UDC 37.015.3:502.131:61(075.8)
ISSN: 2707-3092 (Online)
DOI: https://doi.org/10.32835/2707-3092.2024.31.275-281

Institute of Vocational Education of NAES of Ukraine

Professional Pedagogics/2(31)'2025, pp. 275-281

CRITERIA-BASED DIAGNOSTIC APPROACH TO ASSESSING THE ECOLOGICAL CULTURE OF MEDICAL COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Abstract

Relevance: The urgency of assessing the ecological culture of medical college students stems from rising environmental health risks, exacerbated by the consequences of the Russian Federation's war against Ukraine, the necessity of ensuring environmental safety within healthcare, and the requirements of the updated professional medical education paradigm; this necessitates fostering an ecological world-view in future healthcare workers who are capable of responsible professional activity related to maintaining sanitary and hygienic standards, safely managing medical waste, and minimising negative environmental impacts.

*Aim***:** To substantiate a criteria-based diagnostic approach for assessing the ecological culture of medical college students and to define the criteria, indicators, and levels of its development.

*Methods***:** The study employed an analysis of scientific sources, psycho-pedagogical and socio-methodological literature, and regulatory documents in medical and environmental education to determine the extent of the problem's development; generalisation and systematisation were used to justify the theoretical foundations of the research and the structure of ecological culture among medical college students; definitive analysis served to clarify the conceptual content of "ecological culture of a future healthcare worker" and "criteria-based diagnostic approach"; modelling was applied to develop a system of criteria, indicators, and levels of ecological culture attainment.

*Results***:** The study substantiates a criteria-based diagnostic approach for evaluating the ecological culture of medical college students; it identifies a system of criteria (motivational-evaluative, cognitive, and behavioural-activity), alongside corresponding indicators and development levels; furthermore, the findings establish that implementing comprehensive diagnostic instrumentation facilitates an objective assessment of future healthcare workers' readiness for environmentally safe professional practice, enhances the quality of their vocational training, and fosters a responsible attitude toward health preservation and environmental protection.

*Conclusions***:** Utilising a criteria-based diagnostic approach to assess the ecological culture of medical college students provides a holistic understanding of its development level, allows for timely adjustments to the educational process, and promotes the evolution of ecological thinking, professional responsibility, and the readiness of future healthcare workers to ensure environmental safety within the healthcare sector.

Keywords: *ecological culture, medical college student, criteria, indicators, diagnostics, vocational training, environmental safety.*

Introduction. The current state of the environment in Ukraine is characterised by significant deterioration, accompanied by large-scale pollution of the atmosphere, water resources, and soil, as well as the destruction of critical infrastructure and healthcare systems. According to international organisations, notably the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), military actions in Ukraine have led to the extensive generation of toxic waste resulting from the destruction of industrial

facilities, oil depots, chemical plants, and other infrastructure, accompanied by the release of hazardous substances into the environment (United Nations Environment Programme, 2025). International experts estimate that combat operations generate millions of tonnes of contaminated construction waste and debris containing hazardous components (asbestos, heavy metals, and ammunition residues), which substantially increases the total volume of dangerous waste (Hook & Marcantonio, 2022). Domestic scholars rightly conclude that military actions have caused a significant rise in the volume of hazardous waste, including medical waste requiring specialised handling and disposal, as well as increased risks of chemical and biological environmental contamination (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2024). In the industrially burdened regions of Ukraine, accumulated toxic waste poses an additional environmental threat; specifically, eastern Ukraine contains significant volumes of industrial waste and tailings ponds, the damage of which due to hostilities creates risks of hazardous substances leaching into soil and water resources (Zoï, 2023). According to World Health Organization (2025) data, the synthesis of assessment studies by Ukrainian and international analytical groups indicates that, as of 2025, over 9,000 cases of environmental damage linked to military actions have been recorded, accompanied by the generation of hazardous waste and toxic emissions. In this regard, it is crucial to understand that nearly 25% of diseases are caused directly by the impact of environmental factors such as air quality, water quality, and public living conditions.

Under such conditions, the training of healthcare workers becomes particularly urgent; they must be capable not only of providing medical care but also of ensuring compliance with sanitary and epidemiological standards, performing safe medical waste management, and minimising environmental risks in professional practice, as medical activity involves both treatment and the prevention of diseases, a significant portion of which are environmentally determined.

Regulatory documents in healthcare and environmental safety (including requirements for medical waste management, sanitary legislation, and Ukraine's environmental policy) define the necessity of fostering environmental responsibility in healthcare workers as a component of their professional competence. However, "the vocational education system remains largely oriented towards training personnel for traditional sectors, with an emphasis on productivity rather than environmental sustainability. Courses on product life-cycle management or recycling technologies are rare in vocational education programmes, which complicates the preparation of specialists for modern labour market requirements. Thus, a gap emerges between the needs of the economy and the supply of specialists" (Radkevych, 2025). In the practice of training medical college students, there is an insufficient development of tools for the objective assessment of their ecological culture levels, which complicates the monitoring of vocational training quality. This necessitates the development and implementation of a criteria-based diagnostic approach to assessing the ecological culture of future healthcare workers as a vital condition for ensuring environmental safety in the healthcare sector.

Issues regarding medical waste management, compliance with sanitary and hygienic norms, and the prevention of environmental risks in healthcare facilities are of particular importance. In this context, fostering the ecological culture of medical college students emerges as an integral part of their professional competence. At the same time, the problem of objectively assessing the level of ecological culture development in future healthcare workers remains insufficiently addressed.

Literature Review. The problem of ecological culture is examined in scientific works as an integrative formation that combines knowledge, values, and behavioural practices (Kremen, 2018; Lukyanova, 2019; Radkevych, 2025). Researchers emphasise its connection to the concept of sustainable development (Sovgira, 2023), national state interests (Tolochko, 2024), and vocational training (Nychkalo, 2020; Radkevych, 2024). In the context of vocational education, ecological culture is interpreted as a component of professional competence that ensures readiness for environmentally responsible activity (Bazyl & Rulevska, 2023; Klymenko et al., 2021; Yablunovska, 2019, 2020). Issues of pedagogical diagnostics are addressed through the definition of criteria, indicators, and levels of the qualities under study (Sysoieva, 2017).

However, the problem of assessing the ecological culture specifically of medical college students remains under-researched. While scholars focus on forming value orientations and world-view attitudes toward harmonising the "society-nature" system (Tolochko, 2024), and on the ecological knowledge and conservation skills of learners at various educational levels, they justify complexity,

the integration of individual and universal interests, and continuity as essential features of ecological culture formation. To objectively evaluate the development of this formation, researchers identify specific units of measurement: criteria, indicators, and levels. Nevertheless, scholars have not yet developed a criteria-based apparatus for diagnosing the ecological culture levels of future specialists in river and maritime transport, nor have they defined criteria and indicators for assessing the state of the studied phenomenon. Furthermore, the development of effective diagnostic instrumentation that allows for a comprehensive assessment of ecological culture levels specifically in vocational education learners requires further scientific substantiation.

The aim of the article is to substantiate a criteria-based diagnostic approach to assessing the ecological culture of vocational education learners and to define a system of criteria, indicators, and levels of its development.

Methods. The study employed an analysis of scientific sources, psycho-pedagogical and socio-methodological literature, and regulatory documents in medical and environmental education to determine the extent of the problem's development; generalisation and systematisation were used to justify the theoretical foundations of the research and the structure of ecological culture among medical college students; definitive analysis served to clarify the conceptual content of "ecological culture of a future healthcare worker" and "criteria-based diagnostic approach"; modelling was applied to develop a system of criteria, indicators, and levels of ecological culture attainment.

Results and Discussion. The ecological culture of medical college students is viewed as an integrative personal quality reflecting the level of awareness regarding the link between professional activity and environmental conditions, the development of ecological knowledge, value orientations, and readiness for environmentally safe practice.

The structure of ecological culture encompasses motivational-evaluative, cognitive, and behavioural-activity components. The identification of these components is based on the provisions of competence-based, activity-based, and axiological approaches, according to which any integrative personal formation is viewed as a unity of value orientations, knowledge, and practical activity (Nychkalo, 2020; Sysoieva, 2017). This approach aligns with international frameworks for core competence development, such as UNESCO and OECD recommendations, where ecological competence is interpreted as a combination of cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioural components; it also aligns with modern scientific views on the structure of ecological culture, which presupposes the interconnectedness of an individual's ecological consciousness, thinking, and behaviour.

The criteria-based diagnostic approach is grounded in the principles of pedagogical diagnostics and criteria-referenced assessment of learning outcomes developed within the competence-based approach (Sysoieva, 2017). Its essence lies in defining a system of criteria, indicators, and levels for the studied phenomenon, ensuring the objectivity and measurability of educational results. This approach corresponds with international educational frameworks (OECD, UNESCO), whereby competence assessment is conducted through a system of indicators reflecting the cognitive, evaluative, and behavioural aspects of an individual's activity.

A criterion is considered a generalised feature reflecting the essential characteristics of a phenomenon, while indicators are the specific, measurable manifestations of that feature. Consequently, the application of this approach enables: first, the monitoring of ecological culture development levels; second, the identification of problem areas in learner preparation; and third, the adjustment of the educational process in colleges.

The motivational-evaluative criterion characterises the attitude of vocational education learners toward environmental problems and their readiness for environmentally responsible behaviour. The indicators for this criterion include an awareness of the importance of ecological knowledge; the development of ecological value orientations; motivation for environmental preservation; and a positive attitude toward environmentally safe activity.

The cognitive criterion for assessing the ecological culture level of medical college students reflects the development of ecological knowledge. Its content is specified by the following indicators: awareness of modern environmental problems; understanding the environmental impact of medical activities; knowledge of the goals and principles of sustainable development; and the ability to apply ecological knowledge in professional practice.

The behavioural-activity criterion for assessing the level of ecological culture among medical college students characterises the implementation of ecological knowledge and values

in the practical professional activities of healthcare workers. The indicators for this criterion are defined as: compliance with environmental standards in quasi-professional and subsequent vocational activities; participation in environmental protection measures; the ability to make environmentally sound decisions; and the development of skills for ecologically appropriate behaviour.

In accordance with the defined criteria and indicators, we consider it appropriate to differentiate medical college students into three levels of ecological culture development, which is graphically visualised in Table 1.

Table 1

SYSTEM OF CRITERIA, INDICATORS, AND DIAGNOSTIC METHODS FOR THE ECOLOGICAL CULTURE OF MEDICAL COLLEGE STUDENTS

Criterion	Indicators	Diagnostic Methods	Levels
Motivational-evaluative	Awareness of the importance of ecological knowledge; development of value orientations; motivation for environmental preservation	Questionnaires, interviews, surveys	High, Medium, Low
Cognitive	Knowledge of environmental problems; understanding the impact of medical activity; awareness of sustainable development	Testing, written assignments	
Behavioural-activity	Compliance with environmental norms; participation in events; decision-making	Observation, activity analysis, case studies	

Compiled by the author

As shown in the table, medical college students with a high level of ecological culture development exhibit the following characterological traits: stable ecological motivation; systemic ecological knowledge; active, ecologically appropriate behaviour; and the ability to make environmental decisions independently.

Future specialists with a medium level of ecological culture are characterised by situational motivation; a sufficient volume of mastered ecological knowledge; partial implementation of ecological behaviour; and a need for pedagogical support during quasi-professional activities.

Students with a low level of ecological culture lack stable motivation for environmentally safe activity and possess fragmentary ecological knowledge. They are distinguished by passive or ecologically inappropriate behaviour, which is usually caused by a lack of practical skills.

The diagnostic toolkit for determining the levels of ecological culture among medical college students includes: oral and written surveys; pedagogical observation; analysis of activity results; and situational tasks (case studies).

The comprehensive application of these methods will ensure the objectivity of diagnostic results regarding the ecological culture levels of medical college students. Assessment can be conducted on a scale (high – 3 points, medium – 2 points, low – 1 point). The validity of the diagnostic toolkit is ensured through expert evaluation and testing during the training process of medical college students.

Conclusions. Thus, the criteria-based diagnostic approach is an effective tool for assessing the level of ecological culture development in vocational education learners. The proposed system of criteria (motivational-evaluative, cognitive, and behavioural-activity), indicators, and levels allows for comprehensive pedagogical diagnostics and enhances the quality of vocational training.

The scientific novelty of the study lies in the development of a system of criteria and indicators for assessing the ecological culture specifically of medical college students. We see the practical significance of the article in the possibility of using the published results in the educational process of professional pre-higher education institutions to improve the quality of future healthcare worker training.

Perspectives for further research are linked to the development of digital tools for diagnosing the ecological culture of medical education learners and the creation of innovative methodologies for fostering ecological culture across various sectors of vocational education.

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.32835/2707-3092.2024.31.275-281

КРИТЕРІАЛЬНО-ДІАГНОСТИЧНИЙ ПІДХІД ДО ОЦІНЮВАННЯ ЕКОЛОГІЧНОЇ КУЛЬТУРИ СТУДЕНТІВ МЕДИЧНИХ КОЛЕДЖІВ

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Реферат:

Актуальність: оцінювання екологічної культури студентів медичних коледжів зумовлена зростанням екологічних ризиків для здоров'я населення, загострених наслідками війни рф проти України, необхідністю забезпечення екологічної безпеки у сфері охорони здоров'я та вимогами оновленої парадигми професійної медичної освіти; потребує формування екологічного світогляду майбутніх медичних працівників, здатних до відповідальної професійної діяльності, пов'язаної з дотриманням санітарно-гігієнічних норм, безпечним поводженням із медичними відходами та мінімізацією негативного впливу на довкілля.

Мета: обґрунтувати критеріально-діагностичний підхід до оцінювання екологічної культури студентів медичних коледжів та визначити критерії, показники і рівні її сформованості.

Методи: аналіз наукових джерел, психолого-педагогічної та науково-методичної літератури, нормативно-правових документів у сфері медичної та екологічної освіти – для визначення ступеня розробленості проблеми; узагальнення і систематизація – для обґрунтування теоретичних засад дослідження та структури екологічної культури студентів медичних коледжів; дефінітивний аналіз – для уточнення змісту понять «екологічна культура майбутнього медичного працівника», «критеріально-діагностичний підхід»; моделювання – для розроблення системи критеріїв, показників і рівнів сформованості екологічної культури.

Результати: обґрунтовано критеріально-діагностичний підхід до оцінювання екологічної культури студентів медичних коледжів; визначено систему критеріїв (мотиваційно-ціннісний, когнітивний, поведінково-діяльнісний), відповідні показники та рівні її сформованості; встановлено, що застосування комплексного діагностичного інструментарію сприяє об'єктивному оцінюванню готовності майбутніх медичних працівників до екологічно безпечної професійної діяльності, підвищенню якості їхньої професійної підготовки та формуванню відповідального ставлення до збереження здоров'я і довкілля.

Висновки: використання критеріально-діагностичного підходу до оцінювання екологічної культури студентів медичних коледжів забезпечує цілісне уявлення про рівень її сформованості, дозволяє своєчасно коригувати освітній процес, сприяє розвитку екологічного мислення, професійної відповідальності та готовності майбутніх медичних працівників до забезпечення екологічної безпеки у сфері охорони здоров'я.

Ключові слова: екологічна культура, студент медичного коледжу, критерії, показники, діагностика, професійна підготовка, екологічна безпека .

Manuscript received: 15.06.2025
Accepted for publication after peer review: 06.10.2025
Published: 18.12.2025