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Ethical issues in the teacher and the student relationship

Eva Kralova*, Faculty of Medicine, Institute of Medical Physics, Biophysics, Informatics and Telemedicine, Comenius University in Bratislava, Bratislava 814 99, Slovakia

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Abstract

The mutual interaction of teacher and student and observance of ethical principles in their communication are currently actual problem in the teaching process, including university study. In order to map the current situation in the application of ethical principles and pedagogical tact in the teaching, we realised long-term pedagogical survey in acad. years 2009/2010 and 2017/2018 (65/105 respondents, respectively). Respondents—students of the first year of Faculty of Medicine Comenius University in Bratislava evaluated the level of ethical principles observance and pedagogical tact during teaching and the quality of mutual communication teacher–student and student–teacher. The results of this survey are analysed in this paper.

Keywords: Ethics, ethical principles in education, pedagogical tact, communication teacher—student.

* ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: **Eva Kralova**, Faculty of Medicine, Institute of Medical Physics, Biophysics, Informatics and Telemedicine, Comenius University in Bratislava, Bratislava 814 99, Slovakia. *E-mail address:* eva.kralova@fmed.uniba.sk

1. Introduction

The level, course and outcomes of the teaching process are substantially influenced by the teacher's personality and pedagogical tact, which is an important part of professional ethics code. Teacher's pedagogically tactful behaviour towards students is positively reflected in educational outcomes, creates an optimal atmosphere for mental work, motivates and thus brings positive effect (Stepanovic, Stefanovic & Grac, 1971).

The application of ethical principles in relation to the participants of the teaching process plays a significant role. Both the levels of ethics in relations between teacher and student and in the communication teacher–student/student–teacher are important. They also have an impact on the student's motivation to study, especially with regard to the study of less popular subjects (e.g., sciences) at study programs not focused on the sciences, as medicine study. The pedagogical tact can be distinguished general features according to which teacher's behaviour towards student/students can be denoted as pedagogically tactful or tactless (Kralova, 2017).

2. Methods

In order to map the current situation in the application of ethical principles and pedagogical tact, we realised in acad. years 2009/2010 and 2017/2018 a pedagogical survey (65/105 respondents, respectively) using anonymous questionnaire. Respondents—students of the first year of Faculty of Medicine Comenius University in Bratislava evaluated the level of ethical principles application, pedagogical tactful and tactless behaviour in the teaching process and the quality of mutual communication teacher–student/student–teacher.

Respondents rated next three statements:

1. How do you assess the level of application of ethical principles in relationship teacher/student and student/teacher?
2. How do you assess the level of pedagogical tact during practical training/lectures?
3. How do you evaluate the quality of teacher–student communication at the university?

Respondents expressed their attitudes on the score scale from 0 (negative rating) to 10 (positive rating), subsequently their attitudes were categorised into five categories (0 negative, 1–3 moderately negative, 4–6 neutral, 7–10 slightly positive and 10 positive).

3. Results

3.1. Average score of the level of ethical principles application in the relationship teacher–student/student–teacher in respective acad. years

- 2009/2010—6.48 (neutral)/6.90 (slightly positive),
- 2017/2018—7.96 (slightly positive)/7.78 (slightly positive).

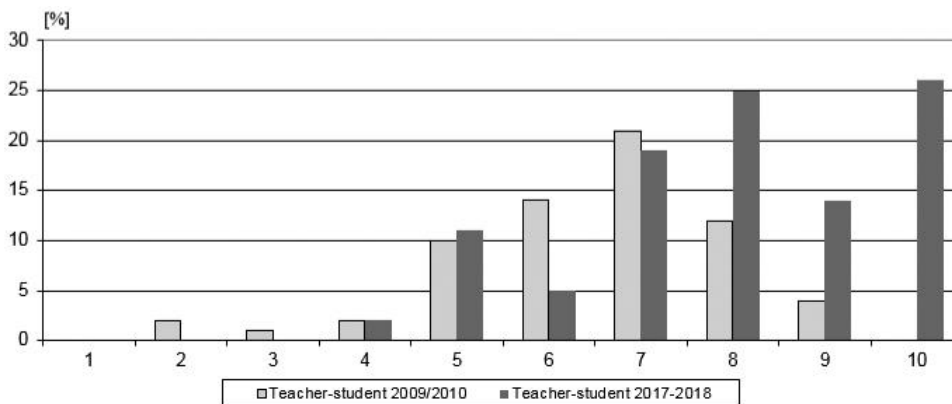


Figure 1. Comparison of the level of application of ethical principles in the teacher–student communication at the university (acad. years 2009/2010 and 2017/2018)

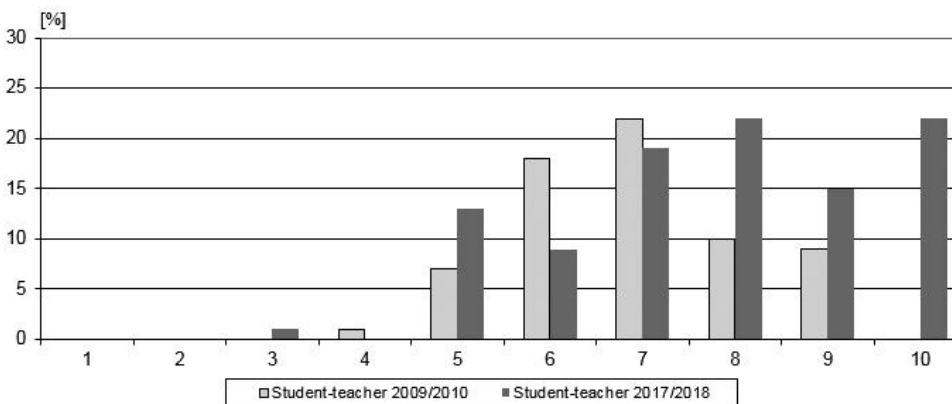


Figure 2. Comparison of the level of application of ethical principles in the student–teacher communication at the university (acad. years 2009/2010 and 2017/2018)

The graphical and statistical evaluation of the level of ethical principles application in the teacher–student (Figure 1) and student–teacher (Figure 2) relationship in two acad. years (2009/2010 and 2017/2018) showed the level of ethical principles in the teacher–student communication has shifted to higher average scores (6.48 → 7.96). The same statement is true for the student–teacher communication (6.90 → 7.78).

3.2. Evaluate the level of pedagogical tactful and tactless behaviour of teacher at the university (lectures/practical training in respective acad. years)

Average score of the level of pedagogical tactful and tactless behaviour of teacher during lectures/practical training:

- 2009/2010—6.08 (neutral)/6.95 (slightly positive),
- 2017/2018—7.00 (slightly positive)/8.13 (slightly positive).

Respondents’ assessment of the pedagogical tact level of the teacher showed its higher level during practical training compared with the lectures (Figure 3).

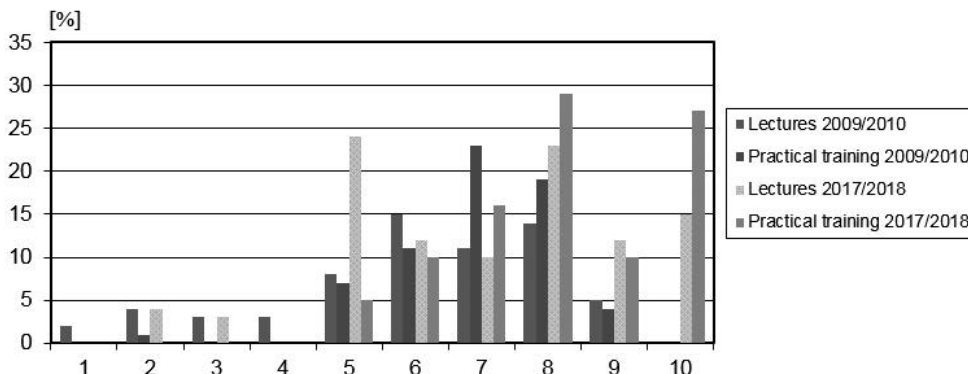


Figure 3. The level of pedagogical tact at lectures and practical training at university (acad. years 2009/2010 and 2017/2018)

In our opinion, this fact is resulting from the specific and different nature of these two forms of teaching and better opportunity for individual contact of teacher with the student during practical training. This is true for both evaluated academic years (Figures 4 and 5).

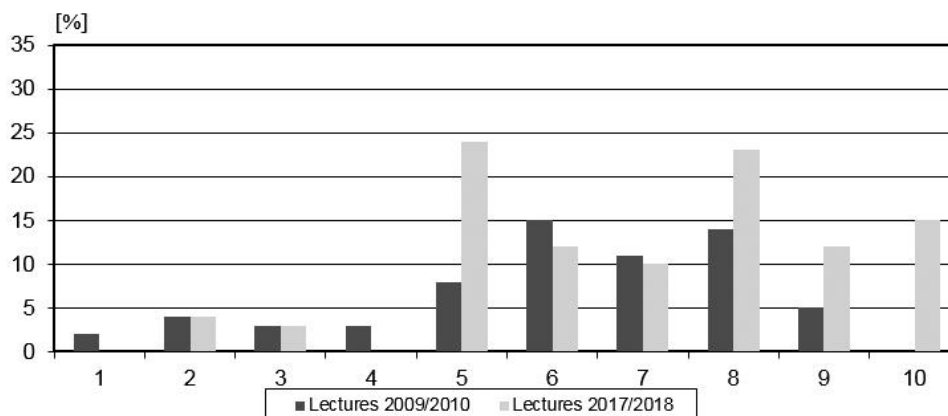


Figure 4. The level of pedagogical tact at lectures at university (acad. years 2009/2010 and 2017/2018)

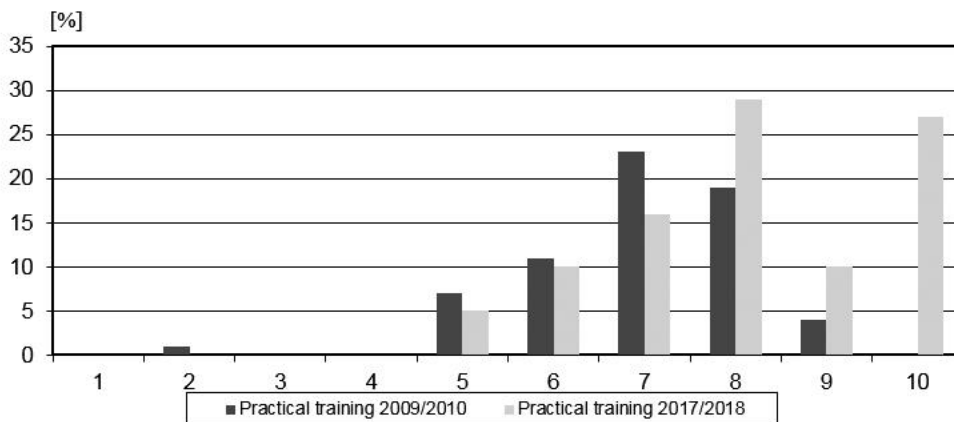


Figure 5. The level of pedagogical tact at practical training at university (acad. years 2009/2010 and 2017/2018)

The graphical and statistical evaluation of the level of pedagogical tactful and tactless behaviour of teacher at the lectures (Figure 4) and at the practical training (Figure 5) in the acad. years 2009/2010

and 2017/2018 showed the level of pedagogical tactful and tactless behaviour of teacher has shifted to higher average scores at lectures (6.08 → 7.00). The same statement is true for the practical training (6.95 → 8.13).

3.3. The quality of mutual communication teacher–student at the university was evaluated by respondents in acad. years Evaluate the level of pedagogical tactful and tactless behaviour of teacher at the university (lectures/practical teaching in respective acad. years 2009/2010 and 2017/2018

Average score of the quality of mutual communication teacher–student:

- 2009/2010—5.68 (neutral),
- 2017/2018—7.89 (slightly positive).

The acad. year 2017/2018 was observed a significant shift of the average score to higher values compared with acad. year 2009/2010 (Figure 6).

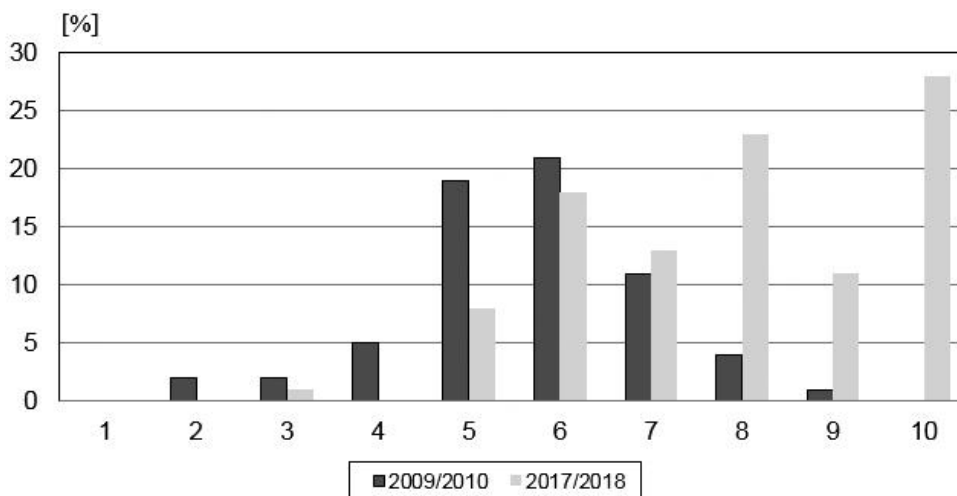


Figure 6. The quality of mutual communication teacher–student at university (acad. years 2009/2010 and 2017/2018)

4. Conclusion

We found out a positive tendency in application of ethical principles in the university study, satisfying pedagogical tact and higher quality of teacher–student communication that could positively affect the study outcomes.

Levels of application of ethical principles in the relationship teacher–student and student–teacher were evaluated in both acad. years as neutral or slightly positive.

Results also showed slightly positive responses concerning application of pedagogical tactful behaviour of teachers in the teaching process (lectures/practical trainings).

Teacher–student communication was also evaluated as slightly positive in last two acad. years.

In the same time, we believe that the pedagogical ethics during the medicine study will also influence the ethical behaviour of medicine absolvents to the patients in their future medicine practice.

Obtained results could be also explained by the facts that in the time interval between evaluated academic years took place:

- significant personnel changes in the teaching staff;
- objective requirements in both theoretical and practical teaching were determined;
- objective evaluation of the electronic test form of continuous and final examination was introduced;
- the rules of protocols (records from experimental measurements) evaluation have been clearly defined in advance;
- emphasis of the teaching has been shifted to the practical training, which makes it possible to deal with difficult issues in smaller study groups, individually and create platform for closer interaction between the teacher and the student.

The work of a university teacher is demanding to meet the expectations of the educational institution, legislation and students. Therefore, it is necessary for a university teacher to be continuously educated in all areas of his/her profession, which creates assumptions for the optimal performance of his/her role in the teaching process.

The teacher should be the holder of the same culture relations that he/she requires from students, he/she should be principled but also tolerant, demanding not only for students, but also for his/her own pedagogical performance and, last but not least, the friendly and respectful personality of the students. The attitudes and relations of the university teacher to the students are always reflected in the student's relations to the teacher himself (Balazsiova, 2017).

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