

Kravchenko V., Korolevska A. Gender neutrality in Swedish society

Over the last decade the importance of the gender component in society and the influence of society itself on the definition of personality became apparent. If sex is programmed naturally, the gender is constructed socially.

The push for the total equality between sexes by the liberal community is slowly reaching its goal, and now attention is gradually being shifted to a new problem – gender liberty.

Today the issue of gender determination appears in many aspects and in many countries. In our study to understand the possible problems and prospects of gender liberty, as an example, we will look more closely at Sweden – the country that is on the forefront when it comes to gender matters. Sweden has achieved significant results in building a society free from gender inequality. But there are some people that want to go further. Many activists in Sweden pursue one goal – the creation of a society that completely erases traditional gender roles and stereotypes, even on the everyday level.

A number of Swedish pre-schools have attracted international attention through their pedagogical practices, which involve diminishing of the gender differences. One of such practices is the use of gender-neutral pronouns and the avoidance and correction of behavior that is traditionally considered gender-based. Such schools completely remove the terms "girl" and "boy" from circulation. Instead, they try to address each child by their name or by using a gender-neutral pronoun, which in Swedish sounds like "hen".

In "Egalia", one of such pre-schools, everything from decorations to books and toys is carefully selected to ensure gender equality and to avoid traditional perceptions of gender roles and parental role in particular.

A study by the University of Uppsala found that while gender-neutral pedagogy alone may not reduce the tendency of children to use gender to categorize people, it reduces their propensity for gender stereotyping and gender segregation, which can expand the opportunities available to them.

It should also be taken into account that in schools of this type, gender innovations constitute a new set of rules and behavior – language is regulated, and children's actions are carefully monitored and corrected by concerned tutors. Ultimately, this complicates everyday aspects of children's lives, from how they form friendships to which games they play and which songs they sing. Therefore, the question arises whether, in their pursuit of maximum liberty, part of the Swedish society does not actually deprive its future generation of freedom and the right to choose.

Key words: gender, gender neutrality, gender education, pronoun "hen".