# THE ORIGINS AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TORONTO TECHNICAL SCHOOL, 1891 – 1904

**Kathleen Yolande Sharman**

Faculty of Education, University of Windsor,
Windsor Ontario, Canada.

Email: sharman@uwindsor.ca

## ABSTRACT

*This paper is about the school that began technical secondary education in the Province of Ontario, Canada. It is an historical case study that seeks to understand why the Toronto Technical School (TTS) was established, how it functioned for 13 years, and why it was amalgamated with public secondary education in 1904. This case history analyzes the rationale and purposes behind this first school and considers the impact of provincial control. TTS played a role that directly influenced provincial legislation which resulted in the formal recognition, public funding, and eventually, the inclusion of technical education in the public school system. The TTS still exists today and serves as a reminder of the original vision of a school designed and created for technical education. The findings of this study prompt critical questioning of the need to continue separate educational space in the absence of the kind of support needed to make it a challenging and worthwhile option for students.*

***Keywords***: *Technical high schools, vocational high schools, Toronto Technical School, Ontario*

## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to share the details and results of a case study of the Toronto Technical School (TTS) within the context of the broader socio-political frameworks. The intent being to better understand how current issues concerning technical high schools as a form of segregated schooling which stigmatizes students may have been shaped by historical events (for the purposes of this paper technical education and schools also refers to vocational education and schools). Although the TTS was established more than 100 years ago, these unique high schools still exist, and there is a current Canadian trend toward establishing high schools that cater to students who are otherwise failing or being failed by academic orientated secondary schools, suggesting that case histories of technical high schools, such as TTS, have much to offer present day discussions on segregated schooling.

The structure of this paper will begin by offering a background of broad sociological and historical trends in technical education. This background will be followed by a relevant literature review which outlines the need for case studies on individual technical schools. Next, the methods of this particular historical case study will be provided along with the analysis and findings. In conclusion, the relevance of this case study will be discussed in light of current trends.

## 2. Background

Technical and vocational secondary schools in Ontario have existed for over a century (Stamp, 1970). These schools slowly evolved from a variety of isolated educational visions inspired by economic and social upheaval. A variety of educational reforms began in the late 19th century as a result of industrial reorganization that had lasting implications for urban social life. The industrial revolution not only changed relations in the workplace, but had a profound ripple effect on the social fabric of working class culture. Conceptions of childhood, and gender roles were forever changed by the disintegration of craft culture, small scale production and apprenticeship. The effects of this changed way of life could be seen on urban streets and was rousing public alarm that inspired educational reform (Bennett, 1986).

Several early reform efforts such as Mechanic's Institutes, Domestic Science and Manual Training programs, Industrial Schools, and Technical Schools, evolved in isolation of each other for well over three decades. These isolated efforts morphed into a more unified challenge to education, as support was gained from private benefactors, municipal leaders, provincial governments, and eventually earning federal support[i]. Once these efforts evolved into unified programs and schools with a supporting curriculum, job training was relocated from the factory or shop floor to the school (Comacchio, 2006). Although the transition was made, the institutionalization of job training was a contentious issue. These schools were established from overlapping and often conflicting needs between federal and provincial governments, labour, capital, reformers and educationalists (Lyons, Randawa & Paulson, 1991; Smaller, 2003; Stamp, 1970). This unsettled beginning set the tone for the continued contentious existence of stand-alone technical schools in our provincial school system to this day (Freeman, 2006; Smaller, 2003).

Stand-alone schools in particular stood out in this matter as a "separate and specialized curriculum for some students, one that ostensibly respected the democratic principal of public schooling while maintaining gender, race and class inequalities" for others (Comacchio, 2006, 409). What we know from previous research on technical and vocational secondary schools is that the unique local settings in which these schools were established have shaped their ongoing structures and functions and hence the degree to which the specialized curriculum served democratic principles or social inequality. What influences the structure and functions of a vocational school through time and space are the local combinations of economic climate and corresponding social issues, in combination with how education is used locally to meet economic and social demands (Anstead & Goodson, 1993).

Although Canada's commitment to technical education is far from unique, international trends suggest that our continuing efforts to maintain stand-alone vocational[ii] high schools are out of synch with ideological changes. In one of the only large scale meta-analyses done on vocational education, Aaron Benavot (1983) sought to explain the reasons for the establishment and decline of this type of education in several industrialised countries. Benavot's (1983) research summarized technical education in sociological terms, using three categories to explain why vocational education emerged in many societies. Each category will be described briefly.

The first category is the "*technical-functional"* approach. From this approach, technical education is explained as simply an outgrowth of, and adaptation to, the economic demands of industrialized workplaces. The second category is the "*progressive-integrationist"* explanation, which posits that technical education socializes new citizens, and the working class, to conform to middle class values and culture. The third, and final category, is a *"neo-marxist"* perspective, which views technical education as a class based solution invented by those with capitalist interests. According to the neo-marxist perspective, the introduction of technical education was an attempt to support the consolidation of corporate capitalist power.

Benavot's (1983) categories help to build an understanding of the various motives behind technical education. However, these stand-alone schools still exist, and research specific to Canada suggests that the explanations behind their presence are not so neatly categorized, but may be more aptly described, as suggested earlier, as a complex and changing balance of all these categories together, at any given time or place.

With regard to why technical and vocational schooling has declined, Benavot (1983) explains the trend using enrolment statistics, and ideological changes of several countries. The conclusion he draws is that shifting perspectives about the role of education have included "shunning differentiated education" (Benavot, 1983), and hence vocational education has declined. These schools however, still exist in most cities within Canada, and the debate continues as to what their role and function is. Recent research from Canada concedes that there is no one overarching reason as to why technical schools have emerged and continue to exist (Smaller, 2003).

An early explanation of the emergence of technical schools in Canada came from Robert Stamp (1970), who suggests in his analysis of national policy and federal-provincial relations that technical schools and programs waxed and waned with federal initiatives. The crucial element in this analysis is that the expense and demands of technical education require more than provincial coffers would allow. The recent decline of vocational schools in the last four decades has been due to the absence of federal funding. Later research supports both Benavot's (1983) and Stamp's (1970) conclusions.

In 1991, Lyons, Randhawa and Paulson suggested that the lack of consistent federal initiatives for technical education have contributed to its socially devalued status. According to this research, what hampered continued national support for vocational education were the constitutional issues surrounding responsibilities for education. Regardless of who is formally responsible for funding education, there are also more deep-seated issues of what kind of education is valued. Historically, Canadians have "valued academic education more than manual" and our lack of initiative for implementing a national system of education that properly funds classrooms that are "challenging and worthwhile, not just a ticket to second-class status" is at the root of why vocational schools are not thriving (Lyons, Randhawa & Paulson, 1991, 148-49).

This explanation of federal funding was extended by Taylor (1997) who indicated that federal funding to technical schools and secondary programs was prompted by capitalist crises. Her analysis includes a comparison of two capitalist crises during the late 1800's, and from the 1970's to the present. Taylor (1997), like previous researchers, examined the variety of motivations behind educational reforms which implemented vocational education. Her analysis presumed that educational change resulted from the struggles of different stakeholders for control of knowledge, social mobility and power, as originally proposed by Michael Apple (1993). She concludes that during the first period of industrial crises from 1868-1911, that capitalists simply wanted the federal government to reduce training costs and fulfil labour force requirements. The second capitalist crisis began in the 1970's to the present, and includes education as a complicit partner in building support for free enterprise (Taylor, 1997). In conclusion, Taylor proposes that public pressure is required to stress the need for transparent policy procedures and practices.

In summary, broad global trends indicate that the decreasing presence of vocational education is a sign of ideological changes about the purposes of education as equitable, rather than a source of inequity. Those vocational schools that have survived the "the rise and decline of vocational education" are "second-class", and in the absence of adequate federal policy procedures and funding, are "differentiated" as such. The emerging trend within Canada since the 1990's is that education has become more differentiated (Taylor 1997). With the recent emergence of historical case studies in the literature, we are beginning to understand the specific ways in which these schools are differentiated within their local community contexts, for the purposes of controlling knowledge, social mobility and power. In the literature review that follows, those studies which have contributed to understanding the origins and significance of the TTS are provided, which in turn also demonstrates the current value of case studies in the literature at this time.

## 3. Literature review

While several scholars have mentioned the first efforts to establish technical education in Toronto, or made direct reference to the Toronto Technical School, analyses dedicated solely to this first initiative have not been carried out to date. Through the existing references in this body of literature we can gain an understanding of how the Toronto technical school is viewed in the broader context of education and why a detailed analysis of TTS is needed. The literature review that follows includes those authors that have made reference to those efforts to initiate technical education in Ontario.

There are three layers to the literature on the history of technical education in Ontario. The first layer, a surface layer, describes the macrostructures involved in technical education. There is also a middle layer, focusing on critical analysis of the macro structures with regard to gender and class. Most recently a third, deep layer has been added to the literature that analyzes the microstructures of schools involving the daily functioning and experiences in a technical school. The surface layer consists of the economic, social and political settings that set the stage for public curriculum reform and new secondary schools for technical education. Stamp (1970) is an example of such work[iii]. This PhD dissertation entitled, "The campaign for technical education in Ontario 1876 - 1914" initiated the academic literature on technical education. In this work Stamp (1970) provides a comprehensive and chronological look at the major contextual factors that influenced educational change in late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Stamp (1970) noted that during this time the "ladder concept"[iv] in Ontario won awards at international exhibitions which created a lack of motivation for change. Fundamental economic changes were occurring as well which provided new challenges but also new opportunities for educational change. The 1880's marked the decline of the local market economy, and the rise of large scale manufacturing which placed demands on education particularly in urban settings like Toronto. Large scale manufacturing also influenced the emergence of organized labour groups such as the Trades and Labour Congress (TLC). The TLC was beginning to organize its goals for change around how the economy as effecting workers. These effects included the decline of the apprenticeship system and the need for alternative training. Other factors cited by Stamp (1970) include political changes such as the promotion of George Ross, who was a former teacher, turned minister of education in 1872, and then went on to become premier of Ontario in 1899. Ross was interested in curriculum reform at the secondary school level. All of these factors together created a receptive environment for the implementation of technical education. Stamp also cites Toronto as being the initial location were concrete actions to establish a technical school began with the offering of night classes in 1891.

Stamp also provided a brief outline of the beginning of the Toronto Technical School in an edited book entitled, "Studies in educational change" (Heyman, Lawson & Stamp, 1972). In this book Stamp analyzes the relationship between education, industrialization, capitalists and organized labour. Of particular importance in this analysis was the organized efforts of labour groups to deal with impact that the changing workplace on employees. Stamp saw organized labour as being concerned with the treatment of employees in the workplace as a result of industrialization, as well as filling a void that had been left by the absence of apprenticeship. The TTS was identified as being a practical application of these concerns. Stamp's work in 1970 and 1972 provide a detailed look at the historical contexts that contributed to educational change. From this work we are left with an appreciation of the myriad of factors that were in place when the TTS was established. A second layer of analysis was added to the literature when Morrison (1974) brought issues of class power to the forefront of discussions on technical education.

Morrison (1974) brought a critical lens to this body of literature by analyzing the role that the so-called progressive reformers of the day had on technical education. Morrison concluded that technical education was influenced by the aims and objectives of progressive reforms and that the benefit of such reforms did not go to the working class. Morrison suggests that the motivation behind educational reforms such as technical education was to ensure the continuation of a social class system of inequality and discrimination. This analysis is important to the research presented here because Morrison specifically mentions the TTS as a school that challenged the motivations of social reformers citing the slow show of support for the school in the form of government funding and acceptance within the education system. From the perspective put forth by Morrison, the TTS was a unique feature in the broader context of educational reforms in Ontario at the time. This perspective is supported by research conducted on the reasons behind the failure of the mechanic's institutes of Toronto.

Mechanic's institutes were a government initiative that emerged as the apprenticeship system was fading and urban social issues became a concern for government. These institutes did not flourish however

and the two articles discussed here suggest reasons for the demise of such schools. Blanchard (1981) and Wiseman (1981) both note in separate analyses that the failure of mechanic's institutes was due in part because they did not meet the needs of the diverse working class in Toronto, many of whom held disdain for the moralistic tones of the schools. At the time the government initiated the mechanic's institutes within free lending libraries they were intended to create a "better worker, and more tractable citizen", serving as "bulwarks against revolution and disorder" (Blanchard, 1981, 393). Both of these studies are relevant to the present research because they support Morrison's conclusion that there were overt attempts at social control, and also make direct reference to one of the strongest supporters of the TTS, D.J. O'Donoghue. These studies site O'Donoghue as gaining his early education from a mechanic's institutes in Ottawa. O'Donoghue who was a printer at the time went on to become the first MPP leader on a labour platform in Ottawa. The work of both Blanchard and Wiseman suggest that the government of Ontario was willing to embark on new types of education and when mechanic's institutes failed they pursued other avenues that held potential and O'Donoghue played a prominent role in offering suggestions. Soon after his success in Ottawa, O'Donoghue moved to Toronto and emerged as one of the most important labour leaders during the 1880's (Kealey, 1980).

Not all of the perspectives in this body of literature concluded that TTS supported the working class in Toronto. Research conducted by Rafferty (1995) suggests that the TTS's emphasis on science over art in their curriculum contributed to the goals and objectives set out by middle class social reform for technical education. According to Rafferty, promoters of the TTS sold out to formal education at the expense of working class culture. Rafferty (1995) saw apprenticeship as a mode of education for working class that valued art and culture which was compromised with an emphasis on science at TTS which served as a model for the province. The contention that technical education served as a tool for social control had been established in previous research, but Rafferty (1995) questioned the function and purpose of the TTS in the educational reforms of the time suggesting that the emphasis on science over art inadvertently served middle class and capitalist agendas.

Goodson & Dowbiggan (1991) introduce a third layer of analysis that focuses on the microstructures of power as they are played out at the level of everyday functioning of the school. Two such case studies exist in Ontario, in London on the Beal School (Anstead & Goodson, 1991; Goodson & Dowbiggan, 1991), and in Toronto on the ABC vocational school (Freeman, 2006). Both of these case studies continue to focus on issues of power and class, however by looking at the level of everyday experience a more detailed appreciation for how the macro structural elements impact individuals was obtained. This is the level of analysis required for a further understanding of the TTS. The need in the literature for case studies on technical schools was the inspiration for the current study. A more detailed look at the TTS is needed to understand the how and why Ontario's first technical school was established. The present historical investigation adds to the body of literature by taking a closer look at the various stakeholders and how and why they participated in initiating the Toronto Technical School. It examines a popular school, whose supporters were able to rally adequate funding, local press coverage, public relations and acceptability within the existing system of public secondary education. This historical case study will discuss how the school was established in relation to the influences and themes identified in previous research. The details of how this analysis was carried out will be provided in the section that follows.

## 4. Historian's craft

Historians must accept that the historical record is never fixed, never complete, but always open to be reexamined under a different critical lens or according to new historical evidence. To make matters more complex, there is no accepted historical methodology and methods. It is therefore necessary to outline the process of how a specific historical inquiry has taken place to illustrate the methods used. The basic purpose of historical research is to analyze significant aspects of an event that occurred in the past through a systematic collection of data to describe how, and explain why particular events occurred. Given this purpose, I will describe the system I have put in place to identify data, collect data, and analyze data.

After conducting a literature review on the history of technical and vocational schools in Ontario, I was unable to find a study dedicated solely to the establishment of the first technical high school[v]. References to the Toronto Technical School in the literature clearly indicated its significance as model school for the province, but I did not locate a detailed record of this school during the thirteen years it existed before being

amalgamated into the provincial school system. I located the primary sources indicated in the academic literature which relied heavily on news articles, industrial reports, school records, labour reports, and city council minutes. Since the school was established by an act of city council, the minutes of council meeting were used to identify key dates, issues, and individuals involved with the TTS. Using the names, associated organizations and correspondence cited in the city council records, along with the sources indicated in the literature, this study utilized 7 types of sources: council records, letters of correspondence, news articles, educational reports, provincial legislation, school pamphlets, and photographs. All of these sources were located in the Toronto municipal archives, the Ontario Provincial Archives, and digitized online databases were used to obtain the relevant news articles.

With respect to analysis, it has been indicated that this is a case study, meaning that this study focuses on just one school. This label has particular meaning, because case studies do not simply focus on one thing, the unitary focus has a purpose. The purpose of singling out the TTS for study is important as it was not only the first school of its kind in Ontario, but also because it served as a model for the province. Therefore, the details of this school mark the beginning of technical education in the province. The analysis proceeded with an awareness of the way TTS has been represented in the literature, and examined what new contributions could be made here. The themes that emerged in the literature are that Toronto had a unique position on technical secondary schooling which emerged amidst a unique social, economic, and historical context, creating a vision for education that conflicted with other popular educational reforms of the day. There are also contradictions in the literature, for instance, Rafferty (1995) views the technical school board in Toronto "sold out" the artistic cultural traditions of skilled trade apprenticeships for science. Any analysis of the TTS must consider these themes and conclusions. The analysis of all the primary sources mentioned are guided by the existing ideas about the origins and significance of the TTS, and examine how the primary sources compare and contrast to those ideas, and what contributions this makes to our understanding of technical high schools today as part of the never ending dialogue which constructs history with a purpose.

## 5. Analysis

As a growing urban industrial center, Toronto was in a unique position to challenge an educational system that did not serve the needs of urban industrial communities[vi]. Ironically, Ontario's educational system created a situation in which many educational policymakers were resistant to change even in the face of public support. In the thick of the economic and social change however, the city of Toronto was an apt testing ground for initiating a publically funded technical secondary school.

Toronto had public, economic and local political support for technical education. A strong organized front emerged that included city council, various manufacturers, the stationary engineers, the Toronto Architectural Guild, the Trades and Labour Council, the Board of Trade and some prominent local educators. Understanding the local issues and needs of Toronto, city council members called for educational changes to suit the needs of this particular city (Heap, 1991). The local support from various organizations served educational change well, as they provided government with information and pressure for funding. The support from the public was apparent by the numbers enrolled in schools such as the Ontario Society of Artists, and the School of Practical Science. While there were efforts elsewhere to lobby the provincial and federal governments for recognition and funding, the unique context of Toronto set the stage for change.

The efforts to establish the Toronto Technical School came primarily from labour leaders. Although the literature identifies government concern for urban social problems, progressive social reformers, educational traditions, and changing philosophies, it is labour organizations that had the most to gain from technical education. Formal education for working class youth would suit union objectives well. Removing children from the workplace would eliminate non-union workers and cheap labour that held back the fight for a living wage. Without an apprenticeship system there was no need for children in the workplace. Also, control of apprenticeship was a great power once held by craft guilds who could control the quality and number of skilled labourers and hence the value of labour. Like their predecessors the craft guilds, control of, or at least playing a role in education was also an objective for unions.

At precisely the same time period in which unions had the most to gain from promoting technical education they had also reached their peak in organizational power. In 1867 union organization and strength had reached unprecedented levels in Toronto. The Knights of Labour had united 53 locals including the Toronto Trades and Labour Council. The philosophy of the Knights of Labour rested on transforming

society through education (Kealey, 1980, p. 195). This philosophy was important to the Knights of Labour and how they conducted labour negotiations. Better working conditions were always sought out with educated representation and workers. It was believe that the dissemination of economic information as well as conditions in other cities would help to avoid strikes. At times however strikes could not be avoided. As fate would have it one of the most notorious series of strikes in the history of Toronto would eventually lead to the opening of the TTS.

As stated earlier one of the primary concerns aside from education were working conditions. The Street Railway Company of Toronto was known for its unfair labour practices[vii]. There had been frequent strikes with the street railway since 1886, but the lease to hold the monopoly over transportation on the city streets was to expire in 1891. The unfair track record of the streetcar railway had united workers on this topic throughout Toronto. The expiration of the lease in 1891 was chosen strategically to gather the support of the entire city to improve working conditions at the Street Railway Company and a city take-over was planned. Support for a public take-over of the street railway was not difficult to gather. According to Kealey (1980) "Frank Smith's Street Car Railway was easily the most despised symbol of corporate capitalism" in Toronto (p. 280). A new committee was established on city council to deal with the street railway issue. On this committee was no other than D.J. O'Donoghue who helped to organize the take-over as well as a one year experimental running of the railway. Once the railway was taken-over, an unexpected motion was put forward to hand the business over to a suitable new operator. This motion was upheld by a contentious vote which took many council members by surprise. This decision to give up the railway caused great friction amongst council. A division occurred which split those councilors who favored giving the railway up with the committee members (supported by most of the city) who envisioned a publically run transportation system.

After three months of investigations and debate over bribed councilors and corrupt practices, the labour leaders of the city called a general meeting with plans to condemn city council. The Toronto Trades and Labour Council had blacklisted 14 alderman in 1892 as a result of this scandal (Kealey, 1980).

Once the dust had settled city council was left to ponder what city council should do with the $12,000 dollars they earned in profits during the three weeks the streetcar railway ran under public ownership. With several new council members elected due to the controversy over the streetcar railway, the stage was set for educational change.

Since 1888 the council had been discussing the kind of education that would suit the needs of Toronto citizens. The correspondence between the minister of education, George Ross and Mayor of Toronto, Edward Frederick Clarke with regards to education provides evidence that those who supported the Toronto Technical School directly influenced legislation and did so with the support of strong union organizations such as the Knights of Labour. With a firm presence of labour representation, city council in Toronto initiated not only local change and reforms in education but also changes in educational legislation at the provincial level. The dynamics between city politicians and provincial government were mediated using not only direct communication but also local media coverage from the Toronto Star which stood as a staunch supporter of the Toronto Technical School.

### 5.1 The Power of City Council to Enact Educational Change

On October the 25th, 1888, Edward Frederick Clarke[viii], mayor of Toronto and MPP, wrote a letter to follow discussions that had taken place in a previous meeting with George Ross who was at that time the minister of education[ix]. In this letter Mayor Clarke put forth the position of council on the topic of educational change that was needed in Toronto. Clarke proposed that two new courses be offered at the School of Practical Science (part of the University of Toronto) on behalf of the city, via a city by-law. Clarke further explained that council desired education beyond "ornamental scholarship" and required education that was of practical and everyday use to the community such as applied chemistry and applied mechanics. Ross tried to come up with a compromise that was unsuitable to Clarke. In conclusion, Clarke stated that if Ross could not better accommodate the educational needs of the city, council would take matters into their own hands. Clarke's letter is evidence of the passion for educational change that was felt on city council leading up to the establishment of the Toronto Technical School. It is also an example of the power Toronto had to enact educational change. Six days later Ross replied to Clarke's ultimatum by stating that he wished to avoid a long and tedious legal battle and would accept the generous offer of $6,000 from council and use it establish the new subjects and increase funding to the School of Practical Science by $29,000. Ross had

made this decision in consultation with the Toronto Board of Trade who also supported technical education citing numerous examples of the need for skilled labour[x]. This desire for educational change from a variety of stakeholders convinced Ross to make this small first step toward change. There was however, much more change required and the city would take a leading role in that change from this point on.

On February 18th, 1889, a committee was organized by city council to look into the matter of technical education. The first priority for the committee was to establish evening technical classes. After sending out a circular to more than 150 organizations and individuals who could offer insight into the needs for night classes it was determined that night classes were needed based on the positive responses from all who were contacted. These responses were forwarded by the committee to George Ross who in turn amended the Free Libraries Act in order to empower the Library Board to oversee night classes in Toronto. Ross also offered the libraries $2,000 to establish such classes. This was not acceptable to the library board who reported their regrets to council. City council was not satisfied with the response put forth by Ross either and responded with greater and more detailed demands for educational change.

The technical education committee crafted a report that would outline the specific needs desired in Toronto, including a full curriculum of subjects, materials required, and a budget for maintenance of a new school and staff. This detailed outline was entitled "Report no. 21" and was passed in city council on July of 1890[xi]. The city tired of requesting change from the province planned on establishing change themselves through a by-law. After the by-law was passed council was informed in writing by the city solicitor that they did not have the power to establish a school. The solicitor was instructed by council to contact George Ross and request new legislation that would allow Toronto to establish a school for technical education[xii]. As instructed the city solicitor wrote to Ross requesting legislation that would enable the city to establish a school as described in report no. 21, which was included in the correspondence[xiii]. In the next session of parliament George Ross ensured that Toronto was able to establish a technical school as planned through an amendment that was made to The Municipal Act on May 4, 1891[xiv]. This legislative change represents the initial recognition of technical education by the province. It is the first accommodation for technical schools by the province and it began as a Toronto city by-law. With the power to open a school, all that Toronto council had to do now was find a way to fund the project. Without much debate the profits from the street car railway were used to fund the new school. A school board was established and their first priority was locating a suitable home for the school. Plans were made to open the school at St. Lawrence Hall which could accommodate 150 students. Initial registrants totaled 307, and plans were then made to open the school in the old Wycliffe College location. With a response from students that exceeded all expectations of the council, the Toronto Technical School was opened on December 7, 1891.

### 5.2 The Power of the Press to Mediate Support for TTS

Mediating support for TTS through the press was a strategy that the Knights of Labour used starting as early as 1894 in a regular labour column that appeared in the Toronto Daily Star (The Star). Once the TTS was established in its functions as a school, it would hold regular exhibitions and public events that would prominently display the works and accomplishments of the students. The Star would play a crucial role in announcing these events and also reporting on the events afterward. Included in most of these reports were noted absences by city councilors or other leaders who would be named as well as what activities or interests distracted them from the school event. As a result of the detailed press coverage most events at the TTS were well attended. Award presenters and speakers often included George Ross, members of council, D.J. O'Donoghue as well as other labour leaders.

The role of the Toronto Daily Star would also prove to be invaluable in the efforts to keep the school open at times when council was divided on major issues. Whenever the school required more funding, staff, equipment and larger accommodations the star represented a primary tool to gain public support when technical education was the sole responsibility of the city, and the demands of the school were outgrowing the city budget. The role of the Toronto Star is undeniable, with constant articles on council debates on such issues as amalgamation, and overcrowding. If anyone posed a challenge to technical education, The Star would not hesitate to highlight the challenge as a negative effort. If there was any neglect on the part of council regarding the school, The Star was sure to keep the pressure on to resolve the issue. The Star was always an undying supporter of technical students, staff, and the labour supporters of the technical school. The Toronto Star also kept a record of provincial government reaction and response to local initiatives

for technical education. This careful record traces verbal promises of government grants to the Toronto Technical School, with later legislation that illustrates once again that the Toronto Technical School had direct influence on legislation for technical education in the Province of Ontario. The Toronto Star also ensured that those verbal promises from the government were public knowledge, which helped the effort to bring about the first step toward provincial responsibility for technical education, the focus of the next section.

### 5.3 Conditional Provincial Funding Deepens Divisions and Presents more Barriers

Another important legislative change for technical education was, An Act Respecting Technical Schools, which was passed in 1897. This provincial legislation was created in direct response to the needs of the Toronto Technical School. This legislative change confirmed provincial responsibility for technical education. Ross had witnessed the positive reception of the school within the community during his attendance at several school functions. As the minister of education, Ross could not deny any longer the need for the province to support education that was so well received by Toronto's citizens.

The varied reaction of stakeholders to the growing technical school, and its increasing needs and costs, represented the levels of commitment for technical education. There was no doubt that everyone on the technical school board wanted technical education, but as the technical school board became more demanding of the city's and council's resources, divisions between council, industry leaders, and labour began to show. According to the Act Respecting Technical Education, in 1897, the city was expected to provide a permanent and adequate home for the technical school before the province would provide any grants. This put tremendous pressure on city council, and provided significant motivation for labour to continue to emphasize the need for this type of education. Labour interests also stressed their expertise in knowing what was adequate for the technical school, which was fully supported by the Toronto Star, adding additional pressure to council. During this time, one labour leader in particular demonstrated leadership in promoting technical education, D.J. O'Donoghue who became more vocal in curriculum reform efforts. Promoters like J.E. Farewell, through his paper entitled "technical education"[xv], help us to understand the unique position of labour and its role in the Toronto Technical School. Also emphasized was the point that Technical Schools have a unique place in education that is separate from manual training efforts at the elementary level. Those promoting manual education hoped to include technical education in the collegiate schools for the purpose of promoting better economic conditions, as a well as safer working conditions. D.J. O'Donoghue and other labour representatives were adamantly opposed to manual training, emphasizing that the primary focus and benefit of technical education should be with the "improved quality of the working class through the knowledge of scientific principles"[xvi]. As manual training made headway in collegiate schools, and the costs and challenges of the Toronto Technical School grew greater and greater, this philosophical principle would become the foundation for maintaining the technical school above all else. Unfortunately, not everyone on the technical school board felt the same as the labour representatives. This struggle within the board led to a board restructuring that was an attempt to limit power of labour representation regarding technical education. The internal struggles on the board also stalled any progress toward establishing a permanent home for the school, and hence receiving provincial government funding for the technical school. While these divisions on the city council were stalling any progress toward obtaining provincial grants other stakeholders began to consider the possibility of the province integrating technical education into the high schools.

The manufacturers association began to support the integration of technical education into the public school system. This new idea of amalgamation came as a relief to some city councilors who felt that the TTS was demanding too much of municipal resources. In addition, the frequent negative reports of who slighted the TTS had grown tired in the press. In the early spring of 1903, Bill 101 went before the provincial legislature proposing amalgamation of TTS into public education. This bill was passed resulting in "An Act Respecting Boards of Education in certain Cities, Towns and Villages", and had the effect of joining the public high school and technical school boards. This legislation placed the Toronto Technical School within the realm of public high schools, but allowed it to remain a unique school that balanced technical and academic education. Some labour representation was able to continue within the Board of Education as indicated by the election of James Simpson, but the amalgamation was also designed to specifically disband the Toronto technical school board. The move to amalgamate the school, its equipment, and staff, while at the same time disbanding the board, was viewed as forced removal of organized labour. On November

2, 1904 the TTS officially became a provincial high school, but one with a unique curriculum and history. The school functions to this day in Toronto, under the name of the Central Technical School. The Central Technical School still bears Toronto's coat of arms, a structural reminder of the story told here.

## 6. Conclusion: the significance of the Toronto technical school

The efforts to establish the Toronto Technical School had direct influence on provincial legislation for technical education, but legislation also had a direct impact on TTS. The original vision and intention of the Toronto Technical School was an organized labour effort to establish education that would ensure the value of workers through an emphasis on science in the curriculum. This vision became secondary as efficiency and minimizing costs of the school became a priority for the Toronto city council. The original vision and purpose also became secondary as the province began to see TTS as a potential part of the public school system. As a result, divisions on the city council and within the Technical School board became exacerbated with legislation in 1897 that place demanding conditions on the city's resources. Unable to withstand the demands at both the local and provincial level, the Toronto Technical School was integrated into the public school system, and it lost its unique vision and became a part of the larger purpose and function of the public school system in 1904. The fact that the school was able to continue to exist as a unique technical school, and does to this day is a haunting reminder of that vision. I suggest however that the continued existence of separate technical schools in the absence of the original purpose and intentions of that separation is problematic. The promoters of the TTS envisioned educational space in which working class students existed as a central concern. Technical schools that are separate but amalgamated into a larger preexisting system of education transformed that same space into nothing more than segregated schooling. The struggle for power over education in order to maintain that original vision is significant to understanding the role of the TTS in technical education. It is also significant that this power struggle was lost by labour leaders who were defenseless against the legislation that amalgamated TTS in the public school system in 1904.

Do recent perceptions of vocational schools as a "second class" (Lyons, Randawa & Paulson, 1991), "a losing track" (Smaller, 2003), or segregated (Freeman, 2006) have any connection to the historical events laid out in this study? What purpose does continued physical separation now represent in light of the loss of its original intention to be independent of the provincial academic school system? When does separate space created for empowerment become segregation? The story of the TTS brings all of these questions to mind. Given recent trends toward continued school specialization for the purpose of catering to social groups who have been identified as having needs not being met by the existing system this history is not only relevant but timely. Can we trust a system that has such large and varied margins to create separate empowering spaces for those who are marginalized? Or, are we simply allowing walls to be built up on the margins of education? Catering to diversity is an admirable goal, but one that must be tempered by the critical understanding of schools as socially constructed institutions that are instrumental in controlling knowledge, social mobility and power (Apple, 1993). This dialogue must include understanding of themes which emerge through time and space, requiring not only dialogue amongst historians, but platform in international discussions of technical education and training.

[i] Federal financial support for technical secondary schools began in 1919, and ended in 1967.

[ii] Although the terms "technical" and "vocational" have different meanings historically, this paper uses the terms interchangeably as the categories once established by federal guidelines have shifted over time. I often use technical when referring to schools established under early federal initiatives, and "vocational" for high schools established after 1967.

[iii] There are other works that fit into this category but for the purposes of this paper Stamp is being used because of the relevance it has to the Ontario context as well as to the Toronto Technical School. Other Works include;

Benavot, A. (1983). The rise and decline of vocational education. Sociology of Education, 56, 63-76.

Bryce, R.C. (1970). The technical and vocational training assistance act of 1961-1967. Doctoral dissertation: University of Alberta.

Enns, D.S. (1982). Technical education and industrial training in early 20th century Canada; The royal commission of 1910. MA Thesis; Dalhousie University. AAT MK57940

Lloyd, C.C. (1985). John Seath and the development of technical education in Ontario, 1890-1920. Doctoral dissertation; University of Toronto. AAT NL23467.

Lyons, J.E., Randawa, B.S. & Paulson, N.A. (1991). The development of vocational education in Canada. Canadian Journal of Education, 16, 2, 137-150. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/1494967

[iv] The ladder concept was a metaphor for the continuity that existed in subject areas from early elementary to

secondary school.

[v] See Heap, R. (1991). Although this article is dedicated solely to the TTS, its purpose is to outline Domestic Science programs at the school in contrast to broader campaigns in the province. This article provides evidence of the unique context and support offered to technical education in Toronto however!

[vi] For full discussions of any of the assertions made in this paper as well as locations and full citations of primary sources please see my (Sharman, K., 2006) master's thesis by the same title.

[vii] For a complete and detailed description of labour relations and earlier strikes at the Toronto Street Railway Company see Kealey, 1980.

[viii] Mayor Clarke has been mentioned by prominent labour historians such as Gregory Kealey (1980) who provided biographical information about Clarke and his role in labour organization in Toronto. Information on Clarke and his involvement in printers unions in Toronto can be found in Rafferty (1995).

[ix] Letter was obtained from the Ontario Archives: "Toronto, Corporation City, 1888-1892", RG 2-29-1-209.

[x] Solicited letters to Ross from members of the Toronto Board of Trade, Ontario Archives, RG 2-42-0-6602.

[xi] Report no. 21. Appendix no. 299 of the Minutes of Proceedings of the Council of the Corporation of the City of Toronto. 1890. City of Toronto Archives.

[xii] Establishment of technical schools, in the Minutes of the Proceedings of the Council of the Corporation of the City of Toronto. 1890. City of Toronto Archives.

[xiii] City of Toronto sub-committee on technical education. 1890. Ontario Archives. RG 2-42-06597.

[xiv] The Municipal Amendment Act, 1891. Statutes of the Province of Ontario.

[xv] Farewell, J.E. A Paper on Technical Education. Presented at the Ontario Educational Association, Easter Meeting, 1899. CHIM no. 89740.

[xvi] As stated in report no. 21

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