Refugee Inclusion.* The comprehensive strategy aims to: ensure refugees are increasingly accounted for in education sector planning goals and action plans; that both refugee and host community students are prepared to succeed in national systems wherever they live. The strategy also



Credit for infographic: © UNHCR

strives to address the learning needs of refugee and host community students by expanding existing programs and partner investments in support of innovative local solutions.

Partnerships will play a key role in ensuring the objectives of the strategy are met. UNHCR points to the "significant sector expertise" among teacher unions, host country and donor governments, the private sector, and other crucial collaborators that can potentially be identified and leveraged in meaningful ways for the benefit of students in displacement areas.

UNHCR and its partners are also working toward boosting the number of refugees enrolled in post-secondary studies. The 15by30 target seeks to ensure 15 per cent of young refugee women and men, or approximately 500,000 refugees in total, can access higher education by 2030.

With the *Aiming Higher* campaign launched in 2021, UNHCR is seeking private sector support to bridge the severe funding gap of its refugee tertiary scholarship program (DAFI). The program offers qualified refugee and returnee students the possibility of earning an undergraduate degree in their country of asylum or home country.

Esraa Ahmad was just 16 when she was forced to flee Syria and initially faced considerable challenges in starting a new school and life in Jordan.

Esraa Ahmad was just 16 when she was forced to flee Syria and initially faced considerable challenges in starting a new school and life in Jordan. Although she had aspirations as a child to study medicine, the scarcity of scholarships in this field forced Esraa to think of another future. She decided to study computer engineering at Amman Arab University and graduated in mid-2019 after three years of studies facilitated by UNHCR's DAFI scholarship program.

"Those years were the best years of my life. I got to know people who will remain in my life forever. Jordanians, Syrians, best friends," said Esraa, 23, who is currently working as a freelancer, creating

Photo credit for Esraa Ahmad: © UNHCR/Lilly Carlisle

Esraa Ahmad

websites from scratch for small businesses in Jordan and around the world.

Nouraldin Uzbek was forced to flee his homeland of Afghanistan in 2007. "My family was threatened in Afghanistan. There was a lack of life security in our home country and there was a real danger if we had stayed," recalled Nouraldin, whose was seven years old when his family arrived in Turkey.

He had held a long-time interest in law which was bolstered after an incident struck close to home. "When I was in high school, a close family friend of ours and his family were deported to Turkey, despite having lived in Afghanistan peacefully for years and having committed no crime," said the 21-year-old. "My interest in law increased and I started to make more effort to study this discipline. After this incident, with the increase of asylum seekers in the country where I live, I thought that the best discipline was law in order to help the asylum seekers and raise their awareness. So, I decided to study law."

Nouraldin initially faced significant challenges in accessing education, including financial difficulties while studying due to the limited number of people working in his family and not having a regular income.

"At that time, my sister and I were studying at university and my three other brothers were studying in middle and high school. Therefore, I had to work in parallel. There were books I could not buy. They were simply too expensive."

Because his home was far from the university, there were times when he didn't attend classes with low credit to save on transportation. During his first year, UNHCR was able to support Nouraldin with cash assistance which helped ease the financial burden. For his second year and beyond he was accepted into the DAFI scholarship program, "which really helped me to study more comfortably," he noted.

Nouraldin Uzbek

"I want to finish university successfully," said the fourth-year law student at Selçuk University. "Then I plan to start my master's degree and continue my academic career. In addition, I want to establish a social association in order to help other asylum seekers not to experience the difficulties I have experienced."

Displaced children and young adults leave behind so much when forced to leave their homes. While it is impossible to bridge the gap of saying goodbye to loved ones, their communities, and treasured possessions, much can be done to help them ease the transition as they begin building their lives anew. Education plays a pivotal part in protecting refugee children and youth from forced recruitment into armed groups, child labour, sexual exploitation, and child marriage. It empowers them with knowledge and skills to live productive, fulfilling, meaningful, and independent lives. And it enlightens and enriches them to learn more about themselves and the world around them as they continue on their life journeys.

Nouraldin Uzbek was forced to flee his homeland of Afghanistan in 2007.

Lauren La Rose works with the fundraising office with UNHCR Canada.

Photo credit for Nouraldin Uzbek: © UNHCR

Bargaining Unit BOOST

by Ronda Allan

Editor's note: Bargaining Unit Boost is a regular column in Education Forum featuring an OSSTF/FEESO Bargaining Unit and the job class(es) within that unit. OSSTF/FEESO, founded in 1919, has over 60,000 members across Ontario. They include public high school teachers, occasional teachers, educational assistants, continuing education teachers and instructors, early childhood educators, psychologists, secretaries, speech-language pathologists, social workers, plant support personnel, university support staff, and many others in education.

This Bargaining Unit boost focuses on District 21, Hamilton-Wentworth's Professional Student Services Personnel (PSSP). I had the opportunity to meet with two members of this Bargaining Unit, Leigh Moore (D. 21 PSSP President) and Robin Jun (D. 21 PSSP Chief Negotiator/Grievance Officer), for an enlightening conversation about the members who make up this unique employee group.

Leigh has been a member of PSSP for 20 years. She is a psychoeducational consultant working with students K–12 and part of her role includes completing assessments in order to profile a student's learning challenges by identifying their strengths and needs. Robin has been a member for 13 years and is a speech language pathologist working mainly with students K–3, but also servicing all grades.

When asked about a general overview of the jobs and roles within the PSSP Bargaining Unit, Leigh pointed out that her unit consists of six different job classes, who often work as multidisciplinary teams making important contributions to system-wide collaborations. With approximately 85 members, the six job classes include board certified behaviour analysts (BCBA), kinesiologists, occupational therapists, psychoeducational consultants, social workers, and speech language pathologists.

Leigh explained that members of the PSSP Bargaining Unit are involved in an intense level of engagement with individual students. Robin added that their expertise and experience allows these professionals to quickly and efficiently identify students in the system with the greatest needs. These members meet with students and their families to provide answers and solutions that dramatically change students' pathways. Often they meet with students who have been struggling for years and after only a short time, diagnoses and identifications can be made that will help address and meet the student's unique needs. It is like a "lightbulb" going on when they distinctly pinpoint exactly why the student has been struggling and set in motion the recommendations they can provide to help turn their lives around.

I asked both Leigh and Robin what part of their jobs is the most rewarding. For Robin, it is working with students who have communication difficulties and improving their lives by collaborating with their educators, families, and community professionals. They are able to lay the groundwork to provide the best outcomes for students. The teams are exceptional at working in the system for the benefits of the students. Leigh added it is rewarding to act as a conduit when forming relationships amongst the students, community partners, and case workers. Having a multidisciplinary team brings all the pieces together. It is a perfect example of the education team's function in a student's success and growth.

All members of OSSTF/FEESO have been affected by COVID-19 and this includes the ways in which these professionals are able to interact with students. However, unlike the majority of OSSTF/FEESO, most members in this Bargaining Unit belong to regulated health colleges. Essentially, they are health care workers working in education. Like with all of members of the Federation, the pandemic has changed the face of how we work and deliver our services. For the PSSP Bargaining Unit in D. 21, these challenges have also presented them with the opportunity to rethink their approaches to how they support students. They have had to consider the best ways to meet and assess students virtually and to develop new methods to keep students safe. Both Leigh and Robin give their members kudos for doing an amazing job of moving their services and skills to a virtual environment.

One of the benefits of delivering their services online is that these professionals now have a greater ability to meet with parents. The challenge of travelling between a variety of schools for parent meetings is gone, allowing more time and opportunity for parent input.

Apart from being valuable PSSP members, both Leigh and Robin contribute to their Bargaining Unit through their elected roles. Leigh spoke of the value of being part of OSSTF/FEESO. As president she feels supported; the meetings she attends and the communications she receives are beneficial in understanding the provincial lens that OSSTF/FEESO can provide.

OSSTF/FEESO's Provincial Office provides a macro view of education issues, including helping her best navigate labour law and member protection. This high-level support from OSSTF/FEESO helps Leigh feel secure in the messages and supports she provides to members.

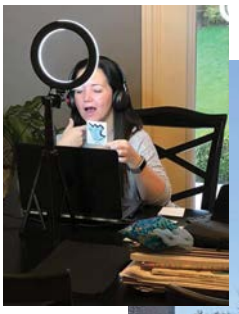
Both Leigh and Robin enjoy being leaders of their Bargaining Unit. Leigh declared they do have a lot of fun on the executive. She feels honoured to represent such an incredible group of innovative people with a high degree of intellect. Much of their work involves thinking and working outside of the box, and it is very rewarding to watch the members blossom and grow.

Robin feels it is an honour and privilege to represent the members. She remarked that the members seem to enjoy the convenience of union meetings using Zoom, and they even had a better turnout for their annual general meeting than in the past.

In concluding the interview, I wanted to know something about the challenges/obstacles that are perhaps unique to the Bargaining Unit. In Leigh's view she feels that as a smaller unit they may not always have as much power as larger ones. She commented that at times, the information from OSSTF/FEESO Provincial Office is more directly related to teacher issues than those of education workers. For example, the information on HEPA filters required during COVID-19 are for teaching and learning spaces but some of her members are working in significantly smaller spaces with different safety issues that need to be addressed. This is an example of why Leigh and Robin work to increase the voice of their members and to ensure their concerns and needs are addressed. This sentiment was echoed by Robin who then added that the biggest challenge from a Bargaining Unit stance is that they are a small education worker Bargaining Unit.

There is no disputing this is a unique and exciting Bargaining Unit to learn about, and they provide a specialized service to the development of students, their families, and community partners.

Ronda Allan is the Managing Editor of Education Forum and is also responsible for art direction and layout.



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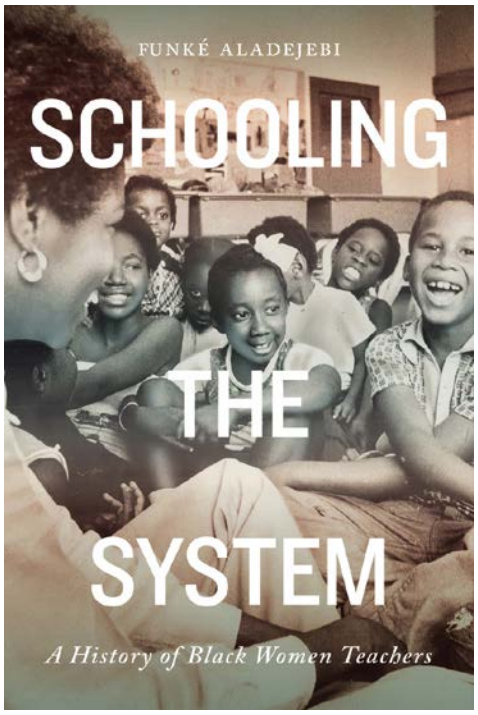


Schooling the System: A History of Black Women Teachers
by Funké Aladejebi
McGill-Queen's University Press (March 2021)
304 pages, paperback $37.95, cloth $130.00
Reviewed by Solange Scott

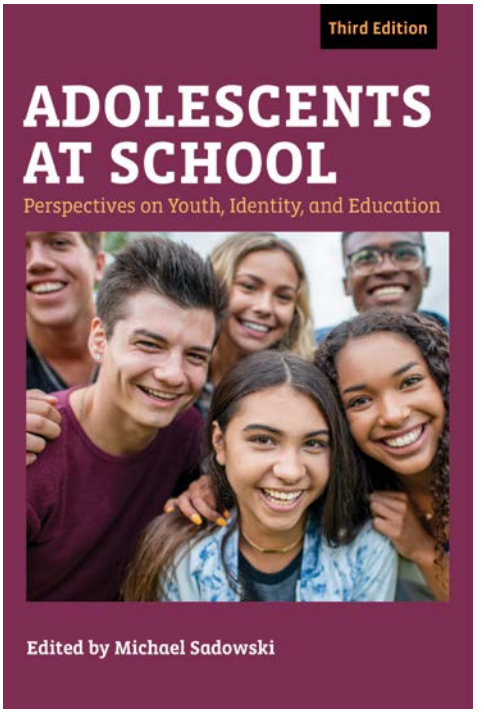
Schooling the System: A History of Black Women Teachers by Funké Aladejebi deftly reviews the experiences of Black women teachers in Canada. For years, some Black women educators have experienced challenges within the education system. As they attempt to make a name for themselves within the system by seeking leadership positions, they are scrutinized and assumed not to be able to handle pressure. Many Black educators have been historically overlooked for high-ranking positions due to the colour of their skin. If lucky enough to gain employment within the teaching profession, they were not permitted to teach white students. Africentric education was missing from the curriculum. As Black educators were only allowed to teach Black students, they were forced to teach from a Eurocentric lens. Aladejebi noted that the creation of the Africentric Alternative School in Toronto "saw increased enrolment numbers and strong standardized test scores." This evidence convinced some critics of the importance of centring Africentric education in the curriculum. Even though evidence showed that Black students weren't underperforming, many were streamed into college-level courses while their white peers were placed into university level courses.

In the 1940s, the intersectionality of race and gender made it, and continue to make it, difficult for Black women in the labour market. "Educational qualifications did not translate into high economic rewards for Black Canadians." Though educated and qualified, Black women found themselves unemployed; and, if employed, were paid significantly less than their white colleagues. As time progressed, it appeared that Black women were beginning to get the same opportunities as white women. In the 1950s, there was a teacher shortage. It forced Ontario to "allow Black women to enter the field." An influx of immigrants from the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) opened the proverbial door to allow Black teachers to be hired and educate the children from the diaspora.

While there have been many challenges faced by Black women educators in the 1940s and on, it is essential to highlight the positive changes that have taken place. In 1992, the Ministry of Education amended the *Education Act* "to allow for the development and implementation of antiracist and ethnocultural equity policies." The Ministry also established "an Anti-racism and Equity Division to hold school boards accountable for their work on equity-related issues." *Schooling the System* is a must-read to better understand the long history of systematic anti-Black racism in the Canadian education system, and to situate the gains made as we work towards greater equality as Black women.

And while the book chronicles the steps that have been taken towards equality for Black educators and students, Aladejebi reminds us that, "until Canada's long history of Anti-Black racism within its social institution is fully acknowledged and addressed, there will continue to be challenges facing racialized students and educators within."

Solange Scott is the District 12, Toronto PSSP Bargaining Unit president and sits on the provincial Black Persons and Persons of Colour Advisory Work Group, Equity Advisory Work Group, and Status of Women Committee.



Adolescents at School: Perspectives on Youth, Identity, and Education (third edition)
edited by Michael Sadowski
Harvard Education Press (Oct. 2020)
296 pages, paperback $41.38, library binding $77.75
Reviewed by Jennifer Speiran

Teaching during a pandemic has not been easy on educational staff, students,

or families. One of the most pivotal changes has been that of the relationships between education workers and students. In *Adolescents at School: Perspectives on Youth, Identity, and Education* the many contributors share their thoughts and research along with the voices of youth on issues impacting young people including racism, immigration, model minorities, gender identity, 2SLGBTQI+, social status, ableism, spirituality, and more. One fundamental theme emerged quickly in the text—the role of the education worker's relationship with students and the impact these various relationships have. Editor, Michael Sadowski, had this to say: "All adolescents strive to connect with others and to feel a positive sense of who they are. The task of identity development is, and probably always will be, central to the 'work' of being an adolescent and, therefore, to the work of educators as well," (p. 8).

As we return to our classrooms this fall, both in-person and virtually, we have an opportunity to renew those relationships—whether as coach, mentor, trusted adult, or just the consistent person who genuinely gets to know the students in their care. I found the variety of essays, commentaries, and youth perspectives to not only be a great refresher of social justice knowledge, but also, a challenge to do better in a good way. A reminder of many of the issues youth are dealing with in and out of school, and how it spills over into their availability to learn. I'm looking forward to implementing the 10 principles of practice the editor challenges all to do this fall when I welcome my new students back to the classroom. I challenge you to pick up this book and join me!

Jennifer Speiran is a teacher in District 16, York Region and is a member of the provincial Human Rights Committee.

Super-Exploitation and Resistance
by José Luis Granados Ceja
Podcast
Reviewed by Danny Gray

The terms super-exploitation and anti-imperialism might bring to mind the late 19th century. A new podcast, *Super-Exploitation and Resistance* hosted by José Luis Granados Ceja reminds listeners that these forces are still shaping society and politics in the 21st century. Ceja is a Mexico-based writer and photojournalist with a passion for grassroots political action and the worldwide labour movement. The podcast takes a critical look at the ideology and practices of Industrial Capitalism in Latin American and Caribbean countries both today and in the recent past. Each episode contains interviews with labour leaders, academics, activists, and organizers who share their struggle to resist oppression and efforts to build a more just world.

Each of the five episodes to date have analyzed a specific issue through the lens of ongoing current events around the globe. The first episode illustrates that while the Canadian government and mining industry have worked hard to maintain a reputation of the lesser of two evils when compared to the United States, they have enabled and engaged in the exploitation of both the people and the land of many Latin American and Caribbean countries. The most recent episode attempts to answer the question, "what is internationalism" by examining some of the domestic political issues facing Cuba, Palestine, and Venezuela.

While not all listeners may share the particular political viewpoint of the host or guests, *Super-Exploitation and Resistance* reminds listeners of the power that the far-right is amassing around the world to enact policies that harm people and the planet and the role that, as members of the labour movement, we can play in the fight to resist them. This informative and accessible podcast is a must listen for anyone who wants to learn more about power and politics in Latin America and the Caribbean and those working to fight for human rights.

Danny Gray is a teacher in District 4, Near North and is a member of the provincial New Member Engagement Advisory Work Group.

The power in a number

Strength in solidarity

Photo credit: Jennifer Klementti Photography

60,000+ is a very big number. There are over 60,000 OSSTF/FEESO members working from early childhood education to post-secondary and adult learning, in all four publicly-funded school systems as well as in six Ontario universities. As I take on the challenge and honour of being president of OSSTF/FEESO I am strengthened by this number. It is our many voices and our many minds united in the pursuit of enhancing and protecting publicly-funded education in Ontario that defines us.

As people working in education, we often find ourselves in figurative silos (some of the OSSTF/FEESO members working at University of Guelph actually do work in or near silos), essentially working on our own. Yes, we are part of the education team but working in education can sometimes be very solitary. We know we are part of a large Federation (and an even larger education community and a still larger labour community) but occasionally we forget the strength we have. We are influential, especially when it comes to education but also in our communities. Individually, we are coaches and mentors, we work with charitable groups and community organizations, and we volunteer our time to help our neighbours. 60,000 people can have a huge impact. As an organization, we are involved in labour advocacy on a variety of levels and we contribute to the greater good, not only in the education sector in Ontario, but also globally with our commitment to national and international labour activism. The strength of unity and of committing to helping others is a hallmark of who we are as individuals and as a union.

In June of 2022 we head to the polls in Ontario. We need to use the strength of our 60,000 members to have our say in the future of publicly-funded education in Ontario. We must wield our power and influence, make informed choices, and ensure that we all cast our respective ballots. We know the devastation a second Progressive Conservative term in office can bring. I know your resolve has been tested since the Ford government was elected with a majority government. Together we stood up to their cuts to education and staged powerful strike actions, together we stood up to advocate for a safe return for all, and together we can bring down this bully government and protect the system we believe in.

What do we want though? An election takes place on one day but a campaign and a platform take months, sometimes years to develop. COVID-19 has had a major impact on our lives and the need for a properly-funded public education system has never been more essential. Education will be the key to rebuilding the province and dealing with the recovery.

We consulted our members and the public to narrow our focus to five key areas; five areas that will help to rebuild Ontario. Our Education Platform, Strengthen Public Education—Rebuild Ontario, focuses on positive, progressive, and meaningful investments in education that will help rebuild our province and that will enhance student success. Our platform understands that investments in education are the key to coming back better than before and are paramount to moving beyond a status-quo that left too many students without the supports they need. By increasing student-centred supports and services and by ensuring we have safer school buildings and campuses in Ontario, we are acknowledging that trauma supports will lead to a better recovery for our province. We know that our schools are the centre of our communities, and as such, they must be fully and adequately funded, in turn fueling the province's economic growth. We know that investments in education yield greater financial outcomes than they cost, making it clear that investments that protect and improve learning conditions will build the province and aid in our recovery. This means creating safe, equitable spaces where students are able to fully contribute and are able to best find success. These spaces need to actively dismantle inequities and must address and work to eliminate anti-Black racism, racism, oppression, anti-Indegeneity, as well as social and geographic inequities. As we all work together to create a better tomorrow, we must also recognize the importance of personal safety, including our mental, physical, and social well-being. This also means continuing to address safety issues as related to the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuring our working and learning environments are the safest they can be.

Can 60,000 people play a positive role in the recovery of a province? Can 60,000 people stand up for public education? Can 60,000 people make a difference? Our united history tells us that we can.

June of 2022 will be here before you know it. Time moves quickly. There is much to do in the coming months. Every vote counts, every person can make a difference. Commit to being a part of the recovery. There are 60,000 people standing with you all dedicated to making sure Ontario's future is vibrant, diverse, and safe.

Karen Littlewood,
OSSTF/FEESO President

Le pouvoir du nombre

La force de la solidarité

Plus de 60 000 est un très grand nombre. Il y a plus de 60 000 membres d'OSSTF/FEESO qui travaillent de l'éducation de la petite enfance jusqu'au postsecondaire et à l'apprentissage des adultes, dans les quatre systèmes scolaires financés à même les deniers publics ainsi que dans six universités ontariennes. Au moment où je relève le défi et l'honneur d'être présidente d'OSSTF/FEESO, je suis confortée par ce nombre. Ce sont nos nombreuses voix et nos nombreux esprits unis dans la poursuite de l'amélioration et de la protection de l'éducation financée à même les deniers publics en Ontario qui nous définissent.

En tant que personnes œuvrant dans le domaine de l'éducation, nous nous retrouvons souvent dans des silos figuratifs (certains des membres d'OSSTF/FEESO à l'Université de Guelph travaillent en fait dans ou près de silos), soit essentiellement seuls. Oui, nous faisons partie de l'équipe éducative, mais travailler en éducation peut parfois être très solitaire. Nous savons que nous faisons partie d'une grande Fédération (et d'une communauté éducative encore plus grande et d'une communauté syndicale encore plus grande), mais nous oublions parfois la force que nous avons. Nous sommes influents, surtout en matière d'éducation, mais aussi dans nos communautés. Individuellement, nous sommes des conseillères, des conseillers et des mentors, nous travaillons avec des groupes caritatifs et des organisations communautaires et nous donnons de notre temps pour aider nos voisins. Soixante-mille personnes peuvent avoir un impact énorme. En tant qu'organisation, nous participons à la défense des intérêts syndicaux à divers niveaux et nous contribuons au bien commun, non seulement dans le secteur de l'éducation en Ontario, mais aussi à l'échelle mondiale grâce à notre engagement dans le militantisme syndical national et international. La force de l'unité et de l'engagement à aider les autres est une caractéristique de ce que nous sommes en tant qu'individus et en tant que syndicat.

En juin 2022, nous nous rendrons aux urnes en Ontario. Nous devons utiliser la force de nos 60 000 membres pour avoir notre mot à dire sur l'avenir de l'éducation financée à même les deniers publics en Ontario. Nous devons exercer notre pouvoir et notre influence, faire des choix éclairés et veiller à ce que nous déposions tous nos bulletins de vote respectifs. Nous connaissons la dévastation qu'un deuxième mandat progressiste-conservateur peut apporter. Je sais que votre détermination a été mise à l'épreuve depuis l'élection majoritaire du gouvernement Ford. Ensemble, nous nous sommes opposés à leurs coupures dans l'éducation et avons organisé de puissantes grèves, ensemble nous nous sommes levés pour réclamer un retour en toute sécurité pour tous et ensemble nous pouvons faire tomber ce gouvernement tyrannique et protéger le système auquel nous croyons.

Mais que voulons-nous? Une élection se déroule en un jour, mais il faut des mois, voire des années, pour élaborer une campagne et un programme. La COVID-19 a eu des répercussions importantes sur nos vies et la nécessité d'un système d'éducation publique correctement financé n'a jamais été aussi essentielle. L'éducation sera la clé pour reconstruire la province et faire face à la reprise économique.

Nous avons consulté nos membres et le public pour réduire notre champ d'action à cinq domaines clés, cinq domaines qui aideront à reconstruire l'Ontario. Notre programme en matière d'éducation, Renforcer l'éducation publique—Reconstruire l'Ontario, met l'accent sur des investissements positifs, progressifs et significatifs dans l'éducation qui aideront à reconstruire notre province et à améliorer la réussite des élèves. Notre programme comprend que les investissements en éducation sont la clé pour revenir mieux qu'avant et sont primordiaux pour dépasser le statu quo qui a laissé trop d'élèves sans les soutiens dont ils ont besoin. En augmentant les soutiens et les services axés sur les élèves et en veillant à ce que les établissements scolaires et les campus de l'Ontario soient plus sécuritaires, nous reconnaissons que les soutiens aux traumatismes conduiront à une meilleure reprise pour notre province. Nous savons que nos écoles sont le centre de nos communautés, et qu'à ce titre, elles doivent être entièrement et adéquatement financées, pour ensuite alimenter la croissance économique de la province. Nous savons que les investissements en éducation produisent des résultats financiers supérieurs à ce qu'ils coûtent. Il est donc évident que les investissements qui protègent et améliorent les conditions d'apprentissage construiront la province et contribueront à notre reprise. Cela signifie qu'il faut créer des espaces sûrs et équitables où les élèves sont en mesure de contribuer pleinement et de trouver le meilleur moyen de réussir. Ces espaces doivent démanteler activement les inégalités et doivent aborder et travailler à l'élimination du racisme anti-noir, du racisme, de l'oppression, de l'anti-Autochtone ainsi que des inégalités sociales et géographiques. Alors que nous travaillons tous ensemble pour créer un avenir meilleur, nous devons également reconnaître l'importance de la sécurité personnelle, y compris notre bien-être mental, physique et social. Cela signifie également qu'il faut continuer à traiter les questions de sécurité liées à la pandémie de la COVID-19 et veiller à ce que nos milieux de travail et d'apprentissage soient les plus sécuritaires possible.

60 000 personnes peuvent-elles jouer un rôle positif dans le redressement d'une province? 60 000 personnes peuvent-elles défendre l'éducation

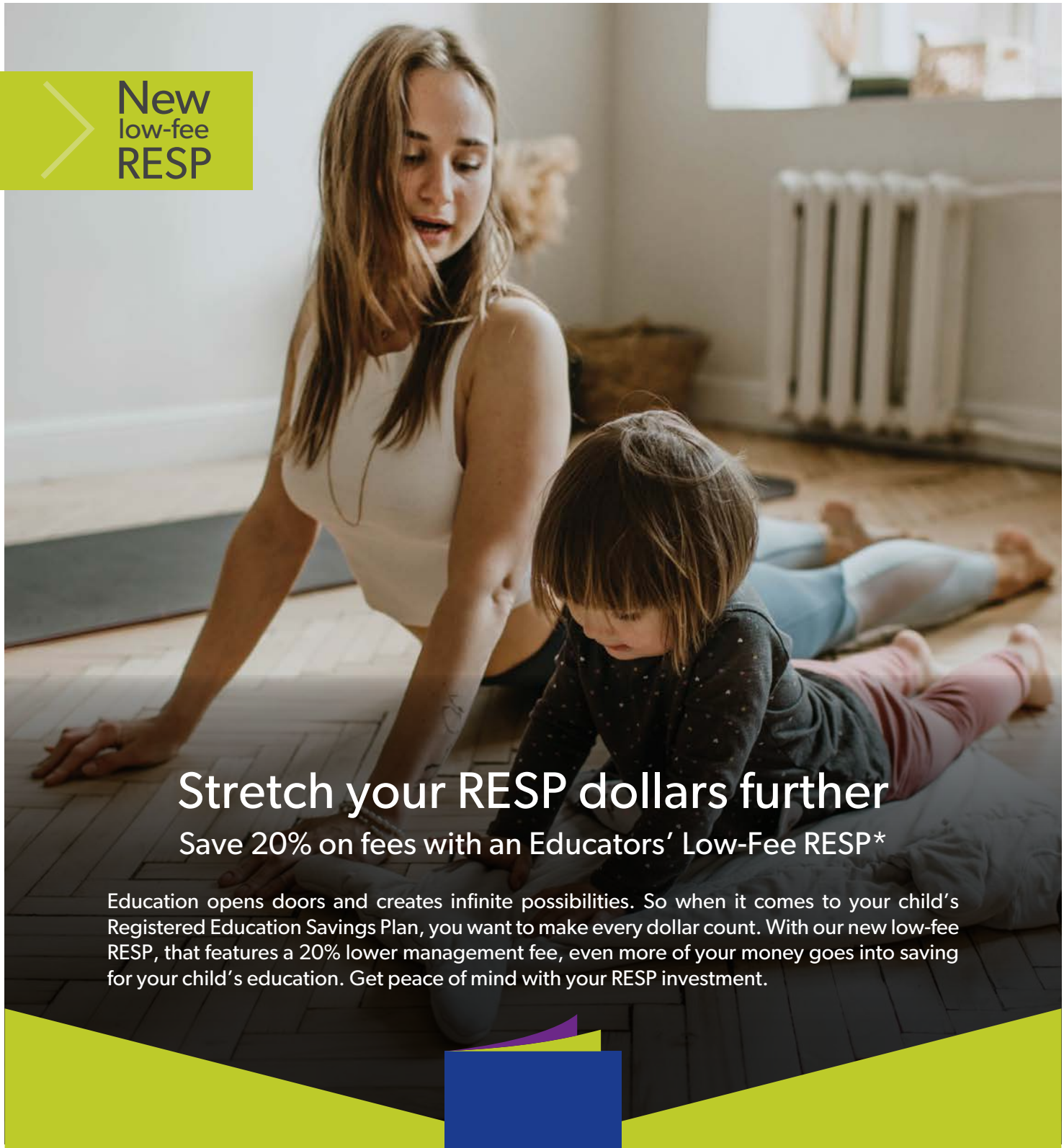
publique? 60 000 personnes peuvent-elles faire la différence? Notre histoire commune nous montre que nous le pouvons.

Juin 2022 sera là avant que vous ne vous en rendiez compte. Le temps passe vite. Il y a beaucoup à faire dans les mois à venir. Chaque vote compte, chaque personne peut faire la différence. Engagez-vous à faire partie de la reprise économique. Il y a 60 000 personnes qui se tiennent avec vous, toutes déterminées à faire en sorte que l'avenir de l'Ontario soit dynamique, diversifié et sécuritaire.

Karen Littlewood,
Présidente d'OSSTF/FEESO

OSSTF/FEESO

REPRÉSENTANT FIÈREMENT PLUS DE 200 CLASSIFICATIONS D'EMPLOI ŒUVRANT DANS TOUS LES SECTEURS DE L'ÉDUCATION FINANCÉE À MÊME LES DENIERS PUBLICS



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