

Inequity in the Classroom, Claudie Solar (Ed.). Montreal, PQ: Concordia University, Office of the Status of Women, 1992. ISBN 0-88947-042-1 (CND \$40.00 manual or video)

Reviewed by Dr. Joan Whelan

Educators of adults whether in a university, college or community-based setting, are often faced with the perplexing problem of what to do about student behaviours that are grounded in inequity issues. The need to "do something" is perplexing because, very often, there is difficulty in finding time and the resources to address the problem, not to mention a possible lack of expertise in tackling difficult issues.

A solution has been found! The Women's Studies Office of Concordia University has developed a multi-media package, consisting of a video and a training manual that not only examines the inadvertent sexual and racial biases that women students encounter in a variety of learning environments, but offers strategies that can be used to address inequity encountered in these situations. Available in French and English, the package enables facilitators and learners unfamiliar with the more subtle forms of racial and sexual bias to explore these issues in a format that grounds them in the facts that need to be addressed. It is designed, as well, to increase the knowledge of those who are aware of inequity issues and are pursuing a framework to examine them further.

In addition to a video, the package contains a comprehensive manual for "Inequity in the Classroom," divided into four parts: a training guide for a one-day workshop, fact sheets dealing with different aspects of inequity, and an annotated bibliography.

The workshop, designed for delivery using an interactive approach, is grounded in principles of adult learning. A statement of objectives, suggestions on how to set an appropriate climate for the workshop participants, and a questionnaire that provides an opportunity for reflection on knowledge and feelings about inequity in the classroom are provided. The fact sheets sensitize learners to discriminatory classroom interaction that results from bias based on sex, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, age or disability, either through unconscious or deliberate behaviour or through the use of exclusive or biased learning materials or approaches that perpetuate inequity.

The video portrays women engaged in a variety of learning environments receiving inequitable treatment. As well, the video provides several in-depth discussions by well-known scholars who are familiar with inequity in learning environments and who are concerned with its effect on learners.

The training session contains detailed step-by-step directions (including points to be included in commentary throughout the session) as well as suggested activities, reference literature, and questionnaires for learner evaluation. The material and suggested approaches accommodate a range of student needs and have a delivery sequence that can fit several time frames.

Part one of the workshop focuses on defining discrimination in the classroom. In part two, learners can use small group discussion to examine personal experiences and observations, as well as situations presented in the video, and discuss consequences of discrimination. The training session concludes by suggesting approaches educators can use to counteract and deal with inequity.

The training session concludes with a review of the workshop, addresses unanswered questions, and arranges for participants to evaluate their learning.

The 26-minute video serves as the springboard for the activities of the workshop. Used early in the workshop session, the video provides examples of the subtle and inadvertent sexual and racial biases that undermines a learner's confidence.

For educators who find themselves caught in learning environments that expose the need to address inequity issues, or for those aware that inequity is an issue that needs discussion in order to prevent it, this learning package can be a valuable resource. The editor and those who assisted her in the development of this package provide a framework for increasing our sensitivity to inequity issues in learning environments and they help us become aware of the consequences for learners who are treated inequitably. While the package is comprehensive and self-contained, both the delivery format and time lines suggested can be modified to fit a variety of learners' needs and situations. In both instructional design and content, the package adheres to the principles of adult learning and seeks to remove from learning environments those behaviours that detract from the human dignity of the person.

REVIEWER

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