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**34th CONVENTION
SPECIAL ISSUE**

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Caroline Quesnel, PRESIDENT

This issue of Carnets coincides with the FNEEQ's 34th convention, which is being held in Chicoutimi from June 4 to 7. The editorial board invited members from a variety of backgrounds to share their thoughts on the central theme of the convention: "Being human." On the following pages, you will find their candid, wide-ranging and enlightening reflections.

A convention is a defining moment for a union. It sets strategy and is the highest expression of union democracy. It is where we define the direction to be taken and the battles to be waged for the next three years. The focus today seems self-evident: teachers are a species endangered by dehumanization. And we must resist this threat with all our might at a time when schools and higher education are contending with increasingly complex challenges, while the CAQ government offers nothing but reductive rhetoric and simplistic solutions, and technology is being touted as the magic bullet. Being human means safeguarding the critical teacher-student relationship. Being human means defending the principles of justice and equity in our institutions. Being human means fighting the erosion of academic freedom and professional autonomy. Being human means taking part in collective and social struggles.

I feel very emotional as I write this, my last editorial as President of the FNEEQ. During all my years as an activist with the Federation, I have always been impressed by our members' genuine commitment, the power of their indignation, and their unflagging desire to make things better, locally and globally. I know that the FNEEQ has a strong and respected voice in the arena of education and higher education, and this is the result of tireless efforts spearheaded by a remarkably cohesive political and technical team. The Federation is a vital and indispensable organization by virtue of its unique position as a union spanning the education system from primary school to university, its active involvement in many coalitions, and its ringing voice in so many debates on all platforms. It has been a privilege to serve as president of this vigorous organization. As I pass the torch, I want to highlight the value and importance of our affiliation with the CSN. The CSN provides us with essential tools, broadens our horizons and makes us part of the larger dialogue in the world of labour.

Finally, let me say that union work is always a team effort. I want to thank all the talented and inspiring people around me. The FNEEQ's officers and staff form a close-knit family that I will sorely miss. I would also like to thank the unions' executive committees for their confidence and for our often animated, always enriching discussions. "Being human" is indeed the fitting theme for the next three years.

Long live the CSN!
Long live the FNEEQ!
Carpe diem



The next generation of teachers takes part in an education course at UQAT

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An AI-generated dream school

By Ann Comtois, Stéphane Daniau, Sylvain Larose, Ricardo Peñafiel and Isabelle Pontbriand
MEMBERS OF THE FNEEQ-CSN SCHOOL AND SOCIETY COMMITTEE

In this dream made in robot heaven, AI grades my students' schoolwork in the blink of an eye. Another AI generates my class lectures and evaluations. I no longer need to answer my students' questions, because my chatbot is on call 24/7. AI even teaches my classes, projecting a 3D image that does a convincing imitation of me ¹.

And since my classes are all online, I can dream this utopia from the comfort of my bed. From time to time, I check on my child, who is attending their own classes online; no human social interaction required.

Wait, this is no dream—it's a hallucination ²! In "real" life, I can't delegate tasks to an AI willy-nilly. As a professional, I'm accountable for my actions. I'd be responsible for any mistakes my AI makes, so I read through each and every discussion my chatbot has with my students. ³ AI is inherently biased ⁴ and can make mistakes or oversimplify, so I revise and correct the syllabus and course content it generates. I need to design tests and exams that can't be completed using AI, since my own AI can't catch when students are cheating. ⁵ I make sure I touch base with my students to determine if their digital tools are causing depression or anxiety, ⁶ and assign them a therapy robot if needed ⁷.

This scenario seems more like a shared nightmare knocking at the door of our school system. We're crying wolf, you say? It's debatable. Though digital tools have invaded our schools, CEGEPs and universities, there's been no real public discussion of the issue. Teaching staff weren't really asked to participate in

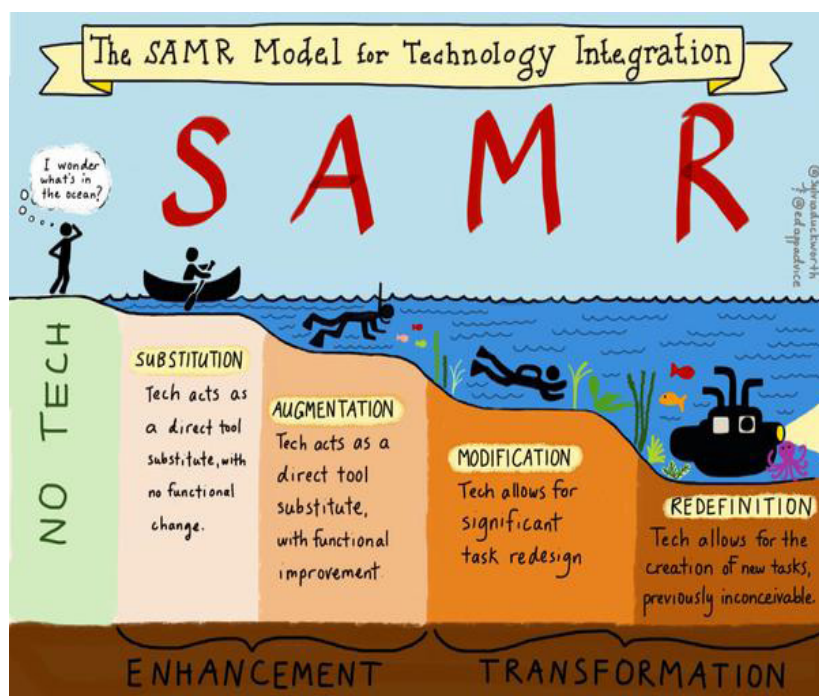
the decision-making process. We're not even following the SAMR model (see illustration below) for integrating these technologies, which when you think about it, is the bare minimum.

AI is moving us away from human-centred learning

The sad reality is that each "innovation" in AI brings us a further step away from a human-centred, humanistic approach to education, chipping away

at our teaching conditions, eroding our teacher-student relationships, and potentially leading to underfunding, meaning more students in our virtual classrooms.

It isn't hallucination to worry that such standardization of course content and teaching methods isn't the best way to go. If we continue down this road, we risk seeing students taking province-wide—perhaps even universal—standardized courses "taught" by a handful





Vicky Gauthier, lecturer at UQAC, answers a student's questions

of “content experts.” Séraphin Alava, a professor emeritus of education at Université de Toulouse II and an expert in the field of formal and informal learning in the digital age, warns that, *although AI-assisted learning can provide personalized learning pathways by standardizing responses, it can also lead to depersonalizing education, because it rejects the facets of learning that aren't all rational. This will lead to a devaluation of the human aspects of teaching so crucial to developing social and emotional skills, creating a learning environment that will likely lack traditional classroom features, such as interaction and empathy.*⁸

Better funding for our education system

Have we stopped to really think about the consequences of the spread of mass education since the 1960's, and its commodification in the name of “performance” and “profitability” since the 1990's? Perhaps our school system was never originally designed, nor funded, to educate so many at once. And

perhaps digital tools were never meant to improve the quality of teaching but prevent us from tackling the problem head-on, which would require a lot of financial, material—and most especially, human—resources to function properly. It takes far greater funding and more resources than our governments currently grant to provide 10, 15, or even 20 years of quality education.

But if digital tools, including AI, could at the very least free us from repetitive tasks that are not directly related to the teacher-student relationship, it would be a win, right? For example, we often hear that teachers would do anything to ditch the “tedious” task of grading schoolwork. Perhaps instead, we should shift the spotlight onto the fact that grading, in fact a key component of the teacher-student relationship, only seems onerous because the student-teacher ratio is excessively high. And because of that, this “tedious task” is the number one reason behind the teacher exodus and the dearth of qualified teaching staff. But it's clear that the

imposed digital shift is not intended to provide the school system with what it needs to offer both our teaching professionals and the students under our responsibility humane, human-centred teaching and learning conditions. If that were the case, we could all readily buy into the digital dream.

¹ But beware—ask AI to create your avatar, and it will replicate racial and other biases (Thomson and Thomas, 2023).

² When AI makes a mistake, we call it a hallucination (Dupuis, 22 November 2023).

³ ICI Colombie-Britannique, February 16, 2024.

⁴ Data for Good, 2023.

⁵ Arnaud, 3 mai 2023.

⁶ Psychom, 2023.

⁷ Perreault, March 6, 2023.

⁸ Alva, 2023.



Humanizing education¹

BY

Mélissa Caron
PHILOSOPHY TEACHER AT CÉGEP DE GRANBY

It is an immense privilege to be asked to testify about the importance of humanizing education. I first wondered what exactly was expected of me.

Upon reflection, I realized that my task is to testify as in to “bear witness; attest” or to “affirm or declare, especially based on first-hand knowledge or prior experience.” I will try to do both in this short essay.

How did we end up like this – with an education system that reproduces the productivity model rather than working in tune with our true nature? How could education deviate so far from its mission that we now have to think about how to humanize it? Is not the primary role of education to help all human beings develop to their full potential while instilling a sense of our dependence on the natural world? How can education achieve this when it has lost its humanity?

“Man is no man, but a wolf, to a stranger.”³

In other words, when the other is a stranger to us, it is easy to perceive them as a threat. By prompting us to see the other as a stranger, the productivity model makes us see wolves everywhere. Humanizing education means working to create an educational system in which the stranger becomes familiar. It means teaching us to see the human in what, too often, is perceived as a wolf.

Humanizing education means working to make education inclusive. It means recognizing that all humans have their own particular needs and that this is equally true of learners, whether or not they have been identified as having a disability. It means taking all needs into consideration, welcoming difference and reducing inequalities.

Humanizing education means nurturing the teacher-student relationship that lies at the heart of education. It means giving it the time that it needs to blossom – taking it slow, building trust, creating joy. It means building relationships, one person at a time. We must raise our voices in unison to insist that this choice of quality over quantity is not only desirable, but also possible, i.e. financially supported.

Humanizing education means promoting learning that is reflective and emancipating. It means fostering the ability to think critically, creatively and deeply using our full range of intellectual, social and emotional skills in order to combat all forms of anti-democratic manipulation.

Humanizing education means cultivating collective intelligence. It means considering fellow students and teachers as allies with whom we can form a community of seekers to think through the challenges of living today. Because we cannot do this alone.

Humanizing education means ensuring that education contributes to the community to which it belongs. It means integrating learning activities with service to that community and properly supporting this important driver of change.

Humanizing education means recognizing the role of the body in learning. It means offering a safe space where it feels good to learn in an active and concrete way, sheltered from the digital maelstrom that captivates its attention. It means giving students the opportunity to get outside and move. It means enabling them to bring all facets of their being to learning and helping them discover their own unique strengths and challenges.

Let us humanize education by giving it meaning. Let’s educate for happiness.

¹ This essay benefited from the constructive criticism of two colleagues/friends, François Dubé and Frédéric Dulac, with whom I have the pleasure of working every day at Cégep de Granby.

² Definition of “testify” in the Canadian Oxford Dictionary, 2nd ed., 2004, p. 1608.

³ Plautus, The Comedy of Asses, Act II, Scene 4.



Embracing uncertainty

BY

Valérie Roberge
PHILOSOPHY LECTURER AT UNIVERSITÉ LAVAL

I'm teaching a class about critical thinking, or rather I'm trying to present a series of ideas to my students about how to practice critical thinking.

The most difficult aspect is, and will always be, critical thinking about oneself, or self-reflection. It's a special skill that requires us to reflect on our actions, understand them, judge them and, if necessary, change them. My students are full of questions and worried about the assignment I've just given them: keeping a self-reflection journal. This is one of the most personal assignments they'll ever be asked to complete during their studies and they don't understand exactly what's required of them, mainly because there are no wrong answers (other than judging others rather than oneself). A good number of them want to be certain about what to write even though this is impossible because they're being asked to reflect on their own particular practice of critical thinking. In essence, they're being asked to tolerate uncertainty, one of the many aptitudes required for critical thinking.

All knowledge is permeated with uncertainty because what we know is always conditional, falsifiable and transformative. There is only one constant: change. Therefore, uncertainty, as a feeling and as a reality, is the only thing that doesn't change and is always present. So what is a teacher to do when all the knowledge they impart amounts to nothing solid and lasting in the end? I believe that all we can do is tap into our life experience and empathy, be present and listen with understanding and compassion as we accompany our students in their doubt. We can help them tolerate uncertainty by fully accepting it ourselves. While this presence and patience can't provide any answers, it can open up new ways of thinking, unravel problems and broaden perspectives. It fosters resilience and the advance of knowledge.

Such uncertainty, when experienced one step at a time with a teacher who accompanies and guides, gradually becomes more tolerable and contributes to building a new sense of belonging. It creates a community of seekers who, while mastering knowledge, also master the ability to question, reflect and incorporate new concepts as they rethink what they've learned and try to understand the world better. This constant searching through reflection, moving through uncertainty and communicating with peers cannot be achieved through the use of big data encoded with all our prejudices, biases, failures and mistakes. It can only be achieved through profound changes to our inner narratives, which are always fallible and a source of vulnerability, and by a desire to see teaching and learning as something to be continually started anew, again and again. Because we cannot learn to be human without being deeply human.



A student attends a course at UQAC



Co-teaching: humanized learning

BY

Anne-Sophie Picard and Valérie Lehoux
GRADE 8 FRENCH TEACHERS AT COLLÈGE DE LÉVIS

The reality is clear: our educational system can be dehumanizing and many students are having difficulties at school. This observation led the administration and teaching team at Collège de Lévis to experiment with a new approach: co-teaching. Here we share our experiences co-teaching Grade 8 French.

Lacking the basics

In recent years, junior high teachers, especially of French and mathematics, have noticed that a growing number of students lack the basics and so have difficulty keeping up and developing their skills. Others are barely passing or end up in summer school. And this is happening whether or not there is an individual education plan in place for the student experiencing difficulties. To tackle the problem, the Collège turned to a method of instruction known as co-teaching.

A new approach

PDéfi-Réussite is a co-teaching program at Collège de Lévis that lets Grade 7, 8 and 9 students experiencing difficulties join a regular class but at the same time receive more individualized support. In our case, we work together to plan and teach a Grade 8 French class. Within our 9-day cycle, we choose what teaching methods to use based on the course content and our students' needs. We may have both of us working with the whole group and providing individual support as needed, or the students with difficulties could receive individualized instruction from one of us in a subgroup. They also have an extra period on their schedule in which one of us works with the sub-group to consolidate their learning. In short, it's the opposite of a dehumanized, "one size fits all" approach.

In practical terms, this approach allows students experiencing difficulties to benefit from the positive emulation that takes place in a regular diverse class setting and, at the same time, avoid being stigmatized for their challenges. In subgroups, we are better able to adapt our pace to the needs of these students and provide them with more individualized instruction. We have found that this new way of teaching helps some students gain greater confidence in their abilities.

The overall goal is to properly support these students during a critical period in their education. After completing Grade 9, they are motivated to choose a new program suited to their interests and will be able to obtain other successes.

A success story

Audrey (not her real name) is enrolled in our sports program and just about to finish Grade 10. During her two years in the Défi-Réussite program, she developed both her self-confidence and work methods by learning to speak up in the subgroup and participating in collaborative projects in her regular class. Audrey learned that she is capable of reaching her goals. As a result, her grades improved and she has achieved many successes.

Bargaining marathon draws to a close for the Regroupement Cégep

By Yves de Repentigny

VICE-PRESIDENT FOR THE REGROUPEMENT CÉGEP



arrived at a comprehensive tentative agreement with the employers' bargaining committee, the Comité patronal de négociation des collèges (CPNC), on sectoral issues (specific to the CEGEPs).

On December 28, the Front commun (CSN-CSQ-FTQ-APTS) and the Conseil du trésor reached a tentative agreement at the central table (where issues common to all workers in the public sector, such as wage increases, pensions and parental rights, are discussed).

Many important gains were made at the sectoral table: more resources for supporting students with special needs, which will result in the creation of new positions; better protection for non-permanent teachers with significant seniority when it comes to hiring priority; the addition of 120 full-time equivalents (FTEs) to the network in various positions (e.g. clinical instruction in nursing, departmental coordination in small units, modified calculation of workloads for 30-hour courses); the addition of 100 teaching loads in Continuing Education (making it possible to be paid the same as in the regular sector); the introduction of guidelines for distance education in the collective agreement; and improvements to the salary scale.

At the central table, one of the most notable gains was a salary increase of 17.4% over five years (the duration of the new collective agreement), with the possibility of an additional 1% increase in each of the final three years to adjust for inflation. Another gain was an increase in employer contributions to

the group insurance plan (in the case of CEGEP teachers, who were starting from zero, this is a foot in the door).

On December 23, 2023, after a galvanizing fall mobilization, 10 and a half days of strike action and a dozen days of intense bargaining, the bargaining committee of the Alliance des syndicats de professeurs et professeurs de cégep (ASPPC), which brought together the FNEEQ-CSN and the Fédération de l'enseignement collégial (FEC-CSQ),

the group insurance plan (in the case of CEGEP teachers, who were starting from zero, this is a foot in the door).

The various intermediate decision-making bodies gave the green light for the tentative agreement to be submitted to general assemblies, which took place from January 15 to February 20, 2024. The agreements negotiated at the central and sectoral tables were all ratified, generally by a wide margin.

Drafting the final text

At the time of writing, union and employer representatives are in the process of working out the clause-by-clause wording of the new collective agreement to reflect the substance of the agreement in principle. The agreement should be signed in April or May. Since preparations for this bargaining round began before the previous collective agreement was signed (the 2020–2023 agreement did not take effect until March 1, 2022), this signing will mark the end of a five-year non-stop double bargaining marathon for the Regroupement Cégep.

The Regroupement Cégep will now be able to devote its energies to other important issues for a few years, such as artificial intelligence, distance education, the weekend internship pilot project in nursing, the application of Bill 14 in English CEGEPs, the Québec government's 2021-2026 Action Plan for Success in Higher Education (French proficiency, "challenge" courses and potential attacks on general education), defending collegiality and academic freedom, program reviews, the downgrading of technical training (including in nursing, despite the professional order's announcement that it was shelving plans to make the bachelor's degree mandatory for licensure), and environmental issues.

The cult of technology: When universities think and act like businesses

By Christine Gauthier

VICE-PRESIDENT FOR THE REGROUPEMENT UNIVERSITÉ



Taking a look back at the Regroupement Université's 2021-2024 term shows how important these past three years have been to defending the place of sessional lecturers and tutors in Québec, obtaining better working conditions (the unions major gains in the new collective agreements), and proclaiming loud and clear that we want the university to respect the

student-teacher relationship and academic freedom.

However, this look back also reveals that we are witnessing a possible erosion of the place of human teaching in university education and that certain threats, such as artificial intelligence (AI) replacing human intellectual work, are now very real. While at the beginning of the last term, the dominant issue occupying the Regroupement's thinking and actions was distance education, three years later our concerns have broadened to encompass the use of digital and other technologies in general, including AI. While administrations are making the usual arguments for making more technology available to teachers and increasing access to education for students, it is clear that universities and their administrators are succumbing to the forces of hypermodernism, including the cult of technology and speed.

Protecting the student-teacher relationship

It's also clear that the cult of technology now being embraced by certain universities threatens the very heart of teaching. The resulting fragmentation of tasks and the use of machine correction and teaching pose serious threats, including the loss of jobs. With the advent of "conversational robot labs," like the one TÉLUQ has launched as a pilot project, it is crucial that we take steps to protect our profession, which relies as much on the quality of human relationships as on the ability to foster critical thinking and impart complex expertise.

The technological acceleration that we are currently seeing in universities comes from a conception of the university as a business (what is called "managerialization"). Just like the "well-run businesses" that they point to as models, these universities are choosing to embrace hypermodernism ("hyper" in the sense of too much, if we take a clinical approach to work) and, in the process, eroding human relationships and destroying collegiality. We need to be wary of calls to standardize and replace human teaching for economic reasons. And we have to remind universities that these decisions must not be taken behind the backs of the unions. It is imperative that these important discussions not be confined to boardrooms and university councils.

The next few years will be decisive for the future of higher education. In Québec, the FNEEQ-CSN and Regroupement Université coordinating committee must continue their leadership role in order to strengthen our bargaining power and mount a firm opposition to full-scale attacks on the university's mission. This can only be done with the support of a broad coalition of allied organizations and the FNEEQ's active participation in mobilization and action networks. At the level of individual universities, the unions and the Regroupement must continue to pressure the institutions to, for example, adopt AI governance charters to counter the erosion of the student-teacher relationship and the dehumanization of university teaching.

A new member and new prospects

By Léandre Lapointe

VICE-PRÉSIDENT FOR THE REGROUPEMENT PRIVÉ



We are happy to announce that the Regroupement Privé has a new member: the Syndicat des enseignantes et enseignants du Collège Saint-Alexandre de Gatineau. This independent local union, which was founded in the 1980s, has always been on the front lines defending its members' interests. But after a tough bargaining round and faced with increasingly

complex labour relations, the union mandated its executive to explore affiliation with a union federation. After meeting with the FPEP-CSQ and the FNEEQ-CSN, its members chose to join our family in March. We welcome them and are delighted to join forces with them to actively support their members.

More support for small unions

At our last convention, we were given a clear mandate to set up a structure dedicated to supporting small unions facing organizational challenges. Currently, three unions in our Regroupement are receiving intensive support from the FNEEQ to enable them to serve their members more effectively. This ambitious initiative reflects our commitment to solidarity and strengthening our movement. We are confident that by drawing inspiration from best practices, particularly in managing relations with employers and effectively representing all members, these unions will be able to forego the extra support in the near future.

Tentative agreement at Collège Sainte-Anne de La Pocatière

After some active bargaining sessions and a strong show of mobilization and solidarity on the part of members, the bargaining committee for the Collège Sainte-Anne de La Pocatière union announced that it had reached a tentative agreement with the institution. They were part of a coordinated bargaining effort by a number of unions in our Regroupement and were the third to reach an agreement, based on all the demands in our coordinated bargaining platform, including those related to distance learning, technological change and professional autonomy. Unanimously, the members voted to ratify the tentative agreement. We congratulate the bargaining committee and all of the union's members for their outstanding mobilization.

Productive final meeting

As this 3-year term was drawing to a close, the Regroupement held its last meeting of the term at the end of April. This two-day event was a particularly important opportunity to discuss the many issues facing unions at private schools. In addition to the usual discussions, there were some notable highlights. First, we heard details of the latest tentative agreements negotiated by unions in our Regroupement. We then welcomed a representative of Québec's provincial student ombudsperson, who explained his perspective, role and the complaints process. Note that private schools have been included in the ombudsperson's jurisdiction since September 2023. Then Mélanie Laroche, a professor in the School of Industrial Relations at Université de Montréal, gave a talk on negotiating and building bargaining power which will surely prove useful to the Regroupement's members unions in the coming term.



The role of education in the ecological and social transition

By Nova Doyon and Nicolas Harvey
MEMBERS OF THE FNEEQ-CSN ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

How can we make our workplaces and unions greener? It's a complicated issue that requires juggling conflicting pressures. And yet the educational setting, from childcare centres to university, is an ideal place to incorporate and teach about environmental issues.

First, greening our educational institutions and making them carbon neutral¹ can mobilize our communities around a common objective. The schools are also a good place to introduce responsible procurement policies, particularly for food products, which can help achieve environmental objectives.

All of these actions are important. But it's probably in the classroom that teachers can have the greatest impact. We teachers have an important role to play in raising awareness about climate change issues. Schools must do more than train our future workforce; they must train the next generation of eco-citizens.

Greening courses and programs

Greening the curriculum can play a key role in this process. Both CEGEP and university teachers can influence the development of courses and programs through co-management and collegiality. It's possible to include courses on environmental issues in any discipline; for example, in psychology (eco-anxiety), engineering (renewable energies and energy independence) and education (environmental education).

In post-secondary education, our professional autonomy and academic freedom give us leeway to address environmental issues in our teaching. The idea is not to impose our own personal vision on students but rather to foster debate on climate and social issues, while remembering that this can potentially be polarizing and anxiety-provoking.

While it may seem natural to address environmental issues in social sciences and biology courses, we believe that it is

possible in all disciplines, whether it be nursing (medical waste and wastewater management²), accounting (green taxes and cap-and-trade systems³) or law (legal personhood status granted to the Magpie River⁴).

To do this, we first need to educate teachers about environmental issues. Université du Québec en Outaouais is already doing just that: since 2023, they have offered group training on environmental issues for and by course lecturers. They have also prepared a guide to give teaching staff the tools they need to integrate environmental issues into their teaching. CEGEP and university teachers can also turn to their institution's professional development or opportunities funds to access this sort of training.

However, if we want to go beyond individual initiatives in environmental education, we need to create spaces for reflection and communities of practice in which we can work together to find ways to transform teaching. This approach would lay the foundation for

a truly global interdisciplinary educational transformation that would make the school a key player in the search for solutions to the climate crisis.

Teaching eco-citizenship: A collective responsibility

Education has a crucial role to play in preparing young people to take up the historic challenge of the ecological and social transition. Since 2010, the UN has continually reiterated the need for schools to make interdisciplinary education on climate change and eco-citizenship mandatory at all levels, from early childhood to higher education, including technical and vocational programs.

Since the first school strikes led by Greta Thunberg in 2018–2019, students around the world have been denouncing the inability of educational systems to prepare them to deal constructively with the ecological and social crises facing our world. Students have banded together in groups like Pour le futur Montréal, Hautes études post-croissance (HEC Montréal), Pour un réveil écologique (France), Sunrise Movement (United States) and Fridays for Future (international). These young people are demanding an education that is oriented toward local collective action and equips for them for the

challenges ahead.

In Québec, based on studies examining how environmental issues are currently being integrated into primary and secondary school programs, experts in environmental education have concluded that current government initiatives are totally inadequate in developing active eco-citizenship⁶. The ideal would be for schools to produce citizens who are informed about the systemic causes of current ecological and social crises, who are able to critically analyse information disseminated by the media and on the Net, and who are able to participate creatively and constructively in debates around the just transition. At CEGEP and university, students must be encouraged to think innovatively about how they could contribute to transforming their future sphere of professional activity in a way that respects the planet's limits and reduces social inequalities.

To be sure, bringing ecological and social issues into the classroom is not the only change needed to reshape education and transform teaching for the modern era. However, in light of the current ecological and social crises facing us, we believe it especially urgent and essential that we work with all actors in education to transform the education system to

make it eco-consistent and, especially, to ensure that it continues to provide meaningful perspectives that enable young people to engage with the world and find their place in it. As teachers, we can act individually and collectively to give these issues more space in our classrooms.


- ¹ COLLIN, Katherine Understanding campus greening as a basic workplace health right. *Carnets*, No. 44, Fall 2023, pp. 12–13.
- ² CARRÈRE, Geoffrey, Hospitals facing the contamination of aquatic areas by drug residue: Towards a new environmental responsibility. *Cahiers de géographie du Québec*, Vol. 61, No. 174, December 2017, pp. 513–527, <https://shs.hal.science/hal-04168465v1> (in French).³
- ³ BERNIER, Dominique, «Quand les loups de la finance montrent patte verte», *Relations*, no 777, 2015.
- ⁴ LOWRIE, Morgan «La rivière Magpie obtient le statut de personnalité juridique», *Le Devoir*, 27 février 2021.
- ⁵ www.sccc-uoq.ca/2023/06/20/environnementalisez-vos-enseignements/
- ⁶ Centr'ERE-UQAM, *Stratégie québécoise d'éducation en matière d'environnement et d'écocitoyenneté*, 2018. <https://centrere.uqam.ca/vers-une-strategie-quebecoise-deducation-en-matiere-denvironnement-et-decocitoyennete/>

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The “Comité de sages” and other transphobic attacks

By Dominique Dubuc
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Attacks on the rights and dignity of trans people are on the rise across Canada. Premier Legault’s new “Comité de sages,” created on the pretext of “social tensions”¹ around gender plurality, is a case in point.

Well yes, of course there will be social tensions when one group tries to crush the rights of an already vulnerable minority. A responsible government would have tried to ease those tensions by turning to the body it had already created, the Bureau de lutte contre l’homophobie et la transphobie (Office for the Fight against Homophobia and Transphobia) and using it to inform, raise awareness, and educate the public about the rights and realities of trans and non-binary people. However, since the committee does exist, it would have been good to seek out experts for it: academics, consultants and, above all, people with experiential knowledge. This was not done. While we can hope their hearts are in the right place—and only time will tell if this is true—the “wise” committee members have to start learning about the issues from square one. This is a repeat of the saga that had played out over the Act respecting family law reform with regard to filiation and amending the Civil Code in relation to personality rights and civil status. It’s exhausting to have to do it all over again. It’s a slap in the face and an added layer of stress and anxiety for a group that’s already incredibly vulnerable, and whose rights and very existence are repeatedly called into question.

Unfortunately, transphobic and, might I add, homophobic and sexist, attacks are on the rise. Conservative, reactionary, right-wing and even far-right movements have been trying to sugarcoat their hateful rhetoric by claiming they’re protecting trans children’s safety and “parental” rights. Alberta’s Preserving choice for children and youth bill, which comes into effect this fall, illustrates that strategy to a T. The bill includes a ban on the use of a person’s preferred name and pronouns in school without parental consent, the risk of disciplinary action up to and including dismissal for school staff who violate the bill’s directives, and a ban on puberty blockers and hormone therapy before the age of 16 (and only with parental consent after that age). Starting treatment at such a late stage is pointless. Meanwhile, cisgender children will



continue to have access to the same treatments for medical purposes. Furthermore, all children in Alberta will now need their parents to opt them into sex ed. None of these political decisions would have been made if the experts had been consulted and, above all, listened to, as the outrage about the bill suggests²⁻³.

Here in Quebec, political weaponization of the same sort has been used to attack trans and non-binary people. The Comité de sages and Minister Drainville’s inane comments about gender-neutral washrooms⁴ are prime examples of the methods being used. Ditto regarding the moral panic underlying Minister Biron’s motion to denounce⁵ the phrasing “a person with a vagina” in a recent Supreme Court judgment. For the record, the phrase appears only once, for the legitimate purpose of including trans men and non-binary people, while “woman” was used 67 times. Examples such as these raise huge red flags that should spur our vigilance and strengthen our solidarity and our commitment to be allies.

¹ <https://www.ledevoir.com/opinion/idees/798937/idees-ce-annoncent-manifestations-anti-lgbtq>

² <https://ablawg.ca/2024/02/15/an-open-letter-to-premier-danielle-smith-re-preserving-choice-for-children-and-youth-announcement/>

³ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/medical-groups-alberta-government-gender-affirming-care-policies-1.7103099>

⁴ https://fneeq.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023-11-29_Carnet44_electronique-2_FR.pdf

⁵ <https://www.ledevoir.com/opinion/editoriaux/809616/editorial-vaut-motion>

COCAL XV is coming to Gatineau this summer!

By Ghyslaine Lévesque
COORDINATOR FOR THE REGROUPEMENT UNIVERSITÉ

From August 8 to 10, the FNEEQ-CSN and the Syndicat des chargées et chargés de cours de l'Université du Québec en Outaouais (SCCC-UQO), together with the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) and the Concordia University Part-Time Faculty Association (CUPFA), will be hosting an important conference at Université du Québec en Outaouais in Gatineau.

The Coalition of Contingent Academic Labour (COCAL), founded 30 years ago, includes some 40 union organizations representing teachers without job security in Mexico, the United States, Canada and Québec. The FNEEQ joined COCAL in 2000. COCAL organizes conferences every two years to discuss the situations experienced by precariously employed teachers in post-secondary institutions across North America. Each country takes turns hosting the event. It has been held in Montréal and Québec City in the past. This year, COCAL 2024 is being held in Gatineau.

Attendees will be able to share their experiences as contract or precarious teachers and discuss the attacks they are facing in a time of technological transformation and growing use of artificial intelligence in higher education and research-creation. These attacks, a direct by-product of the commodification of knowledge, threaten teachers' working conditions, representation in educational institutions, academic freedom, research opportunities and the profession as a whole.

COCAL 2024 will also be an opportunity to discuss the best ways to mobilize against these attacks, which are rooted in a university system plagued by capitalist and managerialist values that reinforce rather than combat job insecurity. Collective action is the best way to reverse the trend and secure the changes we need to ensure free, universal, egalitarian, and pluralistic education. COCAL 2024 participants from all over North America will discuss and debate ideas and positions in order to produce a manifesto and organize a continent-wide day of struggle and mobilization.



The program covers a wide range of issues, with panels on topics such as "Precarity, representation, academic freedom and abuse of power in universities," "Analysis of the work and conditions of contract academic staff: challenges and opportunities," and "Solutions for better working conditions and a greater recognition of contract academic labour." The speakers, workshop participants and panel members will come from across North America. The organizing committee of the COCAL XV International Conference invites you to join us for a wide variety of compelling presentations and enriching discussions.

This summer, the beautiful Outaouais region awaits!

For registration or more information about the Conference program, visit our website at <https://www.cocal2024.org/>.

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