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Role of international experience in development of gender education

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Role of international experience in development of gender education

Most of Ukraine's population, including women themselves, believe that a woman by her nature should be primarily a mother and a guardian of the hearth. We are strongly opposed to this statement, though. The reality is that the values and priorities of the majority of citizens in former Soviet republics have changed. In the present conditions of society's development the „boom” around such notions as gender, gender equality, gender sensitivity, gender identity, gender costs and benefits etc., has forced many people, especially the young to ponder what „gender” means, actually.

The term „gender” emphasizes that society defines certain male and female roles and a just society should change them toward a more equitable distribution of resources and revenues, rights and responsibilities. It is important to realize that gender issue does not undermine the foundations of human society, according to supporters of traditional values, but is rather a way to achieve true harmony and equal rights.

In Soviet times, these issues were observed within the so-called „women's question” and were not perceived seriously by researchers. Slogans of equality of all Soviet people were proclaimed and, therefore, posed problems were automatically closed. In fact, in the early 1980s the problem of gender equality could not find a proper investigation and resolution.

Widespread use of the concept „gender” and gender studies in the U.S.A., Canada, Scandinavia significantly influenced the development of social norms and notions of relationship between sexes and women's vocation. Scientific knowledge, in turn, stimulated a change in mass consciousness, promoted the development of appropriate values and standards that defined the content of new laws, contributed to transformation of moral, traditions and institutions.

The logic of self-development events, development of new political and social structures in Ukraine served as a real basis for and gave rise to women's studies as a new direction of research.

The gender component is taken into account by the United Nations as one of the main aspects in assessing the level of the country's development. Hence, all

specialists today are expected to possess the gender tools [Stakhnevych, Dankevych 2011]. Age stereotype notions about dignity, female and male image have been created by people and distributed to all members of either gender, regardless of their individual features and age.

Ukrainian scientists made valuable contribution to the research on gender problems, gender in education and science: foreign experience, historical portraits of female scientists, gender problems at the labour market etc.

Great influence on the development of the first women's studies in 1993–1995 was shored up by the nationwide conference held by the largest women's organizations in Ukraine – the Union of Ukrainian Women (Soyuz ukrainok), Women's Society (Zhinocha gromada), Women's Union of Ukraine (Spilka zhynok Ukrainy).

The memorable meeting (1997) with the representatives of women's organization „Women in Science and Technology” (Iowa state University, USA) – Professor Ardith Maney and her colleague Mary Ann Evans, sharing ideas and our own experience with them inspired female-lecturers of the National Agrarian University (now National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine) to set up a non-government women's organization (NGO) – association „Women in Agricultural Education” (February, 1998). This in turn promoted the study of current problems – problems of gender equality in independent Ukraine.

Female members of the association participated in many international events on women's issues – National Tripartite Conference „Women in the labor market of Ukraine Congress”, National Congress „Women on the verge of the twenty-first century: status, problems and ways of social development”, five international scientific conferences „Women in Science and Education: past, present and future”, six international congresses (FiNuT) – „Frauen in Naturwissenschaft und Technik” and many others. Conferences and Events became a forum for communication, presentations of scientific research, searching for scientific environments and establishing mutually fruitful contacts among scientists and activists.

The women representatives of the NGO of the National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine presented their achievements to both Ukrainian and foreign female public, in particular:

- the system of training of scientists at the National Agricultural University;
- some approaches to gender and leadership;
- the personality status and scientific knowledge;
- the system of training of scientific researchers – female aspect;
- marriage-family situation and development of a personality;
- gender stereotypes as a social and psychological problem;
- formation of sex-role identification of students;
- professional maturing of female students;

- professional burnout and a lecturer;
- gender and personality, and many others.

In addition, members of the association provide practical advice to students in writing resume, finding information on grants and international conferences, hold workshops on current youth issues, etc. Nicole Regush and Andrew Shwalb – masters from Canadian province Saskatchewan were given counselling in writing master's thesis „The role of women in Ukrainian agriculture”. The dialogue with the Canadian masters who came from far away to write about our women made us conclude that we should extend our activities to studying the problems of „heartland” and its female residents. Eventually we were engaged by the Committee on Families and Youth of Ukraine and Ministry of Agriculture to participate in the sociological research „Rural family in Ukraine”, which focused on such issues as „rural woman”, „rural family”, „rural youth” etc. The results of the research on these issues were published in a collective monograph „Social problems of the position of rural families in the conditions of development of independent Ukraine”; two members of our NGO were among the authors of this monograph.

Another aspect is cooperation between the representative of Hamburg Technical University, member of the NGO „Frauen in Naturwissenschaft und Technik” – Dr. Helene Götchel (PhD) and representatives of our NGO – association „Women in Agricultural Education” (National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine). This collaboration allowed us to:

- expand the vision of gender relations in Germany and in our country;
- exchange teaching experience;
- attend the lectures and seminars of both German and Ukrainian colleagues „Degenderization society” and „Ethics and psychology of family life”;
- hold two international scientific workshops: „Nature of gender” (2004) and „Degenderization society” (2005).

Participation of representatives of the same association in the summer school – seminar „Women in Science and Technology” (Iowa, USA) contributed to acquiring particular knowledge and skills, including:

- work in an international multicultural groups;
- development of leadership skills;
- expanding the scope of business and friendly communication;
- tolerance towards opposing views;
- acquaintance with the problems of women and traditions of foreign countries.

Thus, the experience, knowledge and skills would be used in conducting classes and workshops with students. Gender education includes the study of relationships between men and women in society. Integration of gender equality in education requires the introduction of a special subject and special courses on gender issues.

Being the students of educational institutions young people study different disciplines connected with their future specialty. Some young people are more open to acquiring new information, knowledge, whereas others care only about how to get higher education diploma quickly and find a well-paid job, still others hope that someone (e.g. parents or a sponsor) will help them live or survive without attempting to make their living by themselves etc.

That explains why it is vitally important for students, apart from the knowledge of special disciplines, to get acquainted with different social problems of human interrelations. Our main idea is to help young people understand their roles, help them „awake” from infantility and take an active position in society’s renaissance. Here are some ways:

1. Getting knowledge about society’s problems by means of introducing new educational courses. More than ten years ago we introduced such disciplines: „Psychology of management”, „Psychology of human relations”, „Family and everyday culture”, „Fundamentals of gender pedagogy and psychology”, „Conflict management”, „Social psychology” etc. We are trying to bring young people closer to the topic by binding educational courses mentioned above to such topics as: „Rights and Duties”, „Gender”, „Norms and Limits”, „A leader by birth or by virtue of definite education and upbringing?”, „What does gender equality mean?”, „How to avoid conflicts?” etc.
2. Improving forms and methods of delivering lectures, seminars, workshops etc. We make use of European and foreign educational experience.
3. Involving students to role-playing at seminars (active role games). Holding workshops and talk shows to deal with current problems.
4. Exchanging experience with foreign partners, scientific research centers; non-government organizations; participating in joint projects etc.

Hence, developing new educational courses and improving methods of training in the higher educational institutions will help both the young generation as well as the adult people to cognize the peculiarities of a human being, to find their place in the complex human relationships and understand continuous changes in the world today etc.

Thus, in modern Ukrainian society the problem of providing gender equality grows in its importance. Today we face the problem of working out a mechanism to ensure equal rights and opportunities for both sexes. The starting point to resolve this issue is Article 24 of the Constitution of Ukraine, which reveals the real prospects for pursuing gender policy. But another problem arises at this stage – „artificial imposition of this policy from above”, without creating a certain axiological basis. To form the latter which, perhaps, is the most important role of education, starting with training parents and ending with the education of parents, since they primarily need to learn the art of raising children. In turn, educational institutions require changes, modernization, additions, corrections in

the training and educational programs. Thorough research into this area is crucial, especially when taking into account that established through centuries stereotypes change hard and slowly. This requires time and science-based mechanisms. Our scientific community has already passed the stage when the problem is just stated and passes on to what to tell everyone and further on to find together the appropriate mechanisms to establish parity gender. At this stage it is necessary to study the experience of Western Europe, which in this respect is a step forward, since they worked out some mechanisms, introduced them and now analyzes their effectiveness or ineffectiveness, so that to choose the most optimal ways.

Literature

Stakhnevych V., Dankevych L. (2011), *Gender and personality* // „Edukacja – Technika – Informatyka” – Rocznik naukowy nr 2, cz. 1

Abstract

Developing the new educational courses and improving methods of training in the higher educational institutions will help both the young generation and the adult people to cognize the peculiarities of a human being to find their place in the complex human relationships and understand continuous changes in the present world are shown in the article.

Key words: gender, non-government organizations, development, education, new courses.

Роль международного опыта в развитии гендерного образования

Резюме

Разработка новых образовательных курсов и улучшение методов обучения в высших учебных заведениях помогут не только молодым людям, но и взрослым узнать особенности человека находить свое место в сложной системе человеческих отношений и понимать постоянные изменения в современном мире показаны в статье.

Ключевые слова: гендер, негосударственные организации, развитие, образование, новые курсы.

Rola międzynarodowych doświadczeń w rozwoju „pedagogiki gender”

Streszczenie

Wprowadzanie nowych kierunków studiów i poprawa metod nauczania w szkolnictwie wyższym nie tylko pomoże w rozwoju młodzieży i dorosłych, ale również umożliwi rozpoznanie cech człowieka ułatwiających znalezienie przez każdego swojego miejsca w złożonym systemie relacji międzyludzkich i zrozumienie ciągłych zmian w dzisiejszym świecie. Właśnie te zagadnienia przedstawiono w artykule.

Słowa kluczowe: płeć, organizacje pozarządowe, rozwój, edukacja, nowe kierunki studiów, „pedagogika gender”.