

Educational Equity

By The Ontario Confederation of
University Faculty Associations (OCUFA)

Cet article fait partie d'une présentation au Commissaire à l'équité d'emploi de l'Ontario en guise de réponse au document de discussion, VERS L'ÉQUITÉ.

Educational equity is vital in order to change the face of the workforce in a wide range of occupations, including the professoriate. As the government of Ontario's discussion paper on employment equity legislation says:

Employment equity means providing access to education and training for designated group members who otherwise would have been excluded because of their disability, race or gender. They continue to be discouraged from pursuing studies and skills in the fields identified by both the private sector and the government as essential to economic growth.

This idea needs to be expanded. If members of designated groups continue to be denied access to education and training, whether as a result of the prohibitive cost of education, or as a result of the chilly climate for them on university campuses, or as a result of lack of physical access, or as a combination of these and other factors, then employment equity legislation in and of itself will not create the far-ranging changes that are expected of it. It will not be as effective as hoped because the pool of qualified candidates from designated groups will continue to be small.

Ministers of Education meeting recently in Calgary recognized the need to improve the educational opportunities of girls and young women. Research has consistently documented that access to education—in terms of entrance to post secondary education and in terms of the programs delivered by, and the climates

of these institutions—is limited for Native peoples, persons with disabilities, visible minorities and for women. For those who do gain entrance, curriculum content does not speak to their concerns; pedagogical techniques discriminate; institutional climates are unwelcome and often threatening. These barriers represent a serious block to the success of employment equity.

For example, the number of women faculty is low in part because of the numbers of women decrease sharply at each level of university educational attainment. We have statistics on the numbers of "women" participating in each level, with no breakdown as to membership in other designated groups. Within the province of Ontario, in 1989-90, 19% of the full-time faculty in universities were women.¹ The percentage of doctoral degrees granted to women in Ontario for the same year was 34.5%, with a great deal of variation within disciplines.² If we take this last number as a reasonable goal for the percentage of women faculty, the discrepancy is strongly apparent.

But 34.5% is still not good enough. More than half of the Bachelor degrees awarded go to women. What happens to scare women away from graduate degree in such numbers that the percentage of women drops so many points? The goal of employment equity should be to have the representation of women amongst the faculty equal the representation of women in society. The pool of applicants must be enlarged, and this is only possible through educational equity. This means special effort must be made to counteract centuries of discrimination. This means that members of the designated groups, who are under-represented in the professoriate, must have increased access to universities as *students* in order to become professors.

Educational institutions have a special role and responsibility to provide the foundation for employment equity through educational equity programs. First, our society simply cannot afford to discourage, waste and ignore the talents of the majority of the population. Universities must change to enhance the labour pool in order to be able to change occupational distributions. In addition, the economic health of Ontario demands a well-educated populace. This involves all of the designated groups having the opportunity to contribute to our knowledge-based economy, through access to education.

A second reason why employment equity must exist within universities is one of *justice*. Educational equity programs inside educational institutions will help *change political consciousness* and will provide an important foundation for the success of employment equity programs in the workplace. Without a social and political commitment from all workers, employment equity programs in the workplace can easily be sabotaged.

Employment equity is central to the success of educational equity

Employment equity is vital to the success of educational equity. The success of educational equity programs depends on the participation of members of the designated groups in developing and implementing the programs and in providing role models and support for students who are members of the designated groups. Members of the designated groups must develop, implement and manage the educational equity program. However, current demographics within the university sector would not allow this. Without employment equity programs the designated groups will not be present in edu-

cational institutions in sufficient numbers to develop educational equity programs. This emphasizes the need for interlocking educational equity and employment equity programs.

We call on the Ontario government to take a leadership role and to include in the employment equity legislation *a separate section on educational equity*. This section would cover all levels of the educational sector: primary and secondary schools, and all postsecondary institutions.

Educational Equity as a Separate Section of the Legislation

Despite the link between educational and employment equity, the focus of each is different. Educational equity, unlike employment equity, does not focus on the range of employees in educational institutions but rather on the programs delivered, the climate in which these programs are delivered and the demographics of the student body.

The concept of educational equity put forward by OCUFA pushes beyond the conventional understanding of the role of educational equity in promoting employment equity programs, i.e., it moves beyond skill training and apprenticeships to highlight post secondary education. For employment equity to be truly successful, it must alter the occupational distribution not only in the skilled trades, but across the spectrum of jobs. This is what makes educational equity such an essential part of employment equity.

No section of the proposed legislation put forward in the Discussion Paper allows the scope for developing a program of educational equity. Without a separate section, the strategies for educational equity will be limited by the focus of the document on the workplace. Indeed, educational institutions are only considered in so far as they are also workplaces. Such a section would highlight the special role and responsibility of educational institutions in providing the foundation for employment equity through educational equity programs.

A separate section on educational equity will demonstrate the commitment of this government to employment equity. In the context of the current funding crisis facing the educational sector, such a proactive statement by the government will assist in ensuring that educational pro-

grams will not suffer. Without direct intervention by and support from the government, it is all too possible that the momentum toward equity that this government supports will be lost. Indeed, support for educational equity will also strengthen government initiatives for a new kind of accountability by the university sector which is currently being addressed by the task force of the Minister of Colleges and Universities.

The Educational Equity Plan

The section of the legislation that deals with educational equity must require educational institutions to develop an educational equity plan (in addition to the employment equity plan for their employees) that will be a tool to achieve educational equity goals. This would include proposed policy, curricular and pedagogical changes, and changes in services available to students of the designated groups.

Too often members of designated groups carry a disproportionate share of the responsibility for implementing such programs.

This plan must be mandatory. The Commission should develop standards for goals based on the distributions of designated groups in specific areas: for example, higher goals would be set for Native people in the North, where they are more numerous. As well, the Commission should identify the mandatory components of the plan: for example, an anti-harassment policy and officer.

Collecting and Reporting Data

Both quantitative and qualitative data about the effects of the educational equity plan should be collected. Examples of quantitative data would be: the number of sexual, racial, etc. harassment cases serv-

iced through complaint offices; resources allocated to Women's and Native Studies; the number of full-time faculty teaching in these areas; the number of applicants in the designated groups; and a breakdown of student populations in the designated groups. These last two especially would force educational institutions to gather data that does not currently exist about the participation of designated groups.

Examples of qualitative data would be: descriptions of the policies that affect the climate on the campus; programs and strategies used to recruit members of designated groups; strategies to change pedagogical practices; and strategies to transform the curriculum.

The collecting and reporting of data on educational equity programs should be the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Colleges and Universities. This information would be available to all Ministries. In particular, this data could be used to assist the Ministry of Colleges and University Task Force on Accountability. The accountability of universities to society involves much more than a value-for-money audit; this is a context in which broad-based notions of responsibility, which include educational equity, could be addressed, monitored and implemented.

Participation of Teachers in Educational Equity Planning

Mechanisms must be created and legislated to ensure the full participation of teachers, teachers' associations and unions, and Women's and Native Studies programs, etc., in the setting of priorities and the development of programs to implement educational equity.

It is important that the Educational Equity Plan provide release time or support for those involved in the implementation of equity plans. Too often women and other members of designated groups, because they are present in such small numbers, carry a disproportionate share of the responsibility for and the workload of implementing such programs, often with little power or reward.

Educational Equity Measures

Educational equity measures fall into three categories:

- Mechanisms to expand access;

- Strategies to improve student experience inside the institution but outside the classroom;
- Strategies to improve student experience inside the classroom, with reference to curriculum and pedagogical practices.

For each level of the educational system, these measures would have to be developed. Also, it must be remembered, in the development of strategies, that: 1) women, in addition to being their 'own' group, represent half the other groups; 2) persons with a disability may be female or male, white, Native or visible minority; and 3) a person may have membership in three of the designated groups.

Educational equity programs will help change political consciousness.

OCUFA's two policies on employment equity, *Employment Equity for Women Academics* and *Employment Equity for Academics in Designated Groups* offer numerous suggestions for how to enlarge the pool of designated group member candidates for the professoriate. In what follows, we will develop a list specific to the universities. These measures focus on attracting students, welcoming them and encouraging them to stay.

With respect to general issues of *access*, educational equity in universities can be encouraged through two kinds of measures: 1) specific structural changes; and 2) more symbolic, public gestures that demonstrate their commitment.

Specific *structural changes* that are necessary are:

- 1) the removal of all physical barriers which impede the mobility impaired;
- 2) the establishment of active outreach programmes with high schools to encourage consideration of careers available through the university;
- 3) the establishment of scholarships and fellowships specifically for members of these designated groups, especially

- 4) in areas in which designated group members are concentrated, free of age and time limits;
- 4) an increase in the availability of part-time degree programs, including math and science programs;
- 5) an increase in the availability of continuing and distance education programmes;
- 6) the provision of remedial courses or transitional year programmes for adult students, to open up to them the full range of university degree programs;
- 7) the scheduling of library and class hours which take into account special needs;
- 8) the recognition of women's differential educational/career paths in the evaluation of their progress, e.g., women may often break up their university education between bachelor degree and master's degree, or between master's degree and doctoral degree;
- 9) the creation of an academic link between the community college and university programmes, to facilitate transfers between institutions;
- 10) the search for new funds and the allocation of a portion of existing funds to enhance the financial accessibility of the university to members of the designated groups;
- 11) working towards the elimination of tuition fees, as financial pressures are often especially fierce for members of designated groups;
- 12) encouraging public recognition that under-funding of the universities by government inhibits or prevents the implementation of educational and employment equity strategies;³

More "*symbolic,*" *public gestures* are:

- 1) encouraging participation of the designated groups on Boards of Governors, Advisory Committees, in fundraising campaigns, etc.;
- 2) the creation and advertisement of the university's mission statement concerning educational and employment equity;
- 3) ensuring that all visual advertising of university programmes in the public media contain representatives of the designated groups;
- 4) inviting representatives of community organizations representing these groups to attend specific university functions thus highlighting the uni-

versity's commitment to educational equity;

- 5) awarding honorary degrees at convocation to community leaders of the designated groups recognizing their community contribution;
- 6) highlighting university policies and practices that create a friendly climate, e.g., orientation programmes, cultural clubs, harassment policies, improved physical access, special counselling services.

With regard to strategies for improving students' experiences *outside the classroom* universities should (in conjunction with student and employee unions/associations):

- 1) create and publicize harassment policies to deal with sexual, gender, racial, disability-related and homophobic harassment;
- 2) create and publicize an independent complaint board, race relations committees and equity committees;
- 3) create and publicize specialized student support services available for persons with disabilities;
- 4) create specialized student support services in counselling and housing, health services for persons with a disability, support networks of students and faculty, writing and study skills centres, remedial courses, and other services which recognize the special needs of members of the designated groups and of foreign students;
- 5) create an appropriate student, faculty, and staff code of conduct;
- 6) hire and promote visible minority and Native women and men, and women and men with disabilities, and other women, into staff, faculty, and administrative positions to act as role models and mentors;
- 7) recognize and respect religious and cultural holidays, e.g. in the scheduling of exams and special events;
- 8) create special education/campus events around issues of sexism, racism, homophobia, cultural diversity, and sensitivity towards persons with a disability;
- 9) encourage active participation of the designated groups in the academic environment through student unions and departmental activities;

- 10) publicize their commitment to women, Native and visible minority students and persons with a disability, and to human rights legislation and practice;
- 11) support cultural activities, clubs and events of visible minority groups, Native peoples, persons with a disability, and all women, by providing appropriate resources.

There are two types of strategies for improving the climate *inside the classroom*: curricular and pedagogical. Necessary changes with respect to the curriculum are:

- 1) ensuring that the curriculum incorporates multicultural, multi-racial, multi-abled and gender issues, addresses sexist, racist and homophobic myths and stereotypes, and notions of gender and racial inferiority and supremacy, and generally examines the legitimate role of the designated groups in our society. This includes both special courses in Women's Studies and Native Studies, and the transformation of curriculum to include materials by and for members of designated groups;
- 2) providing financial resources to assist faculty's ability to respond to the special needs of students with a disability, e.g., special equipment, additional teaching assistance, encouraging graduate supervisors to assist their students with a disability in preparing for academic posts, including the recognition of and advantages to post-doctoral posts and research opportunities;
- 3) ensuring that students can pursue research directly relevant to their community and group concerns;
- 4) widening bibliographic materials, where relevant, to include work by researchers and authors from the designated groups and using audio-visual materials which reflect the multi-dimensional reality of the outside world;
- 5) requiring a course on race, class and gender as part of graduation requirements at post-secondary institutions. This has already been done at some colleges and universities in the United States.

Necessary *pedagogical* changes are:

- 1) increasing faculty awareness of cultural bias in teaching techniques and testing, and of differences in cultural

practices and expectations. Anti-sexist and anti-racist pedagogical strategies are critical to curriculum transformation. Class, race and gender dynamics are very much present in the classroom, and pedagogical practices which do not actively take them into account will be discriminatory;

- 2) creating a code of appropriate and inappropriate behaviours and attitudes within the classroom;
- 3) developing and making available techniques to empower minority students, students with a disability and all women, to participate fully in classroom interactions.

With regard to the special situation of graduate students, OCUFA suggests that universities encourage senior faculty to do the following:

- 1) encourage a system of mentoring and sponsorship for graduate students from the designated groups;
- 2) ensure, especially in the social sciences and humanities, that subjects especially relevant to the designated groups be integrated into all disciplines;
- 3) design summer and other programmes that enable graduate students to participate in faculty research projects;
- 4) assist graduate students from designated groups in finding fellowship and grant support during all phases of graduate work, including thesis-writing;
- 5) facilitate participation by members of the designated groups in the collaborative enterprises fostered by academia, including professional meetings, conferences, and large scale research projects;
- 6) seek out graduate students from designated groups with whom to exchange research conclusions and drafts prepared for publications.

Compliance and Enforcement Mechanisms

The development and expansion of educational equity programs should be tied to funding from the Ministry of Colleges and Universities and the Ministry of Education.

Further, as beneficiaries of educational equity programs, employers must participate in funding educational equity programs. Draft legislation put forward by Bob Rae in 1990 when in opposition pro-

posed "the establishment of comprehensive skills training, retraining and apprenticeship programs, designed to increase the number of people in designated groups in each of the occupations." Further, "The Lieutenant Governor in Council, by regulation, may establish a training fund and require employers to contribute to it. Such a fund would be administered by representatives of trade unions and the designated groups and would be used to assist in training and educational upgrading." We suggest that the government incorporate and expand this proposal and develop an *Educational Equity Fund* supported by employers, and administered jointly by an Educational Equity Unit of the Employment Equity Commission and representatives of those implementing such programs inside educational institutions.

Separate Unit on Educational Equity in the Employment Equity Commission

We suggest that the legislation mandate that a separate unit on Educational Equity be established in the Employment Equity Commission, to do three things:

- 1) monitor educational equity programs;
- 2) expand our knowledge base about successful strategies for implementing educational equity;
- 3) facilitate a dialogue, and share resources and skills across levels of educational system in co-operation with both the Ministry of Colleges and Universities and the Ministry of Education.

This article is part of a brief presented by OCUFA to the Ontario Employment Equity Commissioner in response to the discussion paper, WORKING TOWARDS EQUALITY.

¹ OCUFA *Economics Benefits Manual*, 1990-91.

² *Education in Canada*, Statistics Canada, 81-229, 1990.

³ These suggestions, and the suggestions that follow, are taken, with slight modifications and a few additions, from OCUFA's two employment equity policies: "Employment Equity for Women Academics: A Positive Action Strategy," OCUFA