

Mechanisms for Enhancing Gender Sensitivity of School Principals

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Abstract: This article provides a scientific-theoretical and practical analysis of the mechanisms for enhancing gender sensitivity among school leaders. Within the framework of the study, the essence of gender-sensitive management, its significance in educational management, and its impact on management effectiveness are examined. Furthermore, normative-legal, organizational-managerial, pedagogical, psychological, innovative, and monitoring-evaluation mechanisms are substantiated based on a systematic approach. Drawing on the perspectives of foreign scholars and international experience, the role of gender-sensitive leadership in improving educational quality, fostering a positive school environment, and ensuring social justice is highlighted.

Keywords: School management, gender sensitivity, gender approach, inclusive education, mentoring and coaching, gender stereotypes, management effectiveness, pedagogical mechanisms, monitoring and assessment.

Introduction: In contemporary educational management, the integration of a gender approach is recognized as one of the key factors in enhancing management effectiveness. Ongoing reforms in global education systems demonstrate that taking gender factors into account in management processes contributes not only to ensuring equality but also to improving the quality of education.

Gender sensitivity of school leaders constitutes a central component of this process, reflecting a leader's ability to understand and consider social, cultural, and psychological gender-related factors in decision-making, team management, and the organization of the educational environment.

A gender-sensitive management approach facilitates the creation of equal opportunities in educational institutions, prevents discrimination, and promotes an inclusive environment. In turn, this increases the social engagement of teachers and students, ensures their psychological well-being, and enhances the overall effectiveness of the educational process. In this regard, gender sensitivity emerges not only as a criterion of

social justice but also as an important indicator of effective management.

Scientific research indicates that gender-sensitive leadership models have a positive impact on educational quality and outcomes. In particular, as Charol Shakeshaft emphasizes, "in educational management, male and female leaders demonstrate different leadership styles; however, inclusive and collaborative approaches tend to produce more effective results." [1]

Moreover, contemporary studies show that transformational and collaborative leadership styles play a crucial role in improving team performance, reducing conflicts, and fostering innovative development.

However, despite existing theoretical and practical advancements, the level of gender sensitivity in educational management remains insufficient in many countries, including Uzbekistan. This is largely due to persistent gender stereotypes, traditional norms, institutional barriers, and the limited knowledge and skills of leaders in this area. As a result, gender factors

are often not adequately considered in managerial decision-making within educational institutions.

From this perspective, the development and implementation of mechanisms for enhancing the gender sensitivity of school leaders emerge as a pressing scientific problem. Addressing this issue requires the application of innovative approaches in educational management, the development of leaders' professional competencies, and the design of systematic mechanisms aimed at ensuring gender equality. At the same time, this process serves as an important factor in strengthening the sustainable development of the education system and reinforcing the principles of social justice.

Gender sensitivity is defined as a leader's ability to recognize situations of gender inequality within a team, to resist discriminatory actions based on sex, and to prevent gender inequality in relationships with subordinates [2].

A leader's gender sensitivity, together with their socio-communicative skills, contributes to the effective management of interpersonal relations, as well as to a deeper understanding of the conditions and behavioral motivations of both male and female employees.

DISCUSSION AND RESULT

The necessity of abandoning the sex-role approach and introducing a gender-oriented management style has been substantiated by both international and domestic scholars. As the American psychologist Sandra Bem argues, socialization processes and prevailing social norms encourage emotionality and empathy in women, while limiting empathic responsiveness in men. Society tends to believe in the existence of "specific qualities" inherent to men and women, and these perceived qualities serve to justify their respective social roles [3].

O. A. Khasbulatova emphasizes that "gender sensitivity should be an integral characteristic of an effective leader, meaning that a leader must act on the basis of equality values and respect individual rights regardless of gender" [4].

In our interpretation, gender sensitivity represents a core competency of an educational manager and encompasses the following components:

- acquired knowledge of the essence of the gender approach in education;

- skills in implementing gender strategies in the organization of the pedagogical process;

- practical experience in applying gender-related knowledge and skills as a foundation for gender interactions within the educational system.

A prominent scholar in the field of psychology, I. S. Kletsina, was among the first to introduce the concept of "gender competence" into scientific discourse and to substantiate its relevance for overcoming inequality in management. According to her, gender competence is a personal characteristic that prevents an individual from becoming either a subject or an object of situations of gender inequality. A gender-competent leader possesses a solid understanding of the fundamental principles of the gender approach, is capable of identifying situations of gender inequality, and is able to establish partnership-based relationships between male and female employees [5].

Gender competence encompasses various personal qualities of a leader, including intellectual capacity and communicative skills, and these competencies are intrinsically linked to the leader's gender culture and innovative knowledge.

In our interpretation, gender competence is one of the core competencies of an educational manager. It refers to a set of knowledge acquired by the leader regarding the essence of the gender approach, the skills required to implement gender strategies in organizing the pedagogical process, and practical experience in effectively applying gender-related knowledge and skills within the educational system. Furthermore, this competence serves as a fundamental basis for organizing gender-based interaction and cooperation within an educational institution.

In the practice of educational management, gender aspects are manifested through the specific characteristics of leadership styles, the organization of interpersonal relationships, and the consideration of male and female psychology, as well as their psychological and emotional intelligence traits.

At present, in Uzbekistan, there exist professional development courses for managerial staff, along with relevant instructional materials and teaching manuals. However, these resources do not sufficiently incorporate topics related to gender knowledge, nor do they provide mechanisms for developing leaders'

gender sensitivity.

In Ukraine, a national strategy titled “Education: Gender Dimension – 2021” has been approved to promote gender equality within the education system. This modern strategy aligns with the state Law “On Education” and emphasizes that all participants in the educational process should understand the essence of gender competence. Gender competence is defined as the ability to comprehend and implement gender equality, that is, equal rights and equal opportunities [6].

In the Republic of Uzbekistan, the issue of identifying and incorporating gender components in the management of educational institutions is currently at a formative stage, and scientific research as well as methodological developments in this area are gradually evolving. Certain methodological foundations are being developed for integrating the gender dimension into the managerial activities of educational leaders, as well as for applying a gender approach in the organization of educational content and the teaching-learning process. Moreover, specific forms and methods for introducing gender-related knowledge into the educational process have been designed and are being piloted in selected educational institutions.

At the same time, the practice of organizing education on the basis of a gender approach in the country has not yet acquired a systemic character. Gender education is predominantly implemented within the framework of individual research studies or isolated methodological initiatives. This indicates that the gender approach has not yet been fully integrated into education policy and the system of educational management. The level of consideration of gender perspectives across various areas of institutional activity, such as management, the teaching process, the organization of pedagogical staff, and the formation of the educational environment-

remains insufficient.

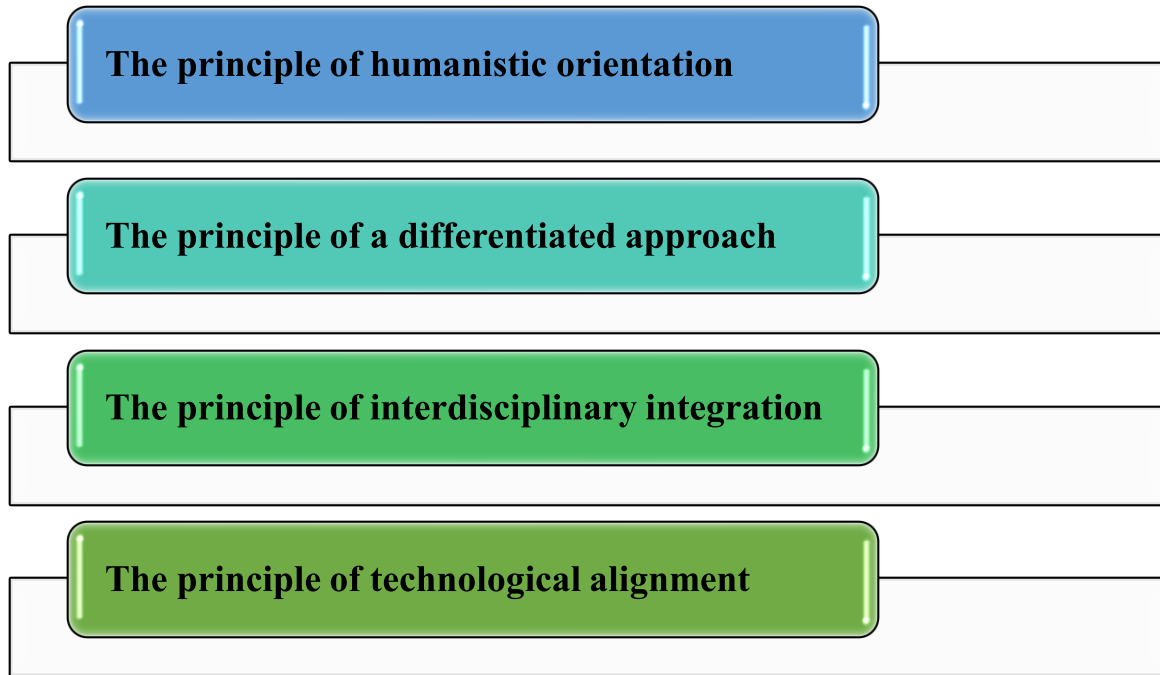
An analysis of the process of developing gender sensitivity in the managerial activities of school leaders reveals several key pedagogical factors that hinder this process:

- insufficient integration of the gender approach into systems of training and professional development for school leaders, resulting in an underdeveloped capacity to consider gender factors in their professional practice;
- the integrative and interdisciplinary nature of the concept of “gender sensitivity,” which creates difficulties in linking it directly to specific managerial activities or distinct instructional modules;
- inadequate methodological development of gender-oriented management technologies applied in school leadership;
- the lack of a scientifically grounded diagnostic system aimed at assessing, monitoring, and developing the level of gender sensitivity among school leaders.

In order to address these challenges, a set of pedagogical principles for developing gender sensitivity among school leaders was identified based on competency-based and gender approaches.

According to contemporary pedagogical interpretations, a pedagogical principle is understood as a set of theoretical propositions that serve as the foundation for designing, organizing, and implementing educational and managerial processes, and that are manifested across all elements of the system (goals, content, technologies, and activities).

Based on the above, the principles for developing gender sensitivity among school leaders include the following:



The principle of humanistic orientation – organizing management activities based on the principles of humanism, gender equality, and social justice;

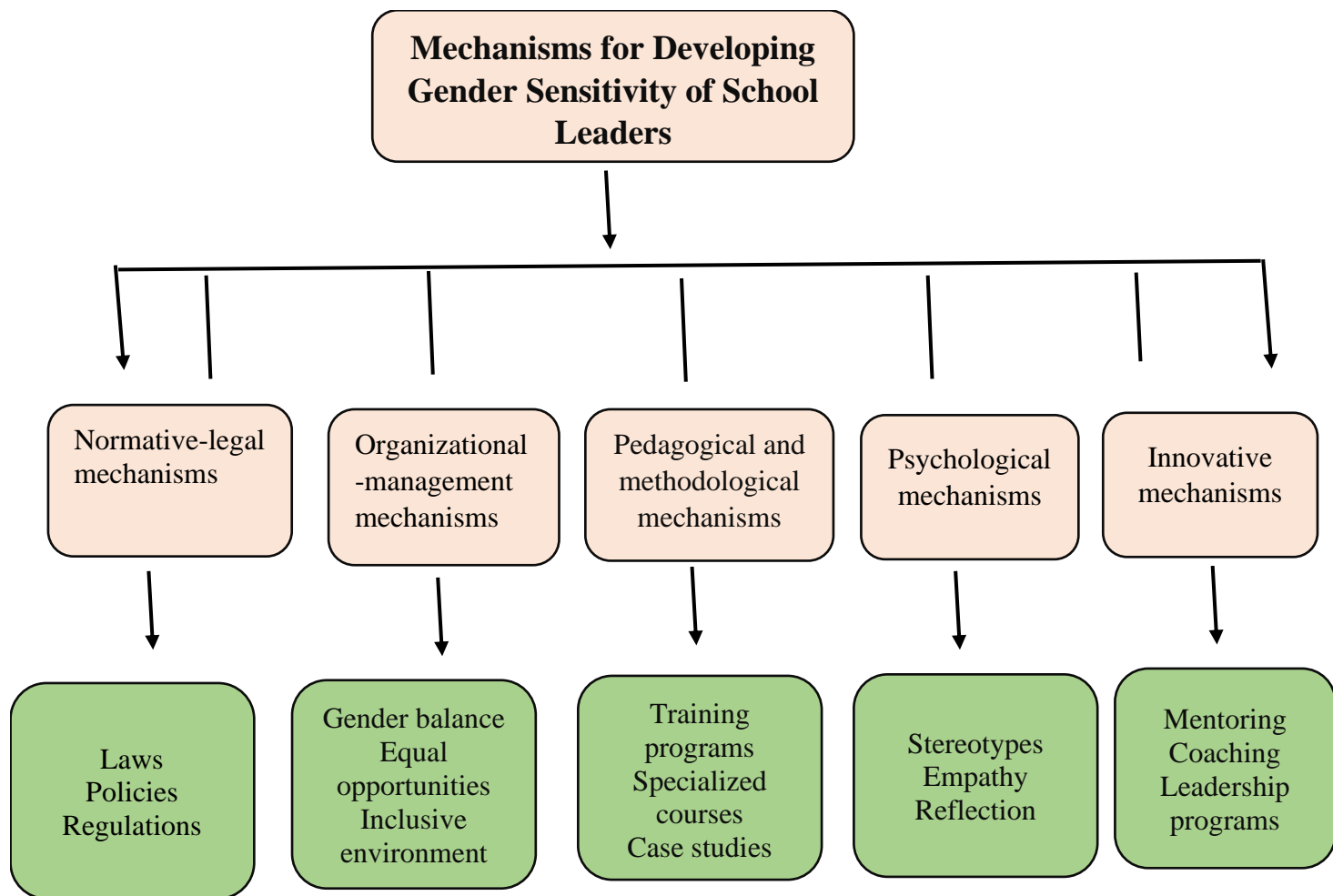
The principle of a differentiated approach – organizing management activities by taking into account the gender composition and individual characteristics of the school staff;

The principle of interdisciplinary integration – integrating knowledge from pedagogy, psychology,

management, and sociology in the formation of gender sensitivity;

The principle of technological alignment – applying gender-sensitive management technologies in accordance with the patterns of the leader’s professional development.

We propose the following mechanisms for developing gender sensitivity among school leaders:



CONCLUSION

In the context of globalization, a number of important tasks are facing the education system of Uzbekistan.

First, it is necessary to improve the education system on the basis of the principle of “equal rights and equal opportunities,” to ensure its effective integration into the global educational space, and to make efficient use of the intellectual potential, knowledge, and skills of both men and women as a factor of national development and global progress. From this perspective, it is essential to take into account the principles of gender equality in the processes of democratization and modernization of education. Raising full awareness of gender rights and opportunities is, therefore, one of the key objectives of the modern education system.

Second, under conditions of socio-economic transformation, the gender factor is increasingly becoming an important component of socio-humanitarian and economic research. Addressing issues of gender equality contributes not only to ensuring

social justice but also to enhancing the effectiveness of the education system. For this reason, the gender approach is considered in contemporary research as an important methodological tool for the objective analysis of social processes.

An analysis of strategic and regulatory documents defining the development of modern professional education shows that one of the promising directions for improving the education system is the competency-based approach. At the same time, there is a growing need to integrate this approach with the gender dimension, thereby forming a gender-competency-based approach. Within this framework, the concept of “professional competence” is regarded as a key indicator for assessing the quality of specialist training.

Professional competence represents an integrated system of knowledge, skills, and abilities that meet the requirements of modern society. The gender-competency-based approach, in turn, implies the incorporation of gender equality principles into the process of developing these competencies. As a result,

a gender-sensitive management culture is formed in the activities of educational leaders and teaching staff, contributing to the creation of an environment of equal opportunities within the educational process.

Thus, the development of a gender approach in the education system of Uzbekistan and its integration into the management of educational institutions is one of the key factors for improving the effectiveness of educational management, fostering a healthy socio-psychological climate within pedagogical teams, and ensuring the sustainable development of the modern education system.

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