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Equity and Inclusion for Leaders in the School District: Exploring Gender

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Abstract

There are increasing expectations that educational leaders attend to social justice. However, little attention is paid to their own experience of equity and inclusion, and there is an ongoing omission of gender from organizational discourse. This problem of practice identifies the lack of attention to the experience and implications of gender for leaders in a school district. The organizational improvement plan aims to prioritize gender on the organization's agenda, bridge the gap between representation and equity and inclusion, and create a gender-inclusive leadership climate. Feminist frames for change establish the underlying change strategy and Lewin's change model structures the change process, outlining the goals of each phase and the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders, school leaders, and human resources leaders. Transformative and inclusive leadership approaches and a model of climate for inclusion inform solutions and approach. Based on an evaluation of impact, readiness, success factors, and driving and restraining forces, gender-based analysis of human resource practices is selected for development of a change implementation plan. An intersectional, non-binary approach is incorporated, and psychological safety and meaningful participation are emphasized throughout the change process. The change plan is strengthened by corresponding communication, knowledge mobilization, and monitoring and evaluation plans that facilitate individual and social learning, reflection, and collective action.

Keywords: gender, equity, inclusion, human resources, feminist theory, organizational change

Executive Summary

Equity and inclusion cannot be fulsomely addressed without consideration of gender. Regardless, gender continues to be omitted from organizational discourse in education, and attention to employees' experience of equity and inclusion is negligible (Benschop & Dooreward, 2012; Connell, 2006; Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016; Kelan, 2009; van Dijk et al., 2020; Vinkenburg, 2017). This creates dissonance with organizational values and the school district's commitment to equitable and inclusive schools. Setting an agenda for equity and inclusion starts with leadership. This Organizational Improvement Plan addresses the lack of attention to the experience and implications of gender for school leaders at Leuven School District and aims to create a gender-inclusive leadership climate.

Chapter 1 summarizes the organizational context, noting the persistent workplace challenges associated with gender and explaining the school district's theory of change and equity framework. Exploration of my positionality and lens describes my role and explains how a tempered radicalist approach serves this problem of practice and my leadership style (Meyerson & Scully, 2003). The problem of practice is grounded in critical feminist theory and research. The waves of feminism and theories of gendered organization, intersectionality, and decolonial feminism frame the problem and offer possibilities. Recognition of leaders' dominant focus on students and widespread gender blindness generates the following guiding questions: To what extent does gender impact equity and inclusion for school leaders? How can school leaders be encouraged to explore their own experience of equity and inclusion? How can the equity framework be implemented in a gender-inclusive manner? How can an intersectional, decolonizing approach be applied to this work? The chapter concludes by describing the vision for change and defining a gender-inclusive leadership climate where leaders understand the

connection between gender and power, and continuously identify and disrupt gendered assumptions and practices to ensure that all individuals are included, empowered, and treated fairly (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Bierema, 2020; Ely & Meyerson, 2000a; Kossek & Lee, 2020; Nishii, 2013; Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015; West & Zimmerman, 2010).

Chapter 2 connects transformative leadership to the equity component of the vision and inclusive leadership to the inclusion component (Ferdman et al., 2020; Nishii & Leroy, 2022; Shields, 2010). Feminist frames for change provide a foundation for change strategy. The first feminist frame for change is grounded in meritocracy and focuses on professional development for women (Ely & Meyerson, 2000a; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000). The second frame legitimizes a feminine approach and focuses on diversity training (Ely & Meyerson, 2000a; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000). This change is situated in the third and fourth frames. The third frame focuses on eliminating gender bias and removing structural and procedural barriers (Ely & Meyerson, 2000a; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000). The fourth frame focuses on the social construction of gender and gendered systems, standards, and practices that reinforce a dominant masculine social order (Acker, 1990; Butler, 1990; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000). This frame embraces the gender spectrum and promotes an intersectional approach (Ely & Meyerson, 2000a). The third and fourth frames model a progressive, inclusive approach that invites broad engagement and represent the vision of a gender-inclusive leadership climate. Lewin's change model guides the change process, emphasizing the human aspect of change with explicit attention to motivation and fears related to power, identity, and group membership (Burnes, 2020; Lewin, 1947; Schein & Schein, 2016). Following an assessment of cultural, commitment, and capacity readiness, gender invisibility and lateral voice are highlighted as prominent barriers to change (Combe, 2014). Readiness is incorporated into an evaluation framework that compares three potential solutions: gender-based

analysis of human resources (HR) practices, leader voice mechanisms, and unconscious bias training for the senior leadership team. Based on impact, success factors, and the agency of my position to implement the change, gender-based analysis is selected as the preferred option.

Chapter 3 develops a change implementation plan based on Lewin's change model. The change process follows three phases, unfreezing, change, and refreezing, and progresses the organization from gender-blind to gender-aware to gender-inclusive (Lewin, 1947). The plan incorporates a participatory action research approach and intersectional lens in each phase. A distinct communication plan, knowledge mobilization plan, and monitoring and evaluation plan are structured according to the three phases of change to strengthen process and outcomes. Success in the first phase depends on sufficient motivation for change. To mitigate the invisibility of gender and lack of organizational data, three types of communication are employed: cognitive, affective, and behavioural (Frahm & Brown, 2007; Hayles, 2013). The second phase focuses on capacity-building, knowledge exchange and co-production, and creating an inclusive experience for participants. The final phase ensures consolidation of learning, knowledge dissemination, and action and evaluates the completion of change activities and achievement of short, medium, and long-term goals.

The Organizational Improvement Plan concludes with next steps and future considerations. The benefits of gender-based analysis of human resource practices are expected to extend beyond school leaders and improve conditions for other leaders and employees. A deeper understanding of system dynamics and intersectionality and enhanced transformative and inclusive leadership competency will serve school district leaders in other social justice efforts, advancing system-wide capability and promise.

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Acronyms

EDID Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Decolonization

HR Human Resources

KMb Knowledge Mobilization

OIP Organizational Improvement Plan

PAR Participatory Action Research

PoP Problem of Practice

Definitions

Cisgender: The gender identity of someone who identifies with the biological sex assigned to them at birth (*Glossary of Terms: A Reference Tool*, 2022; *Queer Glossary*, 2018).

Decolonization: The process of restoring the colonized territory's independence and undoing the effects of colonialism on the social, political, and economic aspects of a people's life (*Glossary of Terms: A Reference Tool*, 2022).

Diversity: The variety of unique dimensions, qualities, and characteristics of an individual, and the demographic composition of a group. Race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, economic status, physical abilities, life experiences, and other perspectives can make up individual diversity (Ferdman et al., 2020; *Glossary of Terms: A Reference Tool*, 2022).

Equality: Where everyone is treated the same regardless of individual and group diversities and needs (*Glossary of Terms: A Reference Tool*, 2022; *LGBTQ2S Glossary of Terms*, 2020).

Equity: The consideration and accommodation of the specific needs of individuals and groups to determine access to services, supports, and opportunities, to enable all people to participate, perform, and engage to the same extent and achieve economic, political and social fairness (*Glossary of Terms: A Reference Tool*, 2022; *LGBTQ2S Glossary of Terms*, 2020).

Gender: Socially constructed ideas about the roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes of a particular sex that a given society considers appropriate. Gender is fundamentally different from the sex assigned at birth (Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2013; *Glossary of Terms: A Reference Tool*, 2022).

Gender binary: The concept that there are only two genders that everyone belongs to, man or woman, and that those genders are distinct, opposite, and static (*Glossary of Terms: A Reference Tool*, 2022; *LGBTQ2S Glossary of Terms*, 2020; *Queer Glossary*, 2018).

Gender identity: One's internal and psychological sense of their gender, anywhere along the gender spectrum. A person's gender identity can align with or differ from their biological sex at birth (*Glossary of Terms: A Reference Tool*, 2022; *LGBTQ2S Glossary of Terms*, 2020; *Queer Glossary*, 2018).

Gender spectrum: The representation of gender as a continuum, as opposed to a binary concept, including all gender identities and expressions (*Glossary of Terms: A Reference Tool*, 2022; *LGBTQ2S Glossary of Terms*, 2020).

Hegemonic masculinity: A dominant pattern of masculinity and hierarchy of masculinities, established by men in power, to organize gender in unequal ways (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Jewkes et al., 2015), The system that keeps men in a collectively dominant position over women and in competitive relations to other men (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Jewkes et al., 2015).

Heteronormative: The assumption by individuals or society that everyone is heterosexual, that heterosexuality is the default and is superior to other sexual orientations (*Glossary of Terms: A Reference Tool*, 2022; *Queer Glossary*, 2018)

Inclusion: Creating an environment that acknowledges, accepts, and values different perspectives, styles, approaches, and experiences to enable people to actively participate and contribute to their fullest potential (Ferdman et al., 2020).

Intersectionality: A term coined by Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe the ways in which our identities intersect to create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage (*Glossary of Terms: A Reference Tool*, 2022; *LGBTQ2S Glossary of Terms*, 2020).

Meritocracy: The assertion that career decisions such as selection, promotion, and compensation are based exclusively on merit, and that race, gender, or other differences do not influence these decisions (*Glossary of Terms: A Reference Tool*, 2022).

Non-binary: A way of identifying and/or expressing oneself on a continuum of gender identities, outside the binary gender categories of male and female (*Glossary of Terms: A Reference Tool*, 2022; *Queer Glossary*, 2018).

Patriarchy: A social system where the bulk of power, authority, and control in society is held by men, and masculinity and maleness are perceived as superior (*Glossary of Terms: A Reference Tool*, 2022; *Queer Glossary*, 2018).

Psychological safety: A climate in which people are comfortable expressing and being themselves, including sharing questions, concerns, and mistakes without fear of embarrassment or retribution (Edmondson, 2018).

Sex/biological sex: The medical term based on physical characteristics and anatomy used to classify people as male, female, or intersex. It is distinct from gender (*Glossary of Terms: A Reference Tool*, 2022; *LGBTQ2S Glossary of Terms*, 2020).

Stereotype: An assumption about a certain group, and the notion that the assumption applies to all members of the group (*Glossary of Terms: A Reference Tool*, 2022).

Chapter 1: The Problem

Despite abundant research and attempts at change, efforts have failed to disrupt the pervasive and entrenched imbalance of power based on gender (Ely & Meyerson, 2000a; van Dijk et al., 2020). The education system plays a central role; it reflects and shapes society. It can confront and correct inequity or sustain it. While the expectation that the education system attends to social justice has grown in recent years, dominant perceptions of gender equality and meritocracy conceal the gendered nature of organizational practices and limit the consciousness of gender issues for women, men, and people with other gender identities (Benschop & Doorewaard, 2012; Connell, 2006; Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016; Kelan, 2009; van Dijk et al., 2020; Vinkenburg, 2017).

Gender diversity in educational leadership has improved; however, research and practice demonstrate that representation does not achieve the benefits of diversity unless equity and inclusion are addressed (Ferdman et al., 2020; Kossek & Lee, 2020; Pless & Maak, 2004; Wolfgruber et al., 2021). Equity and inclusion require strategies, practices, and behaviours that produce fair outcomes and cultivate a sense of belonging to enable all employees to make meaningful contributions (Lundy et al., 2021; Nishii & Leroy, 2022; Offermann & Basford, 2014). Leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping organizational culture and employee experience and is considered the cornerstone of fostering equity and inclusion for individuals, work groups, and organizations (Ferdman & Deane, 2014; Hardacre & Subašić, 2018; Jin et al., 2017). This Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) creates awareness of the experiences and implications of gender for school leaders and facilitates learning and action. By engaging in this change, the school district attends to a fundamental issue of social justice while honouring the contribution of school leaders and developing leadership capacity to build equitable and inclusive environments

for employees and students. This chapter outlines my leadership position and lens in relation to this problem of practice (PoP), provides an overview of organizational context, and articulates the PoP and vision for change.

Leadership Position, Positionality, and Lens

My professional passion and commitment are grounded in an enduring belief in the potential of people to accomplish remarkable things when they feel safe to show up authentically, are enabled to learn and contribute, and are committed to acting in partnership (Ferdman & Roberts, 2013; Nishii & Leroy, 2022). This belief is what drew me to the education sector, a similar purpose to my educator colleagues but with a focus on the adults in the system. I continue to be motivated by an experience of belonging early in my career when I worked with a team that encouraged me to be authentic and accepted, challenged, and empowered me as an individual and team member. As a result, it was a significant period of personal and professional growth. It is an experience that I attempt to recreate with the people I work with and a hope I have for employees throughout the organization. This desire compels me to explore this PoP.

Position

As a human resources (HR) professional and member of the senior leadership team, I have the responsibility and agency to design and implement strategies that enhance workforce capacity and engagement. My role as Associate Superintendent of Human Resources encompasses operational and strategic elements. From an operational perspective, I oversee functional areas such as recruitment, selection, compensation, performance management, health and safety, and labour relations. I am responsible for sound human resource policies, procedures, and practices that comply with legal requirements and mitigate risk. It is my professional obligation to act in a manner that advances the principles of health and safety, human rights,

equity, dignity, and well-being in the workplace, and leaders and employees confidentially seek my advice and support on these matters (Chartered Professionals in Human Resources of British Columbia and Yukon, 2017). From a strategic perspective, I am a change agent and sponsor of organization development (OD) initiatives that enhance leadership competency, optimize employee engagement, and cultivate a positive climate and culture (Deszca, 2020; Minahan, 2010; Short & Shindell, 2009). I act as a change agent by identifying and defining opportunities in the HR portfolio and enlisting others to mobilize change, and being an advisor, thought partner, and contributor to the goals of my peers on the senior leadership team (Deszca, 2020).

Positionality

This work presents an opportunity and responsibility to educate self and others and discover and embrace new ways of knowing and doing (Bierema, 2009; Capper, 2018; Fitzgerald, 2010; Govan & Smith, 2021; Manning, 2018). Attending to gender in an inclusive manner requires receptiveness to diverse individual perspectives and experiences to avoid assuming a binary, cisgender view of gender and perpetuating gender stereotypes (Kelan, 2010; Robbins & McGowan, 2016; Sayani, 2011). In order to be inclusive, I draw on a social constructivist worldview that understands the individual and their subjective meaning by acknowledging multiple realities and cultural and historical contexts (Creswell, 2018; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). A social constructivist worldview also highlights the importance of understanding one's position and the impact of the researcher in the creation of knowledge (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Manning, 2018). This OIP is indicative of my learning journey and influenced by my positionality, lens, and values. I engage in this work from the privileged position of a White, Westernized, educated, able-bodied, heterosexual, cisgender woman in a senior leadership position. As a member of the senior leadership team, employees pay attention to how I conduct

myself, how I am treated, my level of authority and influence and how I use it. Not only do I contribute to the current state and will be expected to take action, I stand to benefit from exploring this PoP (Conner, 1993; Deszca, 2020). My positionality increases the importance of applying an intersectional lens with dynamic representations of identity rather than a functionalist, additive perspective (Calas & Smircich, 2006; Sobre-Denton, 2012).

Intersectionality acknowledges the consequence of multiple, intersecting social categories and systems of oppression and emphasizes their simultaneity and fluidity (Carastathis, 2014; Crenshaw, 1989; Hankivsky, 2013; Showunmi, 2020). It confronts a hegemonic feminist theory based on the experience of White, middle-class women that ignores the subordinate position and distinct experiences of individuals with other identities (Govan & Smith, 2021; Holvino, 2010). I am cognizant that several aspects of my identity confer power and opportunity and mold my perspective and experience of gender, and that I benefit from and am complicit in a system that supports the status quo (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Govan & Smith, 2021; Kenyon, 2022). Respecting the path of decolonial researchers, I hope to create space for many voices by mobilizing my position of privilege while employing my understanding and experience of gender as a bridge for empathy (Arvin et al., 2013; Fitzgerald, 2010; Manning, 2018).

Lens

This OIP leverages my HR and OD expertise and applies these frames to organizational analysis and change planning. The HR frame centers on the mutualistic relationship between people and organizations (Bolman, 2017). It applies theories of motivation, human behaviour, interpersonal and group dynamics to optimize the alignment of organizational and employee needs and maximize productivity and performance (Bolman, 2017; Capper, 2018; Jamieson & Rothwell, 2015). The OD frame centers on organizational change and renewal (Minahan, 2010).

It aims to enhance organizational effectiveness by applying social systems and change theory to realize individual and collective human potential and strengthen the alignment of strategy, structure, process, and behaviour (Minahan, 2010; Wasserman, 2015). The HR function fulfills a management mandate that attends to diversity and equity, while OD fulfills a leadership mandate that cultivates inclusion (Minahan, 2010; Wasserman, 2015). Both frames are relevant to this PoP, designing effective change strategies, and operationalizing a change plan. They are also reflected in my professional stance, and aligned with the principles and values of inclusive and transformative leadership.

I now understand my experience of belonging referenced earlier in this chapter as an example of inclusive leadership. Inclusive leadership brings an inclusive climate to life by creating a psychologically safe environment that respects uniqueness and cultivates belonging (Ferdman et al., 2020; Northouse, 2019; Randel et al., 2018). The impact of inclusive leadership is extended when coupled with transformative leadership. Transformative leadership critiques inequitable practices and acknowledges the need to dismantle hegemony and privilege (Shields, 2011). Transformative leadership connects inclusive leadership practices to the broader social context and the need for social justice, while inclusive leadership creates the conditions for productive conversations about equity and justice (Bieneman, 2011; Katz & Miller, 2002; Shields, 2019). These leadership approaches align with the humanistic, optimistic, and democratic values of OD and reflect my dedication to honour authenticity and enable people to contribute their unique background, perspectives, and talents (Minahan, 2010; Rothwell et al., 2016). Together these leadership approaches represent my intent for this OIP, to create a safe space for critical examination and dialogue about gender.

In order to capitalize on my experience working in the school district and maintain relationships and legitimacy, I employ a tempered radicalist approach (Meyerson & Scully, 2003). Tempered radicalism enables internal stakeholders to engage productively with change by balancing personal values with hopes of making the workplace more equitable and inclusive (Meyerson & Scully, 2003). Work is performed quietly and change is catalyzed subtly through everyday acts (Meyerson, 2001; Meyerson, 2004; Meyerson & Scully, 2003). Tempered radicalism is a collaborative, localized, emergent process of incremental change well-suited for gender issues (Ely & Meyerson, 2000b; Kelan & Wratil, 2018; Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000). This approach fulfills my commitment to the organization and my profession while asserting myself and challenging the organization's culture (Meyerson & Scully, 1995). It reflects my leadership style and preference to work purposefully and quietly. A tempered radicalist approach also demonstrates care and respect for my colleagues by regarding this problem as an opportunity for growth rather than blame or condemnation and trusting their openness to learning in relationship.

Organizational Context

Leuven School District (a pseudonym) is one of sixty school districts in British Columbia. It is located in a mid-sized city known for its agricultural roots and multicultural community. It employs over 2,000 people and serves over 20,000 students. The school district takes pride in advancing the province's competency-based curriculum and achieving strong student results. It considers its strategic plan and core values of respect, opportunity, and innovation to be sources of differentiation from other school districts (Leuven School District, 2020b).

Governance

Leuven School District is governed by an elected board of trustees who establish strategic direction and monitor outcomes (Leuven School District, 2021b). The superintendent has delegated authority for the administration of the school district and, in collaboration with the secretary-treasurer, directs strategic initiatives and resource allocation and manages accountability (Leuven School District, 2020a). Assistant superintendents and directors operationalize the strategic plan in their portfolio and supervise leaders by setting expectations, guiding professional development, and providing recognition and opportunity. The board embraces its strategic role and has established a cadence of strategic planning, reporting, and continuous improvement, enabling senior leaders and their teams to set annual direction and manage daily operations in pursuit of the organization's vision and strategic goals.

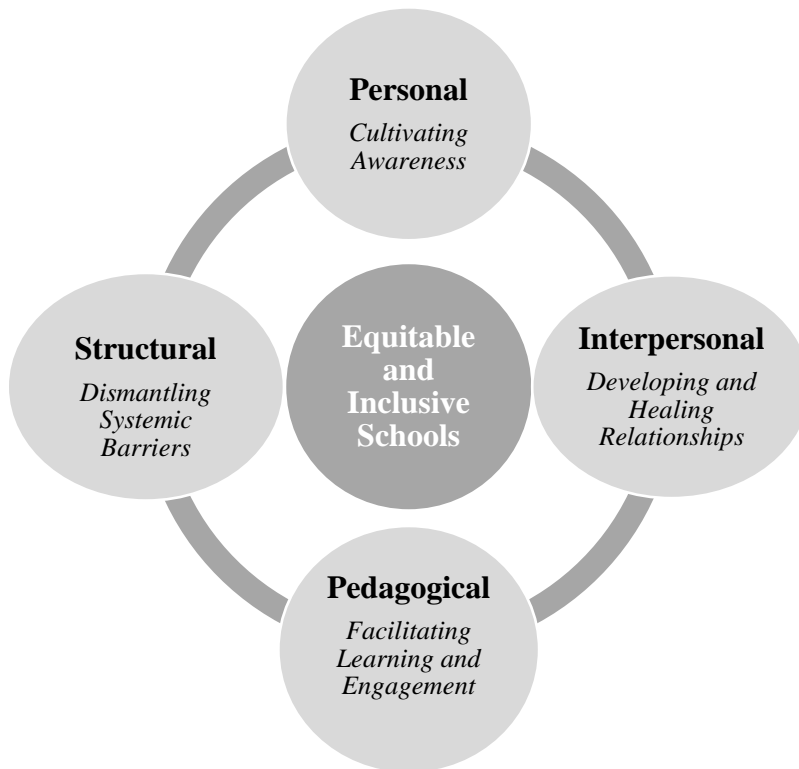
Vision

The school district's vision is an innovative and individualized educational experience for every student, and a key lever in its strategic plan is a workforce dedicated to learning, performance, and growth (Leuven School District, 2020b). Explicit acknowledgment of the contribution of corporate services such as HR, Finance, and Information Technology in the strategic plan is a distinguishing factor from other school districts, reflecting a systemic view of education and value for all employees' contributions (Leuven School District, 2020b). In recent years, the school district committed to increasing deeper learning experiences for students to build their mastery, creativity, and identity and capacity to thrive (Mehta et al., 2018). To ensure equitable access to deeper learning, the school district developed an equity framework to guide employees' reflection, interrogation, and action through personal, interpersonal, pedagogical, and

structural lenses (Leuven School District, n.d.; Safir, 2021). This framework is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Equity Framework



Note. The equity framework outlines areas of inquiry and action to advance equity and inclusion. Adapted from “*Street Data: A Next-Generation Model for Equity, Pedagogy, and School Transformation*” by S. Safir, J. Dugan, C. Wilson, and C. Emdin, 2021, Corwin. Copyright 2021 by Shane Safir.

Implementation of the equity framework is supported by an equity toolkit that provides leaders with resources for facilitating employee learning, and a teaching position that assists teachers with instructional strategies and resources. Many leaders have commenced their equity work by exploring and examining identity, with an overarching focus on Indigenous student

success, cultural responsiveness, and anti-racism. These areas of focus align with provincial priorities. Apart from a discussion about a school's student dress code, gender has not been considered.

Environment

While federal and provincial legislation prohibits discrimination based on sex and gender, and both levels of government have initiatives to advance gender equity, the provincial ministry of education has prioritized truth and reconciliation and anti-racism (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982; Human Rights Code, 1996; Government of BC, n.d.; Government of Canada, 2022). These imperatives operate in the context of neoliberalism (Lundy et al., 2021; Panić, 2018). According to Atta (2021), neoliberalism in education establishes a human capital approach that promotes competitive individualism, negatively impacts pedagogical practices, and dehumanizes students and classrooms. Neoliberalism's focus on individual accountability reinforces male hegemony, equates equity with individual choice and agency, and dismisses institutionalized inequalities related to class, gender, and race (Blackmore, 2019; Jabbar et al., 2018).

While provincial and organizational initiatives reflect an evolving understanding and commitment to social justice, educational systems are complex, and several tensions exist. Impediments to equity can stem from pervasive social and cultural factors manifested in media, education, and significant relationships outside the educational setting (Connell, 2006; Nadler & Stockdale, 2012; Nentwich, 2006). This is a consideration for Leuven School District. Despite its growing and diverse population, the community has historically been politically and socially conservative, influencing the make-up and priorities of the board and potentially creating tension between preserving and disrupting the status quo (Choudhury, 2015).

Senior Leadership

Like the Ministry of Education, the senior leadership team applies liberalist and neoliberalist approaches. The team takes pride in its strategic planning and measurement capabilities. In contrast, the team subscribes to a theory of change that emphasizes dialogue, social learning, and emergence (Mehta et al., 2018). The theory of change (see Appendix A) emphasizes symmetry, and the team acknowledges that building equitable and inclusive schools calls for corresponding efforts to build an equitable and inclusive work environment for employees (Mehta et al., 2018). However, examination of the employee realm has been limited. The theory of change also identifies leaders as critical change agents. This has led to an investment in leadership development but has not translated to an exploration of leader experience.

The senior leadership team is diverse in gender, race, and ethnicity. Conversely, observations of senior leadership indicate that intelligence, strategic thinking, decisiveness, grit, humour, and loyalty are highly regarded. Many of these attributes are indicative of a traditional, trait-based, masculine leadership archetype that does not reflect the diversity and openness of the team and may discourage leaders from presenting a different style or perspective (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Koenig et al., 2011; Northouse, 2019). This leadership archetype contrasts the leadership practices for social learning in the school district's theory of change and creates a sense of dissonance (Fletcher, 2004).

Culture

The leadership culture of Leuven School District is firmly grounded in the ethic of the profession and can be described as dedicated, genuine, and growth-oriented (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). Although the strategic plan acknowledges the contribution of all departments

and stakeholders, leaders' focus is understandably on students. While leaders willingly adapt their views and approach to meet student needs, they do not apply the same priority or flexibility to the needs of employees and colleagues. The lack of attention to colleagues is reinforced by the district's history of school-based management (Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016; Leuven School District, 2013b; Spillane, 2006). School-based management is consistent with the tenet of professional autonomy, which educators continue to value when they move into an administrator role. The focus on individual achievement indicates a belief in meritocracy, where rewards and opportunities are based on effort and ability. The independence sustains a focus on individual schools rather than a district or system perspective and does not generate the collaborative networks envisioned by distributed leadership (Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016). While collaboration is encouraged by senior leadership and school leaders are collegial, expectations and accountability for collaboration are ill-defined. Informal leadership networks have formed and certain networks have achieved a level of credibility and influence. However, these networks are primarily based on personal relationships rather than a deliberate collective or inclusive approach. This can perpetuate benefits to historically advantaged groups, namely White, heterosexual, cisgender males (Konrad et al., 2021; Leighton, 2020; Mijs, 2016; van Dijk et al., 2020).

Recent studies highlight the increasing complexity and intensity of educational leadership, including the expectation to demonstrate social justice leadership (Wang, 2020; Wang & Pollock, 2020; Warner, 2020). However, the majority of preparation for educational leaders does not include robust theoretical or practical components on social justice, and most social justice programs place gender on the periphery, leaving leaders unequipped to understand, never mind disrupt, gender hegemony and discrimination (Allen et al., 2017; O'Malley &

Capper, 2015; Plante & Maurer, 2010; Young et al., 2017). The recent update to the school district leadership competencies intends to shape the leadership paradigm and align it with the school district's commitment to equity and inclusion (Leuven School District, 2021a). The updated competencies present an opportunity to acknowledge gender, examine biases associated with masculinity and femininity, and expand the leadership paradigm. They are incorporated into HR practices and inform selection, development, and evaluation. However, leaders are still in the process of adopting the competencies, and concrete expectations have not been established. In addition, each senior leader highlights certain competencies based on the context and goals of their portfolio and their individual values. This variation in expectations and evaluation contributes to perceptions of subjectivity, inconsistency, and unfairness and leaves the current leadership paradigm and associated practices intact.

Problem of Practice

This leadership PoP contends with an inconspicuous issue underlying the organization's equity journey, the consideration of gender, and addresses the gap between leader representation and leader equity and inclusion. Diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts are complementary to each other and must be intentionally integrated to create the right organizational conditions, reconfigure power relations, and realize the goals of diversity (Ely & Thomas, 2020; Ferdman & Deane, 2014; Katz & Miller, 2002). Without integration, organizations risk imposing assimilation or creating a hostile work environment for individuals who do not identify with the dominant culture (Li et al., 2014; Shore et al., 2011).

This PoP addresses the lack of attention to the experience and implications of gender for school leaders in the Leuven School District. Organizations reflect a patriarchal society and systematically produce inequality by operating with a masculine model of leadership and

reproducing gender stereotypes (Acker, 1990; Benschop & van den Brink, 2018; Bierema, 2017). Studies highlight the absence of systematic reflection on workplace gender equity and the lack of clear goals and accountability, exacerbating the difficulty of raising issues of gender inequity and keeping them on the agenda (Charlesworth & Baird, 2007; Heiskanen et al., 2018; Macneil & Liu, 2017). The ability to notice gender inequity and willingness to address it are complicated by a narrative that organizations are gender-neutral and a widespread belief in meritocracy (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016; Hardacre & Subašić, 2018; Kelan, 2009; Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015; Vinkenburg, 2017). This alleged objectivity and neutrality conceal the gendered nature of organizations (Benschop, 2021).

Educational institutions are no exception; gender hegemony persists without acknowledgment (Bierema, 2020; Blair, 2016; Burton & Weiner, 2016; MacKinnon, 2021; Murakami & Törnsten, 2017; Rusch & Marshall, 2006). Organizational barriers at macro, meso, and micro levels create and sustain systematic disparities in power, control, and opportunity (Acker, 2006; Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016; Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015). Gender inequity affects people of all genders. Gender bias affects leadership behaviour, team dynamics, and organizational culture in many complex ways (Adisa et al., 2020; Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Wang & Pollock, 2020). At Leuven School District, the implications of gender are not openly discussed or questioned. Without deliberate opportunities to explore the impact of gender, leaders do not speak up, and the significance of issues is not acknowledged or understood. This diminishes leaders' contribution, group climate, and individual and collective capacity to create an equitable and inclusive environment for employees and students (Bierema, 2020; Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016; Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015). Exploring this PoP creates an understanding of the prevalence and impact of gender issues, identifies barriers to participation and engagement,

and surfaces opportunities to support leaders of all gender identities to thrive (Ferdman & Deane, 2014; Roberson, 2006; Wolfgruber et al., 2021). By engaging with school leaders about their experience, the school district demonstrates appreciation of their pivotal role and respect for their contribution.

Framing the Problem of Practice

As Leuven School District prioritizes equity and inclusion, learning and dialogue about identity, power, and privilege is occurring on a consistent basis. However, leaders have yet to examine their own status and relationships and gender has not entered the conversation. The tendency to leave gender in the background is not surprising (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). Critical feminist theory provides insight to this omission and an environmental analysis identifies the driving and restraining forces for gender equity in the education sector.

Theoretical Framework

This PoP is grounded in critical feminist theory. Critical feminist theories seek to explain the origins and consequences of gender relations, challenge prevailing gender assumptions, and confront the dominant paradigm of heteromascularity (Acker, 1990; Gedro & Mizzi, 2014; Parpart et al., 2000; Rhode, 1990). They provide an impetus and possibility for change. Feminism has evolved from a focus on inequality between the sexes to a more nuanced deliberation of the social and performative constructions of gender and its interactions with other aspects of identity (Hewitt, 2010). This evolution is described by the waves of feminism, which serve as a framework for understanding this PoP and its underlying assumptions.

Waves of Feminism

The history of feminism is commonly described using a wave metaphor to recognize distinct periods of activism (Hewitt, 2010). The waves are not discrete; they coexist, intersect,

and overlap (Hewitt, 2010). First-wave feminism began in the 1800s with a goal to have society recognize that women are not property and grant women citizenship rights (Baumgardner, 2011; Hewitt, 2010). Second-wave feminism began in the 1960s and challenges women's role in society, including motherhood, sexuality, and labour rights (Hewitt, 2010; Parry et al., 2019; Snyder, 2008). Third-wave feminism began in the 1990s and embraces the concept of intersectionality (Carastathis, 2014). It highlights gender as a performance-based social construct that exists on a spectrum (Baumgardner, 2011; Butler, 1990). The first and second waves are criticized for being centered on issues relevant to White, middle-class, heterosexual women (Hewitt, 2010). The third wave aims to be more inclusive and oriented to social justice but is criticized for focusing on individual empowerment and lack of collective action (Gray et al., 2014; Hewitt, 2010; Parry et al., 2019). Some scholars assert that a fourth wave emerged around 2008 (Baumgardner, 2011; Davies, 2018; Parry et al., 2019). Fourth-wave feminism incorporates trans rights and people who reject the gender binary and is marked by a global perspective (Baumgardner, 2011; Gray et al., 2014; Parry et al., 2019). It intends to hold space for complexity and flexibility and aims to avoid divisiveness (Snyder, 2008).

Gendered Organization

The examination of this PoP is situated in the third and fourth waves of feminism. It views gender as a social construct that maintains the gender binary (Acker, 2006; Kelan, 2010). It relies on the concept of the gendered organization, which asserts that organizations are inherently gendered with systems, practices, norms, and standards that reflect deeply entrenched assumptions and values, reinforce a dominant masculine social order, and perpetuate gender inequity (Acker, 1990; Butler, 1990; Ely & Meyerson, 2000a; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000). This concept was expanded by Acker (2006) to pose a broader notion of inequality regimes that

connects theories of patriarchy and capitalism and acknowledges that gender differences cannot be fully understood without considering the advantages and disadvantages of class and race.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality affirms the importance of multiple, intersecting social categories and systems of oppression and emphasizes their simultaneity and fluidity (Carastathis, 2014; Crenshaw, 1989; Hankivsky, 2013; Showunmi, 2020). It confronts a hegemonic feminist theory based on the experience of White, middle-class women that ignores the subordinate position and distinct experiences of individuals with other identities (Holvino, 2010). Crenshaw (1989) presents intersectionality to mediate the tension between different identities. Despite a growing consensus that attention to intersectionality is vital to understanding inequity and advancing social justice, most practice remains silent on intersectionality; this may be advanced by decolonizing feminism (Benschop, 2021; Holvino, 2010).

Decolonial Feminism

Post-colonial feminisms challenge the western feminist theorization of gender and its reflection of White, middle-class privilege by outlining the connection between settler colonialism and heteropatriarchy and regarding organizations as institutions of the colonizer (Arvin et al., 2013; Calas & Smircich, 2006). Decolonial feminism legitimizes marginalized and alternative ontologies, epistemologies, and world views and negotiates the complexities of positionality through reflexivity, shared power, and the production of new knowledge (Arvin et al., 2013; Benschop, 2021; Calas & Smircich, 2006; Fitzgerald, 2010; Manning, 2018). It confronts the gender roles imposed by colonialism and presents an opportunity to recreate roles, relationships, and alliances, without saviorism (Arvin et al., 2013; Fitzgerald, 2010; Lopez, 2021; Manning, 2018). According to Lopez (2021), the ongoing presence of coloniality is evident in

the management paradigm of school leadership. As the school district fulfills its commitment to truth and reconciliation, and indigenization, decolonial feminism offers a path to weave in different perspectives about gender.

PEST Analysis

A PEST analysis considers the political, economic, social and technological factors affecting the organization (Deszca, 2020). An assessment of macro-environmental factors is a valuable tool for understanding risk and opportunity and informing an organization's direction and change plan (Deszca, 2020). A PEST analysis is essential to understanding this PoP given the impact of macro-level barriers to gender equity and inclusion that exist outside the organizational sphere (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016).

Political

Federal and provincial legislation establish the right to be free from discrimination based on sex, gender identity, and gender expression (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982; Human Rights Code, 1996; Government of BC, n.d.; Government of Canada, 2022). The school district affirms its commitment to its legislative obligations at a cursory level, demonstrated by the following examples. The district's human rights policy reiterates the values and principles of the BC Human Rights Code but does not articulate the protected grounds (Leuven School District, 2013a). The student code of conduct specifies the protection of sex, gender identity, and gender expression for students and employees, but there is no distinct employee code of conduct (Leuven School District, 2017). Similarly, the provincially mandated policy to ensure safe environments for individuals of all sexual orientations and gender identities only appears in the student policy section and focuses on learning opportunities rather than expectations (Leuven School District, 2017). While respectful workplace training discusses the protected grounds in

the BC Human Rights Code and defines bullying, abuse, harassment, and discrimination, there is no reference to sexism or discrimination in the school district's respectful workplace policy (Leuven School District, 2015). These examples demonstrate the lack of consideration for employees and gender.

Economic

Despite legal protections and political commitments, gender equity has not been achieved. The gender pay gap is considered a key indicator of gender inequities and persists across industries and professional levels (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Howard, 2022; Lambert & McInturff, 2016; Panić, 2018). In the OECD ranking of countries, Canada has the eighth worst gender pay gap (OECD, 2022). Women make 89 cents of every dollar men make, and the gap is worse for racialized women, Indigenous women, and women with disabilities (Statistics Canada, 2022). This gap exists for management jobs, where women occupy 35.6% of management jobs and make 56% less money (Richards & Longpré-Verret, 2021). Part of the gender pay gap is related to the gendered allocation of family responsibilities (Panić, 2018; Pelletier et al., 2019). However, nearly two-thirds of the gender pay gap is unexplained (Pelletier et al., 2019). Differences in the work experiences of women and gender-diverse people based on subtle or unobservable acts of bias and exclusion offer a plausible explanation (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016; Pelletier et al., 2019).

In Canada, the teaching profession is dominated by women (Moyser, 2019). In the Leuven School District, 74 % of teachers are women, 90% at the elementary level, and 55 % at the middle and secondary levels. This representation is not reflected in school-based leadership, where 53% of educational administrators are women, 73% at the elementary level, and 33% at the middle and secondary levels, or in senior leadership where 38% of the team are women.

These statistics refute the pipeline theory that, over time, a larger number of women at lower levels in the organization yields a larger number of women at higher levels (Kellerman & Rhode, 2017). At middle and secondary levels, most women leaders are vice-principals, and history shows that they spend more time as vice-principal before being promoted. Women leaders are concentrated at the elementary level. Mobility between levels is limited, and elementary school leaders have not attained positions at other levels. Elementary schools have smaller budgets, less discretionary spending, and lower compensation. It is assumed that the job evaluation methodology is based on student enrolment. This methodology does not consider the nature of student needs and the associated leadership qualifications, effort, responsibility and working conditions necessary to ensure pay equity (Chicha, 2008).

Social

The failure of organizations to change practices and culture is partially attributed to a limited conception of gender (Calás et al., 2014; Ely & Meyerson, 2000b; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000). Gender stereotypes have a descriptive and prescriptive component, communicating socially shared beliefs about how individuals act and expectations about how they should act (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001, 2012). Men are expected to have agentic traits, such as being assertive, competitive, and achievement-oriented (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001, 2012). Women are expected to have communal traits, such as being kind, helpful, understanding, and compassionate (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001, 2012). These gender stereotypes, along with male hegemony, maintain a binary view of gender and traditionally masculine model of leadership, and privilege masculinist work cultures and employment practices (Acker, 1990; Bierema, 2020; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Hoyt & Blascovich, 2007; Jewkes et al., 2015; Knights & Kerfoot, 2004; Koenig et al., 2011; Kossek et al., 2017;

MacKinnon, 2021). Even with increased gender diversity in the workforce, it is difficult to mitigate the impact of gender on perceptions of leader fit and performance (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001; Kellerman & Rhode, 2012; Nishii & Rich, 2013). Gender stereotypes are evident in the history of teaching and administration and the dominant paradigm of educational leadership as a White male continues to be upheld (Bierema, 2020; Blair, 2016; MacKinnon, 2021; Wilkinson & Bristol, 2017).

Technological

The unprecedented pace of technological change has a direct impact on the nature and organization of work and the labour market (Henwood & Wyatt, 2000; Rani & Grimshaw, 2019). While innovation can improve productivity and working conditions, recent studies reveal the increasing complexity and intensity of educational leadership (Rani & Grimshaw, 2019; Wang, 2020; Wang & Pollock, 2020; Warner, 2020). Technological innovations can also be leveraged to create a more equitable and inclusive society (Eynon, 2018; Gaskell, 2019; Henwood & Wyatt, 2000). Examples include increased access to education, flexible work arrangements, and artificial intelligence tools that reduce gender bias (Gaskell, 2019). However, despite an overabundance of technological innovation, statistics demonstrate that the income gap is widening, and pay inequity is persistent. Feminist perspectives emphasize the need to consider the wider social context, acknowledge that the creation and implementation of technology is not gender-neutral, and challenge technology that exacerbates inequalities (Eynon, 2018; Henwood & Wyatt, 2000).

Guiding Questions from the Problem of Practice

This PoP focuses on the lack of attention to the experience and implications of gender for school leaders in Leuven School District. While the school district's social justice efforts and

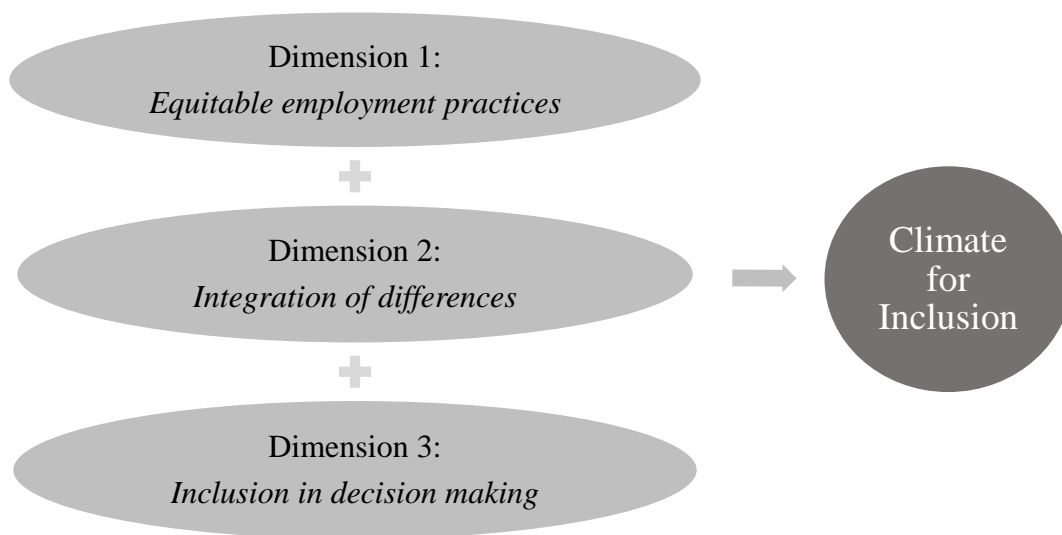
explorations of identity, power, and privilege create an opportunity to address gender, the possibility is complicated and constrained by leaders' foremost focus on students and widespread gender-blindness. Addressing the PoP in this context presents the following areas of inquiry:

- a) To what extent does gender impact equity and inclusion for school leaders?
- b) How can school leaders be encouraged to explore their own experience of equity and inclusion?
- c) How can the equity framework be implemented in a gender-inclusive manner? How can an intersectional, decolonizing approach be applied to this work?

The primary inquiry question can be explored through the model of inclusive climate outlined by Nishii (2013) in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Climate for Inclusion



Note. Three dimensions that constitute climate for inclusion. From “The Benefits of Climate for Inclusion for Gender-Diverse Groups,” by L. H. Nishii, 2013, *Academy of Management Journal*, 56(6), pp. 1754-1774 (<https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2009.0823>). Copyright 2013 by the Academy of Management.

Nishii (2013) identifies three dimensions of an inclusive climate: fairly implemented employment practices that eliminate bias and discontinue status differentials; integration of differences and norms that enable individuals to safely bring their identity and eliminate the need to conform to a dominant group; and proactive inclusion of diverse and even disruptive perspectives in decision making. Each dimension offers a lens to examine current reality, uncover strengths and issues, and generate ideas to enhance equity and inclusion.

The second question acknowledges the need for active leader participation in this change. Facilitating leader reflection and voice enables the senior leadership team to gain a deeper understanding of school leader experiences and organizational norms while modelling inclusive leadership (Atewologun & Harman, 2020; Dundon et al., 2004; Ferdman et al., 2020). However, many factors impact individual motivation to address gender issues, and apprehension is heightened when speaking on behalf of oneself or one's group (Ashford et al., 1998; Piderit & Ashford, 2003). While exercising voice offers an opportunity to influence change, managing the perceived risk of expressing divergent views is an important consideration (Ashford et al., 1998; Bowen & Blackmon, 2003; Frazier & Bowler, 2015; Rohlfer et al., 2021).

The third question acknowledges broader organizational efforts and the opportunity for integration. Blackmore (2013) and Cornwall and Rivas (2015) recommend reframing gender-based issues from an individual view of woman's disadvantage to a broader, relational view of privilege and power. This broader agenda is more inclusive. It clears space for a non-binary approach that acknowledges the existence and experience of different gender identities, providing multiple access points and a basis for a receptive, collective approach (Blackmore, 2013; Cornwall & Rivas, 2015; Hardacre & Subašić, 2018; Rusch & Marshall, 2006). The

implementation of the equity framework provides an opening to integrate gender and connect it to the organization's vision.

Vision for Change

Leuven School District has established a vision of equitable and inclusive schools for students and employees. In equitable and inclusive work environments, individuals of all backgrounds are included, empowered, and treated fairly (Nishii, 2013; Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015). Inclusion is achieved through patterns of behavior, interaction, leadership, and organizational culture that bring out the best in people and provide opportunities for connection and growth (Gallegos et al., 2020). It is enacted at multiple levels: individual, group, and organization (Buengeler et al., 2018; Ferdman & Deane, 2014; Gallegos et al., 2020; Kossek & Lee, 2020). In inclusive environments, individuals assess their own beliefs, biases, and privileges and share their authentic self with colleagues (Ferdman & Roberts, 2013). They have a sense of safety, acceptance, respect, and support and believe that all employees are enabled to grow and thrive (Ferdman & Deane, 2014; Hayes et al., 2021; Pless & Maak, 2004; Shore et al., 2011). Multiple identities are acknowledged, and individuals with dominant identities recognize their privilege, are intentional about how they engage with others, and use their power to dismantle barriers to participation (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Eckersley, 2022; Gallegos et al., 2020; Kossek et al., 2017; Panicker et al., 2018). Groups create and maintain norms to develop relationships, amplify voice, and facilitate collaborative decision-making and problem-solving to leverage differences and create a collective experience of inclusion (Ferdman & Deane, 2014; Katz & Miller, 2002; Nishii, 2013; Shore et al., 2011). Organizational values, structures, and practices are fair and equitable, and congruent with behaviour (Ferdman & Deane, 2014; Katz & Miller, 2002; Nishii, 2013).

The vision of this organizational change is to create a gender-inclusive leadership climate where leaders understand the connection between gender and power and continuously identify and disrupt gendered assumptions and practices (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Bierema, 2020; Ely & Meyerson, 2000a; Kossek & Lee, 2020; West & Zimmerman, 2010). In a gender-inclusive leadership climate, the impact of gender on interpersonal interactions, group cohesion, and access to resources is acknowledged (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; West & Zimmerman, 2010). Leaders examine their own beliefs, biases, and privileges related to gender and initiate conversations that create space for more fluid, non-binary conceptions of identity and social organization (Bierema, 2020; Ely & Meyerson, 2000a; Gallegos et al., 2020; Kossek & Lee, 2020; Nishii, 2013). As a result, work is less constrained by gendered roles and relations (Bierema, 2020; Ely & Meyerson, 2000b; Gallegos et al., 2020; Nishii, 2013). Human resource policies and procedures are examined for gender bias, and gender-inclusive policies and practices for flexible work, career and skill development, compensation, and promotion are in place (Bierema, 2020; Hall et al., 2022; Kossek & Lee, 2020; Starnarski & Son Hing, 2015). Patterns of intra- and intergroup inequity and systematic exclusion are addressed by, with, and for leaders (Gallegos et al., 2020).

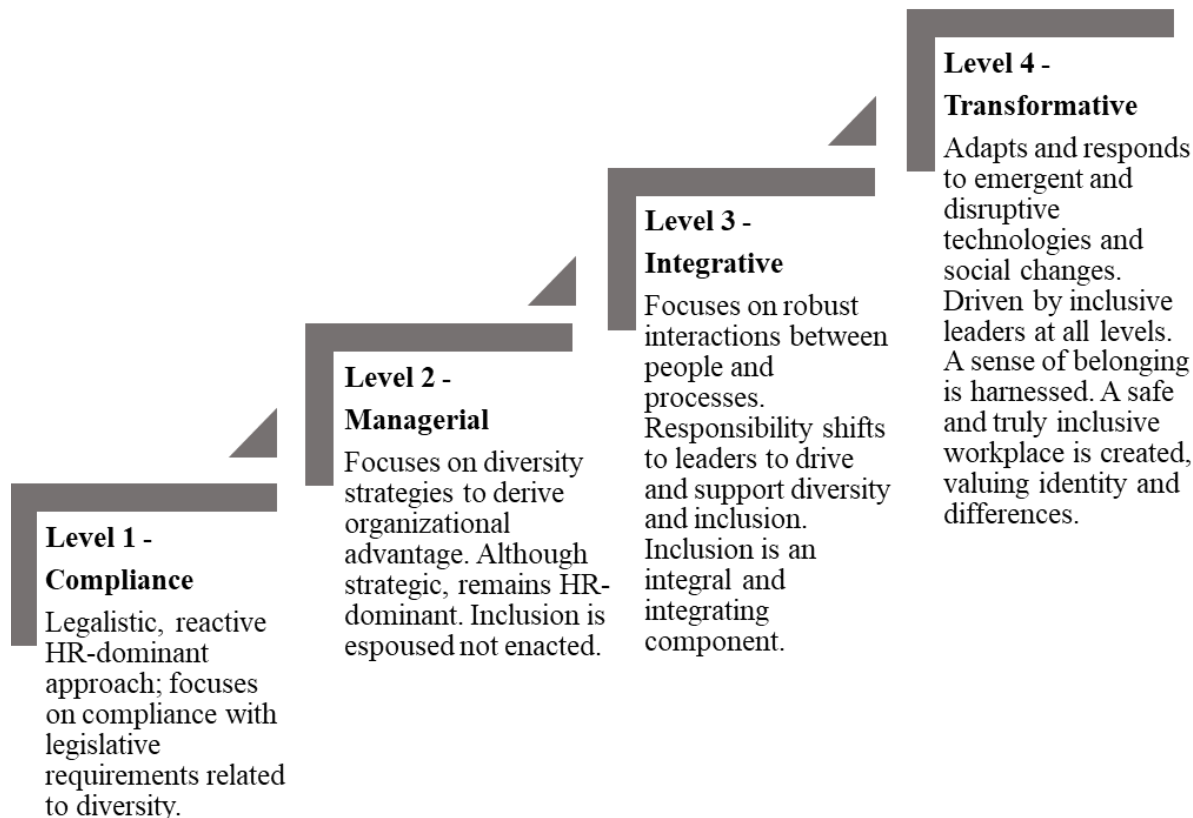
Gap Analysis

Despite the school district's commitment to equity and inclusion, gender is not part of organizational discourse and activity. The school district's employment policies, practices, and outcomes have not been examined from a gender perspective and perceptions of organizational climate have not been solicited in several years (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Kellerman & Rhode, 2017; McKinsey & Company, 2019; Nishii, 2013). The senior leadership team subscribes to a theory of change that emphasizes symmetry and identifies leaders as critical change agents;

however, equity and inclusion for school leaders have been given minimal attention (Mehta et al., 2018, 2018). Figure 3 presents a capability maturity model, an assessment tool and roadmap for an organization’s diversity, equity, and inclusion journey (Lundy et al., 2021).

Figure 3

Capability Maturity Model



Note. The capability maturity model outlines an organization’s evolution from diversity to inclusion. From “Utilising a Capability Maturity Model to Leverage Inclusion and Diversity in Public Sector Organisations” by J. Lundy, R. Keast, B. Farr-Wharton, M. Omari, S. Teo, and T. Bentley, 2021, *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 80(4), pp. 1032–1045 (<https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8500.12521>). Copyright 2021 by the Institute of Public Administration Australia.

This model delineates the gap between an equitable and inclusive work environment and the school district's current state. The school district's current structure and practices reflect the compliance and managerial levels and a focus on diversity (Lundy et al., 2021). Cultivating an inclusive environment requires integration with organizational goals and functions and increased engagement of school leaders (Lundy et al., 2021). The integrative level of the capability maturity model highlights the responsibility of leaders to build an inclusive environment for their teams (Hayes et al., 2021; Lundy et al., 2021). However, according to Hayes et al. (2021), it is unlikely that frontline leaders have their own experience of inclusion to draw from, and organizations need to address that first.

Priority for Change

Several researchers emphasize the leader's role in shaping inclusion through modeling, decision-making, and influence (Atcheson, 2021; Buengeler et al., 2018; Jin et al., 2017; Johnson & Lambert, 2020; Paluch et al., 2017; Randel et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2011). Leaders are critical drivers and gatekeepers of organizational change (Randel et al., 2018). While organizational policies and structures are developed by senior leaders, the daily practices that enact these policies rest with school leaders (Mor Barak et al., 2022; Randel et al., 2018). The level of school leader acceptance, alignment, and participation in this organizational change is imperative to evolve from the managerial to integrative level of maturity (Buengeler et al., 2018; Katz & Miller, 2002; Lundy et al., 2021; Randel et al., 2018). According to Ferdman and Roberts (2013), inclusion starts with the self. In order to create an inclusive environment for others, leaders need to connect with their identities and feel safe, accepted, respected, and supported (Ferdman & Roberts, 2013). This enables leaders to develop richer relationships and create the conditions for an inclusion based on direct experience (Ferdman & Roberts, 2013).

Benefits

The level of communication and participation inherent in inclusive environments supports organizational learning, innovation, and growth (Katz & Miller, 2002; Paluch et al., 2017; Shore et al., 2011, 2018). These outcomes align with the school district's values and contribute to achievement of the strategic plan. Addressing the impact of gender bias, power relations, and exclusion enhances the social learning process that is fundamental to the school district's theory of change and improves outcomes (Johansson & Abrahamsson, 2018; Martin et al., 2018; Mehta et al., 2018; Wang & Wang, 2004; Wenger, 2000). By participating in this change, leaders grow their inclusive leadership competency and increase engagement throughout the organization (Katz & Miller, 2002). This enhances employee experience and improves well-being, performance, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Barak, 1999; Benschop & van den Brink, 2018; Karanika-Murray et al., 2015; Kossek et al., 2017; Rubin et al., 2019; Shore et al., 2011). Engaging in this change demonstrates the school district's authentic commitment to an equitable and inclusive environment for everyone and creates congruency between organizational direction and school leaders' experience. This change presents an opportunity to value multiple identities and leadership approaches, establish norms that leverage diverse knowledge, skills, and perspectives, and contribute to an environment of mutual learning (Katz & Miller, 2002). As stated by Katz and Miller (2002), these benefits can extend beyond the organization's boundaries, strengthening partnerships with outside agencies and enhancing service to students and families.

Conclusion

This chapter outlines the leadership PoP, the organizational context, and where I am situated as a change agent. Theoretical and conceptual frameworks are presented to convey the

meaning and relationship between diversity, equity, and inclusion and illustrate the persistent organizational challenges associated with gender. The chapter concludes with guiding questions from the PoP and a vision for a gender-inclusive leadership climate, providing the basis for possible solutions developed in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2: Planning and Development

Chapter 1 outlined the gap between representation and equity and inclusion, illustrated the persistence of gender inequity, and presented a vision for a gender-inclusive leadership climate. This chapter describes the connection between transformative and inclusive leadership approaches and the vision for change. Four feminist frames for change and Lewin's change model (1947) are applied to change strategy and process. Following an assessment of change readiness, the chapter concludes with an evaluation of three possible solutions to address the problem of practice and direct attention to the experience and implications of gender for school leaders.

Leadership Approach to Change

A gender-inclusive leadership climate is enabled by the competencies and practices of transformative and inclusive leadership. Transformative leadership focuses on social justice, equity, and the structural elements of the vision, while inclusive leadership focuses on inclusion and the intrapersonal and interpersonal elements (Ferdman et al., 2020; Nishii & Leroy, 2022; Shields, 2010). Collectively, these leadership approaches respond to the guiding questions from the PoP and encompass the critical analysis, deconstruction, and recreation involved in addressing gender inequities and enhancing inclusion.

Transformative Leadership

Transformative leadership challenges uses of power and privilege that produce and perpetuate inequities (Shields, 2010). A transformative leadership approach recognizes and addresses gender inequity for school leaders, informs strategies to implement the equity framework in a gender-inclusive manner, and promotes the application of an intersectional, decolonizing approach (Shields, 2019, 2022). It acknowledges the broader social context, which

is particularly important for gender issues given the societal structures and practices upholding hegemonic masculinity (Acker, 1990; Shields, 2019). This leadership approach aligns with critical feminist theory and the third and fourth waves of feminism, where this PoP is situated, by acknowledging the social construction of gender and promoting the deconstruction and reconstruction of knowledge frameworks that maintain the gender binary and associated power and privilege (Ely & Meyerson, 2000a; Kelan, 2010; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000; Shields, 2019). Shifting from a view of gender as an individual attribute to an organizationally maintained social order guides organizational diagnosis and selection of interventions (Acker, 1990; Butler, 1990; de Vries & van den Brink, 2016; Ely & Meyerson, 2000a; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000). Employing this approach prompts senior leaders to examine and disrupt gendering processes, including formal policies and procedures, informal work practices, symbols and images of the ideal worker, social norms and patterns of everyday interactions, and people's internalizations and expressions of gender identity (Acker, 1990; de Vries & van den Brink, 2016; Ely & Meyerson, 2000a; Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000). A transformative leadership approach is increasingly evident in the organization as it implements the equity framework. However, senior leaders need to extend their purview beyond school structures and instructional practices to encompass structures and practices that shape the experience of school leaders. While the focus of transformative leadership is equity and justice, according to Shields (2010), it is inextricably connected to the creation of inclusive environments. Its emphasis on democratic empowerment and transformation of social relations can be a precursor to inclusion and participation (Shields, 2022; Shields & Hesbol, 2020).

Inclusive Leadership

Inclusion is a state where everyone, regardless of their backgrounds, can bring their whole selves to work and have a sense of belonging and value for what they offer (Ferdman et al., 2020; Nishii & Leroy, 2022; Shore et al., 2011). Inclusive leadership is regarded as an effective means of creating psychologically safe environments, improving opportunities for historically marginalized and underrepresented groups, and promoting organizations' diversity management initiatives (Ferdman et al., 2020; Meng & Neill, 2021; Randel et al., 2018). It is a dynamic and relational process that interrupts the negative connection between uniqueness and belonging experienced by marginalized groups (Nishii & Leroy, 2022). This interruption facilitates a gender-inclusive leadership climate by confronting narratives and dynamics based on gender stereotypes, questioning role expectations and perceptions of role incongruity, authorizing and amplifying voice, and rejecting the need to conform to the dominant majority (Ferdman et al., 2020; Grogan & Dias, 2015; Nishii & Leroy, 2022; Shyamsunder, 2020). Inclusive leadership demonstrates how senior leaders shape the interactions and experiences of school leaders and can mitigate negative group processes and tensions by recognizing the impact of social categorization, stereotyping, and bias (Nishii & Leroy, 2022). By employing an inclusive leadership approach, senior leaders create the conditions for school leaders to explore their own experience of equity and inclusion and ensure that diverse and historically underrepresented members are involved in key work processes, decision-making, and formal and informal networks (Mor Barak et al., 2022; Nishii, 2013).

As these leadership approaches are reflected in the school district's leadership competencies and are explicitly connected to the implementation of the equity framework, leaders at all levels are becoming familiar with transformative and inclusive leadership. The

explicit attention to power in social systems requires senior leaders to exercise moral courage and risk-taking but is vital to ensuring that the organization's espoused commitment to equity and inclusion is translated and evident in daily practices and interactions that impact school leaders (Mor Barak et al., 2022; Shields, 2010). Observing activity and impact in the field and monitoring the level of congruency between HR policy and practice is an important function of my role.

Agency

Consistent with the organizational culture, my position is granted a high level of autonomy. How I leverage this agency is critical. Although the HR profession is characterized by significant female representation, its theories and practices are dominated by masculine rationality (Bierema, 2009; Callahan & Bierema, 2014; Sheerin et al., 2020). Despite its humanistic roots, HR is criticized for applying a performative philosophy and human capital approach that commodifies employees and ignores power relations to serve the organization's management interests and justify HR's existence (Callahan & Bierema, 2014). The HR department's focus on recruitment, staffing, and issues management is indicative of this philosophy and approach. To engage in the critical examination of managerialist structures, I need to be receptive to the notion that HR theories and frameworks are based on colonialist and masculine ways of thinking and consider alternative theories and models that question Western hegemony and neoliberal frames (Bierema, 2009; Callahan & Bierema, 2014; Collins, 2019; Syed & Metcalfe, 2017). According to Sheerin et al. (2020), there is a duality of structure and agency in the reproduction of social practices. Weiner (2003) notes that transformative leaders' place of authority means having to challenge from within, learn and unlearn their power, and boldly resist despite their own fear of authority. In this space, I am subject to the power

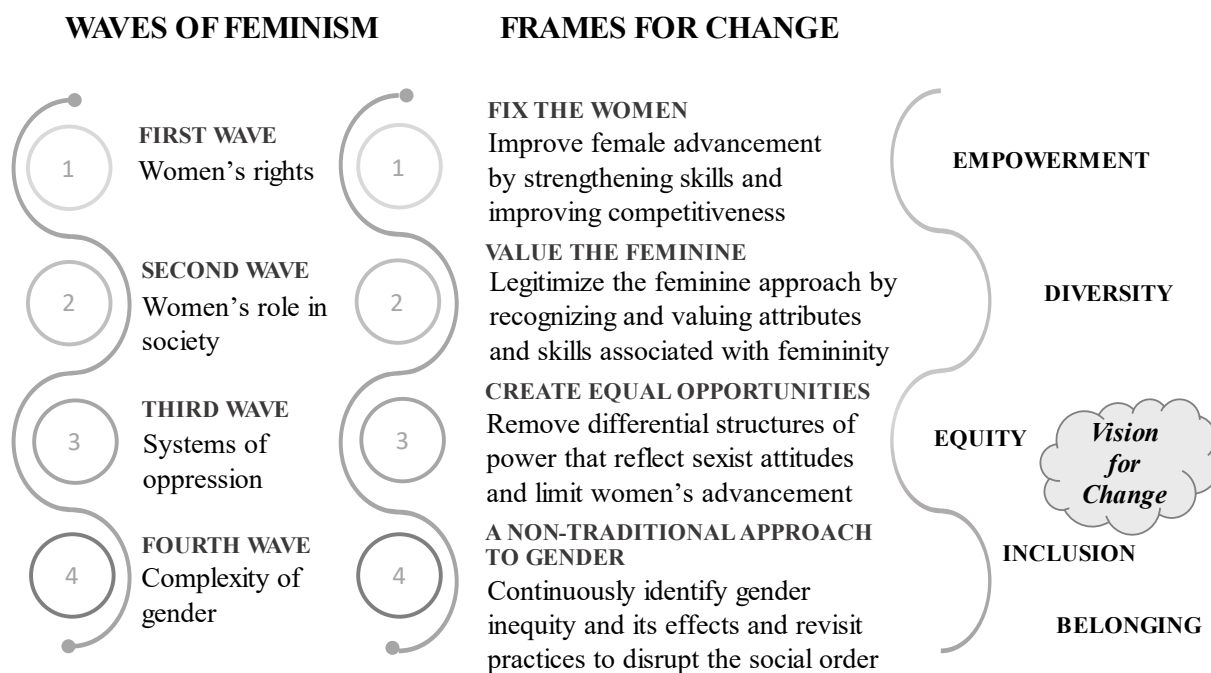
dynamics, rules, and norms of the senior leadership team and the board of education (Sheerin et al., 2020). This duality validates the tempered radicalist approach and an emergent, incremental approach to catalyze change (Ely & Meyerson, 2000a; Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000; Meyerson & Scully, 2003).

Framework for Leading the Change Process

According to Fernflores (2016), the potential of social justice activism depends on determining the most effective strategy. Understanding the nature of change is critical to designing an effective change strategy and process (Anderson & Anderson, 2010). The four waves of feminism presented by Hewitt (2010), outlined in Chapter 1, offer different access points and strategies for organizational change (Ely & Meyerson, 2000a). These feminist frames for change are visually represented in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Feminist Frames for Change



Note. This diagram outlines the waves of feminism and associated frames for change. Adapted from “Theories of Gender in Organizations: A New Approach to Organizational Analysis and Change” by R. J. Ely and D. E. Meyerson, 2000, *Research in Organizational Behaviour*, 22, pp. 103-151 ([https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-3085\(00\)22004-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-3085(00)22004-2)). Copyright 2000 by Elsevier Science Inc.

The first frame, “fix the women”, is grounded in meritocracy and focuses on development for females, placing responsibility on women to achieve gender equality (Ely & Meyerson, 2000a; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000). The second frame, “value the feminine”, aims to legitimize the feminine approach and involves diversity training to create awareness of gender differences and appreciation of attributes and skills associated with a stereotypical feminine approach (Ely & Meyerson, 2000a; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000). The third frame, “equal opportunity”, focuses on removing differential structures of power and authority that reflect sexist attitudes and interrogates organizational practices to reveal gender bias and remove structural and procedural barriers (Ely & Meyerson, 2000a; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000). Frame four, “a non-traditional view of gender”, focuses on the construction of gender in organizations and applies ongoing inquiry and emergent social processes to challenge fundamental beliefs about gender (Ely & Meyerson, 2000a; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000). This frame is based on the assertion that gender is socially constructed and maintained and that organizations are inherently gendered with systems, standards, practices, and norms that reflect and reinforce a dominant masculine social order (Acker, 1990; Butler, 1990; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000). Interventions in this frame continuously identify gender inequity and its effects on people of all gender identities and revisit practices to disrupt the social order (Ely & Meyerson, 2000a). Calas et al. (2014)

believe that gendering organizations is the most promising approach for achieving gender equity. This vision for change is situated in the third and fourth frames. This positioning is inclusive. It embraces the gender spectrum and avoids reinforcement of the gender binary, and promotes an intersectional approach (Ely & Meyerson, 2000a). This positioning corresponds to the progressive aspirations of the school district and aligns with the expectations outlined by the ministry of education to provide inclusive and safe spaces for students of all sexual orientations and gender identities (Government of BC, 2019; Leuven School District, 2020b).

Type of Change

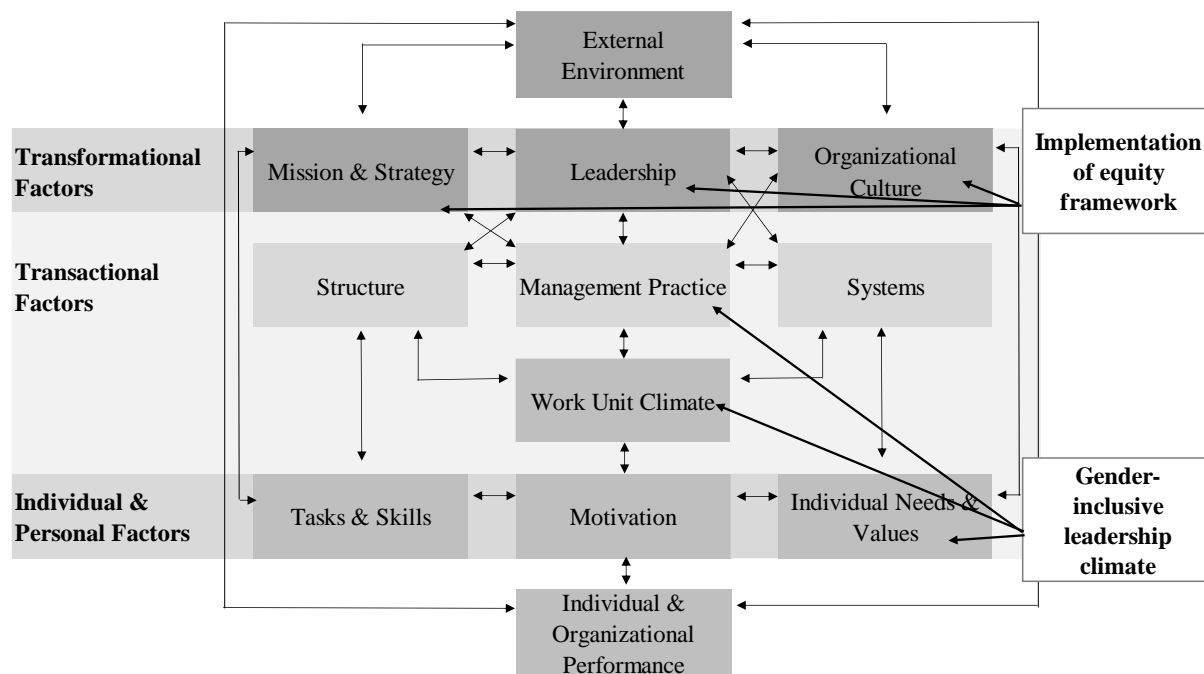
Nadler and Tushman (1989) outline four types of organizational change based on scope and position. The change associated with this PoP is best described as reactive and incremental and categorized as adaptation (Deszca, 2020; Nadler & Tushman, 1989). It is connected to a current initiative, the equity framework, and aims to create an employee experience that is congruent with the student experience. It focuses on a specific employee group, school leaders, and a specific aspect of identity, gender. This change focuses on awareness and understanding; it does not contemplate a sudden, large-scale change to the school district's purpose, priorities, or structure. This categorization is validated by approaches to change recommended by feminist scholar-practitioners who advocate for an emergent, localized process of incremental change that achieves transformation through a series of interventions (Ely & Meyerson, 2000a; Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000).

The challenge associated with adaptation can be underestimated. One must consider the complexity of the education sector. In addition, this change is connected to an overarching change, the implementation of the school district's equity framework, which involves shifting mindsets and priorities and co-creating structures and processes (Kim, 1995; Nadler & Tushman,

1989; Nishii & Rich, 2013). In order to reduce gender bias and create an equitable and inclusive environment, researchers and practitioners recommend a balanced, multi-level approach that includes structural changes to address macro factors and behavioral interventions that address meso and micro factors (de Vries & van den Brink, 2016; Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016; Shyamsunder, 2020; Stephens et al., 2020). This represents the reciprocal relationship between this change and the implementation of the equity framework, as illustrated by the Burke-Litwin Model of Organizational Performance and Change (see Figure 5).

Figure 5

Application of the Burke-Litwin Model of Organizational Performance and Change



Note. This diagram presents the type of change and its connection to the implementation of the school district's equity framework. Adapted from "A Causal Model of Organizational Performance and Change" by W. W. Burke and G. H. Litwin, 1992, *Journal of Management*, 18(3), pp. 523–545 (<https://doi.org/10.1177/014920639201800306>). Copyright 1992 by the Southern Management Association.

This model outlines two sets of variables and feedback loops affecting organizational functioning (Burke, 2018; Jones & Brazzel, 2014). Transformational variables include strategy, leadership, and culture, requiring entirely new behaviours and fundamental, revolutionary change (Burke, 2018; Martins & Coetzee, 2009). Transactional variables include structure, systems, management practices, climate, individual needs, values, and motivation, and are a source of continuous improvement or evolutionary change (Burke, 2018; Martins & Coetzee, 2009). The implementation of the equity framework is in the transformational domain and this change is in the transactional domain and they form a reinforcing loop; demonstrating the view of Fletcher and Ely (2003) that revolutionary change does not need to be achieved solely by revolution.

Change Process Model

Lewin (1947) developed one of the earliest change models based on the theory that human systems exist in a "quasi-stationary equilibrium" maintained by driving and restraining forces in the physical and social environment. Lewin's change model outlines a planned approach to change in three stages: unfreezing, changing, and refreezing, and can be applied to all types of change (Lewin, 1947). Edgar Schein elaborates on Lewin's change model by including the psychological, dynamic process associated with individual and group-level change (Burke, 2018; Cameron, 2015; Coghlan, 2021; Schein & Schein, 2016). Schein and Schein (2016) outline four processes necessary to trigger the unfreezing stage and launch the change process. The first process is disconfirmation of the validity of the status quo (Schein & Schein, 2016). To motivate change, disconfirming information must induce survival anxiety or guilt by demonstrating that an important goal or value is being compromised and overcome an organization's predictable denial and defensiveness (Schein & Schein, 2016). Once people

recognize the need to learn new habits and ways of thinking, learning anxiety and resistance emerge based on fears of loss of competence, power, identity, and group membership (Schein & Schein, 2016). Learning anxiety is reduced by establishing psychological safety and creating the conditions for learning and unlearning (Schein & Schein, 2016). In the second stage, learners discover new concepts, define new meanings for old concepts, and adapt to new standards of evaluation (Schein & Schein, 2016). Learning is accomplished through two mechanisms: imitation and identification with role models and designing and testing solutions through trial and error (Schein & Schein, 2016). In the final stage of the model, learning is reinforced by results (Schein & Schein, 2016). To complete the “refreezing” stage, learners incorporate new understanding into their self-concept and identity and establish congruence with their self-image and behavior (Schein & Schein, 2016).

Successful change requires attention to content, process, and people (Anderson & Anderson, 2010). Lewin’s change model outlines process and Edgar Schein’s extension of the model reinforces the human aspect of change, recognizing why and how people change to understand sources of resistance and enabling strategies (Schein & Schein, 2016). An emphasis on creating motivation to change and addressing fears related to power, identity, and group membership translates strongly to this change and connects to transformative and inclusive leadership approaches (Burnes, 2020; Schein & Schein, 2016). Lewin’s change model incorporates an iterative learning process that aligns with the school district’s theory of change and the incremental change approach promoted for the fourth frame (Ely & Meyerson, 2000a; Schein & Schein, 2016). While some criticize the model for being simplistic, linear, and static, a deeper understanding of underlying theory confirms its acknowledgment of the dynamic environment and perpetual change in organizations (Burnes, 2004; Cummings et al., 2016).

Explicit attention to sociopsychological dynamics is provided by Edgar Schein's elaboration and attention to the optimal conditions for learning and change in a social context (Cameron & Green, 2015; Coghlan, 2021; Schein & Schein, 2016). The main drawback of this change model is the limited guidance in the second and third stages of the change process, changing and refreezing. However, a less prescriptive approach is not necessarily problematic for changes to social systems. Specific goals, strategies, and actions are informed by frameworks and tools specifically designed for gender equity and inclusion and determined by a participative, collaborative change process (Casaca & Lortie, 2017; Lundy et al., 2021; Nishii & Rich, 2013). Utilizing the democratic approach that underpins Lewin's work in social psychology leverages group learning and decision-making, supports an emergent change process, and enhances ownership and accountability (Burnes, 2020; Crosby, 2021).

The application of Lewin's change model to this PoP is outlined in Appendix B. In the unfreezing stage, complacency is disrupted by reviewing data and soliciting organizational and personal stories. Due to a lack of internal data, this process relies heavily on external sources of information. The case for change is validated by noting the lack of discourse about gender equity and inclusion, the impact, and the need for congruence with professional standards and ethics and other EDID (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Decolonization) efforts. Psychological safety is cultivated by developing a shared vision of an equitable and inclusive work environment and facilitated through social learning spaces, informal and formal networks, coaching and mentorship (Edmondson, 2018; Nishii & Rich, 2013). These mechanisms support learning and cultivate readiness throughout the change process. The change stage provides training and resources to facilitate exploration, experimentation, and action planning. The refreezing stage

embeds learning by adjusting language, narratives, group norms, procedures and practices and guiding personal reflection to incorporate changes into leaders' self-concept and identity.

Lewin's change model parallels the change process of critique, experimentation, and narrative generation recommended by Ely and Meyerson (2000a) for the fourth frame of change. Its focus on learning and personal congruency and attention to group dynamics and psychological safety establish a strong fit for this change. The model's emphasis on creating motivation to change is particularly relevant, given the persistence and elusiveness of gender bias. Ultimately, Lewin's change model fulsomely addresses the people component of this change and provides flexibility to determine specific actions based on participant needs, desired outcomes, and organizational context.

Organizational Change Readiness

When organizational readiness for change is high, employees are more likely to initiate change, exert greater effort to implement change, and demonstrate persistence in overcoming obstacles (Weiner, 2009). An assessment of psychological, behavioural, and structural preparedness can be a risk prevention and risk mitigation strategy (Combe, 2014; Helfrich et al., 2011). Combe (2014) outlines three elements of organizational readiness that consider individual and organizational attributes. Cultural readiness speaks to alignment with organizational values and norms (Combe, 2014). Commitment readiness refers to leadership predisposition to the change and the level of resolve to sponsor and participate in the change (Combe, 2014). Capacity readiness considers the number and magnitude of change initiatives in the organization and the resources available (Combe, 2014).

Cultural readiness is indicated by organizational values and norms of open communication, collaboration, shared decision-making, support for risk-taking, and tolerance of

mistakes (Caldwell et al., 2008; Combe, 2014; Lehman et al., 2002). These norms reflect many of the characteristics of inclusive leadership and align with the learning orientation of the school district. The connection to this change is evident, as it requires senior leaders and school leaders to actively participate in individual and social learning opportunities, share their experiences and perceptions, and be willing to shift their mindset and leadership practice (Wasserman, 2015). This type of learning is increasingly prevalent in the school district as leaders implement the equity framework. However, there are cultural inhibitors. Distributed leadership and a value of autonomy may limit interest and engagement in a collective purpose, and senior leaders need to relinquish control over the change process and embrace emergence as proclaimed in their theory of change. A significant cultural barrier is school leaders' fear of making mistakes, given the complexity and sensitivity of matters related to EDID and their perceptions that senior leaders do not give significant credence to their perspectives, ideas, and concerns, and have little tolerance for missteps.

Commitment readiness refers to leadership predisposition to the change and the level of resolve to sponsor and participate in the change (Combe, 2014; Weiner, 2009). Weiner (2009) emphasizes the need for shared resolve for complex changes that require collective action. Commitment is enhanced when the change aligns with organizational values and the need and benefit of the change are clear (Combe, 2014). This change aligns with the organization's values of respect, opportunity, and innovation and its responsibility to uphold human rights and maintain a work environment that is free from discrimination (Leuven School District, 2020b). It is clearly connected to the implementation of the equity framework, which includes discussion about identity, privilege, and bias and is catalyzing interrogation of organizational practices (Leuven School District, n.d.). However, the plan for implementing the equity framework is not

well defined, and leaders are at various stages of commitment and action, ranging from awareness to experimentation (Conner & Patterson, 1982). A more significant issue associated with this change is the challenge to fundamental beliefs about gender and the concept that the organization is gender neutral. Changing beliefs involves revealing assumptions, testing them, and changing them if necessary (Kim, 1995). It is an area of high leverage and the most challenging area to affect (Kim, 1995). This is exacerbated by the lack of understanding amongst all leaders about how gender works in organizations (de Vries & van den Brink, 2016). Taking a systemic perspective and considering the organization as gendered rather than focusing solely on individual behaviour aligns with the school district's theory of change that inequity is structural. Konrad & Linnehan (1995) contend that identity-conscious structures are necessary to remedy discrimination, and it is unlikely that leaders would dispute the need to address discrimination. However, acknowledgement that the organization is not gender-neutral and sustains discriminatory practices may trigger defensiveness and limit participation of senior leaders and school leaders. Given the lack of visibility of gender identity in policy and discourse, one can also anticipate discomfort, reluctance, and even resistance to engaging a non-binary, gender-diverse perspective.

Capacity readiness considers the number and magnitude of organizational change initiatives and the resources available (Combe, 2014). While leader response to the equity framework has been positive, progress has been slow. Leader preparation for social justice work, the changing nature of educational leadership and associated workload, and competing strategic and operational priorities are probable factors (Allen et al., 2017; Wang & Pollock, 2020). Understandably, school leaders focus on student learning. They are responsible for implementing several educational initiatives each year and addressing the urgent needs of vulnerable students.

While senior leaders and school leaders are actively cultivating student voice, calls from school leaders for increased voice and inclusion in organizational decisions are secondary. A widespread belief in gender neutrality and meritocracy minimizes the significance of this issue, especially in relation to other social justice priorities (Kelan, 2010; Smith, 2020). Amidst competing priorities, it is challenging for leaders to sustain attention to the employee experience, especially their own. While an intersectional, decolonizing approach may synthesize efforts, it also introduces complexity to a predominantly White leadership group and necessitates a more sophisticated perspective (Holvino, 2010). A clear understanding of goals, importance, expected behaviour, and action is essential (Weiner, 2009).

The ability to design and implement interventions from the third and fourth frames is also determined by the readiness of the HR department. HR practitioners are criticized for operating from masculine traditions and failing to serve the needs of marginalized employees (Bierema, 2009; Fenwick, 2004). Currently, employment equity is led primarily by national and provincial bodies rather than at the local level, and local intervention is constrained by a lack of disaggregated organizational data. While each member of the HR team engages in professional development, a departmental training plan has not been developed to equip all team members to identify and contribute to EDID initiatives and design a collective departmental effort. As a result, this change requires a reconsideration of departmental purpose and values, an investment in building the team's gender knowledge and transformative leadership competency, and the development of relevant data sources and metrics.

Change Barriers

While an assessment of organizational readiness discusses enabling and restraining forces, there are two barriers associated with this PoP that impact change receptivity and engagement and warrant specific attention: the invisibility of gender bias and lateral voice.

The third and fourth waves of feminism assert that organizations are inherently gendered (Butler, 1990; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000). Consequently, privilege, bias, and exclusion are invisible to everyone, incidents of discrimination are discounted, and harm is not acknowledged (Becker & Swim, 2011; Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016). Invisibility is maintained by hegemonic discourses that legitimize the dominant masculine order and support a narrative that organizations are gender-neutral (Griffin, 2020; Vinkenbunrg, 2017). There is a considerable gap between the gender knowledge within organizations, where gender is understood as the property of individuals, and the approach of scholars who view gender as socially constructed and organizations as gendered (de Vries & van den Brink, 2016). Given the invisibility of gender, leaders may not share a perception of inequity or exclusion (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016; Hardacre & Subašić, 2018; Kaiser & Major, 2006; Kelan, 2009; Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015). An employee engagement survey has not been conducted in recent years, and understanding of the experience and impact of gender is based on limited demographic data and anecdotal evidence. This creates a challenge for the unfreezing stage of the change process, where the status quo must be proven inadequate to motivate change.

Velasco and Sansone (2019) found three sources of resistance specific to diversity initiatives: fear of the unknown, perceived threat to privilege and power, and the risk of being excluded. An understanding of the dynamics and level of safety in each workgroup is key to supporting people in working through discomfort and providing the right combination of

challenge and support (Wasserman, 2015). Change relies on a willingness to speak up, and leaders may hesitate to express divergent views for fear of upsetting relationships and creating personal risk (Ashford et al., 1998; Frazier & Bowler, 2015; Kaiser & Miller, 2004; Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Lateral voice is a particular challenge given the fear of losing status as a result of challenging the social hierarchy of the workgroup and perceptions of self-advocacy (Ashford et al., 1998; Piderit & Ashford, 2003). Compelling data, a knowledge-building and inquiry-based approach, and structures to ensure safety are paramount to counteract these barriers and encourage participation (Nishii & Rich, 2013). Willingness to participate depends on the nature and process of the change and the degree of organizational support and trusting relationships with critical decision-makers (Ashford et al., 1998). A conscious effort by senior leaders to ensure psychological safety is crucial in the unfreezing and change stages of the change process and can be bolstered by involving external consultants (Ashford et al., 1998).

Solutions to Address the Problem of Practice

Solutions to address the PoP aim to increase awareness and discourse about the impact of gender in the leadership group and reflect the following areas of inquiry:

- a) To what extent does gender impact equity and inclusion for school leaders?
- b) How can school leaders be encouraged to explore their own experience of equity and inclusion?
- c) How can the equity framework be implemented in a gender-inclusive manner? How can an intersectional, decolonizing approach be applied to this work?

Situated in the third and fourth frames of feminism and change, solutions consider opportunities at the individual, group, and organizational level to address structural barriers and social practices and, more specifically, the dimensions of climate for inclusion (Casaca & Lortie, 2017;

Fletcher & Ely, 2003; Nishii, 2013; Wasserman, 2015). Solutions are designed based on the prevailing theory that incremental and persistent action enhances the likelihood of organizational transformation (Benschop & van den Brink, 2014; Ely & Meyerson, 2000a; Oliha-Donaldson, 2020). To facilitate adoption and implementation, there is a focus on the unfreezing stage of the change process and attention to the change drivers prominent in academic and professional literature on change management and gender equity and inclusion (Lewin, 1947; Whelan-Berry & Somerville, 2010).

Change Drivers

Change drivers are events, activities, or behaviors that facilitate individual adoption and institutionalize change (Whelan-Berry & Somerville, 2010). Somerville (2008) identifies five categories of internal change drivers: vision, leadership, human resources, communication, and enabling changes in structure and processes. Based on the vision for change and organizational context, three variables related to leadership and human resources are notable levers to accelerate and embed change (Whelan-Berry & Somerville, 2010).

Executive Sponsorship

Active and visible sponsorship is crucial to the success of a change initiative (Prosci, 2018). Senior leaders determine the credibility of a change initiative, authorize resources, and perform essential communication and engagement activities (McKinsey & Company, 2019; Prosci, 2018). According to Benschop and van den Brink (2018), leaders must prioritize gender equity, create a sense of urgency, and display gender-aware leadership to strengthen organizational commitment. In addition to designing and articulating strategy, senior leaders are responsible for ensuring congruence between policy and practice by establishing accountability mechanisms and monitoring data to assess progress and differential impacts (Nishii & Leroy,

2022). At Leuven School District, senior leaders indicate support for gender equity and inclusion, and a more explicit and consistent display of sponsorship, formally and informally, can create the conditions for change.

Human Resource Practices

Workplace equity involves HR policies and practices that foster equality and non-discrimination (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Kossek & Lee, 2020; Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015). Diehl and Dzubinski (2016) identify sixteen gender-based leadership barriers, many of which can be lowered through sound HR practices that are conscious of identity and equity (Bierema, 2020; Hardacre & Subašić, 2018). At the Leuven School District, examining HR practices, including work design, recruitment, selection, career development, and performance evaluation, can uncover areas of bias and privilege and identify interventions to further equity and inclusion.

Leadership Competencies

Leadership competencies facilitate change in three ways. First, leaders' demonstration of transformative and inclusive leadership competencies can interrupt cycles of bias by challenging assumptions, confronting narratives and dynamics based on stereotypes, authorizing voice, and resisting conformance to the dominant majority (Mullin et al., 2021; Nishii & Leroy, 2022). Second, social categorization processes can create stereotypical views that result in perceptions of lower status and competence and role incongruence, impacting an employee's experience of inclusion (Nishii & Leroy, 2022). Leadership competencies can communicate a new representation of the ideal leader that circumvents hegemonic masculine and colonial styles and provide a definition that can be embraced and practiced by all genders (Casaca & Lortie, 2017; Ramasubramanian, 2019). Finally, leadership competencies provide criteria for HR decisions and can reduce bias and remove barriers if objectively and consistently applied (Ayman &

Korabik, 2010; Bielby, 2000; Heilman & Caleo, 2018; Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015; Vinkenburg, 2017). The application of leadership competencies to performance evaluation can also serve as an accountability mechanism and draw a clear line of sight between policy and practice (Mor Barak et al., 2022; Nishii & Leroy, 2022).

Solution 1: Gender-based Analysis of Human Resource Practices

HR practices are a change driver for equity and inclusion, and several scholars note the need to critically examine HR practices and attend to power, voice, and equity (Callahan & Bierema, 2014; Callahan & Elliott, 2020; Fenwick, 2004). An analysis of HR practices and their impact can generate attention, legitimacy, and action (Casaca & Lortie, 2017). By examining HR practices and outcomes, this solution applies the ethic of justice, considering employee rights and fairness, and demonstrates the ethic of critique by questioning the status quo (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016).

Gender-based analysis assesses how diverse groups of women, men, and people with other gender identities experience policies, programs, and practices and the systemic barriers they face (Government of Canada, 2021a; Open Government Partnership, n.d.). It also recognizes gender's relationship with race, ethnicity, culture, class, age, disability, and other forms of status (Government of Canada, 2021a; Hankivsky, 2013). Gender-based analysis addresses the first dimension of climate for inclusion, equitable employment practices (Nishii, 2013). It aims to foster fair outcomes by interrupting gender-blind or gender-neutral assumptions and eliminating gender bias in organizational processes and practices (Benschop & Verloo, 2006; Hankivsky, 2013; Paterson, 2010). Conducting gender-based analysis also communicates a message of respect, acceptance, and belonging (Cornelis et al., 2013; Dover et al., 2020; Hoogervorst et al., 2013; Russen et al., 2021). This solution addresses structural barriers to

gender equity and establishes a process for surfacing and addressing gender issues. By applying a participatory approach, gender-based analysis creates a deeper understanding of school leader experience and supports more informed decision-making (Findlay, 2019). A participatory approach impacts the third dimension of climate for inclusion, inclusion in decision-making (Nishii, 2013). It also provides an opportunity for senior leaders to decolonize HR practices and model transformative leadership, enabling HR leaders and school leaders to replicate the approach and enhance equity for employees and students (Shields, 2011).

Considerations

To manage scope and introduce change incrementally, this solution encompasses select HR practices that directly impact school leaders and are led by the HR department. This may include work design, recruitment and selection, compensation, and development (Heilman & Caleo, 2018; Vinkenburg, 2017). To properly conduct gender-based analysis, HR team members must understand how structures produce and reinforce gender inequities. This requires an investment in building the team's knowledge and skills and securing capacity for planning and facilitating the process (Government of Canada, 2002). Gender-based analysis corresponds with the equity scan recently conducted for Indigenous students and the structural component of the school district's equity framework. Critics of gender-based analysis assert that it does not address subtle, implicit forms of bias and discrimination and that its focus on structural barriers without attention to underlying cultural norms and values is inadequate to realize change (Benschop & van den Brink, 2014; Ely & Meyerson, 2000a; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000; Paterson, 2010). Others criticize the participatory nature of gender-based analysis, contending that it disregards unequal power relations and results in the neutralization of issues, compromised outcomes, and exclusion

of the impacts of colonialism (Findlay, 2019; Sanchez-Pimienta et al., 2021; Scala & Paterson, 2017).

Solution 2: Leader Voice

The structure and culture of organizations are built around hegemonic masculinity, and to succeed, employees must endure or adapt to this orientation (Benschop & van den Brink, 2018; Cleveland et al., 2017). While many employees experience or notice this obstacle and associated injustices, most do not speak openly about it to their leaders (Cleveland et al., 2017; Morrison & Milliken, 2000). This solution encourages school leaders to reflect on their experience of equity and inclusion and provides an explicit invitation and mechanism for leader voice.

Employee voice is defined as a structure or process for employees to communicate their views to management (Dundon et al., 2004). It includes individual and collective, direct and indirect, and formal and informal mechanisms such as surveys, interviews, forums, suggestion schemes, and employee resources groups (Bell et al., 2011; Della Torre, 2019). Voice increases employees' sense of control and value, establishes conditions for meaningful communication and relationships, and creates a culture that values the expression of multiple perspectives (Hoogervorst et al., 2013; Morrison, 2014; Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Nechanska et al., 2020).

An opportunity exists to solicit school leader voice through an upcoming employee engagement survey by disaggregating data for the group. By implementing this solution, the senior leadership team gains a deeper understanding of school leader experiences and organizational norms, cultivates relationships and trust, and demonstrates an ethic of care (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). This solution also provides an opportunity for senior leaders to model inclusive leadership and demonstrate the competencies that create a psychologically safe environment, impacting the second and third dimensions of the climate for inclusion, integration

of differences and inclusion in decision-making (Atewologun & Harman, 2020; Ferdman et al., 2020; Kossek & Lee, 2020; Nishii, 2013; Northouse, 2019).

Considerations

This solution involves the design and implementation of a mechanism for leader voice by the senior leadership team. While this solution aligns with the school district's student voice initiatives and can dovetail with an upcoming employee engagement survey, introducing a new leader voice mechanism requires development of a shared understanding of purpose, process, and best practices, and time and space for meaningful communication. The existence of a communication channel does not guarantee that communication takes place (Harlos, 2010). Before exercising voice, employees consider the likelihood of success and the risk of negative repercussions for themselves or their relationships (McClellan et al., 2018; Morrison, 2014; Mowbray, 2018; Nechanska et al., 2020). Gender equity can be a controversial and divisive topic, and the struggle over when to speak up is ongoing (Neale & Kramer, 1998). Senior leaders influence voice perceptions and behaviours throughout an organization (Detert & Trevino, 2010; Morrison, 2014). They need to defy stories and beliefs about speaking to authority by actively encouraging voice, signaling openness and support, creating trusting relationships, and modelling by speaking up themselves (Ashford et al., 1998; Dutton et al., 1997; Eibl et al., 2020; Taiyi Yan et al., 2021; Urbach & Fay, 2021). If the organization has a climate of silence, senior leadership intervention may be unsuccessful in combating cynicism and revolutionary change may be required (Ashford et al., 1998; Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Neale & Kramer, 1998). While engagement of an external consultant may mitigate these risks, it does not guarantee school leaders' participation.

Solution 3: Senior Leadership Training

Executive sponsorship is essential to driving diversity initiatives and challenging gendered status hierarchies (Benschop & van den Brink, 2018; Cortis et al., 2022; Vinkenburg, 2017; Williams & Clowney, 2007). Blackmore (2010), Casaca and Lortie (2017), and Lundy et al. (2021) assert that it is a moral imperative for leaders to build their gender knowledge and awareness and build an inclusive environment for their team. This solution builds the consciousness and capability of the senior leadership team to create a gender-inclusive leadership climate. While leaders at all levels have been actively learning about identity, bias, and privilege as part of the implementation of the equity framework, gender has not been a prominent topic of discussion. Given the invisibility of gender, unconscious bias training is a common first step (Bendick et al., 2001; Heilman & Caleo, 2018). The focus on professional development demonstrates an ethic of profession and is consistent with organizational norms of learning and continuous improvement (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016).

Unconscious gender bias results from people's automatic thought patterns derived from norms, values, culture, and experience, causing systematic bias that leads to discrimination (Clendon, 2020; McCormick-Huhn et al., 2020). The effects are consequential, impacting performance evaluations, opportunities, and workplace norms (Evans & Maley, 2021; McCormick-Huhn et al., 2020). Unconscious bias training may impact the second dimension of climate for inclusion, integration of differences (Nishii, 2013). Training builds understanding of what unconscious bias is and how it impacts judgement and decision-making and provides strategies to override automatic processes (Clendon, 2020; McCormick-Huhn et al., 2020). Studies show that unconscious bias training impacts individual-level beliefs and actions by creating greater recognition and concern about unconscious bias, increasing cognizance of

judgements and decisions, and motivating employees to confront bias and engage in new behaviours (Clendon, 2020; Emerson, 2017; McCormick-Huhn et al., 2020; Pritlove et al., 2019).

Considerations

This solution involves sourcing a training provider, organizing training sessions for the senior leadership team, and preparing the team for learning and application. Local training providers with a depth of gender expertise and change experience are limited. To be effective, training must communicate the importance of managing bias; attend to the needs, fears, and desires of participants; and emphasize actions relevant to the workplace (Alhejji et al., 2016; Blackmore, 2010; Emerson, 2017). Application and commitment are essential and require a consciousness of sensemaking, deep reflection, and transformational learning (Petriglieri et al., 2011). It is imperative for senior leaders to share and demonstrate their learning to school leaders. The primary challenge with this solution is prioritizing gender on the leadership development agenda and establishing shared expectations and commitment to subsequent action. Relying on training alone presents several risks, including the perception of a quick fix, minimizing explicit and intentional forms of bias, and focusing on individual agency while ignoring barriers associated with context and power (Arredondo, 1996; Bendick et al., 2001; James, 2021; Pritlove et al., 2019; Williamson & Foley, 2018). Several scholars and practitioners question the efficacy of unconscious bias training, pointing to mixed and limited results including resistance, subversion, and superficial compliance (Bendick et al., 2001; Heilman & Caleo, 2018; Isaac et al., 2016; James, 2021; Levy Paluck & Green, 2009; Pritlove et al., 2019; Sinclair, 2000; Williamson & Foley, 2018).

Comparison

Solutions are compared based on impact, organizational readiness, success factors, resources, and driving and restraining forces using a rating scale of low, moderate, and high (see Appendix C). Impact is based on three dimensions of organizational justice: distributive, procedural, and interactional (McCarthy et al., 2021; Scott et al., 2009). Distributive justice is the perceived fairness of the distribution of rewards and resources (McCarthy et al., 2021; Scott et al., 2009). Procedural justice is the perceived fairness of decision-making procedures (McCarthy et al., 2021; Scott et al., 2009). Interactional justice is the perceived quality of interpersonal interactions in decision-making procedures (McCarthy et al., 2021; Scott et al., 2009). Organizational readiness is based on dimensions outlined by Combe (2014): cultural, commitment, and capacity outlined earlier in the chapter. The comparison also considers two success factors specific to gender equity: accountability and engagement (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016; Williams & Clowney, 2007).

Solution 1, gender-based analysis, aligns with the implementation of the equity framework and has the highest rating for impact. Based on a concrete and specific focus and a participatory approach, both success factors are apparent in this solution. However, this solution has the lowest rating of organizational readiness based on the anticipated challenge with prioritization and the lack of relevant local data. Resources are directed to building the capacity of HR leaders to facilitate the process and can be accommodated within the existing HR budget. Solution 2, leader voice, has a moderate impact on justice. Organizational readiness is also considered moderate given the option to incorporate this work with the upcoming employee engagement survey. The focus on communication and participation impacts both success factors. This solution is the most resource-intensive of the three solutions, requiring design and

implementation of voice mechanisms followed by analysis and application of what emerges. While this solution aligns with the school district's student voice initiatives, it requires a level of trust and safety that is questionable in the organization. Solution 3, senior leadership training, has a low impact on justice and organizational readiness is considered moderate. The resources required for this solution are reasonable and there is alignment with the professional development orientation of the organization. However, this training competes with a multitude of other professional development offerings. This solution has a moderate level of engagement, but a lack of accountability may jeopardize its success. Based on the comparison, Solution 3, senior leadership training, is dismissed due to the lack of impact and low rating of success factors, leaving Solutions 1 and 2 as viable options.

Gender-based analysis focuses on equity and leader voice focuses on inclusion. Gender-based analysis is formal and structured while leader voice mechanisms are typically more emergent. There is a notable restraining force associated with solution 2. Leader voice mechanisms rely on a prerequisite level of trust and safety and the willingness of senior leaders to relinquish a degree of control. The level of trust and safety between school leaders and senior leaders is uncertain and represents a significant risk. Leader willingness and ability to speak up are significantly impacted by climate and climate is directly impacted by management practices (Burke, 2018). Gender-based analysis directly addresses the fairness of management practices and provides a clear process that includes leader participation, building the level of trust and safety (Nishii, 2013).

Recommendation

By sponsoring gender-based analysis and implementing recommended changes, senior leaders can demonstrate their commitment to gender equity and enhance the level of trust for

future leader voice initiatives. This solution provides an opportunity for senior leaders, school leaders, and HR leaders to demonstrate transformative leadership by critiquing inequitable practices to dismantle hegemony and privilege and improve conditions for leaders (Shields, 2011). While the capacity of HR leaders presents a lower level of readiness, this can be counteracted by the level of agency in my role to initiate and drive departmental endeavours. The first step of data gathering represents an incremental but impactful effort to examine the validity of the status quo, launching the change process and motivating change (Schein & Schein, 2016).

Conclusion

This chapter outlines the leadership approaches and change process to realize a gender-inclusive leadership climate. An assessment of organizational readiness and attention to specific change barriers outline the driving and restraining forces associated with this change. Three solutions are proposed based on the guiding questions from the PoP and the dimensions of climate for inclusion. Solutions are evaluated based on impact, readiness, success factors, resources, and driving and restraining forces, resulting in Solution 1, gender-based analysis, being the preferred option. This solution addresses the problem of practice, can be an antecedent for leader voice, and builds capacity for future EDID efforts. The plan to implement this solution is outlined in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Implementation, Evaluation, and Communication

Chapter 1 highlighted the omission of gender from organizational discourse and defined a vision for an equitable and inclusive leadership climate. Grounded in feminist frames for change, Chapter 2 applied inclusive and transformative leadership approaches and Lewin's change model to the change process and assessed organizational readiness. Three potential solutions to enhance gender equity and inclusion for school leaders were evaluated, culminating in a recommendation for gender-based analysis of HR policies, programs, and practices that impact school leaders' experience. Chapter 3 outlines the strategies and activities to implement gender-based analysis. The change implementation plan applies Lewin's change model and employs a participatory action research (PAR) approach to facilitate the organization's journey from gender blindness to gender inclusion. The plan relies on meaningful leader participation, which guides and enriches the change process while growing inclusive and transformative leadership competencies.

Change Implementation

The overarching goal of this change is reeducation. Reeducation involves unlearning patterns of thought and behaviour that are well-established in individuals and groups by changing knowledge, beliefs, values, and standards (Argyris, 1990; Coghlan & Jacobs, 2005). Coghlan and James (2005) state that reeducation is critical to changing human systems. Changes in knowledge, beliefs and values do not result in changes in behaviour unless there is an understanding of how current ways of thinking and acting undermine personal needs and goals and a willingness to discard those habits to adopt an alternative paradigm (Coghlan & Jacobs, 2005; Stroh, 2015; Tsang & Zahra, 2008). The change implementation plan creates the conditions for reeducation on gender and is designed based on two priorities. The first priority is to disrupt organizational complacency. Given the invisibility of gender issues and the widespread

belief that organizations are gender-neutral and meritocratic, the change process needs to be activated by an acknowledgement that gender is an integral component of the organization's commitment to EDID and a willingness to include gender in organizational discourse and endeavors. This priority aligns with the first phase of Lewin's change model, unfreezing, and its disconfirmation of the status quo (Burnes, 2020; Crosby, 2021; Klein, 1996; Lewin, 1947; Schein & Schein, 2016). The second priority is to create a setting for learning, unlearning, and action through shared inquiry and critique (Burnes, 2020; Coghlan & Jacobs, 2005). The forum created in the change implementation plan prompts and supports leaders to explore the connection between gender, power, and privilege and assess the congruency of espoused theories and values with experience and outcomes, enabling the disruption of gendered assumptions and practices (Argyris, 1990; Bierema, 2020; Ely & Meyerson, 2000a; Kelan, 2010; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000; Shields, 2010). This priority is reflected in the second and third phases of Lewin's change model, changing and refreezing, where participants learn, redefine, and internalize concepts and standards to facilitate personal and organizational change (Burnes, 2020; Coghlan & Jacobs, 2005; Crosby, 2021; Lewin, 1947; Schein & Schein, 2016).

Approaches

It is imperative to attend to people and process in the design and implementation of change (Anderson & Anderson, 2010). The change implementation plan incorporates two approaches that exemplify the vision for change. Participatory action research (PAR) and an intersectional lens benefit people and process by facilitating broader relevance and deeper understanding and model equity and inclusion.

Participatory Action Research

According to Lewin's fundamental contributions to social psychology, human systems can only be understood and changed when the members of the system are involved in the process, and the likelihood of reeducation is increased in a group context (Burnes, 2020; Coghlan & Jacobs, 2005; Lewin, 1947). The integration of participation, action research, and change process proposed by Lewin is outlined in Appendix D. Numerous researchers and human rights agencies align with this assertion and recommend a participatory approach to gender-based analysis (Casaca & Lortie, 2017; Dobbin & Kalev, 2016; Nishii & Rich, 2013; Park, 1999; Williams & Clowney, 2007). PAR is an inclusive, collaborative process of research, education, and action that facilitates social transformation by examining and understanding how social structures, systems, and ideologies produce people's experiences (Kindon et al., 2008; Park, 1999). It is a form of inquiry grounded in social constructionism, where group members engage in open dialogue and collectively participate in a reflective learning process to resolve difficult, entrenched issues (Glassman et al., 2013; Kindon et al., 2008; McIntyre, 2008). As presented in Appendix E, PAR is a recursive process that involves a spiral of adaptable steps that include questioning, reflection, investigation, planning, action, and refinement (McIntyre, 2008).

As a form of inquiry, PAR reinforces the inquiry-based professional development and change initiatives taking place in the organization. It aligns with critical feminist theory and decolonizing methodologies by providing an opportunity for equal participation and non-hierarchical dialogue, leveraging local knowledge, and democratizing knowledge production (Glassman et al., 2013; Janes, 2016; Lykes et al., 2018; Reid & Frisby, 2008; Stanton, 2014). Utilizing a participatory approach benefits the change process in several ways. PAR establishes the school leader's role as a context and context subject matter expert, enabling a deeper

understanding of their experience and more informed decision-making (Casaca & Lortie, 2017; Findlay, 2019; Nishii & Rich, 2013). This responds to requests from school leaders for increased input and influence. In addition, effective group involvement can shift group dynamics from being a restraining force to a driving force for change (Crosby, 2021). Finally, the alignment between the vision of an inclusive work environment and the utilization of inclusive methods enhances the credibility of the change (Nishii & Rich, 2013).

Intersectional Lens

The second approach underlying the change process is the application of an intersectional lens (see Appendix F). Researchers and human rights agencies are increasingly advocating for the application of an intersectional lens to gender equity initiatives (Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2013; Crenshaw, 1989; Government of Canada, 2021b; Settles, 2006; Shields, 2008). Gender-based analysis is not intended to replace or exclude analysis of other dimensions of identity. According to Shields (2008), it is impossible to discuss gender without considering other dimensions of social identity that shape perspectives and experiences and determine gender's operation and meaning (Crenshaw, 1989; Government of Canada, 2021b; McCall, 2005; Shields, 2008). Other dimensions include race, ethnicity, geography, culture, language, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, income, and education (Government of Canada, 2021b).

An intersectional lens acknowledges that groups of people are not homogenous and rejects categorizing groups based on binaries (Government of Canada, 2021b). It avoids a White, heteronormative view of gender and expands the understanding of gender beyond differences and stereotypes, creating an avenue for culturally relevant analysis and consideration of the impacts of colonialism (Government of Canada, 2021a; Native Women's Association of Canada,

2007; Settles, 2006; Shields, 2008). This approach leverages the intersection of different identities in the leadership group to generate a holistic and inclusive analysis, and a broader view of power and privilege, which may encourage participation and reduce resistance to this change initiative (Oxfam Canada, 2021). However, this approach increases the complexity of the change process and areas of focus must be determined thoughtfully (Warner, 2008).

Stakeholder Responsibilities

The change implementation plan focuses on three stakeholder groups: senior leaders, HR leaders, and school leaders. Senior leaders are executive sponsors, responsible for communicating, modeling, and resourcing the change (Conner, 1993). As direct supervisors of school leaders, this group is also responsible for implementing recommendations and changing their HR practices. This creates a unique role for the senior leadership team, a combination of change sponsor and change target, which requires them to lead the change as well as accept and adopt change (Conner, 1993). Given this change focuses on HR practices, HR leaders are instrumental as change leaders, guiding and supporting the senior leadership team and school leaders through planning and implementation, as well as coordinating and supporting activities such as communication, training, and data collection (Conner, 1993). The HR leadership team has an important role in liaising between the senior leaders and school leaders and attending to psychological safety within and across groups (Coghlan & Jacobs, 2005). As change leaders and internal consultants to leaders, the HR leadership team can set the stage, invite participation, and facilitate responses to successes and challenges in a manner that encourages the openness and interpersonal risk-taking requisite for social learning and change (Argyris, 1990; Edmondson, 1999; Edmondson, 2018; Schein & Schein, 2016). School leaders are represented by the local Association of Principals and Vice Principals (APVP). The association is a conduit to the

leadership group, and their role is critical to the PAR process. As a change champion, the APVP is responsible for advocating for the change, co-designing the change process, and encouraging and supporting leader participation (Conner, 1993). As opinion leaders, the APVP have informal, collegial authority that can subtly but strongly influence the attitudes and actions of principals and vice principals (Klein, 1996).

Change Implementation Plan

A PAR approach requires the change process to be designed in collaboration with stakeholders. Therefore, the change implementation plan presented in Appendix G outlines high-level activities to be validated and expanded upon by the senior leadership team, HR leaders, and school leaders.

Phase One

The goal of this phase is to create readiness and motivation for change and an openness to learn and unlearn (Coghlan & Jacobs, 2005; Lewin, 1947; Schein & Schein, 2016). Framing the purpose and need for change is essential to activate a shift from gender blindness to gender awareness. The connection between gender inclusion and leader well-being and retention is highlighted (Australian Government, 2019; Casaca & Lortie, 2017; Hardacre & Subašić, 2018). The case for change is also informed by the results of the employee engagement survey scheduled for Fall 2023. Readiness and motivation are strongly influenced by psychological safety and this phase contributes to psychological safety through discussion of approach, roles, and process (Edmondson, 2018; Schein & Schein, 2016). With psychological safety in mind, each stakeholder group is initially engaged separately to provide a differentiated case for change that speaks to their specific interests and understand their unique perspectives and needs. Phase

one spans several months to provide the necessary space for cycles of learning, reflection, and dialogue and ensure sufficient openness and commitment before proceeding to the next phase.

Phase Two

The second phase of the change process involves preparing and conducting a gender-based analysis of HR policies, programs, and practices. The goals of this phase are to secure participation of senior leaders and school leaders and facilitate learning and unlearning. Gender-based analysis assesses the impacts of policies, programs, and practices on women, men, and people with other gender identities and considers other intersecting dimensions of identity (Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2013; McNutt, 2010). There are two critical elements of gender-based analysis (McNutt, 2010). The first is gender-sensitive training (McNutt, 2010). Given the lack of gender expertise internally, an external consultant is needed to facilitate gender-sensitive training and provide an orientation to gender-based analysis. This external support is leveraged throughout the change process to provide content and process knowledge and build internal capacity for EDID awareness, analysis, and action planning. The second element is critical engagement which is accomplished through the PAR approach (McNutt, 2010). Through discussions with the APVP, school leaders are invited to participate with the intent of inviting diverse perspectives and reflecting an inclusive and intersectional approach. Meaningful opportunities and processes for participation are co-created based on the PAR process of iterative cycles of questioning, reflection, investigation, planning, action, and refinement (McIntyre, 2008). Participants determine the specific HR policies, programs, and practices for examination, confirm the social identities for consideration, design the plan for data collection and analysis, and develop ongoing feedback mechanisms. The success of this phase depends on school leaders' willingness and ability to make their time available and to share their

experiences and privately-held assumptions (Coghlan & Jacobs, 2005). Therefore, continued attention to psychological safety is critical. The APVP and HR leadership team work together in this phase, and the senior leadership team is involved according to the co-designed change process. This structure encourages collaboration and shared ownership of the change while maintaining psychological safety. This phase concludes with a consolidation of learning and recommended changes to policies, programs, and practices that remove inadvertent bias or preferential treatment and increase support for leaders of all genders.

Phase Three

The final phase of the change process captures and applies a deeper understanding of the experience and implications of gender for the leadership group. The goal of this phase is to gain commitment to action and create momentum for another inquiry cycle (Coghlan & Jacobs, 2005). Key activities include discussion of findings and recommendations, decision-making and action planning, and evaluation. All three stakeholder groups come together in this phase to model inclusion and demonstrate shared commitment. The refreezing stage includes a consolidation of learning for participants to internalize the change and incorporate it into relationships (Schein & Schein, 2016). Participants reflect on their individual and collective growth and identify opportunities to apply their increased competency in transformative and inclusive leadership. Prior to the conclusion of the change initiative, stakeholders also capture their learning about the system and the dynamics of power and privilege, noting further areas of inquiry that emerged in the PAR process. The benefits of this change are extended by applying a greater understanding of the system, as well as enhanced leadership competency and relationships, to identify and support other EDID initiatives.

Potential Limitations and Challenges

A pragmatic acknowledgement of current organizational conditions informs a reliable change plan and increases the likelihood of success (Anderson & Anderson, 2010). Stakeholder analysis reveals three challenges related to motivation, capability, and patterns of interaction. Proactive consideration of these challenges enhances the change plan and mitigates the risk of implementation issues by addressing stakeholder needs.

Case for Change

Chapter 2 highlighted the invisibility of gender as a significant change barrier. Hence, there has been no formal discussion or exploration of gender equity and inclusion in the school district and there is a lack of organizational information readily available to support the case for change. Also noted in Chapter 2, organizational capacity for change presents a challenge. School leaders are responsible for implementing several educational initiatives each year and addressing urgent needs of vulnerable students. Dedicating time and effort to a change initiative to benefit their own group, focused on an aspect of identity that is not perceived to be a priority, is likely to create tension. To relieve this tension and generate interest in this change initiative, the connection to the school district's equity framework, the inquiry-based approach, and the ability to develop competencies that support employees and students are emphasized. The increasing importance of leadership and leader retention amidst unprecedented labour market challenges reinforce the relevance of this change.

Capacity-building

Capacity building for each stakeholder group is essential to constructive participation in the change process and to avoid creating a small number of internal gender experts who take on responsibility for the change (Bleijenbergh & Benschop, 2008; Gartzia, 2021). Many local EDID

experts and training providers focus on other aspects of equity and social justice, such as truth and reconciliation and anti-racism. While it may be challenging to find an external consultant with specific experience and expertise about gender, an intersectional approach expands the pool of consultants equipped to provide advice and support.

Power

While school leaders may appreciate the opportunity to share their experience and surface issues, they may also fear the consequences of criticizing policies, programs, and practices enacted by the senior leadership team (Ashford et al., 2009; Coghlan & Jacobs, 2005). In fact, the participatory nature of gender-based analysis is criticized for disregarding unequal power relations, as well as the impacts of colonialism (Findlay, 2019; Sanchez-Pimienta et al., 2021; Scala & Paterson, 2017). Participants are expected to be reflexive and consider how their own background and perspective influences the change process (Government of Canada, 2021b; Sanchez-Pimienta et al., 2021). However, gender dynamics can appear in the change process and affect what is examined, how it is examined, and the recommendations that are actioned, compromising participant experience and outcomes of the change process (McNutt, 2010). This challenge can be addressed through thoughtful process design and facilitation, engagement with external resources and expertise, and the HR leadership team's attention to group dynamics and psychological safety.

Communication

Communication has a fundamental role in change implementation. A robust communication plan creates understanding of the purpose, goals, and impacts of change, fosters engagement, keeps stakeholders informed of plans and progress, and provides opportunities for feedback and learning (Deszca, 2020; Lewis, 2011; Lewis & Seibold, 1998). Effective

communication mobilizes action and decreases the anxiety and resistance that can result from ambiguity, misinformation, and misunderstanding (Deszca, 2020; Klein, 1996; Lewis & Seibold, 1998). This section of Chapter 3 outlines the plans for communication and knowledge mobilization that create awareness of the need for change, engage stakeholders throughout the change process, and generate knowledge, learning, and application.

Awareness of the Need for Change

The first phase of the change plan focuses on readiness and motivation through disconfirmation of the status quo (Klein, 1996; Lewin, 1947; Schein & Schein, 2016). As highlighted in Chapter 2, the invisibility of gender and gender-blind orientation of organizations are problematic for conveying a clear, compelling rationale for change. Given the lack of organisational information and understanding about gender, it can be expected that some leaders do not perceive issues of gender inequity or exclusion or are prepared to consider or address them (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016; Kelan, 2009; Lewis & Simpson, 2010). Therefore, disrupting the status quo requires a comprehensive communication approach.

Hayles (2013) and Frahm and Brown (2007) outline three types of communication to facilitate diversity and inclusion: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. Cognitive approaches focus on knowledge, data, and facts; affective approaches focus on values and feelings; and behavioral approaches focus on interpersonal interaction (Frahm & Brown, 2007; Hayles, 2013). The cognitive element of communication in this change process is addressed by the results of the employee engagement survey, disaggregated by employee group and gender. This information is complemented by disaggregated demographic data and statistics on professional development, promotion, and retention. To address the lack of gender-specific organizational data available,

research on gender-based issues in the education sector and priorities and initiatives in other public sector organizations is also presented.

It is important to note that addressing the cognitive element is insufficient for complex and sensitive situations such as diversity and inclusion, and that affective and behavioural communication strategies to address values, beliefs, and interpersonal dynamics are essential (Argyris, 1990; Burnes, 2020; Hayles, 2013; Lewin, 1947). In this case, affective information includes a review of the organization's espoused values and commitment to equity and inclusion for employees and students and highlights the dissonance created by the lack of examination and explicit recognition of gender in that commitment. The behavioural component is facilitated through guided individual and group reflection on personal experience, the experience of colleagues, and observations of group dynamics to establish the personal relevancy that is critical for change (Klein, 1996; Levin, 2011).

Framing

Framing is an important aspect of communication as it shapes interpretations, reactions, and expectations (Lewis, 2011). It is particularly important when working with diverse identities, experiences, and perspectives (Witherspoon & Wohlert, 1996). The way that gender initiatives are framed is strategically important to creating receptivity and motivation to change (Armenakis & Harris, 2002; Charlesworth & Baird, 2007; Hayles, 2013). It requires consideration of leaders' identities, power and privilege, and associated narratives to understand how messages may be interpreted (Casaca & Lortie, 2017; Ferdman & Deane, 2014; Frahm & Brown, 2007; Hayles, 2013; Wolfgruber et al., 2021). Given the lack of gender knowledge in the organization, it is necessary to clarify the goal and scope of this change initiative. As outlined in Chapter 2, this change is situated in the third and fourth feminist frames for change. The first and second frames

focus on women, differential treatment, valuing femininity, and elevating women (Billing & Alvesson, 2000; Ely & Meyerson, 2000a). These frames tend to be more familiar and easily understood (Ely & Meyerson, 2000a; Ely & Thomas, 2020). The third and fourth frames, where this change is situated, focus on how gender operates as an axis of power (Ely & Meyerson, 2000b; Ely & Thomas, 2020). These frames are more subtle and complex but enable transformative change (Ely & Meyerson, 2000b; Ely & Thomas, 2020). In fact, according to Cornwall and Rivas (2015), it is necessary to reframe gender-based issues from an individual view of woman's disadvantage to a broader, relational view of privilege and power that focuses on structures, processes, and practices. This broader agenda provides multiple access points, mitigates defensiveness, and creates an inclusive, collective approach (Argyris, 1986; Blackmore, 2013; Cornwall & Rivas, 2015). This recommendation underlies the framing of change for each stakeholder group.

Senior Leaders

The lack of cognitive information to support the case for change increases the need for strong executive sponsorship. According to Schein and Schein (2016), disconfirmation of the status quo can be achieved by data or by the way the problem is defined by leaders. The conditions that create gender inequity undermine organizational effectiveness and the negative impact on organizational results is typically attractive and motivating for leaders (Charlesworth & Baird, 2007; Ely & Meyerson, 2000a, 2000b; Ely & Thomas, 2020; Rapoport, 2002). This presents a dual agenda for change that presents benefits in terms of social justice and organizational performance (Australian Government, 2019; Casaca & Lortie, 2017; Charlesworth & Baird, 2007). The business case for gender equity and inclusion is outlined in Appendix H. The communication plan incorporates the social justice component by connecting

this change to the school district's equity framework, and its commitment to learning and capacity-building for EDID. The performance component is addressed by connecting this change to the school district's strategic plan. The communication plan also notes how the PAR process responds to calls from leaders for increased voice and influence, and how an examination of HR policies, programs, and practices aids attraction and retention. While values dissonance is highlighted to motivate change, the focus on organizational structures and processes rather than individual actions is noted in order to preserve the psychological safety necessary for openness, risk taking, and learning (Edmondson, 1999; Levin, 2011; Pregmark, 2022; Schein & Schein, 2016).

School Leaders

According to Rock (2008), change triggers social fears regarding status, certainty, autonomy, relatedness, and fairness. As this change considers the relationship between gender and power, it triggers questions about status. For leaders who align with the dominant masculine culture, it may be perceived as a threat to their status. For leaders who do not fit with the dominant culture, it may trigger hope for increased status and fairness. Regardless of the perceived impact to status, discourse about gender is likely to impact all leaders' sense of relatedness as perspectives and relationships shift in the change process. To mitigate these fears, the PAR process and associated co-ownership and co-creation of change goals and process are emphasized (Abma et al., 2017). Leaders are reassured that the work will reflect their lived experiences and focus on learning together (Abma et al., 2017). In addition, the intersectional, non-binary lens to gender analysis is clarified to broaden the change agenda and provide a more inclusive opportunity for engagement (Cornwall & Rivas, 2015).

HR Leaders

Learning together is a key message for the HR leadership team. This change initiative is directly relevant to the school district's vision of a progressive workforce, the most pertinent strategic pillar to the HR department. It also relates to the department's mission to design and facilitate a positive employee experience and equip leaders to create a healthy work environment. This change presents an opportunity for HR leaders catalyze transformative change and act as change leaders and PAR facilitators (Conner, 1993; Wimpenny, 2013). PAR facilitators design and implement methods to encourage dialogue, uncover social practices, and build mutual understanding and ownership (Wimpenny, 2013). As change leaders, HR leaders can leverage their competency as consultants, coaches, and advisors to provide guidance and support while growing their EDID expertise and facilitation skills (Wimpenny, 2013). It is a significant opportunity to contribute to the organization's strategic priorities and for professional development in a growing area of HR. While it may create some level of learning anxiety, given the capacity and dedication of the HR leadership team, it is anticipated that anxiety will be conquered by enthusiasm.

Communication Plan

The change implementation plan presented in Chapter 2 relies heavily on communication. A more detailed outline of communication activities is provided in Appendix I. The communication plan reflects the change communication principles articulated by Klein (1996), including message redundancy, personal relevancy, use of several media, preference for face-to-face communication, leveraging hierarchical communication channels and opinion leaders. Change management research shows that employees prefer to hear organizational messages about the reasons for change from senior leaders and information about the personal impact of

change from immediate supervisors (Harvey, 2010; Prosci, n.d.). In this change, senior leaders are positioned in both roles, heightening the importance of what and how they communicate (Prosci, n.d.). A message of genuine support for employee participation reinforced by visible action is critical (Graetz, 2000).

In the second phase of the change process, communication is driven by the PAR process. The PAR process incorporates cognitive, affective, and behavioural strategies. The cognitive component is addressed through investigation and education. The affective component is facilitated through reflection and questioning. The behavioural component is addressed through the interaction among participants. By featuring these three communication approaches, PAR provides an active learning process that builds knowledge and can also reduce bias and facilitate inclusive interactions (Glassman et al., 2013; Hayles, 2013; Kindon et al., 2008; McIntyre, 2008; Park, 1999).

Existing communication structures are utilized throughout the change process. Weekly senior leadership meetings and monthly portfolio meetings are complemented by discussion mechanisms established for the employee engagement survey. These structures provide face-to-face communication with supervisors and opinion leaders (Klein, 1996). Face-to-face communication is found to have the greatest impact on support and commitment, based on its interactive potential and the opportunity to clarify ambiguities and ensure shared understanding, and obtain feedback for course correction (Klein, 1996; Prosci, n.d.).

Change management research validates that repetition of the message through more than one medium increases people's memory and understanding of the message (Klein, 1996). To create multiple channels and redundancy, information is published throughout the change

process on the school district's SharePoint site for leaders. In the third phase, more broad and formal communication of results and learning is provided to all stakeholders.

Knowledge Mobilization Plan

Knowledge mobilization (KMb) is an essential aspect of communication. It creates a connection between research, policy, and practice by managing interactions and reciprocal knowledge flow across stakeholders (Abma et al., 2017; Bennet & Bennet, 2007; Activating Change Together for Community Food Security: Knowledge Mobilization Working Group, 2014; Levin, 2011; Shewchuk & Cooper, 2018). KMb acknowledges theoretical and tacit knowledge and involves the creation of products, events, and networks (Cooper & Levin, 2010; Lemire et al., 2013). It is a dynamic and iterative process that includes institutionalized structures, knowledge brokering, knowledge co-production, knowledge dissemination, and knowledge transfer in order to effect intellectual, social, or economic value (Government of Canada, 2012; Activating Change Together for Community Food Security: Knowledge Mobilization Working Group, 2014; Shewchuk & Cooper, 2018). Institutionalized structures include formal and informal policies and procedures (Shewchuk & Cooper, 2018). Brokering refers to formalized groups or roles that identify and bring people together (Shewchuk & Cooper, 2018). Co-production refers to the partnership model that integrates theoretical and tacit knowledge (Lemire et al., 2013; Shewchuk & Cooper, 2018). Knowledge dissemination ensures that knowledge is accessible and useable (Shewchuk & Cooper, 2018). Finally, knowledge exchange focuses on capacity building (Shewchuk & Cooper, 2018). These elements are represented in the Knowledge Mobilization plan in Appendix J where activities are outlined for each phase of the change process. In the unfreezing phase, education sessions are provided to build knowledge of participatory action research and gender-based analysis. The second phase,

change, focuses on knowledge exchange and co-production through PAR workshops, education sessions and resources, and learning updates. The final phase, refreezing, consolidates learning and presents recommendations from the PAR process, designs an implementation plan to institutionalize new knowledge, and applies learning to other EDID initiatives.

There is congruence between the purpose and principles of PAR and KMb and integration improves the change process (see Appendix K) (Lemire et al., 2013; Ungar et al., 2015). Both PAR and KMb are based on the belief that research should result in change and both advocate for an inclusive approach that is representative of diverse viewpoints (Ungar et al., 2015). PAR enhances KMb by emphasizing tacit knowledge and contextual relevancy and instilling an early commitment to collaboration and shared ownership which aids the deconstruction and reconstruction of knowledge and increases acceptance, usage, and impact (Abma et al., 2017; Frahm & Brown, 2007; Mosher et al., 2014; Ungar et al., 2015; Wimpenny, 2013). The principles of PAR and KMb are also apparent in the approach to monitoring and evaluation.

Change Process Monitoring and Evaluation

An effective monitoring and evaluation plan encompasses process and outcome measures to guide the change process, establish accountability, generate new knowledge, and improve organizational capability (Cooper, 2014; Deszca, 2020; Markiewicz, 2016). Monitoring is a formative assessment that tracks implementation progress and captures learning to direct corrective action, while evaluation provides a summative assessment of achievement of the change plan and goals, and associated learning (Markiewicz, 2016). While gender-based analysis is itself an evaluation process, this section focuses on monitoring and evaluating the overarching

change process. In alignment with the change implementation plan, monitoring and evaluation employ a participatory approach and focus on learning.

Transformative Participatory Approach

Fetterman (2018) outlines the steps in evaluation planning: defining evaluation priorities, identifying evaluation questions, selecting indicators, agreeing on methods for data collection and the plan for analysis, interpretation, and action planning. As opposed to traditional evaluation methods that extract information stakeholders for the purpose of upward reporting, the goal of participatory monitoring and evaluation is to facilitate dialogue, mobilize information, and action learning to inform and empower participants (Chevalier & Buckles, 2019; National Advisory Council on Aging, 1998). A participatory approach to monitoring and evaluation goes beyond stakeholder consultation in select components of monitoring and evaluation to incorporate meaningful engagement in each step (Chevalier & Buckles, 2019; Fetterman, 2018; Núñez et al., 2021). The approach is grounded in the assumption that knowledge is socially constructed and is characterized by shared responsibility and decentralized decision-making, broad representation of stakeholders, and in-depth participation (Cousins & Earl, 1992; Hansen et al., 2013; King et al., 2007; Núñez et al., 2021). A participatory approach means that representatives of all those who are affected participate in the process and their knowledge and experience are valued (National Advisory Council on Aging, 1998). Participants are involved in establishing what is evaluated and how, scope and priorities, developing instruments, collecting and analyzing data, and communicating results (Hansen et al., 2013; International Labour Organization, 2020; National Advisory Council on Aging, 1998). A participatory evaluation approach is responsive, relevant, and transparent stakeholders (Cousins & Earl, 1992; Hansen et al., 2013; International Labour Organization, 2020; Markiewicz, 2016).

It empowers participants, provides richer data, and enhances the validity and credibility of findings, which positively impacts the utilization of evaluation results and commitment to change (National Advisory Council on Aging, 1998).

A transformative participatory evaluation approach frames evaluation as a democratic process (Cooper, 2014). As presented in Figure 6, it is an inclusive approach that elevates the voices of the least powerful and the most affected stakeholders, respects their identities, perspective, and experience, and is responsive to differences among them (Cooper, 2014; International Labour Organization, 2020).

Figure 6

Comparison of Participatory Evaluation Methods

	Practical Participatory Evaluation	Transformative Participatory Evaluation
Control	Researcher	Participant
Representation	Primary users	All legitimate groups
Participation	Consultation	Deep participation

Note. This chart presents the key differences between practical participatory evaluation and transformative participatory evaluation. From “Making Sense of Participatory Evaluation: Framing Participatory Evaluation” by J. A. King, J. B. Cousins, and E. Whitmore, 2007, *New Directions for Evaluation*, 2007(114), pp. 83-105 (<https://doi.org/10.1002/ev.226>). Copyright 2007 by Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

According to Cousins and Earl (1992), the use of evaluation results is not a simple rational process; it requires consideration of personal, political, and organizational variables. Transformative mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation uncover, question, and negotiate

these variables and deepen interactions between stakeholders, increasing the individual and collective learning potential of the evaluation process (Cooper, 2014; Hansen et al., 2013; King et al., 2007; Núñez et al., 2021). If the purpose of a participatory process is to transform power relations, then the evaluation process must avoid replication of the very dynamics that privilege certain voices (Hansen et al., 2013). A transformative participatory method examines and shifts power through mutual learning and interactive engagement, creating a more inclusive, participant-driven process that increases the likelihood and sustainability of desired outcomes (Chevalier & Buckles, 2019; Deszca, 2020; Worthen et al., 2019).

Learning Approach

As the primary goal of this change is reeducation, this monitoring and evaluation plan models a learning approach as outlined in Figure 7.

Figure 7

Learning Approach to Evaluation

	Traditional Approach	Learning Approach
Purpose of Evaluation	To measure progress relative to the plan	To measure quantitative achievements
		To develop lessons learned for integration into the plan
Scope of Data Collection	Targeted analysis	Holistic analysis
	Limited number of variables based on targets	Additional variables based on what emerges in the iterative learning process
Data collection methods	Focus on objective assessment	Inclusion of subjective assessment
	Quantitative measures	Quantitative and qualitative measures
Responsibility for data collection	External evaluators and/or program managers	Stakeholders

Note. This chart presents the distinguishing features of a learning approach to evaluation. Adapted from “*Participatory Program Evaluation. A Manual for Involving Program Stakeholders in the Evaluation Process*” by J. Aubel, 1999, United States Agency for International Development (https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNACH756.pdf). In the public domain.

In order to capture detailed information and facilitate deeper exploration of participant understanding and beliefs, the monitoring and evaluation plan incorporates a variety of data sources and data collection methods including observation, self-assessment, individual interviews, surveys, focus groups, and secondary data disaggregated by gender (Aubel, 1999; International Labour Organization, 2020; National Advisory Council on Aging, 1998; Worthen et al., 2019). Mixed methods offer access to diverse perspectives, provide flexibility to generate context-specific strategies, enable the corroboration and contrast of results, and stimulate inquiry (Chevalier & Buckles, 2019). It is important to note that the evaluation element within PAR is not predetermined as it needs to reflect the aims of the research and participant direction (Chevalier & Buckles, 2019; Worthen et al., 2019). A PAR approach honours participant priorities in addition to external indicators and accountability measures (Worthen et al., 2019). A participatory approach to the identification of measures, monitoring mechanisms, and analysis enables meaningful, gender-responsive engagement across genders and enhance the quality of outcomes (National Advisory Council on Aging, 1998). The monitoring and evaluation plan is presented in Appendix L.

Monitoring

According to Klein (1996), significant organizational change is achieved incrementally, and plans shift as information emerges in the change process. Froggatt and Hockley (2011) outline the need to integrate evaluation and PAR and emphasize how the formative assessment process supports the action-reflection cycle of PAR and uncovers unintended consequences. In addition to tracking the extent to which the change implementation plan is carried out, the monitoring plan observes how the change is being implemented and improves process and outcomes by following the PAR process of questioning, reflection, investigation, planning, action, and refinement (Aubel, 1999; McIntyre, 2008).

A key purpose of monitoring is to track and assess the PAR process, including the level, experience, and value of participation. As PAR facilitators, HR leaders manage the monitoring process. The indicators developed by participants are assessed through observation, interviews, and surveys and include both quantitative and qualitative measures to enable robust interpretation and understanding. Results are summarized and shared with participants to provide a timely feedback loop that informs next steps and course corrections, to ensure that what is planned is occurring and continues to be relevant to participant needs, decreasing the risk of failure.

Evaluation

The evaluation component of the monitoring and evaluation plan balances focus on process and outcomes. It begins by reviewing achievement of the change plan, the extent of the gender-based analysis, and the number of recommendations presented and accepted. It continues with the assessment of participant experience and benefits from the PAR process. Froggatt and Hockley (2011) assert the following criteria to assess the quality of participation and partnership

in a collaborative research model: access, awareness, and action. These criteria are reflected in the participants' experience of inclusion in the PAR process, their level of gender-awareness, and the outcomes of the gender-based analysis.

While this change aims to enhance equity and inclusion, diversity measures are included as a longer-term measurement of progress. Workforce data is gathered in each phase of the change process. This includes representation in leadership roles, leadership networks, succession pools, and the rate of promotion. As outlined in Chapter 1, inclusion is measured across three dimensions: fairness of employment practices, integration of differences, and inclusion in decision-making (Nishii, 2013; Nishii & Rich, 2013). The process for assessing climate for inclusion involves surveys and focus groups (Ferdman & Deane, 2014; Nishii & Rich, 2013). The refreezing stage returns to these measures as a basis for comparison. Climate for inclusion is prominent in the refreezing phase as it is hoped that participant perceptions, relationships, and interactions are noticeably impacted in the change process, and understood that there is a delay before the impact of changes to HR policies, programs, and practices and a broader experience of inclusion can be observed (Ferdman & Deane, 2014).

Conclusion

This final chapter presents the change implementation plan for a gender-based analysis of HR policies, programs, and practices with special attention to communication, knowledge mobilization, monitoring and evaluation. All components of the change plan reflect the principles of participation and inclusion. In fact, it is evident that the change will not proceed without these elements. Establishing a compelling case for change and value for participating in the change process is critical. It is hoped that the pluralistic and flexible approach encourages participation and contributes to the advancement of knowledge that facilitates individual, group,

and organizational learning and unlearning (Chevalier & Buckles, 2019; Núñez et al., 2021). Meaningful participation in this change process is a significant opportunity for personal and professional growth that can ultimately benefit the entire school district.

Next Steps and Future Considerations

Gender equity and inclusion are broad and complex topics that involve organizational and societal factors. This OIP represents a single, incremental step in long-term, transformative change. Nonetheless, there are ways to extend the learning and outcomes from this OIP. While this change focuses on school leaders, human resource practices are relevant to leaders and employees throughout the organization, and recommendations will likely be applied to other groups. This OIP focuses on one dimension of climate of inclusion, equitable employment practices. Exposure to the model of climate for inclusion may prompt examination of the other dimensions. True to an inquiry-based approach, what emerges in the change process and captures the interest of participants will determine next steps.

This change designs a safe space for learning and unlearning through inquiry and dialogue. It calls on leaders to expand their understanding and perspective by engaging in vulnerability and discomfort individually and collectively. By practicing these skills, leaders will grow their transformative and inclusive leadership competency and enhance their approach and contribution to other EDID initiatives. Leaders will also accelerate their collaborative capacity by learning about systems and structures (Stroh, 2015). The learning from this change process includes a deeper understanding of power and dynamics and the ability to apply an intersectional lens. This increased systems sensibility has the potential to enhance equity and inclusion throughout the organization and improve experiences for all employees and students.

Little is known about the work experience of those who express gender in non-normative ways (Sawyer & Thoroughgood, 2020). This change explores foundational assumptions about gender and promotes an inclusive understanding and consideration of gender identity and expression in the workplace. It equips leaders to model the mindset and behaviours that foster an equitable and inclusive learning environment for students and workplace for employees. School is also a student's first substantive exposure to a workplace. By embracing a dual agenda, leaders can create a symmetrical experience for students and employees and enable students to graduate as educated citizens and be positive contributors to their future workplace (Government of BC, 2021).

Narrative Epilogue

No one escapes gender conditioning. Most of us unwittingly carry the cultural gender shadow into our important relationships, and we end up in struggles with our partners, family members, friends, and colleagues that aren't really about us as individual. When people do gender reconciliation work in community, they begin to see the power of this cultural baggage in a new light. They realize the prevalence of overarching social patterns and conditioning in much of their experience – and comprehend that, in this larger context, they are not alone (Keepin, 2007).

I did not come to this program with a background or foundation in feminism. Some may think that personal experience as a female leader equipped me to explore this problem of practice; it didn't. While I felt compelled to explore this topic, I was trepidatious and had much to learn, including how I internalize and reinforce assumptions and rules about gender. I recognize how other aspects of my identity, sources of privilege, concealed gender issues and narrowed my worldview. Not only do I have a better understanding of the social construction of

gender and its impact, I am aware that it is experienced differently based on the intersection of identities and believe I will be able to support others more holistically and compassionately as a result. I am grateful for those who supported my exploration of this problem of practice and those who challenged me. Although I expect that some will continue to dismiss and resist, I feel validated. Unfortunately, this validation is reinforced by current global events regarding women's and trans rights. It is my opinion that if gender issues persist in society, it is impossible that organizations are immune. Finally, I hope that readers gain an appreciation that representation is insufficient and are prompted to question whether their work environment is truly a safe and fulfilling space for people of all gender identities.

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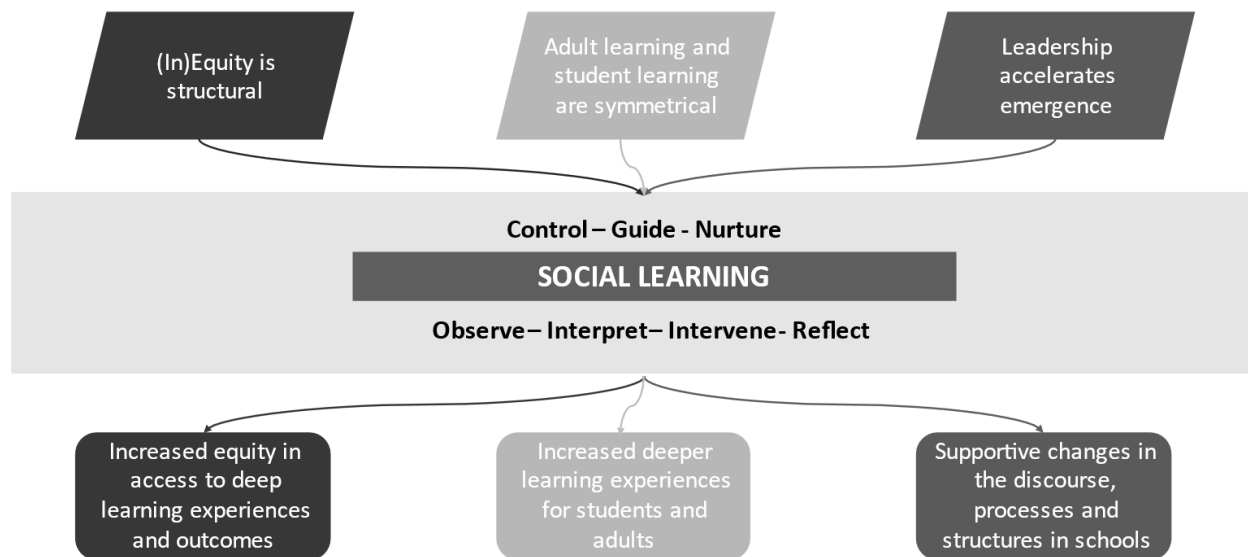
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Appendix A

Theory of Change



Note. The theory of change connects systems thinking concepts with deeper learning outcomes.

Adapted from “*The deeper learning dozen: Transforming school districts to support deeper learning for all*” by J. Mehta, A. Peterson, and J. Watkins, 2018

(<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5bae5a3492441bf2930bacd1/t/5c044eea21c67ce9f633c68c/1543786227024/Deeper+Learning+Dozen+White+Paper+%28Public+2%29.pdf>). CC BY-NC

4.0.

Appendix B

Application of Lewin's Change Model

Stage 1: Creating the Motivation to Change (Unfreezing)	Connection to Problem of Practice and Leadership Approaches	Organizational Mechanisms
Disconfirmation	Disrupt complacency Reveal unconscious bias and its impact Validate focus on employees and gender	Gender equity data – external and internal sources Organizational and personal stories
Creation of survival anxiety or guilt	Make a compelling organizational, professional, and personal case for change Highlight values dissonance	Connection of equity for employees and students Impact to colleagues Personal impact Professional standards and ethics
Learning anxiety produces resistance to change	Address power and privilege Acknowledge fears of loss of power, competence, identity, and group membership	Integration with equity framework Team and one-on-one discussions Professional growth plans Training
Creation of psychological safety to overcome learning anxiety	Enable diverse perspectives and voice Learn in relationship and rebuild social knowledge frameworks Establish congruence with other work	Shared vision of equitable and inclusive work environment Social learning communities Coaching and mentorship
Stage 2: Learning New Concepts, New Meanings for Old Concepts, and New Standards for Judgement (Changing)		
Imitation of and identification with role models	Provide concrete behavioural examples Connect to performance evaluation criteria	Training Leadership competencies Formal and informal networks
Scanning for solutions and trial-and-error learning	Provide resources Encourage exploration and action Learn from mistakes	Equity toolkit Formal and informal networks Social learning communities Coaching and mentorship
Stage 3: Internalizing New Concepts, Meanings, and Standards (Refreezing)		
Incorporation into self-concept and identity	Provide space and guide personal reflection	Coaching and mentorship Counselling services
Incorporation into ongoing relationships	Revise language and narratives Re-establish group norms Provide opportunities for feedback	Procedures and practices Department meetings One-on-one meetings

Note. Application of Lewin's change model to the problem of practice and transformative and inclusive leadership approaches. Adapted from “*Organizational culture and leadership*” by E. H. Schein and P. A. Schein, 2016, John Wiley & Sons. Copyright 2016 by Edgar H. Schein.

Appendix C

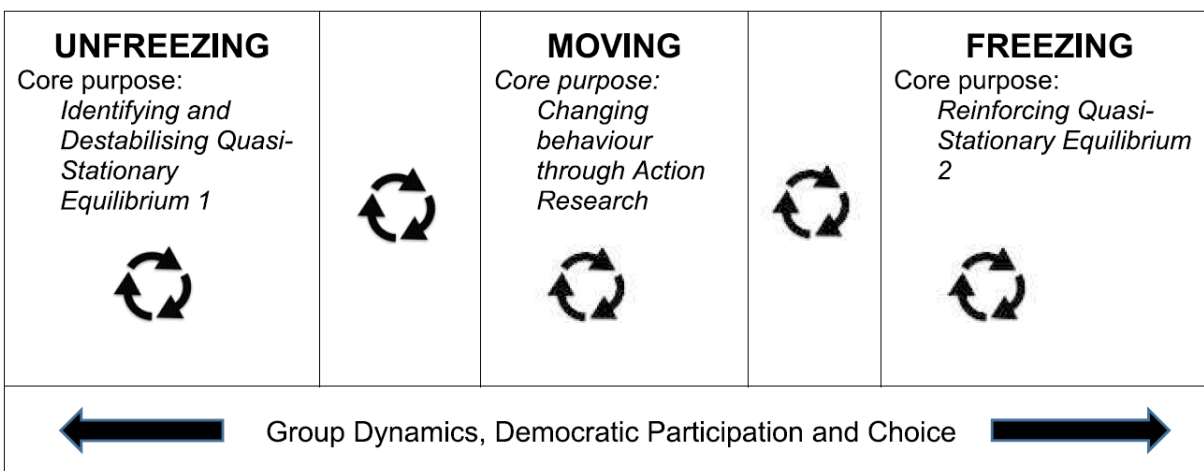
Comparison of Solutions

	Solution 1: Senior Leadership Training	Solution 2: Leader Voice	Solution 3: Gender-based Analysis of HR Practices
<u>Impact</u>			
Distributive Justice	Low	Moderate	High
Procedural Justice	Low	Moderate	High
Interactional Justice	Moderate	High	Moderate
Overall Impact	Low	Moderate	High
<u>Readiness</u>			
Cultural	Moderate	Low	Low
Commitment	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Capacity	Low	Moderate	Low
Overall Readiness	Moderate	Medium	Low
<u>Success factors</u>			
Accountability	Low	Medium	High
Engagement	Moderate	High	Moderate
Overall Success	Moderate	High	High
<u>Resources</u>	Design and delivery of training sessions Application of learning and follow-up	Design and implementation of voice mechanisms Data analysis, action planning and	Capacity-building for HR leaders Audit planning and implementation
<u>Driving Forces</u>	Alignment with professional development orientation	Alignment with school district's student voice initiatives	Alignment with school district's equity framework Position agency
<u>Restraining Forces</u>	Volume of professional development Need to establish accountability for application	Level of trust and perceived safety Need for senior leaders to relinquish control	Lack of readily available data Need for capacity-building

Note. The rating scale for impact reflects the likelihood and magnitude of the solution. The rating scale for organizational readiness reflects the level of that characteristic in the school district as it relates to the solution. The rating scale for success factors reflects the level of that characteristic in the solution.

Appendix D

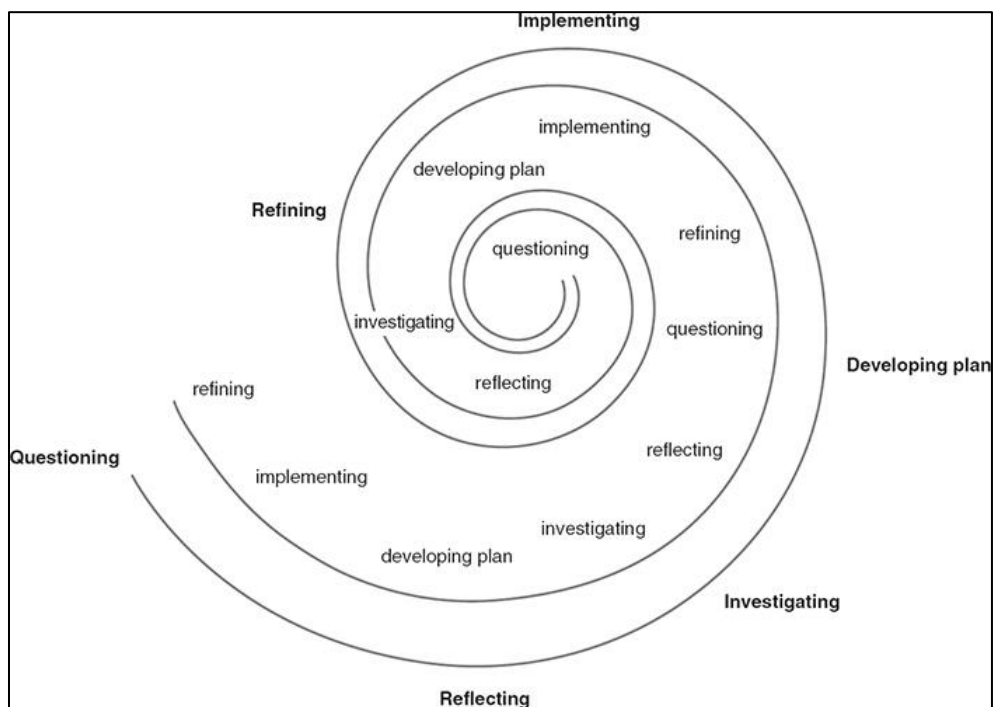
Field Theory View of Lewin's Change Model



Note. The connection between participatory action research and the three phases of change outlined by Lewin. From “The origins of Lewin’s three-step model of change,” by B. Burnes, 2020, *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 56(1), pp. 32-59. (<https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886319892685>). Copyright 2020 by Bernard Burnes.

Appendix E

The Recursive Process of PAR



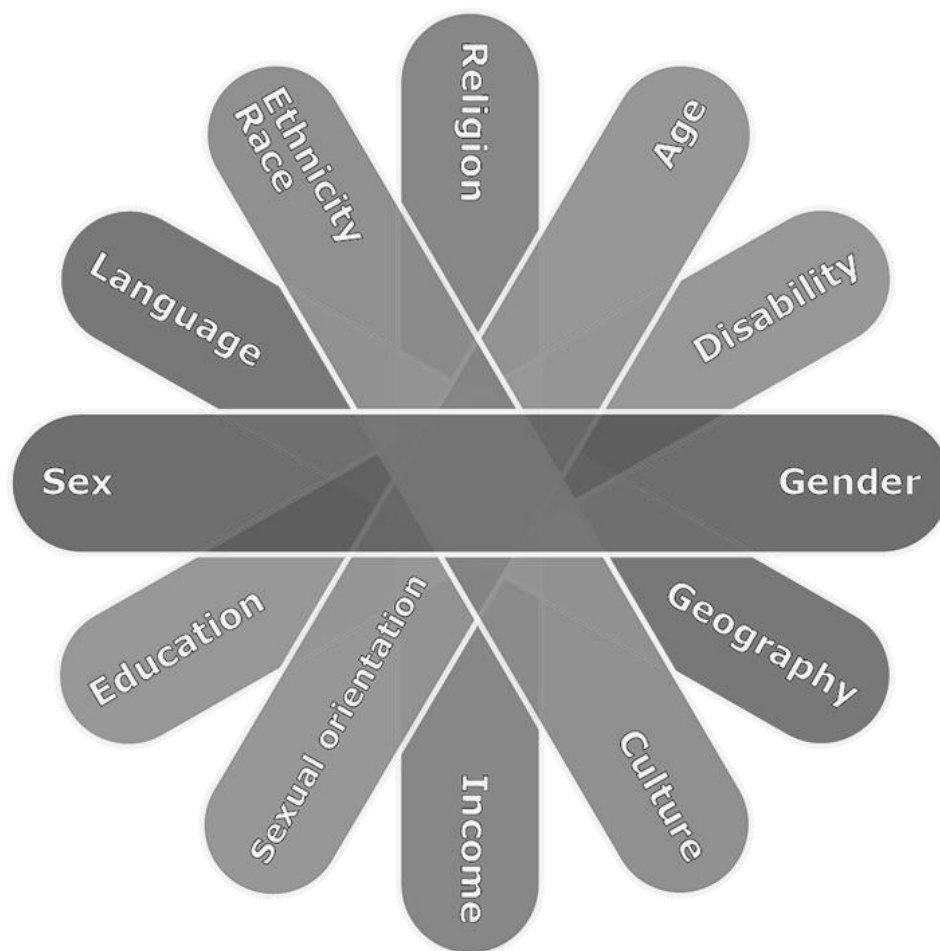
Note. PAR is a recursive process that involves a spiral of reflection, investigation, and action.

From “*Participatory action research*” by A. McIntyre, 2008, SAGE Publications, Inc.

(<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483385679>). Copyright 2008 by SAGE Publications, Inc.

Appendix F


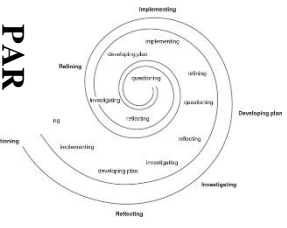
Intersectional Lens

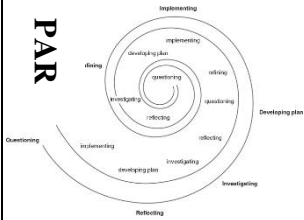


Note. This figure illustrates some of the factors which can intersect with sex and gender. From “*Introduction to GBA plus*” by Government of Canada, 2021 (https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/gbaplus-course-cours-acsplu/eng/mod02/mod02_03_01a.html). In the public domain.

Appendix G

Change Implementation Plan

Phase One: Unfreezing		
Goals:	Readiness, motivation	Gender-blind
Timeline:	Fall 2023	
Outcomes:	Gender-awareness, openness to learn, agreement to participate	
Stakeholder Group	Activities	Areas of Inquiry
Senior Leadership Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss business case and change goals Review role of executive sponsor Identify learning needs and strategies Develop initial communication plan and connect with APVP 	<p>To what extent does gender impact equity and inclusion for school leaders? How can school leaders be encouraged to explore their own experience of equity and inclusion?</p> 
HR Leadership Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss business case and change goals Discuss role of HR in EDID Review role of change leader Compile organizational data Identify learning needs and strategies 	
APVP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss business case and change goals Review role of change champion Identify learning needs and strategies 	
Phase Two: Change		
Goals:	Participation, learning	Gender-aware
Timeline:	Spring 2024	
Outcomes:	Gender awareness, psychological safety, leader voice	
Stakeholder Group	Activities	Areas of Inquiry
Senior Leadership Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sponsor the change - communication, modelling, resources Participate in analysis process 	<p>To what extent does gender impact equity and inclusion for school leaders? How can an intersectional, decolonizing approach be applied to this work?</p> 
HR Leadership Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate capacity-building Compile organizational data Coordinate activities and communication 	
HR Leadership Team & APVP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-design change process (goals, participants, processes, communication, measures) Participate in capacity-building Confirm participants (inclusive, intersectional) Select HR policies, programs, practices for analysis Select identity characteristics for analysis Conduct gender-based analysis (inclusive, intersectional) Reflect on learning and develop recommendations 	

Phase Three: Refreezing		
Goals:	Understanding, action	Gender-inclusive
Timeline:	Winter 2024	
Outcomes:	Leader voice, leadership competency, gender inclusion	
Stakeholder Group	Activities	Areas of Inquiry
Senior Leadership Team HR Leadership Team & APVP	Debrief learning and recommendations Determine changes to HR policies, programs, practices Communicate and implement changes Share learning and apply to other EDID initiatives Recognize participants Identify future areas of inquiry Monitor and assess impact of changes	How can the district's equity framework be implemented in a gender-inclusive manner? How can the learning from this change process be applied to the district's EDID initiatives? 

Note. This table outlines key elements of the change implementation plan based on Lewin’s three-stage change model.

Appendix H

Business Case for Gender Equity and Inclusion

Benefits	Sustainable business performance and growth			
Outcomes	Increased competitive advantage through productivity, client service, innovation, agility and risk management			
Drivers	Build and leverage complementary capabilities within and between teams	Engage, mobilize and retain best available talent and continuously learn	Exploit diverse thinking to create best stakeholder and market solutions	Deliver seamlessly by collaborating across barriers and differences
Foundations	Flexible and empowering workplace			
	Inclusive and equitable culture			
	Diverse and representative workforce			

Note. This diagram outlines the organizational effectiveness and performance component of the dual agenda for change. From “*Gender strategy toolkit*” by Australian Government, 2019, (<https://www.wgea.gov.au/tools/gender-strategy-toolkit#the-diagnostic-tool>). In the public domain.

Appendix I

Communication Plan

Phase One: Unfreezing

Audience	Key Messages	Channel	Person Responsible
Senior leadership team	Need for change Connection to strategic priorities and values Results of employee engagement survey Role of executive sponsor	Weekly senior leadership meetings	Associate Superintendent, HR
APVP	Goals of change Results of employee engagement survey Opportunity for leader voice and participation Role of change champion	Monthly APVP/Superintendent meeting	Superintendent and Associate Superintendent, HR
Principals and Vice Principals	Goals of change Results of employee engagement survey Opportunity for leader voice and participation Opportunity to improve personal and colleague experience	Monthly portfolio meetings	Assistant Superintendents
HR Leaders	Goals of change Connection to HR mission and values Results of employee engagement survey Role of change leader Opportunity for professional development	Special meeting	Associate Superintendent, HR

Phase Two: Change

Audience	Key Messages	Channel	Person Responsible
Senior leadership team	PAR progress Learning to date Opportunity for questions and feedback Need for executive sponsorship actions	Weekly senior leadership meetings	Associate Superintendent, HR PAR team
APVP	PAR progress Learning to date Opportunity for questions and feedback Need for change champion actions	Monthly APVP/Superintendent meeting	Superintendent and Associate Superintendent, HR PAR team
Principals and Vice Principals	PAR progress Learning to date Opportunity for questions and feedback Ongoing opportunities for participation	Monthly portfolio meetings	Assistant Superintendents APVP PAR team
HR Leaders	PAR progress Learning to date Participant feedback Successes, barriers, course corrections, and needs for change leader support	Monthly meetings	Associate Superintendent, HR PAR team

Phase Three: Refreezing

Audience	Key Messages	Channel	Person Responsible
Senior leadership team	Recommendations for changes to HR policies, programs, and practices	Weekly senior leadership meetings	Associate Superintendent, HR PAR team

	Learning and application to other EDID initiatives Recommendations for further inquiry		
APVP	Changes to HR policies, programs, and practices Learning and application to other EDID initiatives Support for further inquiry	Monthly APVP/Superintendent meeting	Superintendent and Associate Superintendent, HR PAR team
Principals and Vice Principals	Changes to HR policies, programs, and practices Learning and application to other EDID initiatives Areas for further inquiry	Announcement and report on leader SharePoint site Follow-up at monthly portfolio meetings	Associate Superintendent, HR Assistant Superintendents APVP PAR team
HR Leaders	Changes to HR policies, programs, and practices Implications for roles and processes Implementation plan	Special meeting	Associate Superintendent, HR

Note. This communication plan is developed based on recommendations for change communication from Klein (1996).

Appendix J

Knowledge Mobilization Plan

Phase One: Unfreezing

KMb focus: Knowledge Brokering, Knowledge Dissemination

KMb outcomes: Event, Network

Audience	Message	Strategy
Senior Leadership team APVP HR Leadership team	What is gender-based analysis What is participatory action research	Education session (external consultant)
HR Leadership team PAR participants	Conducting participatory research	Education session (external consultant)
HR Leadership team PAR participants	Conducting gender- based analysis	Education session (external consultant)

Phase Two: Change

KMb focus: Knowledge Co-production, Knowledge Exchange

KMb outcomes: Event, Network

Audience	Message	Strategy
HR Leadership team PAR participants	Co-ownership, roles, and process of PAR/gender-based analysis	PAR workshops
	HR policies, programs, and practices that impact leaders	Presentation (HR) PAR workshops
	Expertise on gender-based issues and analysis	Education sessions (external consultant) Terms/glossaries Research reports Case studies
	Consolidation of recommendations and learning	PAR workshops Preparation of summary report and presentation
Senior Leadership team APVP	Update and learnings from change process	Presentation
All leaders	Update and learnings from change process	Bulletin Q&A

Phase Three: Refreezing

KMb focus: Knowledge Dissemination, Institutionalized Structures

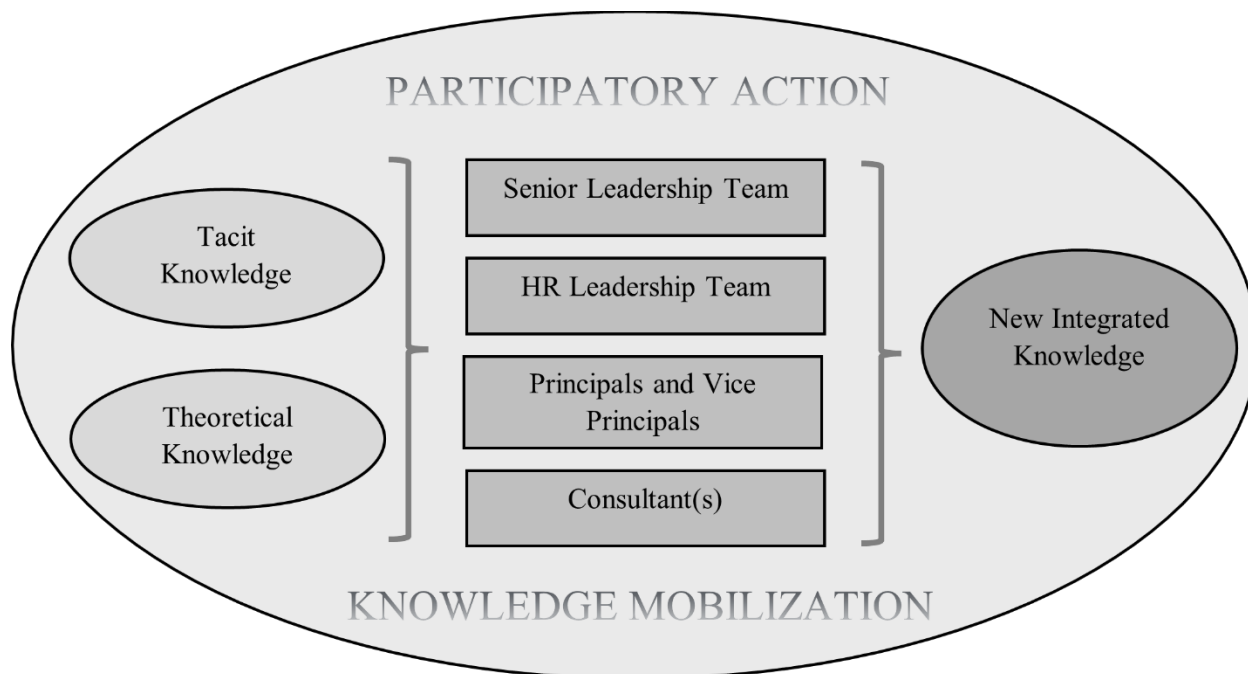
KMb outcomes: Event, Network, Product

Audience	Message	Strategy
Senior Leadership team APVP	Recommendations for changes to HR policies, programs, and practices	Report, presentation, and discussion
APVP PAR participants	Approved recommendations and implementation plan	Meeting
HR Leadership team	Approved recommendations and implementation plan	Meeting
All leaders	Approved recommendations and implementation plan	Updated documentation of policies, programs, practices
All leaders	Application of learning to other EDID initiatives	Updated resources on leader equity toolkit

Note. This knowledge mobilization plan outlines the strategies to share, generate, and apply knowledge throughout the change process.

Appendix K

Integration of PAR and KMB



Note. This visual depicts the integration of participatory action research and knowledge mobilization. Adapted from “*Facilitating the knowledge transfer process: Knowledge review and facilitation tool*” by N. Lemire, K. Souffez, and M.-C. Laurendeau, 2003, Institut national de santé publique du Québec. In the public domain.

Appendix L

Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

Focus	Description and purpose	Indicators (note: indicators to be developed by participants, examples provided)	Data sources/Collection methods	Timing
Monitoring	Extent of participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level and type of participation 	Number of participants Demographics of participants Demonstrations of senior leadership support	Observations by HR leadership team Meeting notes	Throughout change phase – bimonthly
	Experience of participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support • Contribution 	Participant experience, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voice • Group dynamics • Psychological safety • Barriers and supports 	Meeting evaluations Surveys Interviews	Throughout change phase – bimonthly
	Impact of participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived value • Leadership competency 	Participant experience of usefulness and value Level of gender-awareness Inclusive leadership competency	Competency self-assessments Meeting reflections and debriefs Surveys Interviews	Midway through change phase, and conclusion of change process - refreezing
	Progress on change plan	Delivery of activities and outputs outlined in change plan	Meeting notes Project updates	Throughout change phase - monthly
Evaluation	Achievement of change plan Completion of gender-based analysis	Number of HR policies, programs, practices reviewed Reported recommendations Recommendations accepted and implemented	Report to senior leadership Senior leadership decisions	Conclusion of change process - refreezing
	Achievement of change goals (short-term) Reeducation	Level of gender awareness Level of awareness of inclusive climate Shifts in thinking	Observation of HR leaders of group discourse Individual reflection	Conclusion of change process - refreezing

	Experience of inclusion Other benefits	Climate for inclusion (in PAR process) Inclusive leadership competency Breadth and depth of interaction amongst participants Opportunities to apply learning to other EDID initiatives	Competency self-assessment Debrief workshops – participant groups, large group Survey Interviews	
	Achievement of change goals (medium/long-term)	Workforce data Climate for inclusion (organization) Breadth and depth of interactions/leadership network Application of learning to other EDID initiatives	Reports from HR system Surveys Interviews	One year following recommendations - refreezing

Note. The monitoring and evaluation plan reflects recommendations from researchers studying climate for inclusion and applying PAR. Adapted from “*Developing monitoring and evaluation frameworks*” by A. Markiewicz and I. Patrick, 2016, SAGE Publications, Inc.

(<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071878774>). Copyright 2016 by SAGE Publications, Inc.