

**METHODS TO DEVELOP STUDENTS' HUMANITARIAN CULTURE IN THE
EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING PROCESS**

**MÉTODOS PARA DESENVOLVER A CULTURA HUMANITÁRIA DOS ALUNOS NO
PROCESSO EDUCACIONAL E DE TREINAMENTO**

**MÉTODOS PARA DESARROLLAR LA CULTURA HUMANITARIA DE LOS
ESTUDIANTES EN EL PROCESO EDUCATIVO Y FORMATIVO**



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ABSTRACT: This study aims to analyze the transformations in the humanitarian culture of students through the educational and training process, emphasizing autonomous choice and the development of critical thinking in the use of sports equipment. The methodology adopted involved a review of the scientific literature, conducting a survey with students from technical universities at the beginning and end of the semester, and data analysis to evaluate changes in students' attitudes towards physical exercise. Creating conditions that favor the improvisation of movements within the context of autonomous choice and flexible use of sports equipment during aerobic classes contributes to increased physical activity and the development of critical thinking. Finally, it is essential to integrate autonomous decision-making and critical thinking methods into physical education curricula, aiming to promote a holistic formation of individuals.

KEYWORDS: Humanitarian culture. Critical thinking. Choice. Improvisation. Educational and training process.

RESUMO: *O presente estudo visa analisar as transformações na cultura humanitária dos alunos por meio do processo educacional e de treinamento, com ênfase na escolha autônoma e no desenvolvimento do pensamento crítico no uso de equipamentos esportivos. A metodologia adotada envolveu uma revisão da literatura científica, a realização de uma pesquisa com estudantes de universidades técnicas no início e ao final do semestre, e a análise de dados para avaliar as modificações nas atitudes dos discentes em relação ao exercício físico. A criação de condições que favoreçam a improvisação de movimentos, no contexto da escolha autônoma e do uso flexível de equipamentos esportivos durante as aulas de aeróbica, contribui para o aumento da atividade física e para o desenvolvimento do pensamento crítico. Por fim, é fundamental integrar a tomada de decisões autônomas e os métodos de pensamento crítico nos currículos de educação física, com o objetivo de promover uma formação integral dos indivíduos.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Cultura humanitária. Pensamento crítico. Escolha. Improvisação. Processo educacional e de treinamento.*

RESUMEN: *El presente estudio tiene como objetivo analizar las transformaciones en la cultura humanitaria de los estudiantes a través del proceso educativo y de entrenamiento, con énfasis en la elección autónoma y el desarrollo del pensamiento crítico en el uso de equipos deportivos. La metodología adoptada incluyó una revisión de la literatura científica, la realización de una investigación con estudiantes de universidades técnicas al inicio y al final del semestre, y el análisis de datos para evaluar las modificaciones en las actitudes de los estudiantes respecto al ejercicio físico. La creación de condiciones que favorezcan la improvisación de movimientos, en el contexto de la elección autónoma y el uso flexible de equipos deportivos durante las clases de aeróbica, contribuye al aumento de la actividad física y al desarrollo del pensamiento crítico. Finalmente, es fundamental integrar la toma de decisiones autónomas y los métodos de pensamiento crítico en los currículos de educación física, con el objetivo de promover una formación integral de los individuos.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Cultura humanitaria. Pensamiento crítico. Elección. Improvisación. Proceso educativo y de entrenamiento.*

Introduction

The search for personal and professional self-realization is directly linked to the conditions in which the educational and socio-cultural environment continually develops, requiring an understanding of the role of a humanistic worldview in the academic context. The growing demand for the study of humanitarian culture reflects its importance as an evaluative and motivational phenomenon, which serves as a theoretical and methodological basis for ideals, beliefs, norms, behavioral incentives, as well as individual rights and freedoms. Humanitarian culture also involves critically evaluating political, economic, and socio-cultural processes at both national and global levels, implementing ideological convictions, and facing professional and personal challenges.

Critical thinking is a crucial indicator of humanitarian culture. To achieve success, it is essential to engage in continuous learning and apply the knowledge and skills acquired to face life's basic challenges. However, there is still no consensus on what knowledge, skills, and competencies are decisive in ensuring this success.

In an open cultural and informational environment, it is essential to have skills that allow the flexible application of acquired knowledge and stimulate new productive ideas, such as "readiness to take risks, the ability to go against the grain, and an enterprising spirit" (Bondar, 2019, p. 10). Effective production management and problem-solving depend, to a large extent, on the ability to find promising solutions, based primarily on "goal-setting intellectual activity" (Kulikova; Chuyev, 2012, p. 121). This activity involves engaging with the culture of knowledge, thought, and dialogue, which strengthens the evaluative aspect of the educational process (Eliasberg; Vershlovskii, 2008; Konovalova; Izmaylova, 2022). This concept is particularly relevant in the "the classical theory of managing technical systems, where neither the management goals, nor constraints or quality criteria change, and the set of values characterizing the object of management is fully known" (Malinetskii, 2021, pp. 345-346). However, the tasks and results established in these systems often prove inadequate for managing people and teams.

It is essential to distinguish between goal-setting activities and goal-oriented activities. The latter involves a process of in-depth analysis, which reveals cause-and-effect relationships and patterns at both an individual and universal level. Thinking takes on a self-directed character, resulting in a qualitative change in activity. In this context, the "artificially heightened issue of education quality often refers only to knowledge and skills, while the quality of value assimilation and individual spiritual world is devalued in layers of human

existence". The moral and spiritual basis shifts professional activity into a space that lacks moral principles and norms (Verkhovnykh, 2022, p. 13).

The main mission of educational activities in an institution is to promote the humanitarian development of students, which involves the ability to think critically, analyze information, apply it according to spiritual and moral principles, articulate different points of view, produce effective speeches, generate productive new ideas and solve challenges independently and creatively. This process encompasses knowledge, mastery, and spiritual development within the context of global diversity and the challenges of human existence. It is a process of understanding that moves from fact to meaning, from phenomenon to value, transforming the individual into the subject of cultural creativity. Thus, educational and training activities are fundamental to developing critical thinking, an essential component of the humanitarian culture of technical professionals.

Literature Review

The theoretical and methodological foundations for the study of humanitarian culture have been addressed by several researchers (Alimova *et al.*, 2023; Ukolova, 2022; Volkova, 2023). In this context, "humanitarian culture is associated with the ability to process information critically" (Kudryavtseva, 2016, p. 6), which highlights the importance of making informed choices within the scenario of informational globalization. Many scholars associate humanitarian culture with values such as reasonableness, critical attitude, and creativity (Shichkin *et al.*, 2024).

Culture and critical thinking are interconnected elements of the same process, which makes it possible to analyze phenomena in the socio-cultural space and the role of individuals in this context, under the lens of axiology and existentialism. The individual, as the active subject of the activity, goes beyond the limits of the existing system. In this way, recognizing the other is based on a system of cultural values which, although stable, need to be enriched and transformed according to the contemporary conditions of socio-cultural development.

From this perspective, the value of humanitarian culture lies in its encouragement to transgress conventional norms. In this sense, a key indicator is "the shift from viewing norms as a social obligation to embracing them as a personal value" (Kudryavtseva, 2016, p. 3). In this context, "norms act as an internal guide for behavior, serving as a 'moral will' mechanism within the individual's existential framework" (Markov; Verkhovnykh, 2021, p. 6). When

considering humanitarian culture, the focus is on norms as values, which are understood and internalized through critical thinking (Zhuzeyev *et al.*, 2024).

"Humanitarian culture is a complex phenomenon comprising axiological, cognitive, and practical components" (Shichkin *et al.*, 2024, p. 423). It manifests itself in human productive activity and can be understood as a combination of knowledge, skills, emotions, communication, and creative expression. It is perceptible through critical thinking. This, in turn, plays a fundamental role in allowing students to become deeply involved in their educational and professional activities while at the same time discovering alternatives for their personal, professional, and social growth (Potapov, 2021).

Research on "humanitarian culture" (I.F. Isaev) emphasizes its role in the formation and development of a specialist's professional culture. Humanitarian culture is considered an essential and humanistic component of professional culture (Shichkin *et al.*, 2024; Timushkin *et al.*, 2024) and plays a key role in future specialists' personal and professional development. These professionals must recognize their uniqueness, which manifests itself in understanding the importance of their profession, the relevance of their activities, and the impact they have on the context in which they are inserted (Smagulov *et al.*, 2023). The essence of this activity, based on values, becomes clear through the application of critical thinking in their professional tasks.

The professional, educational, and socio-cultural landscape, which is constantly changing due to the influence of the Internet and mental overload, has compromised the level of humanitarian culture, making true self-realization difficult. This calls for a reassessment of the guiding principles in the educational environment, with the aim of balancing the need to overcome technological challenges and the urgency of integrating acquired knowledge, skills, and values into a broader framework that is aligned with humanistic ideals, professional goals and individual development paths (Kharkovskaya; Posokhova; Kushchenko, 2023). Humanitarian culture should be approached from hermeneutic and axiological perspectives, with an emphasis on interpretations that connect text and context, based on critical thinking and learners' cognitive and creative abilities (Konovalova; Semenova, 2020; Markov; Verkhovkykh, 2021).

The educational process should focus on creating conditions that promote the development of individuals as "bearers of a broad spiritual culture and transmitters of its social interactions" (Radzhabov; Lobacheva, 2016, p. 54). Humanitarian culture forms a system of positive values within the educational and training process. It is understood through critical

thinking and manifests itself in activities aimed at understanding and practicing humanistic values centered on the individual. In the cultural and professional context, the ability to critically interpret information emerges as a creative competence that integrates knowledge, skills, values, meanings, and personal qualities that are essential for innovative and research-oriented activities. This competence is crucial for the application and commercialization of research results and developments, aiming to expand and update the range of products offered, improve their quality, and ensure their effective implementation.

In technical university environments, students often interact with the cultural-professional context in a superficial way, addressing contemporary social, political, economic, and spiritual issues in a limited way. This prevents them from fully unlocking their potential in the cultural-educational environment, hindering the development of a research-oriented culture. The uniqueness of a technical university lies in its educational environment, which guides participants primarily toward developing a professional mindset, focusing on learning specific methods and techniques.

Thus, the aim of this study is to analyze the characteristics of critical thinking among students at technical universities during their educational and training activities.

Methods

The first stage of the study consisted of a review of the scientific literature on humanitarian culture and physical education in institutions, based on studies published in the Scopus and Web of Science databases over the past ten years.

The second stage of the study involved conducting a survey with students. A total of 280 students from the first, second, and third years of architecture and engineering programs participated. Classes were held at different times, according to the schedule defined for each program. The survey was conducted at the beginning and end of the semester to analyze students' perceptions and attitudes toward physical education classes.

During the classes, the students selected the most effective resources for developing the psychophysical conditions required in the aerobics sessions. To do this, they evaluated different types of sports equipment, choosing the ones that best met their individual needs and the specific objectives of each session.

In conducting the sessions, the emphasis was on "minimizing behavioral regulations and promoting achievement motivation, focusing on personal sensations and feelings, guiding

students to realize their potential” (Zakharova, 2018, p. 3). This approach encourages “freedom of choice and critical thinking”. The students selected their sports equipment (resistance bands, dumbbells, bars, balls, etc.) and chose the ones they felt best suited their needs and objectives. The students also had the option of not using any equipment.

The same exercises could be done with a ball, dumbbells, a barbell or without any equipment. At the end of the session, each student expressed their opinion on the sports equipment used (whether it was convenient to use, its advantages and disadvantages, what they managed to achieve, what they struggled with, etc.).

At the end of the session, a follow-up survey was conducted to assess the students’ attitudes towards physical education. The methodology used was based on studies by Zakharova (2018). Answers were collected using the options: always, sometimes, rarely, or never. The last question was open-ended, allowing students to specify what they would like to learn in the sessions, including aspects such as exercise load and sports equipment, among others.

The data was analyzed in order to identify changes in students’ preferences and attitudes towards the educational and training process. Particular attention was paid to changes in the ability to make independent decisions and the development of critical thinking in the use of sports equipment.

Results

Table 1 shows the main trends and changes in student's attitudes towards the educational and training process during the period analyzed.

Table 1 - Changes in students' attitudes towards choosing sports equipment and satisfaction with results at the beginning and end of the semester

Questions	At the beginning of the semester (number of students %)				At the end of the semester (number of students %)			
	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Would you like to choose your own sports equipment for classes?	28.6%	35.7%	25%	10.7%	39.3%	43.6%	12.5%	5.4%
Was it an easy choice to make?	17.9%	21.4%	36.4%	24.3%	41.1%	28.6%	14.3%	16.1%
Are you satisfied with	36.4%	45.7%	10.7%	7.1%	38.6%	52.9%	6.0%	2.5%

the results of your lessons?								
Would you like to make any changes (additions) to the lessons?	2.5%	16.4%	17.1%	64%	14.3%	28.6%	29.3%	27.8%

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Table 1 shows that the number of university students willing to make independent decisions regarding the choice of sports equipment increased by the end of the semester. The proportion of students who found it easy to make decisions increased from 39.3% to 69.7%, which indicates that over the course of the semester, they began to define their educational and training objectives independently, based on the equipment provided.

The number of students satisfied with the results achieved increased by 9.4%, from 82.1% to 91.5%. In addition, there was an increase in the number of individuals who sought guidance from instructors and showed greater proactivity, from 18.9% to 42.9%. These students became more interested in using sports equipment, adjusting it according to their workload and level of athletic conditioning, and also using other resources that met their personal needs and interests. Some chose to exercise with the equipment available, applying additional jumping loads according to their abilities, while others fundamentally performed the same activities, without increasing the intensity. Those who sought to modify the classes were interested in methods to optimize the use of sports equipment in different exercises, exploring alternatives for carrying out the activities, and requesting individual consultations with the instructor.

Final considerations

Based on the analysis of the concept of humanitarian culture, we conclude that it is a multifaceted and integrative phenomenon, constituting the core of an individual's general culture. This manifestation takes place during the learning and training process in aerobics classes, as students engage in critical thinking (analysis). This cognitive, functional, and communicative aspect is reflected through physical-mental activity and an approach geared towards creative exploration.

Critical thinking plays a fundamental role in strengthening the humanitarian culture among students, as evidenced by the analysis of their decisions when selecting sports equipment. The autonomous choice of these resources and their use in classes, especially in contexts involving the improvisation of free movements and acts, on the one hand, as a resource

for the instructor to design a set of exercises. On the other hand, it offers students the chance to personalize their practice, choosing instruments that suit their preferences and performing the exercises in an adapted way, with or without equipment, while moving or standing still.

Exploring multiple ways of using sports equipment in fitness exercises helps develop students' physical abilities and arouses greater interest in the proposed activities. This process drives critical thinking and stimulates motor creativity, evidenced in the interaction between participants in the educational process, the reflective analysis of their actions, and the varied use of available resources aligned with their individual needs, interests, and abilities. This context highlights the axiological component that permeates the broad and integrated understanding of the concept of humanitarian culture.

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