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Article abstract

Labour strife in the education sector in Ontario has repeatedly highlighted the precariousness of certain types of teaching and learning that are delivered under the catch-all designation extracurricular. This paper reviews education legislation in Ontario over the past 40 years that has impacted teachers' right to strike; examines how teacher unions and the provincial government targeted extracurricular activities during collective bargaining; and considers how extracurricular activities have come to be an expected part of public education.

The Precarity of Extracurricular Education in Ontario Schools during Labour Strife

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Abstract

Labour strife in the education sector in Ontario has repeatedly highlighted the precariousness of certain types of teaching and learning that are delivered under the catch-all designation extracurricular. This paper reviews education legislation in Ontario over the past 40 years that has impacted teachers' right to strike; examines how teacher unions and the provincial government targeted extracurricular activities during collective bargaining; and considers how extracurricular activities have come to be an expected part of public education.

Keywords: extracurricular, collective bargaining, Ontario schools, Education Act, work-to-rule

Introduction

"Education is always implicitly or explicitly a political issue" (Bell & Stevenson, 2013, as cited in Bell, 2020, p. 31). Over the past twenty years, Ontario schools have experienced repeated labour disruptions during contract negotiation. During the 2012-2013 school year, again in 2015, and again during the 2019-2020 school year, teacher unions employed varying levels of "work to rule" during contract negotiations.[1] During periods of work-to-rule, teachers at both the primary and secondary level withdrew their services from duties that were not mandated in their collective agreements. These activities included completing report card comments, and any activities outside the contractually defined workday i.e., school teaching hours, including attending staff meetings, coaching sports teams, directing school plays, conducting bands and choirs, and supervising student-run clubs. Each work action was different, with different stages of implementation, depending on the union; and not all work-to-rule job actions withdrew all extra activities. For the purpose of this research, "extracurricular" refers to activities that engage students outside of classroom hours, such as sports, music, and clubs.

This paper will highlight the precariousness of these activities during labour action. What role does extracurricular activity serve in our schools? And why does it, repeatedly, become a hot potato during labour strife? To explore these questions, I will look at what constitutes extracurricular, at how the term has evolved; and consider how legislators, teachers, parents, and students have come to regard these activities as an expected part of public education.

Methodology

This study uses unobtrusive methods of collecting data from multiple sources, including newspaper and television reportage; government departmental websites and their archived public announcements; provincial legislation; labour federation websites; and public research group reports. The relevance of public documents to public discourse is theoretically framed by Institutional Ethnography, which exam-

[1] "Almost everyone working in education does far longer hours and greater workload than laid out in their contract, thus working to rule is done to put pressure on the employer in an attempt to achieve a goal without taking strike action." https://www.voicetheunion.org.uk/working-rule

ines "textual practices" to study the "everyday experience of people active in an institutional context" (Smith, 2005, p. 104). Public or bureaucratic documents, such as the Ontario Education Act in its various iterations, are one layer of institutional discourse that groups and individuals respond to and activate through other layers of texts and textual practices, including local schoolboard policies, and school policies. Collective agreements, such as those between the Province of Ontario and the four teacher federations, constitute master texts, in the sense of texts that organize the daily work of people and "subsume the particularities of everyday lived experience" (Smith, 2005, p. 113).

Other documents that were collected for this analysis are from traditional media, such as newspapers and television. Public discourse, that is, how people frame and formulate ideas in the public arena, is still primarily influenced by these traditional producers of news (Pelkey et al., 2021, p. 26). Reports of political speeches, of parent comments, or union activities, are either recorded in the news of the day or dismissed as not relevant. "News coverage can frame our understanding of our social world and can communicate the importance, or lack of importance, of issues, people, and events" (van den Hoonaard, 2019, p. 153).

For analysis of such a diverse collection of documents from different sources, I have used first mapping and then storying. "Mapping" is the term used in Institutional Ethnography to describe the process of making visible the connections between one site and another, between institutional practices and personal experiences. The complexity of governmental institutions and systems can obscure the relations of ruling; mapping is intended, like a geographical map, to make the terrain visible and accessible not only to researchers but also to the people whose lives are affected by these systems, and to activists (Smith, 2005). The concept of "story" emphasises the collection of different perspectives that are constructed by various groups or individuals, or that emerge through texts such as media reports, political speeches, and government documents, presenting different accounts of complex events and actions. It is not the goal of this paper to produce a unified account, but rather to explore and make visible the various strands of sometimes coordinated, sometimes competing experiences and perspectives (Smith, 2005). Using IE, the documents and reports have been organized by type or chronologically; and analysed in a way that creates an "account" (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 54) that attempts to answer the question posed—the place of extracurricular in our schools, and its role during labour conflicts.

Documents are submitted to this process of mapping and content analysis through a qualitative lens; and are used to "construct a picture of what it is like to experience a given situation" (Bouma et al., 2016, p. 245). The goal of this analysis is to figure out what made things happen the way they did, and how various forms of text and discourse contributed to people's conduct and resulted in a sequencing of events and outcomes in the public sphere.

Given the historic period that I am looking at, some of the contemporary web sites originally consulted are no longer accessible; and versions of documents may have replaced previous versions. I have provided current accessible digital citations wherever possible. Online searches were carried out using academic search engines such as ProQuest to identify relevant literature and to access government sites such as Statistics Canada. Search terms included extracurricular; afterschool education; teacher workload; teacher volunteerism; labour conflict; education policy in Ontario; school reform; arts education; Ontario Education Act; work-to-rule.

Policy and the enactment of policy are not always linear or sequential or uniform (Bell, 2020). To research this paper, I examined a variety of sources within a timeframe of 2010 to 2020. Some of these sources may be challenged for reliability, such as newspaper reportage or surveys conducted by special interest groups. However, the nature of this inquiry lies at the intersection of policy and social context. The policies I will be considering are those which the government, the teacher federation, or the school administration sets out as the regulatory framework or legal parameter that defines work and schools. The social context is that within which implementation of policy happens (or does not happen), as it is impacted by social forces such as parental expectations, ideological shifts in politics, and the cut and thrust of labour negotiations and job action at the local level, or by geographic or demographic differences of school districts. Some of this is best captured and reflected in the local reportage of public opinion, with all its implicit, sometimes explicit, subjectivity, as newspapers report the positions of politicians or the response of parents, teachers, or union activists. The combination of official documents, such legislative acts or statistics, and public opinion and reportage, reflects the tensions between policy and implemen-

tation, between contractual obligations and the social contract, and between collective agreements and collective action.

Curriculum

What counts as curriculum has changed over time from the schooling of the ancient Greeks whose curriculum included the practice of the "bodily arts," music, and rhetoric (Hawhee, 2004; Winterer, 2002); to the choir schools of medieval Europe that were established solely to train boys to sing the liturgy, but some of which developed into the early colleges and universities (Boynton & Rice, 2008; Page, n.d.); to the 19th Century competitive sports fields of the English public (private) schools that supposedly fostered character; to the 20th Century in Canadian public schools that took up the idea of citizenship education through service in the community (Raddon, 2015).

Extracurricular is a term that is defined by what it is "extra" to. In Canada, public school curriculum is mandated by the provincial governments, funded by the provincial government and local boards of education, and delivered by teachers within the parameters of the contractual relationship between teachers, their union representatives, local boards of education, and the provincial ministries of education. For the purposes of this discussion, curriculum is that which has been determined by the provincial government to constitute the learning objectives and requirements for graduation as contained within its ministry documents. More restrictively, curriculum, in this formal sense, is that which is taught in courses that are defined and approved by the Ministry of Education (Government of Ontario). "Extra" curriculum is any activity that falls outside of these perimeters. In its current usage by legislators and educators in Ontario, extracurricular implies structured activities that are sanctioned and often overseen by school authorities, i.e., by teachers and coaches who are under contract to the school board, whether the activities are or are not part of their job description. This strictly structural definition is important to an instrumental analysis of what happens during work-to-rule job action.

Informally, extracurricular activities reflect the best intentions of administrators, teachers, and parents, to provide a well-rounded education. Extracurricular activities can and do straddle the lines of formal and informal education, of knowledge and skill acquisition, community building and character development, of health and wellness, and of creating a balance between work and leisure (Guèvremont, 2014). They can fulfill and meet many of the learning goals contained in curriculum documents; but they do so accidentally, in the sense that meeting curriculum goals is not the objective. The school band, football team, drama society, debating club, gay-straight alliance, and many more, are organized on principles that are developed "ex curia"—outside the jurisdiction of the provincial Ministry of Education. However, the local school board regulates who can oversee activities on school property; and may dictate who has authority to register teams for tournaments at the city, provincial, or national level. Some school board policies restrict coaching to certified teachers or require a certified teacher in a position of supervision; and many sports leagues require school administrators or certified teachers to register teams for tournaments. Thus, what constitutes extracurricular is a combination of institutional regulation and cultural and social practice, at both the translocal and local level.

To understand how extracurriculars take on a political dynamic during labour strife, we need to look at previous labour disputes in the education sector and how, in each of these, extracurricular activities became a factor. I will begin by looking at successive legislation bills—Education Acts from 1968 to 2011—that defined the roles and responsibilities of teachers and schools. Each of the Education Acts contributed to an evolving profession through a myriad of ways, including regulating the responsibilities of its practitioners, both inside and outside the classroom. I will then provide a summary of events in Ontario during the 2012-2013 school year, when many Ontario teachers withdrew voluntary participation in extracurricular activities. I will conclude with a discussion of what constitutes *extra*curricular activity and how it has come to be viewed and valued within school life.

Historic Context: Ontario 1968-2011

How did extracurricular activities and teacher volunteerism to run these activities become an expected part of school culture, and why are they the first casualty of labour disputes? There are at least two factors: one is the history of Education Bills in Ontario, and the other is how schools deliver "extra" curriculum.

Ontario was governed during the 1960's and 1970's by the Conservative party. William Davis served as Education Minister from 1962 to 1971 when he became Premier of Ontario. Under his long tenure as the Minister for Education and Universities, he oversaw a large expansion of post-secondary education, the establishment of new universities and colleges, and a progressive era in curriculum development (Hall Dennis Report, 1968). It was not, however, an era without conflict. The early 70's were particularly contentious years. After extended labour unrest, Premier Davis worked with teachers and school boards over a period of two years to come to a mutually beneficial resolution. Bill 100, *The School Boards and Teachers Collective Negotiations Act*, passed in 1975 and held sway for 22 years (Government of Ontario/Bill 100). Bill 100 gave teachers the right to strike and, by establishing a regional model of collective bargaining, allowed teachers a greater level of involvement in negotiating future contracts. It had the effect of lowering labour unrest as most contract negotiations were settled early; and fewer negotiations ended in labour actions than in the private sector during the same period (Rose, 2002). It also benefited teachers, as they saw their salaries rise, especially for those at the lower end of the pay grid (Hanson, 2009). This reflected a growing professionalism as the old Normal Schools closed and university degrees became a minimum requirement for all teachers.

In 1997, Conservative Premier Mike Harris and Education Minister John Snobelen drafted Bill 160, the *Education Quality Improvement Act*. In the firestorm that erupted after its introduction, teachers from every union, principals, support workers, even custodians, walked out of their schools and stayed out for two weeks. Bill 160 reduced control at the local school board level and severely limited collective bargaining. It was, in part, based on a government commissioned 1996 review of collective bargaining in education which came up with 14 recommendations, including some that weren't immediately enacted, such as the recommendation that a teacher's working day include extracurricular activities (Bedard & Lawton, 1998). Despite labour turmoil, Bill 160 passed. Three years later, in 2000, the government brought in Bill 74, the *Education Accountability Act*, which made teachers' involvement in extracurricular activities mandatory at both the elementary and secondary level. Teachers viewed it as an unconstitutional infringement on teachers' rights and threatened a court challenge. The government eventually backed down, by not having the contentious section of the bill officially proclaimed (Robertson, 2001). In 2003, with the *Back to School Act* (Bill 28), the Conservative government took aim at restricting teachers' right to strike. By broadly defining "strike" action, they redefined the duties of teachers:

> [Strike action] now included all actions that would have "the effect of curtailing, restricting, limiting or interfering with" normal teaching activities as well as school or board programs such as co-curricular activities… The teacher unions understood Bill 28 as mandating teachers to provide extracurricular activities, succeeding where Bill 74 failed. (Anderson & Jaafar, 2003, p. 39)

Unions responded to the repeat attacks on their profession by putting their political support behind Liberals in the next two elections, providing support to local campaigns, targeting the Minister of Education, and giving substantial donations to the Liberal Party (Walchuk, 2013; Wallner, 2008). That support may have been a factor in the victory of the Liberal government in 2003. However, many of the most noxious aspects of the Harris Conservative government's attacks on the teaching profession resurfaced in 2012. The Minister of Education announced in mid-August 2012 that the government would bring in Bill 115, the *Putting Students First Act*. Bill 115 imposed restraints including the terms under which local boards could bargain with teacher unions; allowed the government to impose a contract if those terms were not met; and outlawed strikes (Government of Ontario/Bill 115). It is interesting to note that in 2016 the Supreme Court of Canada determined Bill 115 to be unconstitutional (National Union of Public and General Employees).

The way in which each successive bill is named is a study in the politics of semantics. *The School Boards and Teachers Collective Negotiations Act* (1975) gave teachers rights that they had not previously had, such as the right to collective bargaining with local school boards; and gave school boards the right to define working conditions and teacher responsibilities. It was an era when improving the profession by requiring university degrees for all teachers and recognizing teacher unions as professional associations was seen as the best route to improving education for students. The *Education Quality Improvement Act*

and the *Education Accountability Act* both sought to reduce the professional autonomy of teachers, and to place more oversight and control in the hands of the government. They used the language of business to shift the focus from teaching to production. The *Back to School Act* can be read as ordering teachers back to school and keeping them there, as it restricted teachers' right to strike. The title of the latest bill, *Putting Students First*, implies that, previously, teachers had been putting themselves first. The naming of these Acts seems to go from viewing teachers in a positive light and empowering them to viewing them in a negative light and disempowering them. The negative imagery is reflected in public discourse, as the current Premier, Doug Ford, recently claimed that the unions had been "holding the province hostage for 50 years" (Rushowy, 2020).

Contract Negotiations: Ontario 2012

Ontario has four teacher unions, which bargain separately: Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association (OECTA), Association des Enseignantes et des Enseignants Franco-Ontariens (AEFO), Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO), and Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation (OSSTF). In the summer of 2012, all four unions were in negotiation with the Government of Ontario. OECTA came to an agreement with the province in July, and shortly thereafter AEFO agreed to a deal that was virtually identical. That still left more than half of Ontario's teachers— members of ETFO and OSSTF—without an agreement. But on September 11, the Liberal government brought in legislation in the form of Bill 115 to immediately curtail the unions' right to strike and to impose contracts that would include a wage freeze, reduced sick leave, and unpaid professional development days. The OSSTF and ETFO responded by advising teachers to withdraw voluntary services, including administrative duties and volunteer activities. Job action came in stages over the next few months (Nesbitt, 2012). Many teachers withdrew from extracurricular activities and worked to rule; but it was far from a coherent approach, as each local in the province had to put any potential job action to a vote of its members. In late November 2012, Forum Research conducted a poll based on a telephone survey of 1,127 randomly selected Ontarians. They found that 44% of Ontarians supported the teachers in the dispute, compared to 39% who supported the government; but that 47% thought their job actions were an ineffective way to get their message across while 39% found it effective (Forum Research, as cited in Benzie, 2012). The survey also found that two-thirds of those polled disagreed with teachers withdrawing from extracurricular supervision. This strategy was evidently hurting rather than helping teachers win public support.

By December, union locals across the province had completed filing "no board reports," which put them in a legal strike position.[2] The recommendations from the unions went from advice to directive. Job action became mandatory, and all teachers withdrew services not required by their collective agreement (Lewis, 2012). School athletic fields were idle, music stages dark, tournaments and field trips cancelled. On October 15, 2012, Premier Dalton McGuinty announced he would be stepping down and prorogued the legislature. Although the furor of the day was focussed on other issues (Howlett et al., 2012), the timing of the prorogued legislature left opposition to Bill 115 in limbo. The unions ratcheted up job action, and the government looked for ways to appear conciliatory without changing position. In January 2013, a few weeks after imposing the new contract, Bill 115 was repealed. The unions saw this as a cynical move—having used the legislation as a "hammer" to impose contracts, the government could dispense with the hammer (Brown et al., 2013). The Liberals chose a new leader and a new premier, Kathleen Wynne, and she and her new cabinet took office in early February 2013. The Minister of Education, Liz Sandals, and Premier Wynne quickly began conversations with the teacher unions of Ontario. The new Premier wanted to restore a positive relationship with teachers and bring back extracurricular activities for students, which had taken on symbolic significance. Despite efforts to mend fences, extracurricular activities would not return quickly, if at all, that year. The secondary school teachers union (OSSTF) came to a Memorandum of Understanding in February, but the largest elementary teachers union, ETFO, continued its job action for another month (Rushowy & Brennan, 2013), and did not ratify a new contract until the end of June. By mid-May it was obvious that many clubs and teams would not restart in the current school year (Brown & Rushowy, 2013).

[2] No-board report : "If the union and the employer don't reach an agreement during conciliation, the conciliation officer will report the outcome to the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development and the minister will send a written notice to the union and the employer. Typically, this notice will inform the parties that a board of conciliation will not be appointed. This is commonly known as a 'no-board'" (Government of Ontario/collective bargaining)

Labour unions took note of the backlash in public opinion when extracurricular activities become part of the withdrawal of teacher services. After the heated public outcry during the 2013 and subsequent 2015 labour disputes, in 2019 the secondary teachers stopped most administrative duties such as report card comments, staff meetings, and professional development, but continued to provide extracurricular activities with students (Teotonio, 2019). However, the escalation of work stoppage by elementary teachers in early 2020 finally included extracurricular activities (McGinn, 2020). Extracurriculars continue to be a bargaining tool too potent to ignore.

The Contribution of Extracurricular Activities to School Life

"School life" is a much broader concept than the provincially mandated curriculum. "Schools are complex social systems where multiple sources of influence combine to influence youths' development" (Morin et al., 2013, p. 1970). Morin et al. (2013) identified the major factors in school life as organizational, interpersonal, and instructional. Extracurricular activities contribute to each of these, as students develop autonomy and confidence within an organized setting, build relationships with other students, their teachers, and their school, and acquire knowledge and skills through both formal and informal learning. While surveys have been conducted of extracurricular participation levels in Ontario (Cheng & Yau, 1998), activities such as sports clubs and music lessons that take place outside of school have been included with school-run clubs and teams, which makes it difficult to assess the number of students engaged in extracurricular activities run by teachers. However, what is clear from the literature is the value ascribed to extracurricular experience and a growing sense of moral imperative for schools and teachers to provide it (Oberle, 2019). Researchers have found that at-risk students can be re-engaged in healthy activities with their peers (Faulkner et al., 2009; Feldman & Matjasko, 2005); girls can overcome gender bias and be exposed to technology through science and computer clubs (Shortt, 1998); teenage obesity can be reduced (Lagarde & LeBlanc, 2010), creativity deepened (Spooner, 2002), social responsibility increased (Earl & Sutherland, 2003), and high school completion rates of First Nations students improved (Arriagada, 2015).

Many factors contribute to the pressure on schools to provide extracurricular activities. Parents come to rely on schools to provide enriched programming, experiences that some parents might not be able to afford otherwise. School principals are directed by the Ministry of Education to build up an extensive extracurricular program and to involve "every student" to address the equity issue (Province of Ontario, 2011). Parents volunteer their time as a way of engaging in their children's education (Goshin, 2021). Students build credit for extracurricular activities that constitute an aspect of application and admission to many university programs; may win scholarships based on their performance on the sports field or in the arts during their senior year; and enjoy social status conferred by these after-school activities (Aurini, 2020).

The Price of Education

What do extracurricular activities "cost" in terms of time? A study by ETFO (2014) of elementary teachers in Ontario found that, on average, elementary teachers spend over one hour a week on extracurricular activities. Currently, there are over 80,000 elementary teachers in Ontario, which means that, collectively, elementary teachers are volunteering over 80,000 hours per week. Many music teachers direct after-school choirs and bands. Classroom teachers coach team sports, fundraise for equipment and uniforms, and travel to tournaments, while staying on top of a full load of teaching multiple subjects. Volunteering for extracurricular activities is expected and normalized, despite the professionalization of teaching (Hanson, 2009). At the secondary school level, a 2013 study found that 30% of teachers were involved in extracurricular activity, with some of them putting in 10 or more hours a week (OSSTF, 2013). While most of the teachers see this as voluntary and enjoy their involvement, there may also be a degree of coercion.

> Many reported their participation is mixed; they take on one extracurricular voluntarily but are coerced to take on a second one. In addition, there is considerable pressure and coercion placed on the following groups: (1) respondents from schools with few staff, (2) athletics, technology, fine arts, guidance and special education teachers, and (3) newly hired, part-time

> and occasional teachers. (OSSTF, 2013, p. 9)

Teachers, when every other option of negotiating is taken away from them, withdraw the only thing they legally can—those activities that are outside of their contractual obligations—knowing how valued they are by parents, and therefore how much pressure it will bring to bear on the government. This is a circular model, obviously, as public pressure and censure can go either way, creating pressure on government or a backlash against teachers. In 2013, the public response to the government and to the teachers, as reported by the Ottawa Sun, was "a plague on both your houses!" ("Teachers, McGuinty Share the Blame," 2013).

Education provides a service that we have deemed an essential good. Literacy and numeracy are important, but so is the ability to communicate and work with others, and to think creatively and critically about the problems that confront society (Finn, 2015). How well are the schools supporting what Morin et al. (2013) identified as a richly supportive school life, both inside and outside the classroom? There are multiple factors at work. The Ministry of Education ascribes higher or lower value to subjects by requiring a certain number of instructional minutes per day; by earmarking funding for professional development in numeracy, literacy, or STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics); or by reducing the number of credits of certain subjects required for graduation. School boards provide support and resources for some activities and limited resources for others. Schools with more affluent parents can subsidize afterschool activities and teams. Principals prioritize new hires to balance the human resources of their schools and the school budget; while school budgets are determined by "head count." This last factor, the funding formula for schools, can affect staffing. During the 2013 labour dispute in Ontario, there was a growing concern that parents would pull their children out of public schools and register them in either private or Catholic schools, where extracurriculars were being offered. As the Globe and Mail reported:

> Students in Grade 8 are currently deciding where to attend high school, and officials fear that ongoing strife within the public school system will push many parents and their children to consider other options. "The real crux of the issue is in Grade 8 when you're looking at the spectrum of two years of potentially no extracurriculars in high school and you have a government that says that we should live in hope," said Michael Barrett, president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association. "If there's an opportunity or desire to move, it may happen during that time period." Enrolment numbers determine school board funding, so public high schools are at a serious disadvantage if they can't offer the same extracurricular programs as their French and Catholic neighbours. (Hammer et al., 2013)

With Catholic, Public, and French school boards funded separately, and four unions negotiating separately, there is the risk of playing one against the other.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Canada has a mixed model of core curriculum funded by the provincial government, and extracurricular activities funded by teachers' volunteer time and user fees. It is beyond the scope of this paper to provide a comparative analysis of how the arts and some other "extra" curricular activities are provided in other parts of the world. However, the United States has a long tradition of athletic and band programs taught in state schools, funded both federally and by local school boards, including compensation for team coaches or band directors. These approaches obviate the dependence on unpaid extracurricular volunteerism by teachers for some activities, especially competitive music and athletics (Ma & Hall, 2018; Shakakeeny, 2016; Sturges et al., 2020).

The weakness of the Canadian model is that whenever collective bargaining breaks down, extracurricular activities, in particular the arts and athletics, become the first casualties. Parents and students feel aggrieved at the loss of something they have come to expect and value. Teachers find themselves the object of public resentment; and may lose an aspect of their professional identity, their sense of self-worth, and pleasure. Provincial governments that attempt to mandate "volunteer" activity may be seen as attacking the profession.

To untangle this knotted relationship of *extra* curriculum and labour strife will require institutional change to how curriculum, the arts and athletics in particular, are taught during the school day; how school buildings and sports fields are controlled as public spaces outside of school hours; and how teachers are compensated for time spent on professional activities, whether in the classroom or out. As long as activities that are of high value to students, parents, and other stakeholders remain intwined in competing jurisdictions of social expectations, provincial government policy, and contractual duties, they will continue to be a potential casualty of job action.

To return briefly to the theoretical and methodological approach of this study, using Institutional Ethnography to map, organize, and create an account, IE may also provide a lens to consider change. The Education Act and the teacher federation collective agreements define what counts as work in the classroom. Schoolboards create policies on who has access to school property, and who can organize, supervise, or "teach" afterschool activities; and do so to fit the definitions and categories laid out by the Education Act, and to fall within activities permitted by the Collective Agreements. Omitting extracurricular from these master documents leaves local officials, from Board of Education trustees down to school principals, to create and enforce policy; and creates a grey zone for teachers in which coercion and politics can come into play. Rather than trying to change this from the "top down," I would suggest that Boards of Education proactively create policies (organizing texts) for extracurricular activities and access to schools and equipment. This could be overseen by school principals, who are not part of the bargaining units of teacher federations, and who are therefore always on site and able to take legal responsibility, even if teachers are engaging in job action. Parent committees, that are part of every school in Ontario, could provide the coaches or instructors or facilitators. As with some charitable and volunteer organizations that work with vulnerable populations, parent volunteers would likely need to provide criminal record checks and undertake training. Most importantly, such policies would need to be in place before labour conflict arises.

A much larger issue is how some curricula is valued over others and the social injustice of uneven access to specialized teachers and curricula in many parts of the province (People for Education, 2018). I am writing this as we have just been through a year of extreme disruption due to the pandemic. When schools shut down and classes went online, extracurricular clubs and bands and choirs, as well as in-class music, art, and physical education, were largely abandoned. This was, in part, for health reasons, but also to address the "emergency" of needing more teachers to teach smaller cohorts, and to teach the online option. Specialists were reassigned to general classroom teaching, and music instruction almost ceased (Sefton, 2021). It has been one more lesson in the precarity of certain areas of knowledge and experience within our schools.

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