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WOMEN IN RUSSIAN SCIENCE AND EDUCATION

KEYWORDS: gender; gender disbalance; gender structure; gender disproportion; feminism of education; fundamental asymmetry; women.

ABSTRACT. The article deals with the urgency of gender research in the sphere of science and education of Russia. The interest to the topic emerged due to the conduct of the Urals World Women University Presidents Sub-Forum "Pedagogical University and Leadership in Education". Gender issues are looked upon as objects of socio-humanitarian knowledge developing as a unity of interdisciplinary theoretical and empirical research. The analysis of gender disbalance in the scientific and educational spheres gives grounds for reflection on the causes, peculiarities and main aspects of this issue. The author analyzes its contradictory character and the paradoxical nature of the current situation as manifestations of gender asymmetry. The given article may be of interest to the participants of educational relations, scientific community and the colleagues from the PRC.

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ЖЕНЩИНЫ В НАУКЕ И ОБРАЗОВАНИИ РОССИИ

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА: гендер; гендерный дисбаланс; гендерная структура; гендерные различия; гендерная диспропорция; феминизм образования; фундаментальная асимметрия; женщины.

АННОТАЦИЯ. В представленной статье рассматривается актуальность гендерных исследований в сфере науки и образования России. Интерес к теме возник в связи с проведением Уральского Суб-форума Всемирного Форума Женщин-Президентов университетов под названием «Педагогический университет и лидерство в образовании». Гендерные проблемы рассматриваются как объекты социально-гуманитарного знания, развивающегося как совокупность междисциплинарных теоретических и эмпирических исследований. Анализ гендерного дисбаланса в образовательной и научной сфере дает основание для размышления о причинах, особенностях и основных аспектах этой проблемы. Автор рассматривает ее противоречивый характер и парадоксальность сложившейся ситуации как проявление фундаментальной гендерной асимметрии. Данная статья может быть интересна участникам образовательных отношений, научной общественности и коллегам из КНР.

There is a proverb in Russian which can be roughly translated in English as "Women's brain is better than any Duma". It highlights such qualities of the women's worldview that surpass legislative decisions. Without denying the metaphorical nature of folklore, we will try to deal with given problem from the point of view of theoretical and empirical analysis of the differences between the social roles and statuses of men and women in such social institutes as science and education existing in the contemporary Russian society. Thus, we enter the sphere of gender research which has, as a rule, interdisciplinary character incorporating the knowledge of history, philosophy, sociology, psychology and pedagogy.

Gender studies represent an area of socio-humanitarian research the object of which is gender as a socio-cultural phenomenon. The notion of "gender" is used to denote distinctions between men and women which do not boil down to biological or anatomical differences the presence of which is included in the semantic structure of the notion "sex". In the field of socio-humanitarian knowledge, such issues are called "gender" ones; they are brought about by the differences in social roles

and statuses of men and women and determine their essential characteristics, interpersonal interactions, and opportunities of existence and development in the basic social institutes.

As a specific area of socio-humanitarian science, gender research has existed in Russia for a comparatively short time – since the 1980s, therefore its terminological apparatus has not been properly formed yet, and the conceptual approaches are still at the stage of development. At the same time, the Interregional public organization "Women in Science and Education" (www.awse.ru) created in 1992 carries out coordination, scientific cooperation and professional and moral support for women working in the sphere of science and education.

Modern society is characterized by stereotypical mentality and perception of gender distinctions. The presence of various social roles that are taken as fundamental differences between men and women in the psyche and activity gives birth to gender stereotypes. The main gender stereotype of mass consciousness describes the woman's role model as "keeping the house and bringing up children" – the so-called three Ks – *Kinder, Küche, Kirche* (a

German expression translated as Children, Kitchen and Church). The given stereotype has so firmly penetrated men's consciousness that the women who try to realize themselves in social activity are constantly aware of it. It is necessary to be strong enough to be able to resist caustic remarks, sarcastic glances and open confrontation of men-colleagues.

At the same time, we cannot but agree that the modern Western culture is characterized by the tendencies towards universality and abandonment of prejudices and stereotypes (ethnic and national, religious, political and gender) and by the recognition of existence of different modes of thinking and life styles preserving the universal human rights and freedoms. It is common knowledge that overcoming all kinds of discrimination and inhibition of free personal development, and specifically with reference to gender is one of the most important socio-cultural tasks. The movement of men and women towards equal opportunities in realization of their abilities over a long period of time will create the vector of development for the modern society. The United Nations Millennium Declaration proclaimed in 2000 formulated eight development goals among which the goal to promote gender equality and empower women comes third – a fact that makes gender research especially urgent.

The urgency of the topic is also determined by the obligations of the Russian state which has signed numerous international documents on the rights of women and has taken responsibility for the implementation of the UN principles concerning women.

Nevertheless, whatever documents or norms we would have used, never has a person managed to ignore the socio-cultural origin of the gender hierarchy. Let us consider this assumption on the example of gender disbalance in the Russian science and higher school. This sphere is traditionally believed to be rather safe in relation to gender – more than 60% of students of higher education institutions are women; the sphere of education employs about 80% of women-teachers, and they total more than 54% of all higher school teachers [4; 2].

The process of feminization of the teaching staff is differentiated with relation to positions: the higher the position, the more expressed gender inequality is. We will illustrate this situation with the data of a sociological investigation by Professor V.F. Pugach.

"In 2013, almost 45% of all higher school women-teachers were associate professors, 25% of them were senior lecturers and assistant lecturers. Heads of Departments and professors made up 6% and 7% respectively" [5, p. 85] and further: "... among rectors, more than 80% were men, and among deputy rec-

tors – about 70%; associate professors are the nearest to gender parity ..." [5, p. 82]. So it follows that women occupy the lowest steps of this hierarchical stairway.

As far as science is concerned, the number of women-scientists in Russia is also traditionally high. More than half of all candidates of sciences carrying out scientific research are women. With reference to doctors of sciences, only a quarter of them are women. Women-scientists actively raise the level of their qualification: they total at about half of all post-graduate and doctoral students [9].

Even a brief statistical analysis makes it possible to speak about gender disbalance in the sphere of science and education as a social problem with its own causes, tendencies of development and contradicting characteristics.

Which of the contradictions are the most salient? Let us single out the most important ones:

- the contradiction between the state ideology of equality and the stereotypes of mass consciousness ("women cannot be trusted with power", "women are not clever enough to ...", etc.);

- the contradiction between legal guarantees of the state and real actions of employers (while choosing between a man and a woman to occupy an important position the priority is usually given to a man. Or: employment of pregnant women is next to impossible.);

- the contradiction between feminization of education and science and low wages in these spheres (men usually do not stay here);

- the contradiction between the high intellectual potential of women and good education and performing painstaking, routine and responsible work with very little chance of promotion (because managerial positions, as we have already seen, belong to men);

An incredible situation is thus formed: the whole system of education is propped up by women, and the management belongs to men. Occupying their positions under the conditions of such gender asymmetry, women continue their scientific and pedagogical activity in which they see their vocation, interest and responsibility. This situation may have its own reasons. According to the Chairman of the Board of the inter-regional public organization "Women in Science and Education" Professor G. Yu. Riznichenko, "in the years of hardship, the female part of any population are the keepers of the genofund and traditions in the broad sense of the word; this is determined by the laws of biological and social development. The Russian scientific-educational community is not an exception. The women working in science and education turned out to be more capable of self-organization, of long-term common action, of interaction with administrative structures, and managed to oppose the government sponsored kaleidoscope of aims and

priorities with an educative and uniting position salient to all members of the scientific-educational community" [6].

Women are, as a rule, stable in their professional choice. They are founders of the famous pedagogical dynasties (there are such dynasties at our Ural State Pedagogical University), scientific schools and areas of development of science.

Women can combine many kinds of activity, which really expands the opportunities of their self-realization in any profession.

The world of values of the modern woman is rich and versatile: non-formal relations, family and children may replace career ambitions and become the basic indicators of the personal growth motivation.

The outstanding contemporary thinker Nassim Nicholas Taleb introduces such notion as "fundamental asymmetry" into socio-humanitarian knowledge [9, p. 634, 243–244]. I believe it can be used for analysis of gender issues in science and education. Changeability, indefiniteness, non-linear character of this system and the presence of random manifestations and

errors suggest that fundamental gender asymmetry might be "favorable" for its development.

The socio-cultural dependence of gender disbalance in Russian science and education has various aspects that are still to be studied and understood. These aspects are the following:

– biological (woman – keeper of genofund, mother leading her offsprings along the ways of socialization);

– existential (woman is prone to emotional experiences, self-analysis and sympathy);

– psychological (rich emotional world, universal communicative abilities);

– educational (high level of education and knowledge);

– economic (seeking economic stability, assiduity, housekeeping skills).

Instead of Conclusion. The article does not purport to be comprehensively complete because the topic is too complex and versatile. Nevertheless, the empirical and theoretical material presented in it may serve as a prerogative for dialogue with our Chinese colleagues or a stimulus for further scientific contacts in the field of gender theory and practice.

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