

The importance of considering gender identity in the educational process

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Abstract.

Relevance and objective. This study thoroughly analyzed the modern concept of gender within contemporary social relations. It comprehensively evaluated the specific impact of deep-rooted gender stereotypes on early childhood socialization processes and systematically examined the pedagogical characteristics of biology-based education. Furthermore, it clearly determined the pivotal significance of implementing innovative gender pedagogy in general education systems to effectively eliminate prevailing structural inequalities and social barriers.

Methodology. Throughout the research, a comprehensive systemic approach, rigorous comparative pedagogical analysis, and critical socio-cultural deconstruction were rigorously applied. The study systematically investigated traditional behavioral patterns, established family education strategies, and ongoing gender role transformations within global educational contexts. These complex factors were thoroughly examined through the analytical lens of social justice, equity, human rights, and educational inclusion.

Scientific novelty. The article theoretically substantiated the urgent necessity of a strategic transition from rigid traditional teaching frameworks to progressive, inclusive gender pedagogy. It successfully established a strong, direct correlation between early social development patterns and an individual's ultimate professional trajectory and career choices. Additionally, the paper conceptually proposed an innovative multi-vector collaboration model designed for seamlessly applying unified educational standards across various academic institutions.

Results and conclusions. The findings definitively confirmed that structural gender discrimination exerts a highly destructive influence on the realization of students' creative potential and personal academic growth. It was clearly clarified that the consistent implementation of modern legal frameworks, the comprehensive development of educators' gender competence, and the provision of continuous professional mentorship within schools represent absolute essential conditions for building a truly democratic society. Finally, the study thoroughly characterized the crucial role of an interdisciplinary academic approach in resolving complex educational contradictions and fostering an equitable learning environment for future generations.

Keywords: gender, gender self-awareness, socialization, gender pedagogy, gender equality, education, stereotypes

Важливість урахування гендерної ідентичності в освітньому процесі

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Анотація.

Актуальність і мета. У даному дослідженні ґрунтовно проаналізовано концепт гендеру в контексті сучасних соціальних відносин. Детально оцінено специфічний вплив стійких гендерних стереотипів на процеси ранньої соціалізації особистості та всебічно вивчено особливості біологічно орієнтованого навчання. Чітко визначено ключове значення інноваційної гендерної педагогіки в системі загальної освіти для ефективної ліквідації системної та структурної нерівності.

Методологія. Під час проведення роботи застосовано комплексний системний підхід, порівняльний педагогічний аналіз, а також критичну соціокультурну деконструкцію. Комплексно досліджено традиційні моделі соціальної поведінки, усталені стратегії сімейного виховання та фундаментальні трансформації гендерних ролей у глобальному освітньому просторі безпосередньо крізь призму принципів соціальної справедливості, рівності та інклюзії.

Наукова новизна. У статті теоретично обґрунтовано нагальну необхідність стратегічного та планомірного переходу від традиційних педагогічних догм до прогресивної гендерної педагогіки. Достовірно встановлено безпосередню кореляцію між особливостями ранньої соціалізації дитини та її подальшою професійною траєкторією розвитку. Концептуально запропоновано інноваційну багатовекторну модель міжінституційної співпраці задля ефективного впровадження єдиних освітніх стандартів.

Результати та висновки. Емпірично та теоретично підтверджено, що гендерна дискримінація в освітньому середовищі вкрай деструктивно впливає на формування та реалізацію творчого потенціалу здобувачів освіти. Остаточо з'ясовано, що послідовне впровадження спеціалізованих правових норм, активний розвиток гендерної компетентності педагогів і забезпечення систематичного професійного менторингу в закладах освіти є обов'язковими та ключовими умовами розбудови сучасного демократичного суспільства.

Ключові слова: гендер, гендерна самосвідомість, соціалізація, гендерна педагогіка, гендерна рівність, освіта, стереотипи

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Introduction.

Gender equality, also known as equality between the sexes, means equal access to resources and opportunities regardless of gender, including economic participation and decision-making. It implies the equal valuation of different behaviors, aspirations, and needs irrespective of gender. At the same time, it refers to the freedom of women and men, girls and boys to develop their personal abilities and make choices without restrictions. This does not mean that women and men are the same. Gender equality implies fairness that takes into account the needs of both women and men. Here, equality is understood only in terms of equivalence in rights, benefits, responsibilities, and opportunities. Gender equality is not limited to designing programs aimed solely at supporting women. The true goal of gender equality is to ensure equal rights, opportunities, and access for both women and men. With regard to gender inequality, women and girls currently cannot benefit from the rights, opportunities, and access available to men and boys. Therefore, policies that prioritize the integration, support, and empowerment of women are a necessary starting point on the path toward achieving gender equality. However, it should also be taken into account that gender equality is not an issue that serves only the interests of women and girls; it is a goal from which the entire society benefits. As confirmed by indicators of economic, political, and social development, gender equality is an important internal component of stability, development, and prosperity. For this reason, it is essential to identify, analyze, and meet the needs of both women and men in the workplace and in society as a whole. Gender equality is a characteristic of a social structure accompanied by unequal opportunities and persistent differences among various social groups (in this case, women and men). The principle of gender equality is primarily based on the recognition and evaluation of differences between women and men and their diverse roles in social life. The principle of equality presupposes the right to be different. This means balancing and harmonizing the characteristics and criteria that constitute the distinguishing qualities of each subject, of every member of society. Gender equality is one of the fundamental rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations in 1948 and is one of the essential prerequisites for achieving sustainable development and growth. Moreover, at the historic UN summit held in September 2015, world leaders adopted the "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," in which the fifth Sustainable Development Goal is precisely "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls." From the 1960s onward, the concept of "gender," used in the social sciences of Western countries (anthropology, history, psychology, philosophy, etc.), became associated with the analysis of the women's issue, particularly relations between women and men in society. The idea that biological factors alone are sufficient for an adequate

analysis of relations between women and men also dates back to this period (Ibragimbeyova, 1998, p. 4). Since the 1970s, primarily in Western – especially English-language – literature, and later in various countries, including present-day Azerbaijan, one can encounter attempts at research and reflections on the concept of gender. In the contemporary period, the term "gender relations" conventionally refers to the interaction of the sexes specifically within the socio-cultural sphere. However, this view has not been unanimously accepted (Quluzade, 1998, p. 8). In a number of studies and in almost all countries, "gender studies" are often perceived as research on women's issues or as feminist studies. In reality, however, gender studies address not only women's problems but also the essential characteristics of the sexes, relations between them, their positions in society and politics, and the historical process of the socialization of women's movements. Gender studies primarily imply research into the socio-psychological and socio-cultural characteristics of the sexes. Naturally, within this framework, the social environment, economy, and politics are also taken into account. Alongside the theoretical problems of gender philosophy, practical experience of contemporary life and processes directly related to political and legal developments in society have introduced significant changes into the study of political, social, economic, and moral spheres. For many years now, the gender dimension has been an indispensable attribute of international law and is reflected in the documents of almost all global organizations and institutions, as well as in major international conferences and symposia (Atwood, 1996, pp. 13–17).

Analysis of previous research and publications.

Previous studies considered gender identity through psychological, sociocultural and pedagogical perspectives. The works included in the source base address gender constancy and cognitive gender schemas (Emmerich et al., 1977; Martin & Halverson, 1983), gender theory and inequality (Bem, 2001, 2004), gender terminology and the post-Soviet sociocultural context (Ibragimbeyova, 1998, 2015; Quluzade, 1998), as well as the place of gender issues in pedagogical research (Shustova & Dyuldina, 2016). Together, these approaches provide the theoretical basis for examining how family, educational institutions and wider cultural norms participate in gender socialization and for discussing the possibilities of gender-sensitive pedagogy.

Results.

In today's globalized world, gender identity is viewed not merely as a matter of legal equality but as a critical factor in the realization of individual potential. The discussion highlights that despite the existence of formal legal norms, traditional stereotypes still dominate pedagogical practice through the "hidden curriculum." A central point of debate is the necessity of a strategic transition from traditional pedagogy to progressive gender pedagogy. This transition aims to decouple professional

trajectories from social stereotypes and uphold the principles of inclusivity within a democratic society. Furthermore, the influence of the digital educational environment on the transformation of adolescent gender roles is emphasized as a critical contemporary discourse.

Gender socialization and sexual self-awareness. Gender socialization primarily manifests itself in the differentiation and separation of gender roles determined by the division of labor. Individuals choose socio-cultural images appropriate to their society as models; they initially go through processes of suggestion and imitation and subsequently internalize these models. Confusing cultural and psychological factors with biological ones in gender socialization means diverting attention from the essence of the issue. The determination of gender roles is not based on biological factors but is related to gender identity. As noted, the initial stage of gender socialization is shaped by the influence of the family. Here, gender symmetry is considered a key factor. If the distribution of roles between father and mother is balanced and both parents participate equally in child-rearing and development, gender socialization proceeds normally. However, when fathers are often absent due to work and cannot devote sufficient time to children, gender asymmetry arises, which negatively affects gender socialization. Divorced families and children raised without fathers may sometimes face problems of gender identity. One of the factors that, in recent years, has been considered harmful to the gender socialization of children is the legalization of same-sex marriages and adoption by same-sex couples in some European countries.

According to Sigmund Freud, the awareness of sexual identity begins to form after the ages of three to four. One of Freud's ideas regarding the socialization of the sexes is that, from an early age, girls feel attraction toward their fathers and boys toward their mothers. He termed this the Oedipus complex, drawing on Sophocles' tragedy Oedipus (Bem, 2004, p. 11) from Greek mythology. A closer look at the Oedipus complex and Freud's theory of development reveals that this theory is grounded in psychic processes. Freud argued that the causes of neuroses may lie in traumatic sexual experiences in childhood, the formation of sexual fantasies, and relationships with parents. Boys may sometimes perceive their father as a rival and feel that they must protect their mother from him. Freud referred to the period between ages three and five as the Oedipal stage, noting that it later ends, though in some individuals it may reemerge during adolescence. According to Freud's theory, women are evaluated as guilty, passive, uncreative, and asocial beings who envy men, which in a sense serves to justify their subordination. Jung, Horney, and Erikson opposed this theory, arguing that attraction toward one parent is not rooted in biological causes. In their view, although sexual impulses may appear in children's behavior during the Oedipal stage (ages three to five), what the child seeks is not sexual gratification but security. Lacan, in turn,

argued that an Oedipal triangle emerges during the period of gender formation. When this triangle is successfully completed, the process of gender socialization proceeds normally. According to Lacan, the meaning a child assigns to the father depends on how the mother presents the father. Regardless of whether the father is biological, the father figure as presented by the mother is sufficient for the child. If the mother does not invest emotional significance in the father, the child remains trapped in an imaginary relationship, which may later lead to psychosis. Emotional attachment to the name of the father introduces the child into the Oedipal triangle. As emphasized, the family is a crucial factor in the emergence of gender identity. Parents who are carriers of patriarchal values tend to keep daughters under closer supervision, grant sons more freedom, and raise them to be economically independent. Typically, boys are burdened with greater responsibility, while girls are raised to be more obedient, shy, and fearful (Quluzade, 1998, p. 75).

In modern pedagogical theory and practice, an indispensable condition for the epistemological grounding of gender identity development as a new direction is the identification of key problems and contradictions, principles and regularities, models and mechanisms, factors and methodological approaches in this field, as well as the determination of strategic directions for gender research and prospects for gender education. The methodology of the social construction of gender is highly productive for studying gender issues in the human context. Without implementing axiological, anthropological, cultural, personality-oriented, and activity-based approaches closely linked to the application of a gender approach in pedagogy, the formation of the gender personality of subjects in the educational process is impossible. The formation of gender identity can serve as an effective means of social development, provided it contributes to the acquisition of a diverse repertoire of gender roles and a culture of communication between the sexes.

To improve the quality of modern education, teachers must be aware of and utilize gender differences in students' intellectual, speech, emotional, and personal characteristics during the educational process. A gender education system built on the cultural concept of personality-oriented education positively influences the development of individual consciousness structures in the gender dimension. Models of gender personality formation should reflect gender education systems in educational institutions and include as key components goals, values, meanings, motives, content, forms, methods, technologies, as well as self-assessment and reflection, and student behavior in specific gender situations. The search for new forms and methods of forming gender personality within traditional education systems, and the supplementation of generally accepted forms and methods with alternative ones should be aimed at establishing socially organized relations at the level of society, the state, and gender groups – relations

between different gender groups, between subjects of different sexes, and the individual's attitude toward oneself as a representative of a particular sex. Without changing the existing system of social division of labor, it is impossible to differentiate educational content by gender; teaching methods are closely linked to content, and therefore coeducational and equal education appears more functional socially than segregation.

To eliminate gender asymmetry within the education system, a unified and clearly defined concept of gender education is needed, along with raising teachers' levels of gender competence. The development of gender identification among vocational school students is facilitated by incorporating both core and elective gender-related courses into the curriculum. Gender relations can be deconstructed, reconstructed, and transformed: the deconstruction of gender relations involves reorganizing them according to a partnership model of interaction, a system in which both interacting parties act as equal subjects of equal value and significance for one another. In the context of noticeable changes in gender-role stratification in Russian society, identifying the main trends in gender education is linked to critical analysis of the multidimensional, multifunctional, highly subjective, and interdisciplinary nature of the process of gender personality formation, as well as the existing conceptual and categorical apparatus and systems for assessing teachers' gender competence. Thus, the research hypothesis holds that the set of conditions outlined in these theses reflects the prospects for the development of gender identity in modern education systems (Shustova & Dyul'dina, 2016, p. 56).

The conducted studies showed that almost all survey participants are gender-sensitive, which was to be expected. Some of them are directly involved in addressing gender problems, while others encounter gender issues in the course of their professional activities. Therefore, they are generally well informed about gender problems in the country. Education is based on morality intended to shape "proper" men and women and prepare them for love, family, marriage, and childbearing. "Family education" is, in fact, the single dominant direction that determines everything else and the entire educational process as a whole. This is precisely why National Demographic Security Programs received substantial budget funding, whereas National Plans for Achieving Gender Equality did not. Accordingly, gender education in Belarusian schools should be carried out in close connection with family education. For example, in the publication *Gender Approach to Youth Education* (Burova & Yanchuk, 2010), which were published in two editions and approved by the Ministry of Education, the section "Responsible Parenthood" occupies a large portion. The aim of this topic is "to familiarize the younger generation with the values of family and children in every person's life, as well as with concepts of gender approach and responsibility in the family sphere (Ibragimbeyova, 2015, p. 102).

When turning to the analysis of works in domestic pedagogy devoted to issues of sex and gender, it should be noted that most of them address either matters of sex education, the justification of coeducation versus single-sex schooling, or the consideration of gender and gender differences in education. However, within the framework of behavioral models, they rarely address the problem of harmonizing intersexual interaction. Thus, B. I. Khasan and G. M. Breslav emphasize that the aim of sex education is not the formation of certain traits of "male" and "female" types, but rather the development of relations between the sexes. Among the authors who have written on the sexual education of schoolchildren in sexual and physiological aspects are P. P. Blonsky, D. I. Isaev, V. E. Kagan, D. V. Kolesov, L. N. Timoshenko, A. G. Khripkova, and others. These authors point to the interaction of the natural and the social in the formation of femininity and masculinity; however, as a rule, their teachings ultimately lead to the idea of sex as a "natural destiny." Gender and education issues are also discussed in order to justify coeducation or single-sex education for boys and girls.

For many years, this problem has attracted the attention of both domestic and foreign educators and psychologists, including A. Adler, G. M. Breslav, V. D. Ereemeeva, N. Yu. Erofeeva, Z. V. Kozlovskaya, N. B. Krylova, A. V. Mudrik, A. V. Pyzhikov, A. Sirotiyuk, I. A. Tupitsyn, B. I. Khasan, S. Sharonova, and others. Above all, they are concerned with the following aspects: how separate or coeducational schooling affects the formation of the personalities of boys and girls. Here, a number of contradictory views emerge:

Single-sex education based on gender hinders the development of gender relations and does not promote students' positive socialization; it leads to the formation of stereotypical gender representations and to distorted perceptions of the opposite sex.

Coeducation further intensifies differences between boys and girls, leads to the "neutralization of the sexes," feminizes boys and masculinizes girls, and does not contribute to the harmonization of relations between the sexes. (Martin & Halverson, 1983, p. 1164). Coeducation helps boys and girls understand one another's characteristics more effectively and, in the future, has a beneficial influence on mutual understanding and tolerance between the sexes, as well as on students' moral and ethical development.

A contradiction arises: there are shortcomings in both coeducational and single-sex schooling. Some authors propose addressing this through a differentiated approach: education should correspond to natural developmental staging and gender specificity. Globalization influences identity formation at all levels. The identity space guaranteed by the modern state for its citizens is, on the one hand, subject to the unifying tendencies of cultural hegemony and informational globalization, and, on the other hand, to pressure from ethno-religious and other communities. The boundaries of traditional criteria of identity become less perceptible. At one pole stands

cosmopolitan world citizenship; at the other, as an alternative, fundamentalist ethno-religious, confessional, and civilizational identity choices confront it. The essence of a gender approach in education is that it represents an individualized approach to the manifestation of a child's sexed personality and demonstrates that differences in the behavior and upbringing of men and women are determined not by biological, but by socio-cultural factors. This follows from the fact that gender identity is not uniform: it is not the same for all men and women within a gender category, and it recognizes the multiplicity and individuality of gender differences.

When analyzing the psychological and pedagogical literature on gender approaches in education, it should be noted that the number of works on this issue has increased not only in theory but also in practice. In psychological and pedagogical practice, gender-oriented programs have emerged for children of various ages: a gender development program for primary school-age children, the course "Fundamentals of Gender Studies" for students in grades 7–11, gender education in systems of innovative schools, and so forth. Summarizing the analysis of the gender problem in pedagogical research, we arrive at the following conclusions. In virtually all modern pedagogical studies, in contrast to the biological meaning of the concept of "sex," the social nature of the concept is emphasized, and the influence of the sociocultural environment on the development of gender identity is highlighted. In pedagogical literature, various directions of works on gender problems are identified: from sex education in a sexual-physiological context, to issues of coeducation or single-sex schooling, to the development of gender approaches in education that take gender differences into account. Psychological and pedagogical sources consider two models of the individual's sex-role socialization: a polarization model, based on a strict division of male and female roles, and a continuum model, which allows a blending of male and female functions. The gender approach in education is based on the continuum model.

Educational concepts consistent with a gender approach are grounded in several gender theories: identification theory, gender-typing theory, cognitive development theory, and the complementary theory of social expectations. In domestic pedagogy, there is no unified concept of gender-role education. Scholars qualify its content in different ways: as part of social and moral education; as the upbringing of the head of the family in accordance with moral and hygienic requirements; or as a pedagogical activity aimed at enabling children to master gender-role behavior skills and a culture of gender relations. In pedagogical theory and practice, there is currently a shortage of technological and methodological tools that ensure adequate gender socialization of the younger generation, which dictates the need to intensify the search for new gender-oriented technologies and methods. Guided by the relevance of this problem, the authors conducted an experimental study on the formation of gender tolerance among lyceum students,

which ensures the correction of the most rigid gender stereotypes on the eve of secondary school students' coming of age, the unconditional acceptance of individual characteristics, and the affirmation of a partnership model of interaction between the sexes (Shustova & Dyuldina, 2016, pp. 629–633).

Conclusions.

Gender norms are instilled from childhood through family, education, and culture. Concepts of "man" and "woman" extend far beyond biological anatomy, dictating societal expectations regarding behavior, personality traits (e.g., emotionality and service for women; stubbornness and ambition for men), and lifestyle.

Society uses biologically assigned sex as a baseline to construct gender – masculinity and femininity – as a distinct social category. A person's socially constructed gender often defines their societal identity more clearly than their biological sex alone.

Gender distinctions operate not only at interpersonal levels but are also embedded into the structural framework of society. These behaviors and expectations are reinforced and institutionalized across major social institutions, including the economy, politics, education, religion, and the family.

Achieving gender equality requires systematic interventions through gender pedagogy. To eliminate discrimination, targeted strategies must be applied across curricula, lesson planning, classroom language, learning environments, and cross-ministerial policy execution.

The analysis therefore supports an understanding of gender-sensitive education as a systemic pedagogical task rather than as a set of isolated classroom measures. Its implementation requires coherence between curriculum content, teaching methods, teacher communication, the organization of the learning environment, family education and institutional policy. Particular attention should be paid to teachers' gender competence, because educators not only transmit formal knowledge but also influence students through expectations, assessment practices, examples, language and everyday interaction. A partnership model of communication and equal access to educational opportunities can reduce the reproduction of rigid stereotypes and broaden the range of social and professional trajectories available to learners.

The prospects for further research are connected with the empirical assessment of gender-sensitive pedagogical practices in different types of educational institutions, the development of tools for measuring teachers' gender competence, and the study of how digital educational environments influence gender socialization. It is also important to compare the effectiveness of curriculum interventions, professional mentoring and cooperation between educational institutions, families and public authorities. Such research would make it possible to move from general theoretical principles toward evidence-based recommendations for creating inclusive educational environments and for preventing structural discrimination in education.

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