

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 175 090

EA 011 865

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TITLE The Growing Momentum for Sex Equity: Case Studies from California.
PUB DATE Apr 79
NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Francisco, California, April -12, 1979)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adoption (Ideas); *Change Strategies; *Diffusion; Educational Improvement; *Educational Programs; Elementary Secondary Education; Models; Sex Discrimination; *Sex Fairness
IDENTIFIERS California: Title IX Education Amendments 1972

ABSTRACT

As part of a symposium evaluating the prospects for eliminating sex discrimination in schools through institutional advocacy, network building, and planned interventions, this paper summarizes the successes and setbacks of sex equity advocacy in California. It reviews theories of innovation diffusion in organizations, documents their application in the advocacy of the California Coalition for Sex Equity in Education (CCSEE), and presents a series of vignettes from case studies to illustrate problems encountered, the change strategies employed, and projected outcomes. Based on the stages of the adoption and diffusion of a new idea, CCSEE has designed and presents a change model that includes a systematic process for problem-solving, identification, and resolution of barriers to the achievement of sex equity.
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THE GROWING MOMENTUM FOR SEX EQUITY:
CASE STUDIES FROM CALIFORNIA

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paper presented to the Annual Conference of the American Educational
Research Association, San Francisco, California, April 1979. Final
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THE GROWING MOMENTUM FOR SEX EQUITY: CASE STUDIES FROM CALIFORNIA
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American society has long tended to assign and limit roles on the basis of race and ethnicity. Quite suddenly we have come to realize that we do exactly the same thing on the basis of sex. The results of which infringe upon basic rights, limit individual opportunity, and arouse strong emotion in both adherents and victims.

A growing body of laws, regulations and court decisions have had the effect of placing upon educational institutions the responsibility to identify, prevent, and eliminate discriminatory practices and policies which result in inequality of opportunity and participation on the basis of sex.

In the last few years, great efforts have been made to assist public educators to eliminate sexism in accordance with the legal mandates only to find that educational institutions are remarkably resistant to change efforts.

The forces acting for change--social pressures and the law--while powerful movers in the educational system, are not sufficient in themselves. There must also be change in the day-to-day actions of individuals making up the system--teachers, administrators, students, parents, school boards, etc.--in order for real change to occur. Only when these individuals have the opportunity to become aware of the nature and magnitude of the problem and the need for change can discrimination be eliminated. Then and only then will they be ready to explore and practice alternatives of attitude, belief, and behavior that will effect change. Attitudes can be challenged and expanded if teachers, administrators, parents, students, and board members deal with the subtle aspects of discrimination. The effectiveness of any program depends upon the conviction and skill with which these persons implement non-sexist understandings. Raising the sensitivity and awareness level may not have enough of an influence

on conviction--enough, that is, to cause teachers and administrators to sharpen their skills in implementing attitude change strategies. Therefore, a systematic process for problem identification and problem solving with the provision of identifying innovators and opinion leaders who make up the human power base in a school district is evident. If these individuals become advocates for sex equity in the school districts, their proximity to the educational program makes them logical change agents to initiate efforts to obtain sex equity.

Thus, the application of "sex-equity" as a new idea in the implementation of successful changes in school programs became a focal point for the development of the California Coalition for Sex Equity in Education (CCSEE).

Now almost four years old, this organization brought together the Association of California School Administrators (11,000 membership), the California State Department of Education (Project SEE), Project EQUITY, a Sex Desegregation Assistance Center located at California State University at Fullerton, and within the past year, the California School Boards Association.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In 1976, the coalition received its first contract with Women's Educational Equity Act to conduct workshops for Title IX trainers in elementary and secondary school districts throughout Region IX. This subcontract was awarded through the auspices of the Council of Chief State School Officers, Sex Equity Workshop Project. Some 515 school, community and student representatives met in San Francisco to participate in 18 hours of training in the use of materials and strategies to implement Title IX.

In 1977, the coalition received a grant designed to conduct follow-up workshops for experienced Title IX leaders throughout the Regions. The

purpose was to extend their awareness and understanding of materials, strategies, and procedures to assist them in the implementation of Title IX. From this workshop period, a strategies notebook, TOWARD EQUITY, was compiled.

In 1978, the coalition received a Women's Educational Equity Research Grant which is currently in progress and will serve as one reference for this paper.

To date, the coalition members individually and collectively have successfully provided training and technical assistance to over 5,000 persons, representing all levels of the educational hierarchy, as well as the community and students. They have come from large and medium size school districts, from urban, rural and suburban areas, and have received consultation, technical assistance, demonstration, training, and sometimes legislative intervention. However, the overall efforts in trying to obtain sex equity have not always been successful. Failures often lie in the general approach to developing a district contact network, as well as the "outside forces", such as finance, which limits the resources of a district. Therefore, the coalition recognized the importance of organizing efforts around explicit strategies which would diminish and/or overcome the constraints of limited resources both in time, people, and materials, and set up a communication and dissemination network within the districts to provide a continuing subsystem to support change.

THE ADOPTION OF CHANGE

To implement successful change in school programs there are two distinct processes which must be taken into account, namely, adoption and diffusion of new ideas. The adoption of a new idea will only occur when an individual perceives that there is a problem to be solved, and a different course of action to be taken. Those who are interested in change must then create an

awareness of the problem, and develop a problem solving strategy which will become the vehicle through which change can be made. A series of vignettes from case studies will serve to illustrate problems, issues, and strategies that are illustrative of the kind of discrimination problems on which we would work.

CASE STUDY

Throughout her eight years of elementary education, Jessica has been identified as an excellent student, attentive, studious and ambitious. Her claim to fame upon entering High School is that she can do anything she sets her mind to doing. Upon meeting with her counselor for the first time, Jessica indicates her desire to be an Electronics Engineer upon graduation from College. She requests that Math and Science courses be a part of her program, starting in her Freshman year. The counselor congratulates her on such high ambitions, but feels she is a little too young to make career decisions. Therefore, he suggests that she let Math and Science wait for a year or two until she completely understands career planning. Additionally, since the Math and Science classes are mostly male students, she would probably feel out of place and find it difficult competing with them in her first year of High School.

The Issue

Lack of sensitivity regarding sexist attitudes and stereotyped behaviors.

Change Strategies

Awareness activities incorporated into training seminars. Consultation and diagnosis to respond to incongruities between the system and the goals of sex equity.

Preparing counselors through workshops to accept the importance of their role as change agents in encouraging students to enroll in non-traditional programs.

Projected Outcomes

Counselor awareness of personal sex biases.

Development of short and long range goals for the overall implementation of sex equity in counseling programs.

The role of the counselor is to assist in the active promotion of the personal growth of each student. The strategy for change is the knowledge infused into the system which is implicit and instrumental in expanding the mission of sex equity. Although some forces for change are external to local school districts, the adoption of new ideas by individuals within the system is by far the most powerful force for change. These ideas are then diffused by the interaction of individuals within the system.

THE CONCEPT OF SEX EQUITY

The adoption of a new idea is a mental process through which an individual passes from first hearing about a new idea to the final adoption or implementation of this new idea or concept. In this case, the concept of sex equity. The adoption of this idea can manifest itself in a myriad of ways, but an individual's perception of the ways that sex equity can best be accomplished relates first of all to the norms and values of the social system of the school and community in which they operate.

CASE STUDY

The population of Bluefield has a large concentration of Spanish and Asian cultures. When Title IX became a reality in the public school systems, a group of Spanish parents converged upon the school district

protesting the fact that their daughters and sons were being educated to assume roles not complimentary to their culture. One month later, the Asian community filed a grievance against the school district charging discrimination on the basis of race and sex. The charge specifically stated that parents have an inalienable right to determine the destiny of their children based upon their own religious beliefs as well as race, culture, and sex. The charge further stated that the teachers were misrepresenting cultures by teaching students that males and females had the right to participate in any activity if they had the interest and ability to do so.

The Issue

Dealing with conflicting cultural values of various minority groups.

Change Strategies

Awareness activities to bring about an understanding of differing cultural values and commonality of goals.

Collaborative consultation to bring in minority consultants and sympathetic minority community members who are sex equity advocates to develop a working plan.

Training and awareness to combat the negative effects of racism and sexism.

Projected Outcomes

Achievement of an understanding of differing cultural values.

Establishment of a working relationship between differing ethnic groups in order to combat sex bias and stereotyping.

When working with community people holding traditional values who are opposed to sex equity, it must be remembered that many of the traditional values that these people hold have validity. It is not a matter of challenging the validity of these beliefs, but working with them to determine whether the education that they desire for their children is appropriate to the world and lifestyle these children will face in the future. More importantly to the adoption of the concept of sex equity, that there is nothing wrong with traditional beliefs and values as long as they are perceived as not limiting the options of children.

DIFFUSION OF SEX EQUITY CONCEPTS

There is a link between the adoption of the idea of sex equity and its ultimate implementation, which is the diffusion process. While the adoption of an idea is an individual matter, diffusing the idea throughout the entire educational system can only happen as interaction occurs among persons. Therefore, any useful model for achieving the goal of sex equity must include a process and subsequent action steps which will provide for constantly raising the level of individual awareness regarding sex equity, and providing for the interaction which is needed to help those who are already aware of the problem of inequality to interact with those who are yet undecided about the merits of the idea.

CASE STUDY

A recent school district reconfiguration of grade levels has resulted in teachers and students receiving textbooks that are anywhere from ten to twenty years old, and are the only texts available for use in many classrooms. Most, if not all of these texts are sexist. Needless to say, the district has little money to purchase new

textbooks, which would certainly exceed six figures.

At several board meetings, students, teachers, and the community protest the use of these text in the classroom, not only for the sex stereotyping, but also the out-dated information contained in each text. The school board, although sympathetic to the teacher and student claim, indicate that money is just not available for this type of massive purchase, and suggest the use of newspapers, reference books, and the public library for updated materials. As far as sexism is concerned, it will have to wait until monies are available.

The Issue

Infusing sex equity concepts using sexist materials.

Change Strategies

Exploring wealth of data available for non-sexist instruction.

Diagnosis of current curriculum strengths and weakness relating to sex equity.

Provide training to staff to identify sexist practices.

Involve local agencies, parents, and students to provide ongoing evaluation and support.

Projected Outcomes

To maintain sex equity concepts as important priorities.

To sensitize staff and students regarding sexist and non-sexist environmental indicators.

To increase district consciousness of non-sexist teaching methods and materials.

Changing curriculum content, behavior, and attitudes becomes the essential link between the idea and the diffusion process. Extreme sensitivity to the needs of students must be a major consideration of instructional personnel acting as change agents. Research indicates that group pressure for adoption becomes more intense as the number of "adopters" increases. Research also indicates that the adoption of a new idea generally follows a bell shaped curve over time and approaches normality. Diffusion is accomplished through interaction between individuals who have adopted a new idea and those who have not yet adopted the idea. Adoption, then, is a product of human interaction, diffusion, the process.

NEW IDEAS A CONTINUOUS PROCESS

Adoption of new ideas is a continuous dimension in that individuals will adopt a new idea at different times. In deciding whether or not to adopt the new idea, an individual considers the relative advantage of the new idea, the compatibility of the idea with existing values and past practices, the complexity which is the degree to which an innovation is relatively difficult to understand and use, the divisibility which is the degree to which an innovation may be tried on a limited basis, and the communicability or the degree which the results of the new idea may be passed on to others.

CASE STUDY

Norma, a sophomore in a local high school has always been interested in athletics. As a child, she played baseball, football, and basketball with her brothers, and was always able to hold her own. The athletic program offered in high school for the sophomores proves to be rather unstimulating for Norma, so during the spring of the year when the school announces the formation of a baseball

team, she requests to be allowed to try out. The coach recognizes Norma's potential for making the team, but considering the fact that females have never played on the baseball team, her request is rejected. Norma appeals her rejection to the school administration, where she is told she may join the girl's softball team. Norma then appeals this decision by speaking to the members of the baseball team, who then request to the coach that she be at least permitted to try out for the team. After much discussion, Norma is permitted to try out, and incidentally, makes the team.

The Issue

Evaluating students fairly in coeducational instructional settings.

Change Strategies

Awareness of the needs, interests, and abilities of all students.

Resource linkage between the staff and the students.

Team building to provide models which demonstrate exemplary programs.

Collaborative consultation among athletes, coaches, and administrators.

Projected Outcomes

To provide both boys and girls equal access to physical activities.

To recognize the achievements of boys and girls in an equitable manner.

To break down the sex stereotyping within the physical education and athletic programs among both the staff and students.

Positive self-concepts are strengthened and the inherent values of a meaningful physical activity program are embraced by each of the students to be

served and not just those who already possess innate abilities. Practical insights and beginning action steps which can facilitate sex equitable programs to meet individual needs, interests, and abilities of students call for a positive interaction between teachers, administrators, students, and the public at large. The basic recommended action step could very well be "Try It, You'll Like It".

DECISION MAKING PROCESS

Since adoption is one type of decision-making, the individual begins by taking on a new idea and deciding to discard the practices that the idea replaces. The individual decision-making process is usually broken into four stages. In the first stage, awareness, the individual is exposed to the new idea but lacks complete information about the idea and is perhaps yet unmotivated to seek further information. In the first case study, a counselor was exposed to the idea that a female student could be interested in a non-traditional career. The second case study exposed the community to conflicting cultural values, while the third case study exposed the concept of using sexist materials for non-sexist instruction, and case study four exposed the awareness of students and the need for linkage between the staff and students. For those interested in promoting change, the primary function of the awareness stage then, is to initiate a sequence of later stages that lead to eventual adoption of the new idea or innovation.

In any planned change strategy there must be a provision for the second stage in which an individual has an opportunity to become "interested" in the new idea or concept, and gather additional information about it. In each of the case studies a planned awareness activity for administrators, teachers, students, and community is an important strategy for change. The activity

provides the interest to motivate the participant. The individual is more psychologically involved with the new idea at the interest stage than at the awareness stage. The individual's personality as well as the values and norms of the school and community may effect where the information is sought, and how that information is interpreted.

The next stage in the adoption process is the evaluation stage. Here an individual mentally tries to apply the new concept to the present and anticipate future situations, and then decide whether or not to try it. In case study one, the counselor must achieve a mind set to acknowledge that a female can be an Electronic Engineer. Case study two finds a cultural community in conflict with what one could call a cultural myth. The concept of the past in conflict with the present and future. Case study three thwarts the present for the future, while case study four, anticipates the future through immediate action. If the individual feels the advantages of the new idea outweigh the disadvantages, he or she will probably decide to try the idea, as experienced in case study four. Trying the new idea carries a subjective risk for all individuals. There is an uncertainty about the results, and for this reason a "reinforcement effect" is needed which says the individual is on the right path. Information and advice from peers is apt to effect the individual's decision at this point. Mass communication transmits messages that are too general to provide reinforcement.

The fourth stage is the trial stage where the individuals use the new idea on a small scale in order to determine its utility in a local situation. In case study one, the counselor could provide encouragement and positive reinforcement to the female student as a trial to raise his/her

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consciousness level. The cultural communities involved in case study two could work with the school and sex equity advocates from minority communities to experience the joy of students achieving in a non-sexist environment. In case study three, reviewing the entire curriculum on a relatively small scale obviates a potential for legal non-compliance, while case study four adapted a new idea and succeeded. The main function of the trial stage is to determine its usefulness for possible complete adoption. This phase might be called the "dry run". Most persons will not completely adopt a new idea, without first adopting it for a probationary period. Finally, after all the stages have been met the individual decides to reject or continue the full use of the new idea by adoption.

AN ECLECTIC MODEL TO ACHIEVE SEX EQUITY

Keeping in mind these stages of the adoption and diffusion of a new idea the California Coalition for Sex Equity in Education (CCSEE) has designed a change model which includes a systematic process for problem solving, identification, and resolution of barriers to the achievement of sex equity. The problem solving model chosen is an eclectic one which is drawn from literature on change and the field experience of the project personnel. The model appears on the following pages.

PROBLEM SOLVING MODEL

Step I: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Which includes assessing both the general area of concern and statement of the problem including the specific issue(s) to be addressed.

Step II: WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?

Identifying and agreeing on a precise statement of the problem, converting the problem into a statement which specified the expected results.

Step III: DEVELOPING SOLUTION CRITERIA

Identifying those elements that must be present in the solution(s) in order to ensure its acceptability to the individuals or groups which must adopt the new idea and make a change.

Step IV: IDENTIFYING POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS

Brainstorming ideas which meet all the solution criteria while providing diversity in the means for implementing the solution(s).

Step V: SELECTING A SOLUTION(S)

Evaluating and ranking all of the alternatives which meet the solution criteria and could be utilized by various audiences within the school districts.

Step VI: DEVELOPING A PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Identifying resources and constraints and recommending specific change strategies which may be useful in securing the implementation of the change including stating who does what to whom and when.

Step VII: MONITORING THE PLAN

Arranging for ongoing monitoring of the implementation of the change plan as well as measurement of the results.

Step VIII: IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

Carrying out the change plan and noting any changes in the pre specified objectives, activities, timelines, and responsibilities.

Step IX: RECYCLING THE PLAN

Stabilizing, revising or terminating the change plan based on the processes by which the change was made and the subsequent results or outcome.

INFLUENCES FOR SEX EQUITY

Personal influence has been found to be an essential ingredient in all types of decision-making. Personal influence is defined as communication involving face-to-face exchange between the communicator and the receiver which develops a change in the behavior attitudes on the part of the receiver.

Opinions of leaders from whom others seek advice and information play an important role in the diffusion and adoption of new ideas as they exert a great deal of personal influence on their peers. Therefore, one of the strategies of the California Coalition is to identify the opinion leaders in the school district and to persuade them through face-to-face communication, using information, technical assistance, and training that they should become advocates for sex equity in public schools. Opinion leaders generally exhibit the following characteristics:

- They tend to conform more consistently to social system norms than the average member
- They use more impersonal technically accurate information gathered from outside their own school or district
- They exhibit more social participation
- They have higher social status and are more innovative than their followers

Innovativeness is another very important dimension. In a school district where the norms are "modern" or "progressive", innovativeness does not hinder the flow of communication and influence among individual adopters. The inverse is true where the norms toward innovativeness are more traditional. Therefore, another implication for designing a change model and selecting change strategies is to assess the "norms" toward innovativeness in a particular school or district.

Another influence in promoting the adoption of sex equity is the change agent. This person usually functions as a communication "go-between" or link between several groups. For example, CCSEE project personnel may initially serve as a link between opinion leaders and/or innovators in a school district. However, the change agent's position is located midway between the bureaucracy to which he or she is responsible and the school districts which are being served. This often causes role conflicts, therefore, one of the essential skills of the change agent is to be able to select and adapt strategies which will be compatible with the norms of the individuals and the school district and still move the personnel in the district closer to the goal of sex equity. It is desirable to have innovators and opinion leaders serve as the district leadership team become trained to advocate for sex equity and to eventually take over the role of the change agent. Change agents are frequently in a position to maintain the diffusion (communication) network which is needed to support and spread the concept of sex equity.

CONCLUSION

Education, since its beginning, has been charged with the responsibility for teaching attitudes, reinforcing values, and for preparing students for successful personal, occupational, and social adjustment. Although "equal

opportunity for all" is promulgated by school personnel, in fact, the schools often continue to prepare students for traditional sex roles. Schools are charged with the responsibility of teaching and preparing students for a successful social, personal, and occupational adjustment. They share with parents a unique responsibility as an agent of socialization and a force for social change and continuity. Researchers agree that the individual's concept of sex roles can be influenced in important ways by the attainment of knowledge and the process of self-evaluation. Just knowing about sex biases and stereotyping seems to influence attitudes. But, when the awareness is consistent with feelings about the issue, change occurs, perhaps more readily.

Therefore, the change agent must recognize that people can change at any moment and not "give up" if the first efforts at promoting change fail. The agent for change will also need to communicate effectively the values of the proposed new ideas, the positive impact of the changes being tried, and the increased benefits being received as a result of the efforts expended. The change agent will want to seek out the most influential people, assist them in adopting the new idea, and then encourage them to exert their personal influence so a broad pattern of diffusion will result.

The California Coalition received a grant to test some of the concepts of the adoption and diffusion process as it relates to sex equity in California Schools. A stratified random sampling of 36 districts has been selected to participate in a two year research study. Both the experimental and control school districts have participated in an in-depth pre-assessment interview which was intended to ascertain their current level of compliance with Title IX. On the basis of their interview scale score, and other information obtained from a

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tape of the interview, an individual program is being designed for each of the experimental districts. The program will include the use of the model which provides for a systematic problem-solving process, and tries to ascertain whether or not using some of the tenets of the adoption and diffusion process are more effective in achieving a higher level of commitment and compliance with Title IX.

The specific change strategies used in the experimental districts will be coordinated by a coalition of persons identified by the Superintendent or his/her designee as being:

- 1) influential either as change agents or innovators
- 2) interested in seeing sex equity established and maintained as a priority for the school district.

This coalition of persons will review the results of the initial needs assessment, and work with the project staff in identifying and prioritizing specific problems to be addressed, selecting strategies, materials, and resource persons to solve these problems, and continue to monitor their progress in relation to compliance with Title IX.

The post-assessment for the experimental and control districts will be conducted in January, 1980. The "significant differences" between experimental and control groups will be tested. Those elements of the planning model, strategies related to adoption and diffusion, and specific implementation plans which seem to have been effective in establishing and maintaining sex equity in a district will be reviewed at a conference for both the experimental and control districts in the winter of 1980. It is hoped that these results can also be shared at the 1980 AERA conference. The results will be related to the literature on knowledge production and utilization, and change.

An additional aspect that will be covered in our final research report are the influences of the inter-agency cooperation and collaboration on the

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part of the design and implementation of this project. The project staff will look at the influence of bringing together three powerful organizations such as the Association of California School Administrators, the California School Boards Association, the Title IX Unit of the State Department of Education, and Project Equity, the Title IV General Assistance Center for Sex Desegregation, and their attempts to modify the norms related to the attainment of sex equity.