CURRENT ISSUES ON GENDER STUDIES EDUCATION IN KAZAKHSTAN

Elif Ekin Aksit¹, Aizhan Salimzhanova²

¹Ankara University, Ankara, Turkey, elifaksit@gmail.com
²Kazakh National Women’s Teacher Training University, Email of the corresponding author: aizhan.salimzhan@gmail.com

Abstract

Gender studies education in Kazakhstan is facing many challenges that impede its progress and efficacy. This paper delves into the current issues plaguing gender studies education in Kazakhstan, providing an overview of the country's educational framework. A review of the education system was undertaken from a gender perspective with a focus on the higher education level. In 2019, the Directory of gender education in higher educational institutions of the Republic of Kazakhstan was issued by the Institute of social and gender research of the Kazakh National Women’s Teacher Training University. Using empirical data from this publication, the authors demonstrate the spreading of gender related courses by regions, cities, universities, subjects and lecturers. Key issues discussed include analysis of national education policies and programs in Kazakhstan, with the purpose of mainstreaming gender education and providing recommendations on strengthening gender equality in Kazakhstan. By analyzing these current issues and proposing potential solutions, this paper seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on gender studies education and advocacy in Kazakhstan.

Key words: gender education, Kazakhstan, gender studies, gender-based disciplines, gender knowledge

Introduction

The Republic of Kazakhstan unveils a tapestry of rich cultural heritage and a commitment to fostering gender equality within its educational landscape. As part of this Gender Analysis of the Education System in Kazakhstan, we delve into the intricacies of a nation where tradition intersects with modernity, profoundly shaping educational policies and practices.

Kazakhstan's gender roles and norms emerge from a complex interplay of nomadic heritage, Turkic influences, and the enduring legacies of the Soviet era. Historically, gender roles were defined as men tending to herding and providing for their families while women managed household and child-rearing duties. The Soviet era heralded changes, promoting women's participation in the workforce and advocating gender equality.

Today, Kazakhstan stands at the crossroads of traditional values and modern challenges. Women have gained a significant foothold in various professional spheres, yet gender-based discrimination and wage disparities persist. Traditional gender roles also endure, especially in rural areas, even as women ascend to prominence in politics, business, and academia. Challenges such as gender-based violence have resulted in legislative reforms and extensive awareness campaigns.

At the same time, Kazakhstan has demonstrated its commitment to ensure gender equality in accordance with international agreements, conventions and frameworks, ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1998, Beijing +25, Convention on the Political Rights of Women (CPRW), Convention on the Nationality of Married Women (CNMW) as well as the Sustainable Development Goals [1]. Moreover, in 2015, Kazakhstan committed to providing regional leadership to implement the goals of the Beijing Declaration [2].

Gender roles and norms in Kazakhstan are influenced by cultural and traditional values, with a combination of post-Soviet influence and some modern changes. Today, the Government of Kazakhstan has established gender equality as a national priority for development [3]. This has led to a focus on developing human resources in the field of gender education, development of proposals for the implementation of gender policy, and the formation of gender consciousness in society.

Gender education is an important task for building civil society, as well as developing and strengthening democratic ideas and views in Kazakhstan. A significant part of society in Kazakhstan and Central Asia does not understand the importance and necessity of gender awareness and the creation of a system of gender education. And while the teaching profession may appear to be overly feminized,
especially at primary and secondary levels, there is evidence showing that this is not the case in certain subsectors. According to national statistics, the share of women at the executive level in higher education is only 21 per cent, as opposed to 79 per cent for men [4]. The share of women that are heads of secondary and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions is also declining, going from 57.8 per cent in 2015 to 50.7 per cent in 2021 [5].

Today, there is a mix of traditional and modern gender dynamics. Women continue to play an important role in the workforce, but they often face challenges related to gender-based discrimination and wage disparities. Traditional gender roles are still present in many families, especially in rural areas.

In this paper, a review of the education system was undertaken from a gender perspective with a focus on the higher education level in Kazakhstan. The main objective of this paper is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of national education policies and programs in Kazakhstan, with the purpose of mainstreaming gender equality in and through education and providing recommendations on strengthening gender equality in Kazakhstan. The main milestones of the study included conducting a desk review of relevant and available information, analyzing existing policies and programs related to gender equality and education, and identifying gaps and challenges with regard to gender equality and education in Kazakhstan.

**Materials and methods**

**Literature review**

Educational disciplines, both in compulsory and higher education, require specific professional knowledge and skills, including understanding how the SDGs and global sustainable development challenges are relevant to one profession, sector, or activity [6]. There are several articles prepared by Kazakh scientists about gender education. N.S. Alkozhueva conducted research on gender education and its importance in the pedagogical aspect and analyzed the results [7]. S.M. Shakirova has several articles investigating the methodology and scientific direction of gender education in Kazakhstan [8, 9, 10]. O. Kalimichenko made a general analysis related to gender education [11]. But those articles do not fully cover the area and research object of gender education. Because of the lack of comprehensive research on gender education in Kazakhstan its scientific concept was not fully developed. This paper analyses the gender education in Kazakhstan in higher education level. In 2005, “Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the Approval of the Strategy on Gender Equality in the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2006-2016” was issued [12]. During the implementation of this decree, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (former Ministry of Education and Science) did tremendous work. They developed methods of gender education for teachers, organized training courses, round tables and training on gender education.

In 2019, the Directory of gender education in higher educational institutions of the Republic of Kazakhstan was issued [13]. According to this directory, gender education courses were conducted in 19 higher educational institutions, which comprised about 18% of all higher educational institutions in Kazakhstan (Table 1 in Appendix). The main direction of all the courses from which the information was obtained is dedicated to the course “Gender sociology”, “Gender policy” (“Gender and Public Policy”), “Gender psychology” (“Gender Studies in Pedagogy”) [13].

Today, leading US institutions of higher education offer undergraduate and graduate degrees in gender education. For example, the University of Wisconsin-Madison offers several courses in Gender Studies and Women’s Studies. Courses discuss gender differences from a cultural and global perspective. Programs of the courses offer to analyze the cultural representations of women and men within the social and historical contexts of race, class, gender and sexuality, issues of Black women, gender differences in health care, etc. Students learn gender topics in various fields such as politics, history, law, and get knowledge about feminism, colonialism, gender inequality [14].

Princeton University is one of the famous institutions of higher education that offers programs in gender education. According to the information published on the official website of the university, gender courses cover topics such as gender and sexuality studies, gender standards in media and beauty, gender inequality across races, etc. In addition, there is an analysis of works on feminism and science, feminist writers in science fiction [15].

The American University, founded in Washington, launched the Program on Gender Analysis in Economics (PGAE). The project focuses on improving the status of women and other disadvantaged groups by examining gender roles in social production, the labor market, economics and development. The
American University offers a unique program to students by teaching relevant research on Africa, Asia, Latin America, the post-socialist world and OECD countries and collaborating with other researchers in the field of gender economics [16].

Results and discussion

Analysis of the available gender courses in Kazakhstan

The topics of gender courses in Kazakhstan are included in the state compulsory education standards only for such specialties as “Sociology” and “Social Work” [13]. Nevertheless, in the conditions of the credit system of education, elective courses provide a good opportunity for developing the ideas of gender education. Some universities and educational institutions in Kazakhstan offer gender studies as part of their curriculum. These courses focus on understanding the social, cultural, and economic dimensions of gender, as well as the challenges and opportunities related to gender equality.

Teaching gender disciplines in Kazakhstan involves the integration of gender-related content and perspectives into educational curricula across various levels of education. Most of the gender-related courses taught in Kazakhstan are based on sociology, psychology and political issues. In general, gender courses (gender studies and related disciplines) in Kazakhstan aim to help to promote gender equality, raise awareness about gender issues, and address social issues related to gender.

The main forms and methods of work in the classroom on gender courses in Kazakhstan: group discussions, watching and discussing gender-oriented videos, content analysis of media materials on gender issues, compiling psychological portraits of a person considering gender specifics, building logical and structural diagrams in order to systematize and consolidate the studied material, the creation of thematic presentations. Teaching gender courses at Kazakhstani universities contributes to the development of the ideas of gender education, the formation of gender competence of future educators, and, consequently, the gradual implementation of the main provisions of the current gender equality strategy.

Overall, teaching gender disciplines in Kazakhstan involves fostering critical thinking and promoting discussions that challenge norms and stereotypes. It is important to adapt teaching methods to the cultural context and the needs of the students while maintaining a commitment to gender equality and social justice.

Key messages on Gender Studies Programs in Kazakhstan

The Key Messages on Gender Studies have been developed to serve as a valuable resource for career guidance and raising public awareness about this emerging discipline and academic degree. These messages are designed to provide concise and impactful information that can be easily understood and effectively communicated to various audiences.

Key messages for parents:
1. Promote Critical Thinking. Gender Studies encourages students to think critically about societal norms, stereotypes, and power structures. It helps them question preconceived notions and fosters independent, critical thinking skills.

2. Promote Empathy and Understanding. By studying gender, students gain a deeper understanding of diverse experiences and perspectives. This promotes empathy and tolerance, helping them become more compassionate individuals.

3. Prepare for a Diverse World. In today's globalized world, understanding gender dynamics is crucial. Gender Studies equips students with the knowledge and tools to navigate diverse workplaces and communities with sensitivity and inclusivity.

4. Enhance Communication Skills. Gender Studies programs often involve discussions and debates, honing students' communication and interpersonal skills. These skills are invaluable in any profession.
5. Encourage Social Responsibility. Gender Studies often explores social justice issues. Students learn about the challenges marginalized groups face and are motivated to work towards a more equitable society.

6. Expand Career Opportunities and Meet Employer Demands. Graduates with a background in Gender Studies are in demand in fields like social work, counseling, human resources, and advocacy. This can lead to fulfilling career opportunities. Employers from the private sector such as firms increasingly seek graduates with a deep understanding of diversity and inclusion. Gender Studies can give students a competitive edge in the job market.

7. Support Personal Development. Gender Studies can help students better understand themselves, their identities, and their relationships. This self-awareness contributes to personal growth and well-being.

8. Foster Inclusivity on Campus. Implementing Gender Studies programs signals a commitment to diversity and inclusivity on campus. It creates an environment where all students feel valued and respected.

9. Address Contemporary Issues. Gender Studies courses cover contemporary issues. It helps students stay informed and engaged in important conversations and relationships.

10. Connect Theory to Reality. The knowledge gained in Gender Studies can be applied to real-world situations. It bridges the gap between theory and practice, making learning relevant and impactful.

11. Build a Strong Community. Gender Studies programs often foster a sense of community and support among students. You will connect with like-minded individuals who want to contribute to social progress.

While both groups may appreciate the importance of Gender Studies, the messaging should be tailored to address their unique interests and needs.

When discussing Gender Studies with parents, the focus is on addressing their concerns and emphasizing the broader societal and career-related benefits of the field. The discussion often centers around how it benefits their child's education and future prospects. On the other hand, when communicating with students, the focus shifts towards their personal growth, self-discovery, and educational experience. The messaging is tailored to resonate with their aspirations and interests.

Regarding career opportunities, parents may be more concerned about the practical applications of Gender Studies in terms of their child's future career and financial stability, whereas students are likely more interested in how Gender Studies can help them develop as individuals, gain a deeper understanding of social issues, and contribute to societal change.

Regarding personal growth vs. parental concerns, parents may have concerns about their child's academic and career choices and how Gender Studies fits into their overall educational plan and students are more interested in how Gender Studies can help them grow personally, academically, and socially.

Regarding relevance to diverse experiences, parents may be interested in how Gender Studies can prepare their children to navigate diverse workplaces and communities, emphasizing the practicality and applicability of the field, and students may focus more on how Gender Studies can help them better understand themselves, their identities, and the world around them, promoting self-discovery and self-acceptance.

Regarding social change, parents may appreciate the role of Gender Studies in preparing their children to be responsible and informed citizens and students might be more enthusiastic about the activism aspect of Gender Studies, viewing it as a means to drive positive change.

Thus, communication with parents may need to be more structured and information-driven, addressing their concerns with concrete examples of how Gender Studies benefits students and communication with students may involve more emotive and aspirational language to appeal to their personal and academic interests.
Conclusion

In this article, we have analyzed data from higher education institutions of Kazakhstan. It was found that 19 universities have specially designed elective courses for gender education, which is less than twenty percent of all universities. In 9 higher education institutions, gender issues are considered in the content of other socio-humanitarian disciplines. As a result, gender education is implemented only in 28 universities, or in less than a quarter of all universities of Kazakhstan.

It is recommended to ensure the development of gender disciplines/courses and educational programs in universities of Kazakhstan, both quantitatively and qualitatively, with updating the content. It is also needed to ensure the increase of research on gender studies/issues at undergraduate and graduate programs level. It is important to prepare educational, methodological and scientific literature on gender, primarily in the state language - Kazakh, as well as in Russian and English languages.

Appendix

Table 1. List of universities where gender courses (undergraduate level) were taught in the 2018-2019 academic year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Name of universities</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Brief description of the course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kazakh National University named after Al-Farabi</td>
<td>Almaty</td>
<td>Course name: Gender sociology. Number of credits: 3 (5 ECTS). Course author: Zhanazarova, Z.Zh. The course deals with the history of gender studies, an anthology of gender theory, the foundations of feminist theory, gender and physical education, family types, reproductive rights. Course name: Gender psychology. Credits: 3 (5 ECTS). Course author: Sadykova, N.M. The course deals with gender stratification in gender psychology, gender characteristics of personality, men and women in the business world, Bem gender schema theory, history and theory of feminism, family relations, gender psychology, gender socialization, gender leadership, the role of women leaders, social psychology of gender. Course name: Genderology and feminology. Number of credits: 3 (5 ECTS). Course author: Kylyshbayeva, B.N. This course examines the concept, subject, object of genderology and feminology, Marxist approaches, liberal feminism, postmodern feminism, radical feminism, cyberfeminism, genderology and modern theories of feminology, gender studies in Kazakhstan, poverty feminism, social gender stereotypes, gender aspects in social work, the national idea and the mechanism for regulating gender equality, the problems of modern Kazakhstan society in the process of social change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kazakh State Women's Teacher Training University</td>
<td>Almaty</td>
<td>Course name: Gender policy. Number of credits: 3 (5 ECTS). Course author: Atash, B.M. This course focuses on gender studies, gender issues in legal relations and gender education, gender issues in politics, women's political activity, violence against women, gender issues in social policy, the National Action Plan for the advancement of women in Kazakhstan, family gender issues, social problems of women, gender problems in Kazakh society.</td>
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<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>Course Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kazakh Academy of Transport and Communication named after M. Tanyshpaev</td>
<td>Almaty</td>
<td>Course name: Introduction to the theory of gender. Number of credits: 2 module (90 academic hours). Course author: Zharkynbayeva, R.S. This course examines the relationship of gender with political processes, gender criteria in government policy, gender crimes, gender discrimination, the development of political participation and representation, gender in public politics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Narxoz University</td>
<td>Almaty</td>
<td>Name of the course: Gender Economics. Number of credits: 3. This course addresses the issues of interdisciplinary features of gender studies, gender production in everyday life, family, gender policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan, the concept of gender economics, economic analysis of gender inequality, women's equality in the labor market, gender budgeting, household economics and division of labor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Caspian Public University</td>
<td>Almaty</td>
<td>Course title: Human rights and mechanisms for their protection. Number of credits: 2. Course author: Mukhtarova, A.K. This course deals with the issues of human and civil rights, the formation of the rule of law, the chronological approach in the history of the formation of human rights, the classification of basic human and civil rights, the international bill of human rights, political law, civil law, forms of discrimination, infringements of human rights, gender structure, the concept of gender expertise of laws, gender criteria for human rights, women's rights, forms of violence, the national mechanism for the protection of women in the Republic of Kazakhstan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Almaty Management University</td>
<td>Almaty</td>
<td>Course name: Gender management. Number of credits: 3. Course author: Lipovka, A.V. This course covers an introduction to the discipline of gender management, the contribution of women to the theory and practice of management, new theories of leadership in a multi-gender world, gender socialization and gender identity, leadership and gender stereotypes, the gender potential of Kazakhstan, women's and men's entrepreneurship, the gender aspect in the management of human resources, resources, stress management, time management, personal life issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>KIMEP</td>
<td>Almaty</td>
<td>Course Name: Gender and Public Policy. Number of Credits: 3. Course Author: Aliya Tankibayeva. In this course are considered Gender Basic concepts, Sociology of gender in historical and comparative perspective, Contemporary theories and theoretical contributions, Gender and Development. Gender in Economic Context, Engendering Social Policies, Gender and the Labor Markets, Globalization, informatization and gender, Tools for gender mainstreaming in public sector programs and projects, Tools for gender mainstreaming in public sector programs and projects, Gender and Finance, Gender Budgeting, Work life interplay. gender in organizations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eurasian National University named after L.N. Gumilyov</td>
<td>Astana</td>
<td>Course name: Gender and Identity. No further course information was provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>A.K. Kussayinov Eurasian Humanities Institute</td>
<td>Astana</td>
<td>Course Name: Gender Studies in Pedagogy. In the 2019-2020 academic year, the introduction of elective courses &quot;Pedagogical Sciences&quot;, &quot;Business, Management and Law&quot; were planned. It is planned to include the topic of gender in their content, and develop an educational complex for the 2019-2020 academic year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Number</td>
<td>Institution Name</td>
<td>Course Name</td>
<td>Credits</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>North-Kazakhstan State University named after M. Kozybayev</td>
<td>Gender approach in gender education</td>
<td>2 credits (3 ECTS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Kostanay State Pedagogical University</td>
<td>Gender psychology</td>
<td>3 credits (5 ECTS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Kokshetau State University named after Sh. Ualikhanov</td>
<td>Gender policy</td>
<td>3 credits (5 ECTS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Kokshetau University named after Abai Myrzakhmetov</td>
<td>Gender psychology</td>
<td>2 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Institute</td>
<td>Course Title</td>
<td>Description</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Makhambet Utemisov West Kazakhstan state university</td>
<td>Oral</td>
<td>Course name: Gender policy (for the specialty social work). Number of credits: 3. Course author: Tlenshina, G.M. This course discusses the concept of gender studies, gender stereotypes, gender issues in the world philosophical and political Union, international experience in gender equality, anthropo-biological issues of gender studies, women and men in the economy, gender aspects of politics, gender in the social sector, issues of gender-based violence, gender aspects of family and culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Auezov South Kazakhstan University</td>
<td>Shymkent</td>
<td>Course name: Gender sociology. Number of credits: 2 credits. Course author: Kenzhegulova, A.A. This course includes the subject of gender sociology, sociological and philosophical and scientific theory, gender socialization in modern society, gender approaches in the context of gender equality in family and marriage, in public policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Korkyt A. Kyzylorda University</td>
<td>Kyzylorda</td>
<td>Course Title: Theory and Methods of Gender Studies. No further information was provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Sarsen Amanzholov East Kazakhstan University</td>
<td>Oskemen</td>
<td>Course Title: Gender Psychology. No further information provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Arkalyk State University named after Y. Altynsarin</td>
<td>Arkalyk</td>
<td>Course Title: Gender Education: Legal and Gender Literacy. No further course information was provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Taraz State Pedagogical University</td>
<td>Taraz</td>
<td>Course Title: Fundamentals of Gender Policy. No further course information was provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>West Kazakhstan Marat Ospanov State Medical University</td>
<td>Aktobe</td>
<td>Course Name: Genderology. No further course information was provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Atyrau State University named after Kh. Dosmukhamedov</td>
<td>Atyrau</td>
<td>Course Title: Gender Policy. No further course information was provided.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [13, pp. 6-13/25-32]
Table 2. List of universities where gender studies were included in the content of other courses (undergraduate level) in the 2018-2019 academic year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Universities</th>
<th>Social and humanitarian subjects, the content of which deals with gender studies/issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Karaganda State University named after Academician E. A. Buketov</td>
<td>Political Science, Philosophy, Sociology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Karaganda State Technical University</td>
<td>Sociology, Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kazakh National Medical University is a university named After S.D. Asfendiyarov</td>
<td>Political Science, Sociology, Cultural Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>South Kazakhstan State Pedagogical University</td>
<td>Sociology, Family Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Karaganda Economic University</td>
<td>Social work with women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Kurmangazy Kazakh National Conservatory</td>
<td>Sociology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>A.K. Kussayinov Eurasian Humanities Institute</td>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Pavlodar State Pedagogical University</td>
<td>Political Science, Family Psychology, Sociology, Family Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>West Kazakhstan Agrarian-Technical University named after Zhangir khan</td>
<td>Philosophy, Sociology, Rukhani Zhangyr</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [13, p.33]

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АКТУАЛЬНЫЕ ВОПРОСЫ ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ В ОБЛАСТИ ГЕНДЕРНЫХ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЙ В КАЗАХСТАНЕ

Элиф Экин Акшит 1, А.С. Салимжанова 2

1Университет Анкары, Анкара, Турция, elifaksit@gmail.com
2Казахский Национальный Женский Педагогический Университет, г. Алматы, Казахстан
Email автора-корреспондента: aizhan.salimzhan@gmail.com

Аннотация
Гендерное образование в Казахстане сталкивается со многими проблемами, которые препятствуют его прогрессу и эффективности. В данной статье рассматриваются текущие проблемы, с которыми сталкивается гендерное образование в Казахстане. Обзор системы образования был проведен с гендерной точки зрения с фокусом на высшее образование. В 2019 году Институтом социальных и гендерных исследований Казахского национального женского педагогического университета была выпущена Дирекция по гендерному образованию в высших учебных заведениях Республики Казахстан. Используя эмпирические данные из этой публикации, авторы демонстрируют распространение курсов, связанных с гендерной проблематикой, по регионам, городам, университетам, предметам и преподавателям. Ключевые обсуждаемые вопросы включают анализ национальной политики и программ в области образования в Казахстане с целью внедрения гендерного образования, а также предоставление рекомендаций по укреплению гендерного равенства в Казахстане. Анализируя текущие проблемы и предлагая потенциальные решения, авторы в данной статье стремятся внести свой вклад в продолжающийся дискурс по образованию и пропаганде гендерных исследований в Казахстане.

Ключевые слова: гендерное образование, Казахстан, гендерные исследования, гендерные дисциплины, знания по гендерным вопросам.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE AUTHORS
Elif Ekin Aksit - PhD, Professor, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Ankara University.
Address: Cemal Gürsel Caddesi, Cebeci Campus, Çankaya/Ankara, Türkiye; e-mail: elifaksit@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0002-1306-077X
Aizhan S. Salimzhanova – Master of economic sciences, director of the Center for social and gender studies at the Kazakh National Women’s Teacher Training University. Address: Office 314, Main building -1, 114 Gogol St., Almaty, 050000, Kazakhstan; e-mail: aizhan.salimzhan@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0003-3526-5802

АВТОРЛАР ТУРАЛЫ АКПАРАТ

Элиф Экин Акшит – PhD, Анкара университетинің саяси ғылымдар және мемлекеттік басқару департаментінің профессоры. Мекенжай: Джемал Гюрсель кошесі, Джеbedji кампусы, Чанкая/Анкара, Турция; e-mail: elifaksit@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0002-1306-077X

Салимжанова Айжан Сериковна – магистр, Əлеуметтік және гендерлік зерттеулер орталығының директоры, Қазақ Ұлттық Қыздар Педагогикалық Университеті. Мекенжай: 050000, Алматы к., Гоголь кошесі 114, 1- корпус, 314- каб.; e-mail: aizhan.salimzhan@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0003-3526-5802

ИНФОРМАЦИЯ ОБ АВТОРАХ

Элиф Экин Акшит – PhD, профессор департамента политических наук и государственного управления Анкарского Университета. Адрес: улица Джемаль Гюрсель, кампус Джебеджи, Чанкая /Анкара, Турция; e-mail: elifaksit@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0002-1306-077X

Салимжанова Айжан Сериковна – магистр, директор Центра социальных и гендерных исследований, Казахский Национальный Женский Педагогический Университет. Адрес: Республика Казахстан, г.Алматы, 050000, ул. Гоголя, 114, ГУК-1, каб. 314; e-mail: aizhan.salimzhan@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0003-3526-5802