

Assessment of the need for co-ed clothing and textiles courses in British Columbia

By Maureen Picone

Rationale

The aim of home economics is to equip people with the basic skills essential for independent and family living. The changing roles of the male as related to personal, home, and family life have increased the need for boys as well girls to have formal education in home and family living. Young men are becoming more aware of their need for preparation so that they can better assume their present and future roles within their families. For this reason, home economics education must be set free from the present sex role stereotyping. Home economics courses must be taught on the same co-educational basis as other courses in education that provide meaningful learning experiences for students of both sexes. If home economics goes along with the increasing social trend toward definition of a *human* role as distinguished from a sex role, it is more likely that an increasing number of young men will enroll in home economics courses, and thus acquire the confidence and manipulative and social skills needed for independent and family living.

In theory, no barriers prevent boys from studying home economics (see Ministry of Education circular, Appendix A), but the challenge of encouraging boys to take advantage of the opportunities provided remains.

One area of home economics of which boys seem to be taking the least advantage is clothing and textiles. While male enrolment in foods and nutrition courses is substantial, and in family studies courses is ever increasing, male enrolment in clothing and textiles courses is negligible.

Statement of the Problem

Given that schools strive to facilitate the development of all students to their fullest potentials and given that no student can be denied, on the basis of sex, entrance into a course, why then do we not see the offering of courses in clothing and textiles designed especially to help boys as well as girls develop skills and realize their potentials?

Purpose

The intent of this study is to discover what home economics teachers throughout British Columbia believe and recommend about co-educational clothing and textiles courses and to determine if a significant difference exists between those home economics teachers who teach clothing and textiles courses and those who do not,, regarding co-ed clothing and textiles courses.

The aim of this project is to address the following questions through survey research.

Part 1.

Do home economics teachers believe co-ed clothing and textiles courses should be taught? What are their reasons for their opinions?

Part 11.

What do home economics teachers believe would increase male enrolment in clothing and textiles courses?

Part 111.

What do home economics teachers recommend for content in co-ed clothing and textiles courses?

Part IV.

What resources do home economics teachers believe are required to instruct co-ed clothing and textiles?

Part V.

Is there a significant difference between home economics teachers teaching clothing and textiles courses and those who are not, in their beliefs and recommendations regarding co-educational clothing and textiles?

Selection of the Sample

The November 5, 1981 list of THESA members - 550 people - was used as the total population. Of these members, 226 (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970, pp 608-609) were randomly selected to be surveyed using a table of random numbers (Freund, 1971, p 444).

References

Freund, J..E. *Mathematical Statistics*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971.

Krejcie, R.V. and D.W. Morgan. Determining "sample size for research activities." *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 1970, 30, 607-610.

Conclusions

From the evidence provided in the research, the following conclusions with respect to the research queries are appropriate. The conclusions are not defined in a descending line of importance.

Part I.

Do home economics teachers believe co-ed clothing and textiles courses should be taught? What are their reasons for their opinions?

1 . Home economics teachers "very much agree" that co-ed clothing and textiles courses should be taught.

2. The reasons upon which they base their opinions are, for the most part, educationally sound. It could be argued that offering a course simply to "increase enrolment," is not a valid educational reason. This, though, would depend on the respondents' interpreted implication of the reason. If one interpreted "increasing enrolment" to imply creating or maintaining her/his own employment, it would not be considered a valid educational reason. On the other hand, if one interpreted "increasing enrolment" to imply reaching more students and thereby empowering more people with necessary knowledge and skills, it would be considered a valid educational reason.

There can be no argument, however, that offering a course for the purpose of achieving relevancy to everyday life, self-satisfaction, and improvement of motor skills, is *not* educationally sound.

Part II.

What do home economics teachers believe would increase male enrolment in clothing and textiles courses?

3. Home economics teachers believe the following factors would produce the greatest increase in male enrolment in clothing and textiles courses:

- Being allowed to construct sewing projects of interest to boys.
- Receiving encouragement from school counsellors to enrol in co-ed clothing and textiles courses.
- Receiving encouragement from parents to enrol in a co-ed clothing and textiles course.
- Having previous experience in clothing and textiles courses (Life-Skills 8).
- Becoming aware of the co-ed clothing and textiles curriculum (through co-ed fashion shows, co-ed project displays, career booths, etc.)
- Becoming aware of employment opportunities for males in clothing and textiles.
- Changing the course title to evoke a "co-ed" rather than a "feminine" image.
- Being in "mixed" classes of both boys and girls.

Part III.

What do home economics teachers recommend for content in co-ed clothing and textiles courses?

4. Home economics teachers recommend the following content for co-ed clothing and textiles courses:

- Teach construction techniques for garments worn by men as well as women (fly zipper).
- Teach time-saving sewing techniques.
- Teach fast and easy beginning projects.
- Increase the use of outdoor wear and recreational projects.
- Teach theory relevant to both sexes (wardrobe planning for teen-age boys and girls).
- Allow students to help evaluate and grade their own sewing projects.
- Allow students to choose their own sewing projects.

Part IV.

What resources do home economics teachers believe are required to instruct co-ed clothing and textiles?

5. Home economics teachers believe the following resources are required in order to instruct coed clothing and textiles:

- A greater selection of easy-to-make patterns for boys in commercial pattern books.
- Teaching materials that depict males as well as females.
- A greater selection of sports-equipment patterns in commercial pattern books.
- Teaching aids appropriate for both sexes.
- A great variety of patterns for boys in commercial pattern books.
- In-service workshops for clothing and textiles teachers to learn fitting techniques for the male figure.
- Textbooks that are appropriate for both sexes.
- A pattern collection of sewing projects suitable for both boys and girls.
- A curriculum guide that outlines the course content and suggests activities for a co-ed program.
- In-service workshops for clothing and textiles teachers to obtain suggestions on how to conduct a co-ed clothing and textiles program
- In-service workshops for clothing and textiles teachers to learn short-cut construction techniques.
- Teaching materials on wardrobe planning for males.

Part V.

*Is there significant difference, between home economics teachers teaching clothing and textiles and home economics teachers who are not, in their opinions about **the reasons** for teaching co-ed courses in clothing and textiles?*

6. There is no significant difference, between home economics teachers teaching clothing and textiles and home economics teachers who are not, in their opinions about the reasons for teaching co-ed courses in clothing and textiles.

Is there significant difference, between home economics teachers teaching clothing and textiles and home economics teachers who are not, in their opinions about the ways in which male enrolment could be increased in courses in clothing and textiles?

7. There is no significant difference.

*Is there significant difference, between home economics teachers teaching clothing and textiles and home economics teachers who are not, in their opinions about **the appropriate content** in co-ed clothing and textiles courses between home economics teachers.*

8. There is no significant difference.

*Is there significant difference, between home economics teachers teaching clothing and textiles and home economics teachers who are not, in their opinions about **what resources** are required in order to instruct in courses in co-ed clothing and textiles.)*

9. There is no significant difference.

*Is there significant difference, between home economics teachers teaching clothing and textiles and home economics teachers who are not, in their opinions about **their** willingness to teach boys in courses in clothing and textiles?*

10. There is no significant difference.

Recommendations

As a result of this study, recommendations were made to THESA and other organizations concerned. For a complete listing of these, all the data, and the report as a whole, you may contact the Educational Research Institute of B.C., 400 - 515 West 10th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5Z 4A8. Phone 873-3801. Report #82:23.