

ЄВРОПЕЙСЬКІ НАУКОВІ СТУДІЇ

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**A CONTEMPORARY TEXTBOOK FOR HIGHER EDUCATION:
ANALYSIS FOR SEXISM AND GENDER STEREOTYPES**

Abstract. *The article is focusing on one of the most important problems of gender studies — the creation of modern methodological and curricular support for the educational process in higher education. The author analyses the experience of teaching the elective course 'Gender Studies' for Bachelor's students majoring in Primary Education at the Faculty of Pedagogical Education of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University. This course is practice-based and aims to prepare pre-service teachers to address gender issues in the educational process. Teaching this course raised questions about the content of higher education textbooks and their analysis concerning sexism and gender stereotypes. The author recognizes that textbooks on gender issues are currently linked to certain courses: gender psychology, gender sociology, gender pedagogy, gender journalism, etc. However, according to the author, a modern textbook should be comprehensive and based on the latest scientific research, deep interdisciplinary connections, and contemporary practice. The article defines the main characteristics of a modern textbook in general and gender studies, in particular: it should be comprehensive in terms of analysis when it comes to sexism and gender stereotypes, regardless of the specialty; the content of any textbook should be based on scholarly research in the field of gender studies; the textbook should show deep interdisciplinary connections; the formation of critical thinking of students is the main goal of any modern textbook, regardless of the specialty it is written for; without the use of interactive teaching methods, it is impossible to create a modern textbook. The article also discusses approaches and methods for analyzing textbooks for sexism and gender stereotypes. The author pays special attention to hidden discrimination in the curricula on gender equality of students and schoolchildren.*

Key words: *gender studies, gender education, gender education, gender stereotypes, sexism, hidden curriculum.*

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Introduction. Ukraine has taken the road of ensuring human and civil rights and freedoms, as well as implementing gender equality standards for men and women. In modern Ukrainian society, even in the context of a full-scale war against Russia, there are deep processes that contribute to the creation of equal opportunities for self-efficacy and

agency, regardless of social status, nationality, age, gender, etc. (Datsiuk T., Hihin O., 2023). In Ukraine, there's an aspiration to reclaim national traditions and principles while also aspiring to European values and freedoms, creating a delicate balancing act. This underscores the importance of adapting the consciousness of citizens, legislation, lifestyle,

economic processes to new realities that will ensure the creation of a society of equal conditions and opportunities for everyone.

Despite the fact that Ukrainian women already hold managerial positions, are in politics, serve in the army and reach incredible heights in building their own careers, our world is still very far from gender equality. After all, gender equality is, first of all, a question of justice, equal access to resources and power, including in the field of education, where the percentage of women is very high (Kenworthy L., Malami M., 1999).

The idea to write this article was inspired by the results of the course "Gender Studies" as an elective course for Bachelor's degree students majoring in Primary Education at the Faculty of Pedagogical Education of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University. This course is practice-based and aims to prepare pre-service teachers to address gender issues in the educational process. This experience prompted discussions regarding the content of higher education textbooks and their examination in terms of sexism and gender stereotypes.

Gender studies is the general name of the methodological approach to the study of factors, processes, and results of social construction of gender. These studies have a pronounced interdisciplinary connection and relate to a number of social, humanitarian, and even natural sciences. Gender knowledge helps to create conditions for gender equality and equal personal development regardless of gender in modern Ukrainian society. To do this, radical changes should be made in the gender socialization of children and students, gender stereotypes should be destroyed, and conditions should be created for the mobility of gender roles of men and women in society. Hence, scholars should prioritize steering clear of a limiting, differential approach to educating individuals based on their gender. Rather, the aim of training and education should be the individualized, personal development of each individual (Gender Studies in Higher Education, 2022).

Nowadays, it is difficult to meet a legislator or manager who would the idea that gender equality is the key to the development of a sustainable civil society, and one of the signs of its democracy. However, the actual reality often diverges from a harmonious perspective, as evidenced by the analysis of existing higher education textbooks, especially those for pre-service teachers. Additionally, even textbooks specifically focused on gender issues tend to be tied to certain courses, such as gender psychology, gender sociology, gender pedagogy, or gender journalism. However, according to the author, a modern textbook should be comprehensive and grounded on the latest scholarly research, deep interdisciplinary connections, and contemporary practice. This need arises from the critical importance of shaping healthy gender relations among the younger generation. At the same time, it's

important to consider the significant shifts in the roles of men and women in contemporary society and the growing focus on the individual as a unique entity with personal agency and individuality.

Analysis of recent research and published papers. The foundation for the emergence of a gender approach in education and upbringing can be traced to new social knowledge developed by thinkers like Michel Foucault, Erving Goffman, Peter Berger, Thomas Luckmann, and others, alongside research from feminist theorists. These feminist works, which have gained recognition in many parts of the world, were relatively unknown in Ukraine until recently (J. Scott, J. Butler, Yu. Kristeva, L. Irigaray, and others). The problem of gender equality of women in senior positions in politics and education in particular was studied by L. Kenworthy, O. Folke, J. Rickne, R. L. Fox, J. L. Lawless, M. Niederle, L. Vesterlund, P. Campa, Ch. S. Hauser and others. The philosophical and legal aspects of gender equality, particularly in the context of martial law, have been explored by Ukrainian researchers like T. Datsiuk, O. Hihin, L. Tymoshenko (2023). The formation of the gender component of the professional competence of pre-service teachers was studied by S. Vykhor, I. Horoshko, L. Danylenko, I. Ivanova, I. Kochurska, V. Kravets, S. Matiushkova, I. Muntian, V. Oliinyk, M. Polyvianna, O. Tsokur and others. The problems of creating a textbook on gender knowledge were studied by T. Martseniuk, S. Shturkhetyskyi (gender journalism), T. Hovorun and O. Kikinedzhi (gender psychology) and others.

The analysis of scientific literature reveals that many scholars believe that merely possessing abstract knowledge of moral norms and societal laws does not guarantee equal relationships between men and women, flexible role changes in society, or the breaking of gender stereotypes. Equally important is one's social experience of gender interactions in real life, underpinned by an individual system of values, orientations, guidelines, internal perspective, and the capacity for critical thinking and analysis. This personal experience is crucial for understanding and assessing the real state of relations between men and women in Ukrainian society. In this aspect, the role of gender education and the formation of a truly equal model of relations between men and women in student youth, and especially in pre-service teachers, is very important (Gender Equality Strategy of the Council of Europe, 2018).

In our opinion, this process is not only due to the teaching of such courses as gender pedagogy, gender sociology, gender journalism or gender psychology (Gender for Media, 2017. 220 p.)

It is much deeper and more diverse and covers almost all courses of the educational program of the institution of higher education, regardless of the specialty that the student seeks to obtain. Therefore,

a comprehensive review of international experience in this regard led us to the most common name for the course, i.e. gender studies.

The purpose of the article. Based on the analysis of contemporary textbooks used in higher educational institutions, to derive a model of the textbook that encompasses integral knowledge, interdisciplinary connections between courses within educational programs for training specialists, and emphasizes the impact of gender knowledge on developing critical thinking in students. The *objectives of this article* are the following: 1) to analyze the current status of textbooks used in educational programs at higher educational institutions in Ukraine, focusing on their coverage of gender equality and the presence of gender stereotypes; 2) to explore the interdisciplinary connections within gender studies, examining how different fields interrelate and contribute to a comprehensive understanding of gender issues; 3) to suggest a model for a modern textbook for higher education that fosters critical thinking and facilitates the practical application of gender knowledge.

Results. A critical approach should be one of the core features of a modern textbook for students in higher educational institutions, focusing on altering the current state of affairs concerning gender equality. This approach encourages students to adopt an active and conscious stance, including a critical perspective on authorities at all levels—central, regional, and local—in relation to gender policy. It is the study of gender studies that helps students acquire such skills because one of the strengths of gender studies is their consistency and focus on the issues of social responsibility of the authorities, which in turn allows students to develop their critical thinking.

It should be noted that gender studies have their own pedagogical and didactic aspects. The subject of gender studies is characterized by pluralism, which can be seen as one of the strongest aspects of the course. It is gender studies, as a subject of study and training, that is the bridge between the humanities, social and natural sciences, as well as the human social experience (Haidenko V., 2019)

Another crucial component of a modern textbook should be a strong interdisciplinary focus (Henderson E., 2015, p. 38), which ties together concepts from philosophy, sociology, cultural studies, religious studies, political science, law, psychology, ethics, pedagogy, journalism, and other subject areas. In addition, the interdisciplinary component contains both empirical and theoretical contexts, indicating that gender studies can—and should—be explored by almost all students. This is due to the fact that it is impossible to separate the problems of gender, class, ethnicity, race, faith, and sexuality from each other. Hence, teaching methods, course syllabi and textbooks must undergo continual development

and adaptation to include a gender approach in the educational process.

The main task of gender training is to ensure that students have equal opportunities in education and social activities, along with the freedom to express their opinions. This approach is critical to fostering an environment where students feel valued and heard, which in turn is key to developing critical thinking skills (Gender Media Practices, 2014). To do this, it is advisable to incorporate the statistics on gender inequality in Ukraine in textbooks. For example, in Ukrainian society, there is an opinion that the sphere of education is entirely a “female kingdom”. This stereotype is based on government statistics, which show that women dominate at all levels: every tenth working woman is employed in education, while the percentage of men is only 2,8 %. Additionally, statistical data indicate a degree of gender parity in higher education. The number of men and women is relatively balanced; among the 158,5 thousand teachers in higher education institutions of III–IV degrees, women constitute 52,4 %, while men represent 47,5 % (Women and Men, Demographic and Social Statistics, 2022). But the heads of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, according to Soviet tradition, were exclusively men. This tradition was broken in 2016, when Lilia Hrynevych took the post of minister. During her tenure, which lasted just over three years, she launched the landmark reform of the New Ukrainian School.

As for the state of gender equality in senior positions at Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, the university administration includes 7 people, including 5 men and 2 women. The percentage breakdown is as follows: women make up 28,5 %, while men constitute 71,5 %. If we analyze the composition of the Academic Council of the University, women make up 58 % of its representation, and men — 42 % (Web-site of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, 2023). These data demonstrate the real situation in the field of higher education, where the representation of women prevails.

Another issue with textbooks across various courses (particularly school textbooks) is their focus on the sexual division of labor, reinforcing traditional roles for men and women in society, perpetuating gender stereotypes, and lacking examples of successful women's contributions to fields like science, politics, and economics. Of the 268 higher education institutions of Ukraine that operate today, only one — Volyn National University — bears a female name in honor of Lesia Ukrainka. This fact speaks very eloquently about the role of women in our society and in education (Register of Subjects of Educational Activity, 2023).

However, the list of obstacles to adopting gender transformations in Ukraine does not end there. It is worth mentioning anti-gender ideas rooted in our society from an early age. Kindergarten toys, books,

and textbooks often convey—sometimes subtly but persistently—messages about how the world should work. An example that illustrates this point is the reaction from conservatively oriented groups within preschool education when confronted with a concept that has long been adopted in European state kindergartens—namely, avoiding emphasis on the gender of children and not imposing a typical set of toys for boys and girls. In this approach, advocates of strict moral codes and traditional values perceived a risk of encouraging non-traditional sexual orientation among children.

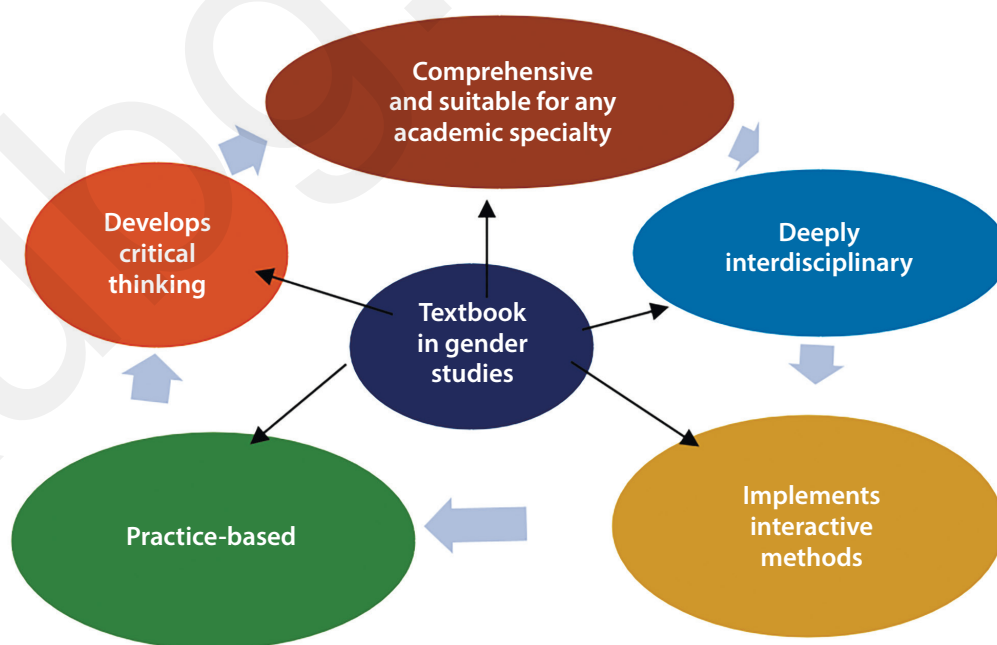
All of the above indicates the presence of gender stereotypes in the daily practices of both higher educational institutions and schools, which is also reflected in textbooks. First of all, this persistent rooting is explained as a result of hidden or open elements of gender discrimination. Open discrimination can be considered the availability of curricula taught separately for boys and girls. This is quite typical for arts and crafts lessons in secondary school. Traditionally, girls are taught household management (e.g. cooking, sewing), and boys are taught carpentry and locksmithing (Malakhova O. A., Marushchenko O.A., 2016. P. 48–56).

Hidden discrimination is often evident when gender stereotypes are embedded in school textbooks and other educational materials, as well as when teachers unconsciously perpetuate these stereotypes through their behaviour during classes. In particular, in most school textbooks, girls are offered only one identification model (family), boys have a wider choice, but their family role is considered as peripheral. Women are shown to be passive and engaged in traditional activities (cooking, cleaning,

etc.). Men and boys are busy with work or hobbies. Textbook language often defaults to masculine grammar, particularly when referring to a person or people in general without specifying gender.

Thus, the hidden curriculum or syllabus can impose specific social roles on individuals through subtle messaging and underlying assumptions. In the context of the gender-role approach to education, the structure of the educational process not only perpetuates traditional gender stereotypes, norms, and prejudices but also, through its inherent system of organization (including course content, structure, teaching methods, styles, and the specific gender stratification within the teaching profession), reinforces and maintains gender imbalance. This leads to the perpetuation of a masculine-centered view of education (Strilnyk O. 2019).

Identifying instances of sexism and the perpetuation of gender stereotypes in textbook content can be accomplished through various methods and analytical approaches. Some of them might include: 1) *Structural analysis of textbooks*: statistical analysis (comparison of the number of instructions to representatives of different genders, distribution of images and illustrations by gender; analysis of text examples (analysis of specific text examples for the presence of stereotypes and sexist ideas with attention to the roles assigned to men and women, as well as to language constructions; 2) *Analysis of illustrations and images*: role stereotypes (identification of role stereotypes through analysis of images and illustrations that can support traditional gender roles; method of representation (reflection of the diversity of roles of men and women, or the use of standard images, emphasizing



Model of a Modern Textbook on Gender Studies

Source: developed by the author

sexualization or objectification); 3) *Assessment of language use*: language analysis (definition and analysis of language constructs that can support gender stereotypes; use of gender-dependent terms (analysis of the use of terms and expressions that can reinforce stereotypes and definition of roles); 4) *Interaction with involved parties*: feedback from students (involvement of students in the analysis and discussion of gender aspects in educational materials); for the school textbook, participation of parents and teachers (referring to parents' and teachers' opinions and feedback on gender sensitivity in the content of textbooks); 5) *Professional training of instructors (teachers)*: trainings and workshops (providing teachers with knowledge and tools to identify gender stereotypes and reproduction of sexism in educational materials); evaluation and review of textbooks (active participation of teachers in the selection of a textbook and its review in terms of gender sensitivity).

The use of these methods and approaches can help to identify and correct gender inequalities and stereotypes in the content of textbooks, contributing to the formation of a gender-sensitive approach to education and upbringing in pre-service teachers.

Taking into account all of the above, we can suggest the following model of a modern textbook

on gender studies for students in general and pre-service teachers in particular.

Conclusion. A study of modern textbooks for students on sexism and gender stereotypes has demonstrated that: 1) Gender inequality, particularly toward women, remains evident in many textbooks used in higher education institutions; 2) A modern textbook should be comprehensive in terms of its analysis of sexism and gender stereotypes, irrespective of the academic specialty; 3) The content of any textbook should be grounded in scientific research within the field of gender studies; 4) The textbook should be deeply interdisciplinary; 5) The formation of critical thinking among students should be a central objective of any modern textbook, regardless of the academic specialty; 6) Modern textbooks must incorporate interactive teaching methods to be effective. However, it should be noted that when teaching or writing a textbook on raising awareness of gender differences or gender inequality, coercive methods cannot be used, even to build consensus in a student group or other environment.

Further studies should explore this topic by analyzing modern textbooks from European universities for instances of sexism and gender stereotypes. This analysis will focus on countries known for being centers of gender education.

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Мельниченко О.

СУЧАСНИЙ ПОСІБНИК ВИЩОЇ ШКОЛИ: АНАЛІЗ НА СЕКСИЗМ І ГЕНДЕРНІ СТЕРЕОТИПИ

Стаття присвячена одній з важливіших проблем гендерного знання — це створення сучасного методологічного та методичного супроводу освітнього процесу у вищій школі. Автор аналізує досвід викладання курсу «Гендерні студії» як вибіркової дисципліни для студентів бакалаврського рівня спеціальності «Початкова освіта» факультету педагогічної освіти Київського столичного університету імені Бориса Грінченка. Цей курс має практико-орієнтований характер і спрямований на підготовку майбутніх вчителів до розв'язання гендерних проблем в освітньому процесі. Саме цей досвід поставив питання щодо змісту посібників для вищої школи та їхнього аналізу на сексизм та гендерні стереотипи. Автор зауважує, що посібники, які присвячені гендерним проблемам, на сьогодні мають чітку прив'язку до певних дисциплін: гендерна психологія, гендерна соціологія, гендерна педагогіка, гендерна журналістика тощо. Однак, на думку автора, сучасний підручник має бути універсальним та спиратися на останні наукові дослідження, глибинні міждисциплінарні зв'язки й практику сьогодення. В статті визначаються основні характеристики сучасного посібника взагалі та гендерних студій, зокрема: він має бути універсальним з точки зору аналізу на сексизм та гендерних стереотипів, незалежно від спеціальності; контент будь-якого посібника має спиратися на наукові дослідження в сфері гендерних знань; посібник має бути пронизаний глибинними міждисциплінарними зв'язками; формування критичного мислення студентів — це головна ціль будь-якого сучасного посібника, незалежно від фаху; без застосування інтерактивних методів навчання неможливо створити сучасний посібник. В статті також розкриваються підходи та методи аналізу підручників на сексизм та гендерні стереотипи. Особлива увагу приділяється автором прихованій дискримінації в навчальних планах щодо гендерної рівності студентів та школярів.

Ключові слова: гендерні студії, гендерна освіта, гендерне виховання, гендерні стереотипи, сексизм, прихований навчальний план.

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