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GENDER APPROACH TO THE LEARNING PROCESS AT HIGHER EDUCATION ESTABLISHMENTS

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Higher education in Ukraine is undergoing an important stage of reforming within the framework of the European integration course in order to improve its quality. Since education is one of the main factors in the formation of consciousness, its development should take place on the democratic basis with the establishment of equality, justice, tolerance, and non-discrimination principles. In this context, issues of gender equality and the development of gender culture are important and relevant factors for the state and society as a whole. Thus, gender education and overcoming gender stereotypes become one of the links in the learning process at educational institutions of various levels, including higher ones. At schools, institutes and universities, it is necessary to create favourable environment for positive changes in overcoming gender inequality, avoiding gender discrimination, as well as conditions for participants of educational process to receive necessary information about gender culture essence and gender policy aspects in Ukraine and the EU.

The problem of introducing a gender approach to the learning process at higher education is of interest to many foreign and Ukrainian researchers. Among them, there are many researchers who develop special courses for students, suggest ways to improve their gender culture (O. Stadnichenko [1]), consider general issues of introducing a gender approach to the learning process at higher education (S. Hladchenko [2], T. Dedilova, I. Tokar [3]). Collective works on conducting gender audits in educational institutions, popularizing the best practices for implementing a gender approach are also useful [4].

The object of research is the level of gender culture of Donbass Institute of Technology and Management IHE Academician Yuriy Bugay International Scientific and Technical University (DITM ISTU) students. The subject of the research is students' understanding of the concepts of "gender", "gender equality", the presence of gender stereotypes at student environment. The aim of the work is to increase the gender competence of university students. Theoretical and empirical methods were used to achieve this goal. The analysis of the regulatory framework, scientific literature on the selected issues, and generalization of the results of the activities of gender education centres were carried out. The necessary material was obtained as a result of DITM ISTU students and lecturers survey on gender issues. A training and educational course on gender equality was instrumental in achieving the goal.

In 2018, the Council of Europe adopted a new Gender Equality Strategy [5]. Among the areas that European countries will focus on are the prevention of gender stereotypes and sexism, combating violence against women, ensuring equal access of women to justice, balanced participation of women in political and public decision-making, protection of refugees, migrants, etc. Forty-seven countries, including Ukraine, have taken the responsibility to implement the new strategy at the national and local levels.

In accordance with the European integration course of Ukraine, maintaining the policy of the UN and the Council of Europe in matters of equality of all people regardless of gender or other characteristics, for the sake of strengthening democratic principles, establishing respect for the rights and freedoms of every person in our state, a number of normative legal acts were adopted that laid the foundation for the formation of a policy for achieving gender equality. They are the law of Ukraine "On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men" (2005), the State Social Program for Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men (2018) and others. On September 16, 2020, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine approved the Communication Concept in the field of gender equality for 2021-2025. The purpose of the document is to improve the population's understanding of the essence and objectives of the state gender policy. In order to achieve the goal by 2025, it is planned to inform target audiences about key concepts of gender equality, cover this topic in press and online publications, promote its discussion at public events, conduct audits, refute gender stereotypes, involve women in political and other activities. Among the listed activities, there is gender mainstreaming in education, and among the topics, there is gender-based education.

Therefore, an urgent problem for Ukraine is the improvement of gender culture in educational institutions, which is achieved by applying a gender approach to the learning process of higher educational institutions. This approach involves encouraging students to engage in activities that are interesting to them, without paying attention to the concept of "female" or "male" profession or behaviour [3]. It provides an opportunity to educate free and active people who are capable of cooperation and mutual support.

The gender approach is becoming particularly relevant in the context of the preservation of most gender stereotypes, the actual unequal status of women and men in Ukrainian society. According to UNDP data for 2020, Ukraine has risen one step in the Gender Gap Index report from 60th to 59th place, while many problems regarding equal access of women and men to economic participation and career prospects remain [6].

The gender approach is introduced through such disciplines as philosophy, history, sociology, psychology, cultural studies [2], as well as through special courses, trainings, conferences, and the creation of gender education centres.

A survey among DITM ISTU students showed the presence of gender stereotypes, a lack of understanding of "gender" concept, the importance of achieving gender equality, and mechanisms for protecting against discrimination. Some of the respondents, primarily men, defended patriarchal views on family, talked about "women's and "men's" affairs, "women's" and "men's" characters, and also did not know where to apply if discrimination and domestic violence are detected. Therefore, targeted and systematic work to improve the gender culture of students is necessary. DITM ISTU has developed a training and educational course for students.

For first-and second-year students, the training "Relationship Ecology: a gender approach" was developed, the purpose of which is to inform those interested about the main concepts in gender culture and recommendations for building professional and personal relationships with gender equality in mind. The training plan provides understanding the difference between the concepts "gender" and "sex", analysing the concept of "gender equality", understanding the stereotypes that exist in society regarding the roles of men and women, historical excursion about marriage and family values in the world and in Ukraine.

Senior students at DITM ISTU are offered a special academic discipline "Gender Equality and Women's Rights". Its introduction into the educational process at universities was initiated by the Association of Women Lawyers of Ukraine "YurFem". DITM ISTU supported this initiative and, based on the recommendations of "YurFem", developed a course for everyone (both lecturers and students). It provides five open lectures:

Topic 1. Gender, Gender Equality and Feminism.

Topic 2. Feminism in International Law. Women's Rights.

Topic 3. Power and Protection from Gender-based Violence.

Topic 4. Gender Equality in Media, Education, Politics and Business.

Topic 5. Gender Discrimination and Combating it: International and National Legal Norms, Protection Mechanisms.

Thus, gender equality implies achieving equal rights of women and men at work, family and other relations, overcoming various types of discrimination. In order for equality of people regardless of gender to become a reality, first, it is necessary to conduct an information campaign among population of different ages. Especially effective is working with young people in educational institutions. At student environment, the presence of gender stereotypes was revealed, primarily regarding the distribution of household chores, "female" and "male" work or activities. An educational campaign to overcome such stereotypes should be included in educational process. Gender approach should be implemented through a number of social disciplines, as well as through special courses. DITM ISTU developed a training and a course aimed at improving the gender culture of students, overcoming gender stereotypes, and developing gender competence. Systematic work at higher educational establishments on gender equality and mechanisms for its protection is important for the development of each individual, as well as the establishment of democratic values, the formation of civil society and a state governed by the rule of law.

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