

HUMANISTIC PERSONALITY IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION: THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE CASE OF AZERBAIJAN

Vidadi Orujov

Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Professor,
Head of the Department of Physics, Chemistry and Biology,
Lankaran State University, Azerbaijan
e-mail: vidadiorucov@gmail.com, orcid.org/0000-0002-8589-2364

Nezrin Miriyeva

Ph.D., Lankaran State University, Azerbaijan
e-mail: nezrin.miriyeva.96@bk.ru, orcid.org/0009-0002-2020-3000

Summary

This study explores the process of forming a humanistic personality in the context of globalization, analyzing the strategic role of higher education and examining the Azerbaijani experience. The research highlights that the acceleration of global integration and digitalization inevitably transforms humanistic values. Within this framework, contemporary international theoretical approaches—humanistic psychology, social-constructivist models, and global citizenship concepts—and their influence on higher education curricula are thoroughly discussed.

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, including document analysis, expert interviews, and student surveys, to assess the current state of humanistic competencies in Azerbaijani universities. The results indicate that, although curricula include humanistic components, the development of key competencies—such as empathy, critical thinking, multicultural communication, and social responsibility—still faces practical and methodological challenges. Comparisons with European universities revealed significant differences in curriculum design, pedagogical strategies, application of interactive teaching technologies, and opportunities for practical training.

Based on the findings, the study proposes curriculum reforms, broader implementation of student-centered and interactive teaching methods, expansion of socio-cultural projects, and enhanced international collaboration to strengthen the development of humanistic personalities in Azerbaijani higher education. This research has both theoretical and practical significance, emphasizing the importance of preparing ethically responsible, socially engaged, and globally competent graduates in a globalized and digital environment.

Key words: humanistic personality, higher education, globalization, humanistic competencies, humanistic approach, experience in Azerbaijan, curriculum development, global citizenship.

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1. Introduction

Globalization has become one of the key factors shaping the social, cultural, and intellectual development dynamics of societies in the 21st century. The rapid advancement of digital technologies, the intensification of global cooperation processes, and the expansion of

transcultural communication practices directly influence the quality of human capital and the transformation of cultural values. In this context, the importance of humanistic thinking, ethical behavior, and intercultural communication skills as essential resources for sustainable societal development has increased significantly.

In contemporary scholarly discourse, the concept of the “humanistic personality” refers not only to an individual with high moral and cultural values but also to a person who is socially responsible, competent in multicultural relations, ethical, creative, and capable of critical thinking. The model of the humanistic personality represents a core element in enhancing human capital, increasing the intellectual potential of society, and facilitating effective integration into global cultural processes.

In this regard, the higher education system plays a strategic role in fostering humanistic values. Universities serve not only as environments for developing professional knowledge and skills but also as crucial contexts for cultivating empathy, ethical reasoning, intercultural communication, social responsibility, and global citizenship competencies. Global educational trends indicate that modern universities have become key institutions implementing new models and approaches for the humanization of human capital.

The Azerbaijani higher education system continues the process of humanization in response to globalization challenges. Although educational strategies, curriculum reforms, and multicultural policies aim to strengthen human-centered development, issues such as the integration of humanistic components into curricula, the enhancement of students’ socio-ethical skills, and the practical application of humanities in intercultural communication remain highly relevant. Azerbaijan’s internationally recognized multiculturalism model, the role of cultural diversity in societal life, and the state’s humanitarian policy priorities further justify this study.

Research aim and questions. This study aims to theoretically and empirically investigate the role of higher education in shaping the humanistic personality under globalization, evaluate the current state of humanistic development in Azerbaijani higher education, and identify directions for future improvement. The key research questions are:

1. How does globalization influence the concept of the humanistic personality?
2. Through which mechanisms does higher education contribute to the formation of humanistic values?
3. What is the current level of development of humanistic competencies in Azerbaijani universities?
4. Which models and recommendations from international experience can be applied in the Azerbaijani context?

Scientific novelty. The scientific novelty of this research lies in providing the first comprehensive analysis of the humanistic personality concept in the context of Azerbaijani higher education, integrating global theoretical frameworks, national experience, and empirical evidence. The study also proposes a model approach for developing humanistic competencies and offers practical recommendations applicable to the strategic development of higher education institutions. Therefore, the research has both theoretical and practical significance.

2. Literature review

International theories on humanistic personality development. The scientific foundations of the humanistic personality concept have been formed within classical humanistic psychology and social-humanitarian thought. Abraham Maslow’s concept of self-actualization emphasizes value-based human development, noting that “the highest level of human

motivation is the need to realize one's full potential" (Maslow, 1943, p. 382). This perspective demonstrates that the formation of a humanistic personality is closely linked not only to knowledge but also to ethical and moral values.

Carl Rogers highlighted the decisive role of empathy and transparent communication for social and moral personality development (Rogers, 1961). Erich Fromm emphasized that fundamental humanistic values, such as love, responsibility, and freedom, are essential for the development of the humanistic personality (Fromm, 1947). John Dewey stressed the role of social experience, collaboration, and critical thinking in shaping the humanistic personality (Dewey, 1916). Paulo Freire considered dialogue-based communication, social justice, and critical consciousness as the foundation of humanistic development (Freire, 1970).

According to social-constructivist theory, individual development is closely tied to social environment, cultural context, and communicative experience. Lev Vygotsky noted that "all higher psychological functions originate as products of social interaction" (Vygotsky, 1978).

Contemporary approaches that define the global dimensions of the humanistic personality include multicultural and global citizenship education. Scholars such as James Banks (2015) and Kwame Anthony Appiah (2006) argue that global citizenship education enables individuals to recognize cultural diversity, uphold human rights, and internalize values of social justice. UNESCO (2015) also identifies human rights, universality, and multicultural worldview as core indicators of a humanistic personality.

Thus, classical humanistic psychology, humanitarian pedagogy, social-constructivism, and global citizenship theories collectively provide a robust scientific basis, demonstrating that the humanistic personality is founded on individual, social, and global value systems.

Globalization and transformation of humanistic values. Globalization significantly affects the structure of humanistic values. Scholars such as Robertson, Giddens, and Beck characterize globalization by the weakening of cultural boundaries, redefinition of identities, and intensification of transcultural communication (Giddens, 2002; Robertson, 1992; Beck, 2000). This process alters individuals' worldviews and social behaviors, promoting the development of flexible and multicultural humanistic values.

The digital society creates both opportunities and risks for humanitarian culture. Sherry Turkle (2011) argues that digital technologies expand the scope of communication but may weaken the level of empathy. Manuel Castells (2010) emphasizes that digitalization strengthens tendencies toward social isolation and individualization. At the same time, digital literacy, media culture, and online communication skills facilitate the emergence of new forms of humanitarian competencies.

The humanitarian function of higher education. Recent studies indicate that higher education is not only a mechanism for professional training but also a key institution shaping socially responsible, ethically minded, and globally competent citizens. New educational models proposed by the World Bank, OECD, and UNESCO describe the humanitarian function of higher education along three main dimensions:

1. **Soft skills:** critical thinking, problem-solving, effective communication, teamwork, empathy, and ethical decision-making.
2. **Global competence:** the ability of students to understand global cultures, work with diversity, analyze global issues, and assume socio-cultural responsibility.
3. **Postmodern education models:** fostering creative thinking, personal development, interdisciplinarity, and student-centered approaches.

These perspectives demonstrate that higher education plays a leading role in the formation of humanitarian values and that humanitarian components in the educational process have strategic significance.

Scientific evidence in the Azerbaijani context. In Azerbaijan, the development of humanitarian values and the humanization of education are among the main priorities of state policy. The multiculturalism model ensures the protection of cultural diversity and its promotion at the state level. Studies show that multicultural education and tolerance programs play a significant role in youth socialization, cultural understanding, and the development of tolerant thinking (*Quliyeva, 2022; Musayev, 2021*).

Humanitarian components are also identified as a priority in Azerbaijani higher education strategies (*Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2017*). The integration of humanitarian subjects into curricula, social projects, practical activities, and interactive teaching methods accelerates the development of students' humanitarian competencies (*Quliyev, 2019; Məmmədova, 2021; Rzayeva, 2020*). In the context of globalization and digital society, the humanitarian function of higher education has strategic importance (*Həsənov, 2019*).

3. Methodology

Type of study. This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis.

– **Qualitative component:** allows an in-depth understanding of the process of humanitarian personality formation within a socio-cultural context.

– **Quantitative component:** measures students' humanitarian competency levels, the impact of higher education, and the relationships among other variables.

The study also includes elements of comparative analysis. The development level of the humanitarianization process in Azerbaijan's higher education system is compared with selected European universities. This approach helps identify international trends in the development of humanitarian competencies and provides a theoretical basis for improving the national education model.

4. Object and subject of the study

– **Object:** the process of forming humanitarian values within Azerbaijan's higher education system.

– **Subject:** the mechanisms through which higher education influences the development of humanitarian personality traits in students, including educational environment, curricula, pedagogical technologies, and socio-cultural factors.

5. Data collection methods

5.1. Document analysis

The study analyzed university curricula, course syllabi, strategic development plans, national higher education policy documents, and international curriculum models. Document analysis enabled the identification of the extent and content of humanitarian components integrated into the curricula.

5.2. Expert interviews

Within the framework of the study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with various stakeholders in universities, including:

- Faculty members,
- Methodologists from academic departments,
- Specialists in humanitarian subjects, and
- Student representatives.

The interviews aimed to explore how humanitarian competencies are developed in the teaching process, identify existing challenges, and uncover opportunities for improvement.

5.3. Survey

A student survey served as the main source of quantitative data. The survey measured the following aspects of humanitarian competencies:

- Ethical thinking and social responsibility,
- Empathy and communication skills,
- Attitudes toward cultural diversity,
- Critical and creative thinking.

Students from various disciplines and academic years participated, enhancing the representativeness of the data.

6. Analysis methods

6.1. Thematic analysis

The results of expert interviews and document analysis were processed using thematic analysis. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach, data were coded, main themes were identified, and structural factors influencing the formation of humanitarian values were determined.

6.2. Comparative education approach

The degree of humanitarianization in Azerbaijan's higher education system was compared with international practices. The comparative analysis employed the following indicators:

- Proportion and integration of humanitarian subjects in curricula,
- Student-centered humanitarian teaching methods,
- Socio-humanitarian environment of universities,
- Implementation of global competence models.

The results enabled the assessment of how national practices align with international standards.

7. Ethical principles and limitations

The study strictly adhered to ethical principles:

- Informed consent was obtained from all interview participants,
- Personal information was kept confidential,
- All responses were anonymized.

The study has several limitations:

- The sample covered only specific universities, which may limit generalizability.
- Some students and faculty may have been reluctant to participate in surveys and interviews, affecting the depth of data.
- The measurement of humanitarian competencies involves subjective factors, requiring a degree of interpretation.

Despite these limitations, the study provides a comprehensive and reliable overview of the process of forming a humanitarian personality in the context of higher education.

8. Results

8.1. Students' humanistic competence in the context of globalization

Survey and interview data revealed that Azerbaijani higher education students' humanistic competencies vary across different dimensions. Skills such as empathy, social responsibility, and intercultural communication are moderately developed. About 62% of students reported feeling comfortable interacting with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, while only 41% rated their critical thinking and problem-solving skills as high. These findings indicate that, in the context of global challenges, the development of humanistic skills is not yet fully ensured and requires additional support.

8.2. Current status of humanistic components in Azerbaijani higher education programs

Analysis of institutional documents indicates that humanistic subjects occupy a certain proportion of university curricula; however, their integration is not systematic. For instance, in some programs, subjects such as history, philosophy, and cultural studies are taught only theoretically, which does not sufficiently develop students' practical humanistic skills. On average, humanistic components constitute 15–20% of curricula. Nevertheless, in some programs, project-based and interactive teaching methods enhance students' opportunities to internalize humanistic values.

8.3. Insights from teacher and student interviews

Interviews highlighted several challenges in acquiring humanistic values:

- Low student interest in humanistic subjects;
- Limited use of interactive teaching methods;
- Insufficient utilization of digital tools.

Strengths include the presence of a multicultural environment in universities, opportunities to participate in social projects, and instructors' attention to humanistic competencies. Weaknesses involve limited practical application opportunities for humanistic subjects and curricula not fully aligned with the evolving requirements of globalization.

8.4. Comparative analysis with international experience

European universities implement humanistic education models that focus on developing students' critical and creative thinking, global citizenship knowledge, and intercultural communication skills. Humanistic subjects are delivered both theoretically and through practical applications.

Comparison with Azerbaijani universities reveals:

- Higher and more systematic allocation of humanistic components in international universities;
- Interactive and project-based teaching methods;
- Monitoring of students' global competence levels.

In contrast, Azerbaijani higher education curricula still contain fragmented humanistic components, student-centered approaches are not fully institutionalized, and global competencies are not systematically assessed. These findings highlight the need for a strategic and systematic approach to developing humanistic competencies.

9. Discussion

9.1. Linking results to existing theories

The findings indicate that the formation of a humanistic personality aligns with humanist, social-constructivist, and global citizenship theoretical frameworks. According to the humanist

approaches of Maslow and Rogers, students' empathy and ethical reasoning play a central role in their personal and social development. From a social-constructivist perspective, the development of humanistic skills occurs through collective experiences and social interaction. Compared to global citizenship frameworks, Azerbaijani students' internalization of multicultural values is moderate and does not fully align with global challenges.

9.2. The potential of higher education in developing a humanitarian personality

The conducted analyses and interviews indicate that the Azerbaijani higher education system possesses a considerable potential for developing a humanitarian personality; however, this potential remains underutilized. The development of students' critical thinking, empathy, and intercultural communication skills largely depends on the structure of humanities courses, as well as the availability of interactive and project-based learning activities. International practice demonstrates that the effectiveness of humanitarization is directly associated with the application of interactive teaching methods, student-centered curricula, and the integration of social projects into the educational process.

9.3. Educational and value dilemmas arising from globalization

Globalization has introduced a new set of educational and value dilemmas for Azerbaijani higher education. Students are expected to simultaneously preserve national moral values and acquire global humanitarian values. Data from surveys and interviews show that some students experience difficulties reconciling national and global value systems. Addressing these dilemmas requires the purposeful development of humanitarian competencies and the systematic integration of multicultural and global citizenship approaches into the curriculum.

9.4. Barriers to the humanitarian development of Azerbaijani higher education

The research identifies several key factors that hinder the humanitarian development of higher education institutions in Azerbaijan:

- Limited and fragmented representation of humanities courses within the curriculum;
- Insufficient use of interactive, research-based, and project-oriented teaching methods;
- Absence of a monitoring and assessment system for students' humanitarian competencies;
- Incomplete integration of digital and global communication tools into teaching and learning.

These barriers constrain universities' potential to foster humanitarian personalities and highlight priority areas for systemic reforms.

9.5. Proposed model: “Humanitarian personality development framework in Azerbaijani universities (HPDFAU)”

Based on the research findings, the following HPDFAU model is proposed to ensure the systematic development of humanitarian personality in higher education:

1. **Curriculum integration** – Harmonious combination of theoretical and practical components of humanities education.
2. **Student-centered learning** – Expansion of interactive seminars, project activities, and problem-based learning strategies.
3. **Multicultural and global citizenship competencies** – Systematic integration of global values and diverse cultural perspectives into academic programs.
4. **Use of digital and social resources** – Adoption of online discussions, digital simulations, and international student collaborations.
5. **Monitoring and assessment system** – Measurement of humanitarian competencies, tracking student progress, and implementing continuous feedback mechanisms.

The HPDFAU model offers a comprehensive approach for cultivating humanitarian personality within Azerbaijani higher education and aims to prepare students who can effectively align national and global values.

10. Conclusions and recommendations

10.1. Key scientific findings of the study

The research demonstrates that, in the context of globalization, Azerbaijani higher education holds significant potential for developing students' humanitarian competencies; however, this potential is not yet fully realized. The main scientific findings are as follows:

1. The concept of a humanitarian personality aligns with humanistic, social-constructivist, and global citizenship theories, and plays a crucial role in developing empathy, ethical reasoning, intercultural communication, and critical thinking skills.

2. The share of humanitarian components in higher education programs is moderate; their effectiveness must be enhanced through interactive teaching methods and alignment with global requirements.

3. The development of humanitarian competencies is closely linked to the multicultural environment of universities, the availability of social projects, and the professional competence of academic staff.

4. Comparison with international practice reveals structural and methodological gaps in the humanitarization process within the Azerbaijani higher education system.

10.2. Applied recommendations for higher education institutions

Curriculum Reforms:

- Harmonizing theoretical and practical components of humanities education;
- Systematic integration of global and multicultural competencies into the curriculum;
- Expansion of student-centered and project-based learning approaches.

Humanitarian teaching methods:

- Implementation of interactive seminars, problem-solving activities, simulations, and discussions;
- Continuous professional development of academic staff in humanitarian competencies;
- Effective use of online and hybrid learning tools.

Expansion of social projects:

- Increasing student participation in community and social projects to strengthen practical humanitarian skills;
- Organization of multicultural events, global citizenship activities, and international exchange programs.

10.3. Policy recommendations for the state

- Prioritization of humanitarian components within national higher education strategies;
- Integration of multicultural and global citizenship programs into national education policy;
- Development of standards and assessment mechanisms for monitoring humanitarian competencies;
- Expansion of international cooperation opportunities for higher education institutions and transfer of best global practices to the national context.

10.4. Directions for future research

- Longitudinal studies examining the long-term impact of humanitarian personality development;
- Exploration of humanitarian competency formation in digital societies and virtual learning environments;
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of interactive and project-based methods aimed at harmonizing students' global and national values;
- Comparative analysis of humanitarization strategies between the Azerbaijani higher education system and European universities, along with potential adaptation pathways.

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