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**SHARED VALUES AS A BACKGROUND OF EUROPEAN CIVILIZATIONAL CHOICE: CASE STUDY OF ZNU STUDENTS**

*Annotation:* The article compares the results of a student values survey conducted within the frames of Jean Monnet EUVOLIA project to those of a wider age and territory (pan-Ukrainian) scopes to identify any possible shifts in understanding core European values.

*Key words:* European values, European identity, post-materialism

The complex process of Ukrainian society integration into European axiological framework has been one of the highlights and strategic aims of the national educational reform. As the vast majority of topical surveys (Gorshenin Institute, “Ukrainian Society and European Values” project, 2017; Third Pan-Ukrainian Municipal Survey commissioned by International Republic Institute, 2017; European Social Survey, 2004 – 2012; World Values Survey, 2015 etc.) tend to demonstrate, Ukrainian society’s devotion to the set of values formed under authoritarian regime remains one of the key challenges of the transition phase. Following Inglehart and Welzel concept of traditional vs secular rational and survival vs self-expression values [1, p. 16], the core of Ukrainian axiological system as of 2018 is located in the traditional/survival zone. The majority of Ukrainians tend to cherish tradition, stability and personal safety over innovation, experiment and openness to the world; at the same time, the matter of social status, income level, dominance and power seem to prevail over such post-materialistic, in R. Inglehart’s terms, values as tolerance, justice and dignity.

Among the reasons behind the existing situation, as Victoria Brynza aptly points out in her Ukrainian Pravda column, Soviet and Post-Soviet educational background of 71,6% of Ukrainian population plays an important part not only in terms of lack of self-reflective and critical approaches to the matters of self-identification, but also due to a visible performance gap in European identity construction throughout school and HEI curricula [2]. These problems are particularly strong for Exact and Natural Sciences students, where the cluster of Humanities is largely neglected even in case of students obtaining professional qualification of a school teacher of natural and exact disciplines. Therefore, the objectives set before HEIs as key agents of gradual adjustment of new generations of Ukrainians to the paradigm of European values, comprise not only balanced curricula development and modernization in the field of teachers’ training, but also profound analysis of existing student values and implementation of various means and tools boosting students’ critical thinking and self-reflection.

In order to identify the current axiological climate in the student environment, a Schwarz values survey was conducted for 40 Bachelor students (2nd – 4th years of study) from various faculties of Zaporizhzhya National University within the frames of Jean Monnet Module “EUVOLIA”. All the participants of the survey were distributed into two gender-balanced groups: those enrolled for EUVOLIA course (experimental group) and those not yet involved into project activities (control group). While experimental group (20 students) consisted mostly of students from Humanities and Social Sciences, traditionally more engaged into cultural and educational pro-European events, the students from control group (another 20) belonged to the field of Exact and Natural Sciences usually left behind in terms of EU-related initiatives. Therefore, one of the supportive aims of the survey was to find out whether EU-focused cultural and educational activities promoted by the university can significantly influence the axiological set of a student counter to the influence of social and economic environment. It should be also noted that, being one of the biggest universities in the South-Eastern region of Ukraine, Zaporizhzhia National University deals greatly with the consequences of an axiological breakdown caused, on one hand, by long lasting influence of post-Soviet heritage in industrial areas of the country and, on another hand, by proximity to the battlefield in Donetsk, Luhansk and Crimea.

In accordance with the Schwartz Values Survey methodology [3], the participants were asked to conduct a self-assessment by answering 57 questions entailed with two lists of value items. The importance of each value item was measured on a nonsymmetrical scale, from 7 (of extreme importance) to -1 (opposed to my values). The results acquired were compared to those derived from World Values Survey for Ukraine and to average European indicators from the Atlas of European Values [4]. This comparison is represented in Table 1.

Table 1. Basic values comparison, UA-EU

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Group 1 (experimental) | Group 2 (control) | Average Ukrainian | Average European |
| Conformity | 18% | 22% | 41% | 10% |
| Tradition | 21% | 29% | 64% | 6% |
| Benevolence | 20% | 26% | 26% | 14% |
| Universalism | 53% | 46% | 38% | 45% |
| Self-direction | 27% | 23% | 14% | 35% |
| Stimulation | 18% | 18% | 18% | 22% |
| Hedonism | 18% | 26% | 14% | 24% |
| Achievement | 9% | 11% | 22% | 9% |
| Power | 6% | 10% | 31% | 15% |
| Security | 53% | 53% | 56% | 23% |

As follows from the results represented in Table 1, the value of security seems to be heavily prioritized by both groups of students: 31,3% of the Group 1 and 44,8% of the Group 2 participants marks sense of belonging as their top-2 priority, while national security has been pointed out as No1 priority by 53,1% and 52,8% respectively. The unanimity is really striking when it comes to personal and family security, figures rising to 84,4% and 86,8% respectively. These figures overall correspond to the pan-Ukrainian tendency marked by World Values Survey 2015, where 60,3% of Ukrainians supported values of survival.

However, in terms of such important survival values as income level and material supplies, the results acquired from the students differ greatly from those coming from general Ukrainian public. Only 9,4% of respondents mark high income as their top-1 priority, while most participants (50%) grant it a third place. At the same time, 61,5% in the Group 1 and 49,4% in the Group 2 tend to prioritize spiritual values over material as their 1st or 2nd choice. For Group 1, figures seem to become even higher when it comes to beauty of arts and nature (chosen as the first and second priority by 81,2% of respondents); in Group 2, this value is rated significantly lower (41,6%).

Another striking difference can be spotted in terms of social status values. Only 6,3% in the Group 1 and 9,4% in the Group 2 mark social power and dominance as their first priority choice; for the majority of respondents (25% and 21% respectively), this value is rated as of almost no importance (2-3 points out of 7). Leadership, however, is considered important (5-6 points out of 7) by almost equally high number of participants in both groups (18,8% and 21,9% respectively). Same can be said about social recognition values (respect, approval of the others), rated 5-6 out of 7 by 56,2% of respondents in each group.

Students also look much more perceptive to the so-called universalism values. 53,1% in Group 1 and 46% in Group 2 prioritize equality (equal opportunities for all) as their No1 choice. Such indicator corresponds to the general tendency pointed out in numerous surveys as a marker of Ukrainian society’s dissatisfaction with growing social and status inequality. Social justice (protection of vulnerable groups) is prioritized by 68,7% and 65,4% respectively. For 53,1% participants in Group 1 and 49,1% in Group 2, global piece is top priority.

An interesting detail can be spotted regarding the term tolerance that bears particularly controversial connotations for Ukrainians. Numerous surveys have proved suspicious attitude towards this term in Ukrainian society. I.e., in a survey “Ukrainian Society and European Values” (2017) conducted by Gorshenin Institute in cooperation with Friedrich Ebert Foundation it is stated that almost 50% of Ukrainian citizens treat the value of tolerance as something contradictory to traditional Ukrainian values and therefore impermissible for Ukrainian society [5, p.19]. Tolerance and respect to other cultures are rated as the least important amongst the European values for Ukrainians (5,4% and 9% respectively). The respondents understand tolerance first and foremost as acceptance of sexual minorities, other nationalities and religions.

As for the students, their reaction to the questions explicitly featuring the word “tolerance” would support the tendency previously spotted by Gorshenin Institute’s study: specifically, 44,2% of Group 2 would rate tolerance as the least important value, while in Group 1 it scores 3 points out of 7 for 37,4% of respondents. However, when it comes to questions describing manifestations of tolerance rather indirectly, the situation can change drastically. I.e., politeness in considered very important by 43,8% in Group 1 and 41,4% in Group 2; harmonious coexistence with other groups is rated as a top priority by 56,3% and 51,2% respectively. Respect to the opinions of others (conflict prevention) is very important (6-7 points out of 7) for 56,2% in Group 1 and 52,5% in Group 2.

Tradition as a force contradicting tolerance in the average Ukrainian’s world picture seems to lose its significance when it comes to younger generation. Only 15,6% in Group 1 and 17,9% in Group 2 stress the uttermost importance of tradition (7 out of 7). Yet, over 50% of respondents in both groups give tradition 5-6 points out of 7, thus proving that its impact upon Ukrainian society’s axiological matrix is particularly strong. At the same time, 68,8% of respondents in Group 1 and 65% in Group 2 strive for life full of novelty and discoveries; over 50% of students in both groups prioritize changes and challenges over stability (supported as a main value by 37,5% in Group 1 and 42,4% in Group 2).

Contrary to what Ukrainians tend to think about individualistic values, the values of self-realization seem to hold comparatively strong positions in ZNU students’ axiological chart. Personal freedom is one of the most important options among individualistic values, scoring 6-7 out of 7 by over 70% of respondents in both groups. Self-respect is prioritized by over 80% of respondents; creativity, uniqueness and imagination are important for 70%, while over 90% of students tend to value personal space. Hedonism seems to be one of the most controversial values, being chosen as a priority by 18,8% of respondents in Group 1 and 26,1% in Group 2; as a second choice – by 28,1% in Group 1 and 38,4% in Group 2.

As far as transcendent values are concerned, the importance of love and friendship never exceeds 50% in both groups. Wisdom is sought by 37,5% of respondents in Group 1 and 32,4% in Group 2. Over 70% of students in both groups value motivated life. Ecology is considered top priority by 21,9% students in Group 1 and 16,4% in Group 2, while the majority of respondents ranks it 4-5 out of 7.

Thus, the results of the survey clearly demonstrate that axiological sets of Ukrainian students are closer to those of an average European in terms of universalism, achievement and self-direction values. Younger generation is more open to innovations and changes and is less concerned with material income and social status. At the same time, the traditionalist-survivalist trend common for Ukrainian society and fed by war and political crisis is still here to be dealt with.

The survey has also shown considerable performance gaps in terms of verbalizing one’s likings and experience when it comes to defining personal values set. Lack of self-reflection over life priorities and motivations led to providing contradictory answers to similar questions, as was the case of tolerance-addressed questions and some other. Therefore, it is vitally important for HEI teachers to provide more opportunities for the students to reflect upon their inner life experiences and to help them reach for suitable words to describe these experiences in a conventional way.

Another important conclusion to be drawn out of the survey is importance of pro-European educational and cultural activities and events that resulted in a more conscious pro-European choice in case of Group 1. It is therefore necessary to establish balanced curricula for the faculties traditionally not involved into European studies to grant their students more reasonable approach to the matter of European values.

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