

Teachers' Work: Changing Patterns and Perceptions in the Emerging School Systems of Nineteenth-and Early Twentieth-Century Central Canada.

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## Teachers' Work: Changing Patterns and Perceptions in the Emerging School Systems of Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Central Canada

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### Abstract

TEACHERS HAVE BEEN left out of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century labour history just as they have been ignored, as workers, in the history of education. This paper investigates themes in the history of elementary public school teachers' work in Quebec and Ontario during the period when state school systems were being put in place and public teaching forces were becoming predominantly female. During this period teachers contended with the introduction of new subjects and methods, the introduction of increasing amounts of paperwork, and a growing insistence on discipline and uniformity in increasingly hierarchical work places. In addition they had to deal with unhealthy working conditions and conflicts over who was responsible for the upkeep and physical improvement of schools. Although, by the turn of the century, increasing workloads, difficult working conditions, and low pay had pushed urban women teachers to form single-sex protective associations, most schoolmistresses failed to identify with other organized workers. Neither self-identified workers, nor the professionals they aspired to be, they began to understand one major source of their problematic status when they perceived that this derived, in large part, from their status as women.

LES ENSEIGNANTS ET enseignantes ont été oubliés(es) dans l'histoire des travailleurs(ses) tout comme ils/elles ont été ignorés(es) dans celle de l'histoire de l'éducation. Le présent article étudie certains thèmes de l'histoire des enseignant(es) du niveau primaire dans les écoles publiques de l'Ontario et du Québec, alors que les enseignantes dominaient le secteur public. Pendant cette période, les institutrices durent s'adapter à l'introduction de nouvelles matières au programme, à une accumulation de paperasse, et à une insistance grandissante sur la discipline et l'uniformisation dans un milieu de travail de plus en plus hiérarchisé. Elles avaient de plus à fonctionner dans des conditions de travail insalubres et à négocier le partage des responsabilités pour l'entretien et l'amélioration des écoles. Au début du siècle, bien que l'augmentation des charges de travail, les conditions de travail difficiles, et les bas salaires aient poussé les enseignantes urbaines à s'unir dans des associations protectrices féminines, la plupart des institutrices ne parvinrent pas à s'identifier comme travailleuses syndiquées. Sans s'identifier comme travailleuses et sans obtenir le statut professionnel auquel elles aspiraient, elles commencèrent à réaliser que la principale cause de leur statut problématique était leur condition de femme.

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