Federal Funding of R & D Programs for Women's Educational Equity: Possible Sources in the Department of Labor and Other Agencies Outside HHS

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ABSTRACT

There is a great need to examine factors limiting educational opportunities of women, especially minority and low income women. Thus, it is important to identify funding sources for research and development programs which enhance women's educational equity. Possible funding sources include the Department of Labor and other federal programs. In the Labor Department the greatest possibilities appear in the 1975 revised Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), which contains research, training, and evaluation provisions. Other potential funding sources are labor programs such as the Office of Youth Programs and the Work Incentive Program and labor agencies such as the Office of Policy, Evaluation, and Research and the Employment Standards Administration. For example, the Women's Bureau received a grant for a female Youth Program that includes efforts to achieve educational equity. In a funding search it is also important to examine resources such as project summaries and application guidelines published annually by the Employment and Training Administration's Research and Development Office and the "Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance" published by the Office of Management and Budget. Finally, it is useful to look outside large cabinet departments and into agencies such as the National Endowment for the Arts and to look at legislation containing anti-sex discrimination provisions. (CIS)
The full participation of women in all aspects of our society depends, to a large extent, upon women's full participation in education programs and activities. One area, in particular, where women's lack of educational equity has a negative impact is in their employment, because the two issues are linked closely together. Although the median number of school years completed by women and men workers is the same (12.6 years), what differs substantially are the kinds of academic disciplines in which they have been prepared, and consequently in the jobs they hold and the earnings they receive.

There is a gradual movement of women into non-traditional skill areas of employment in blue-collar trades as well as professional and managerial occupations. But women, on the whole, are still concentrated in a small number of occupations. Over half of the 42 million women workers (1978) are concentrated in just 20 of the 441 occupations identified in the Census Occupational Classification System, and they are largely in the low-pay categories.

A comparison of the degrees awarded to women in the mid-seventies with those in the mid-sixties shows some improvement in the non-traditional areas, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. At all degree levels, women have increased their portions of degrees awarded in the fields of computer and information sciences, mathematics, architecture, and in engineering, where the least gains were made. In all of these areas, it is necessary to have a good background of math in high school, but even today women tend to shy away from math and science, and are consequently prevented from understanding the concepts as well as the importance of those basic disciplines.

Educational equity involves removing this kind of fear surrounding math and any other subjects that enhance the ability of women to have an economically and personally rewarding life experience, and that adequately prepare them to compete in the job market. Attention must be focused upon removing sex biases and sex stereotyping in a broad range of educational activities that extend from preschool programs to continuing education for adults. Achieving educational equity also involves meeting the special needs of groups that may be affected differently, such as racial and ethnic minorities who suffer double jeopardy in lack of educational opportunity, rural women, older women, teenage mothers, single parents, and the handicapped.

The barriers to educational equity have come in forms as overt as the total exclusion of girls from "boys' woodworking courses" and as covert as the stereotyped attitudes that are manifested in the aura of fear that causes girls to shun high school math. Even in their formative years, girls and boys are guided into entirely different directions through sex-role stereotyping. These attitudes are instilled and reinforced by a number of forces in our society—by textbooks and curricula as well as the print and broadcast media; by teachers and counselors as well as parents and peers. The stereotypical impressions are transferred from the educational setting to the workplace, and from the home to the workplace.

For mature women, other barriers to educational equity lie in social constraints, institutional practices—financial aid, admission factors—the lack of supportive services including child care for mothers who want to participate in educational activities, and the lack of information about adult life responsibilities.
The need for research to identify ways to eliminate barriers and promote equity is crucial. There is an urgent need to uncover and examine the factors which limit educational opportunity for all women, particularly for those of racial and ethnic minorities and those from low-income families. Therefore, a major task, and one that this seminar seeks to undertake, is that of identifying various sources of funding for research and development of programs which enhance women's educational equity.

This paper suggests possible sources of funding in the Department of Labor, in addition to other Federal sources exclusive of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, the agency primarily responsible for administering the Women's Educational Equity Act and Title IX of the Education Amendments.

To keep the issue in perspective, it would be well to note that the key provision of Title IX states simply that "no person in the United States shall on the basis of sex, be excluded from participating in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." It would also be well to consider the Equity Act as an essential helpmate which authorizes a broad range of activities at every level of education to eliminate sex bias and sex-role stereotyping, and to expand educational opportunities for girls and women.

In the Department of Labor, there are several funding sources for research and development of programs for training and employment. In some instances there is the potential for projects that bear on women's educational equity. The greatest possibilities appear to be under the revised Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) passed by Congress in October 1978. The act is administered by the Employment and Training Administration (ETA).

A provision for research, training, and evaluation requires the Labor Department to undertake a wide-ranging program of employment and training research. This includes studies on skill, responsibility, and remuneration; easing the transition from school to work; and opportunities and services for older persons who desire to enter or reenter the labor force. Also authorized is research on the applicability of job sharing, work sharing, and other flexible hours arrangements in various settings, and of the incentives and technical assistance required by employers to implement such alternative arrangements. There is authorization to investigate the extent to which job and wage classification systems undervalue certain skills and responsibilities on the basis of the sex of persons who usually hold the positions.

Under the CETA legislation the Department must conduct educational and assistance programs to eliminate artificial barriers to employment based on sex, race, age, national origin, handicap, marital status, and other barriers. In complying with this requirement, the Labor Department is to consult with the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; the Civil Rights Commission; and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Discretionary funds for research on displaced homemaker programs are included under title III of the act.

Youth programs provided for under CETA cover a wide range of training and supportive services, including programs to overcome sex stereotyping in job development and placement. It would be wise to examine this and other provisions of CETA to determine what funding possibilities exist to support research and development programs for educational equity.
Another Labor Department program, administered jointly with ETS, is the Job Results program. Dealing with white-collarmatching the large numbers of disabled workers, the Department of Labor, in consultation with the Agency for Research and Development in the Office of Public Employment, has conducted a number of studies on job opportunities and the labor market for both employed and unemployed persons. The Department of Labor is conducting a survey of the labor market for both employed and unemployed persons.

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how agencies are responding to legislation they administer to achieve equal opportunity for women. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights investigates and reports on anti-discrimination provisions, and the National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs is concerned with responsiveness to legislation for women's educational equity. Its mandate addresses not only the Equity Act but all Federal policies and programs affecting women's education at all levels.

The Interdepartmental Task Force on Women, created by Executive Order 12050 in April 1978, works within the Federal system to advise the President on initiatives needed to promote equality for women, including the recommendations of the 1977 National Women's Conference. A strong recommendation came out of that conference to promote educational equity. It called for vigorous and expeditious enforcement of all laws prohibiting discrimination at all levels of education; surveys to gather data on compliance; the upgrading and expansion of leadership programs for working women in postsecondary schools; more bilingual vocational training, educational, and cultural programs; and the removal of sex stereotyping in all its forms. Recommendations and the Administration's executive and legislative actions to address these needs are included in a report submitted to the White House by the National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year, titled "The First 18 Months."

The Women's Bureau maintains a deep interest in programs to achieve educational equity and how they relate to women's employment. There are concerns about young women's transition from school to work, and about opportunities for mature women and all women to continue their education—in both formal and informal settings.
The Bureau's participation in this AERA symposium represents a partnership that should be maintained with agencies throughout the government and the private sector who share mutual concerns—to achieve equity in education, to enhance employment opportunities, and to improve the quality of life for all American women.