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INFLUENCE OF ACADEMIC RELATIONS BETWEEN UNIVERSITY TEACHERS AND STUDENTS ON EDUCATIONAL PROCESS EFFICIENCY

INFLUENCIA DE LAS RELACIONES ACADÉMICAS ENTRE PROFESORES UNIVERSITARIOS Y ESTUDIANTES EN LA EFICACIA DEL PROCESO EDUCATIVO

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ABSTRACT

A teacher in higher education is a key figure who has a strategic role in the development of a student's personality in the course of vocational training. The objective of the teacher-student system is to bring up and train a highly qualified specialist, and the efficiency of the educational process hinges on the real academic relationship between the teacher and the student, on how effectively the teacher can influence their mentee. The study aims to conduct a typological analysis of real academic relations between the teacher and the student based on an expert survey of practicing university teachers in Russia and Kazakhstan. The study identifies characteristic types of students that university teachers deal with in their teaching and research work, characteristic types of teachers that students deal with in their university training, as well as the possible types of relations between the different

types of teachers and students. It is concluded that the typology of academic teacher-student relations reflects the diversity and ambiguity of today's university life, which must be a serious challenge to university administration.

Keywords:

Higher education, academic relations, student, teacher, typology.

RESUMEN

El profesor en la enseñanza superior es una figura clave que desempeña un papel estratégico en el desarrollo de la personalidad del estudiante durante su formación profesional. El objetivo del sistema profesor-alumno es formar a un especialista altamente cualificado, y la eficacia

del proceso educativo depende de la relación académica real entre el profesor y el alumno, de la eficacia con la que el profesor pueda influir en su alumno. El estudio pretende realizar un análisis tipológico de las relaciones académicas reales entre el profesor y el alumno basado en una encuesta a expertos de profesores universitarios en ejercicio de Rusia y Kazajstán. El estudio identifica los tipos característicos de alumnos con los que tratan los profesores universitarios en su labor docente e investigadora, los tipos característicos de profesores con los que tratan los alumnos en su formación universitaria, así como los posibles tipos de relaciones entre los distintos tipos de profesores y alumnos. Se concluye que la tipología de las relaciones profesor-alumno universitario refleja la diversidad y ambigüedad de la vida universitaria actual, lo que debe constituir un serio reto para la administración universitaria.

Palabras clave:

Enseñanza superior, relaciones académicas, estudiante, profesor, tipología.

INTRODUCTION

The efficiency of the educational process is greatly contingent on the development of subject-subject relations between teachers and students in the academic process, their interpersonal interaction rooted in dialogue, cooperation, and partnership (Kalashnikov et al., 2023). A drastic change in the social roles, positions, and relations of teachers and students has been brought about by the demands of the time and the new paradigm (Bardach & Klassen, 2020).

Current scientific approaches suggest the following processes taking place in the global educational space: education is acquiring the characteristics of continuous learning (Kim & Seo, 2018); the student becomes a seeker and producer of personal knowledge (Madigan & Kim, 2021); the teacher performs the functions of an organizer of students' learning activity, the process of them obtaining a personal experience of learning (Baideldinova et al., 2021); the efficiency and humanistic orientation of the learning process is achieved through joint activities and positive interpersonal interaction of students in the conditions of a community brought together by the goal and objectives of the process with due regard to the unique position and culture of each individual (Chehaibar et al., 2023).

The relevance of analyzing the subject position of students in the educational process and their relationships with teachers is defined not only by the regular features of the individual's learning activity and the role of education

in its development, but also by the fact that the relations in the "student-teacher" system are the basis, where the personal self-affirmation of the future specialist unfolds for the first time, their self-awareness develops, and the model of professional activity is mastered.

The problem of the teacher's relationships with students is examined predominantly in the context of various aspects of pedagogical communication (Li et al., 2021; Urmina et al., 2022). Select studies concerning the problem of teacher-student relationships have examined: general issues of pedagogical interaction in higher education (Titsworth et al., 2015; Göktaş & Kaya, 2023); the dialogical interaction of the teacher and the student as a precondition of future specialists' personal and professional growth (García & Medécigo, 2014); psychological aspects in the interpersonal interaction of teachers and students (Vidic et al., 2022).

Under academic relations in the teacher-student diad, we understand a purposeful interaction of subjects in the pedagogical process determined by the goal and objectives of joint educational and professional activity, which is shaped by the social role functions of the partners and the peculiarities and regularities of pedagogical communication in a higher education institution (Vera, 2017).

An analysis of research (Malik et al., 2022; Seth & Bhuyan, 2023) has found that teacher-student relationships are characterized by a complex internal structure, which includes the following components: 1) motivational (interest in the partner and the need for a relationship with them); 2) cognitive (perception and assessment of the other; reflection on relationships and awareness of their challenges; understanding of optimal relationships); 3) emotional (satisfaction with the established relationships; mutual evaluative relationships between partners; a sense of security and comfort or tension and anxiety); 4) behavioral (the type of relationship and the style of pedagogical communication: the mode of behavior in conflict situations; the means of adjusting relationships and mutual influence).

The nature of the teacher's relationships with students is defined by the primary goals of their pedagogical work and the degree of their consistency with the goals of students' vocational education activity, which are: 1) organization and management of the process of students mastering professional knowledge, abilities, and skills in the chosen specialty assumed by the curriculum (Tormey, 2021); 2) providing students with all the information, illustrative guides, and other educational means necessary to achieve the first goal (Petillion & McNeil, 2020); 3) carrying out the educational process in a way that it contributes to the maximum possible development of general

psychological and especially intellectual (in the context of the specialty) abilities (Bektas et al., 2015); 4) organization, management and implementation of the educational process aimed at the upbringing of each student as a highly moral, creative, active, and socially mature person (Aleksandrova et al., 2023).

Meanwhile, analysis of research findings gives evidence that today’s system of values of student youth is undergoing prominent shifts. A considerable number of students show a negative attitude to educational, social, and any other socially useful activity (Moreva & Skitnevskaya, 2023). Thus, instead of an ideal model of student-teacher relationships, we often face educational realities with plenty of deviations from its exemplary implementation.

In line with the above, the goal of the study is to conduct a typological analysis of real academic relationships between the teacher and the student using an expert survey of practicing university teachers in Russia and Kazakhstan.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In the first stage of research, relevant scientific sources were selected on Web of Science and Scopus using the keywords “teacher,” “student,” “relationships,” and “higher education” with the publication date restricted to no more than 10 years ago.

The approximate set of theoretical research methods employed to achieve the research goal includes theoretical generalization and structural-logical analysis in establishing the specifics of academic teacher-student relationships in university education.

The second stage of the study involved an expert survey that attempted to answer the following research questions: (1) What are the characteristic types of students that university teachers deal with in their teaching and research work? (2) What are the characteristic types of teachers that students deal with in their university training? (3) What are the possible types of relations between the different types of teachers and students?

Invitations to participate in the study were emailed to 62 experts, who were teachers at Russian and Kazakh universities. The experts were samples based on a criterion of no less than 10 years of teaching experience at the university. In total, 48 teachers agreed to take part in the survey, after which they were emailed the formulated research questions (1-3). The letters asked them to justify their answers in free form and additionally express their own opinion on the problem of academic relations between teachers and students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Turning to the results of the expert survey, we can outline the characteristic types of students that Russian and Kazakh university teachers encounter in their professional practice: student-researcher, student-entrepreneur, student-minimalist, and student-violator. Expert characteristics of the identified types of students are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Expert characteristics of the types of students (based on the expert survey).

Type	Expert characteristic
researcher	«are intellectually active and inquisitive,» «devote their time to participating in research and prepare for it assiduously, using copious sources,» «ask questions, discuss, expand their knowledge,» «their yearning is for the process of learning about their surrounding reality»
entrepreneur	«the busiest»; «make efforts to study thoroughly enough to then go on to study another field or specialization,» «get a job to gain professional experience»; «aim to have the best possible chance of finding a good professional occupation after graduation»
minimalist	«discoverers and explorers of the status of 'being' a student,» «have consciously committed to a minimum program in the process of learning and a maximum program in enjoying student life»
violator	a person who violates the existing norms of social community at the university

Source: Elaboration of authors

The expert survey has also established the equivalent characteristic types of teachers faced by Russian and Kazakh students in their university studies: teacher-researcher, teacher-entrepreneur, teacher-minimalist, and teacher-violator. Expert characteristics of the types of teachers are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Expert characteristics of the types of teachers (based on the expert survey).

Type	Expert characteristic
researcher	«an independent researcher who expands their professional field of activity through their scientific work,» «their objective is not simply to teach but to work in their branch of science,» «they can educate only in proportion to their research work»; «they not just 'teach' their subject but express their scientific views»
entrepreneur	«seeks the best position in the scientific community,» «focuses on obtaining grants and interesting internships and adhering to the latest government regulations»; «these teachers tend to be quite young and full of physical and mental strength»
minimalist	«teaches their discipline without any deep passion for it, driven by the belief that it is a relatively easy academic discipline and that one can excel in it without much effort compared to other fields,» «are not marked by any exceptional care for the quality of educational work»
violator	initiators of academic mobbing, fraudsters, etc.

Source: Elaboration of authors

Consistent with this great diversity of the types of students and teachers, there are numerous possible types of relationships between them (Table 3).

Table 3: Types of teacher-student relationships at the university (based on the expert survey).

researcher		Teacher			
		entrepreneur	minimalist	violator	
Student	researcher	++	+	+	-
	entrepreneur	+	++	+/-	+/-
	minimalist	+	+	++	+
	violator	-	+	+	+

Source: Elaboration of authors

Note: ++ – a highly positive level of academic relationships; + – a positive level of academic relationships; +/- – a neutral level of academic relationships; – a negative (confrontational) level of academic relationships

According to the survey of experts, the first characteristic type of students that university teachers deal with in their teaching and research work (Table 1) is a **student-researcher** – a participant in research, and in this sense also a budding scientist, who expands the scope of the known through their scientific work. This type of student is especially desirable with respect to the goals of vocational training. A person who belongs to this type is distinguished by reliability in training and a creative search for knowledge.

The next type of student is a follower of the rules of the market game (**student-entrepreneur**). Students in this category are more sensitive to adaptation to the conditions of the established market economy.

The third type of contemporary students are **students-minimalists**. This is not a homogeneous group, although quite large, and in it we can distinguish:

- a) “limited minimalists,” those who, despite estimating their intellectual potential rather low, are satisfied with passing credits and exams; focus their “academic” efforts on passing the following semesters rather than on developing their creative potential and acquiring knowledge and competencies;
- b) “program minimalists” – students who actively participate in entertainment events organized by student clubs and participate in them as entertainers. Despite their intellectual potential, they receive low grades in the learning process;
- c) “pragmatic minimalists,” who follow the general trend of popularization of higher education, embracing the principle that it is now imperative to complete some study and obtain a university degree.

Taking part in the formal educational process, **student-minimalists** do not show much emotional involvement, but generally meet a certain minimum and easily continue their education. When faced with the threat of bad grades, representatives of this group can mobilize themselves and use their educational potential to overcome “moments of crisis”.

For various reasons, they keep obtaining minimal knowledge, which is consistent with the analysis presented by Chehaibar et al. (2023).

A student-violator is “a person who violates the existing norms of social community at the university” (Table 1). Cheating is a particularly painful and, unfortunately, quite common phenomenon in the academic environment, which, despite its undoubted harmfulness, is overlooked. The student-fraudster resorts to lying in relations with other participants of the educational process. In this category, we can find, among others, the student-plagiarist, who submits papers composed of fragments of other people’s statements, and sometimes even completely written by another person, as their own. Another example of the functioning of a fraudulent student is the extremely intractable practice of cheating on exams and final credits. A student fraudster consciously accepts as natural the possibility of violating ethics in relations with another person (Moreva & Skitnevskaya, 2023). In the category of student-violators, some people resort to violence against members of the academic community. Usually, this involves verbal and symbolic violence, coercing a certain behavior in favor of the student-violator.

The outlined typology comprises a certain range of ideal, pure types. Factually, as indicated by research (García & Medécigo, 2014), due to the patterns of development of the person and their relationships with others, the real self-image created by the student may undergo a certain evolution or sharp changes. Furthermore, the presented typology can be further expanded to include additional criteria, for instance, the features of the predominant generation of students (Göktaş & Kaya, 2023).

To give an example, research by Petillion & McNeil (2020), has found at least one additional type of modern student: a student “typical representative of Generation Z” (the generation currently dominating the student population).

A student who is a typical representative of Generation Z is quite well-versed in the realities of technical advancement, as they feel at home in the world of the Internet, use it as the leading source of information, and are unfamiliar with the political past of our country. The latter is one of the reasons leading them to seem more tolerant of various socio-political phenomena than older generations. They are also not afraid to create their forms of entrepreneurship. Students matching this characteristic will therefore be proficient in technical skills and innovation in training for professional activity, and open to contacts with a new professional environment – these are undoubted advantages of a future specialist. It is worth adding, however, that representatives of Generation Z value comfort and pleasure in life, expect partnership and favor from their

employers, and cope well with standard tasks, which can be solved using strict algorithms but are less effective in non-standard situations that require a lot of their creativity. In the educational process, these personality characteristics translate into expecting the teacher to give detailed and simple recommendations on passing the course.

The expert survey also identifies the typical types of teachers that students deal with in their university studies (Table 2). The first and the most ideal type is a *teacher-researcher*. However, on the other side of students’ relations taking place during the educational process is not always a teacher-researcher. The results of the expert survey allow, similarly to the student typology presented above, to specify the list of typical teachers.

Apart from a teacher-researcher, this list includes the types of *teacher-entrepreneur*, *teacher-minimalist*, and, regrettably, *teacher-violator*.

Analyzing the desired image of teacher-student relationships, we should highlight the configuration of a *teacher-researcher* paired with a *student-researcher*, as the two are focused on the same goals. The expert survey suggests that a teacher-researcher is greatly satisfied with the passion for knowledge shown by such a student. Their relationships are marked by a clear commonality of thought and discussion (scholarly debate) in university classes. An independent and creative student who takes responsibility for their knowledge is a joy for every true teacher-researcher. The teacher-researcher inspires the student-researcher to discover new areas of existing knowledge, shares personal research experience in the field, and finally encourages the student to conduct their research. Such a relationship is developmentally constructive not only for both subjects of learning but also for the quality of knowledge per se (Vera, 2017).

A *teacher-researcher* may have quite a good relationship with a *student-entrepreneur*, valuing their diligence and enthusiasm. However, if the efforts of the student-entrepreneur in the academic and extracurricular activities simultaneously prevent them from a more in-depth study of university disciplines, there can be a breakdown in that relationship. Caring for this student, the teacher-researcher will surely start a substantive conversation about the problem with them.

Building a relationship with a *student-minimalist* takes special effort from a *teacher-researcher*. A constructive form of this relationship requires a change in the student’s attitude. The teacher-researcher has to make a lot of effort to unlock the developmental potential of the *limited minimalist* student and encourage them to work creatively and diligently on themselves and the learning material.

In the case of a *student-program minimalist*, experts believe that it could be effective to use their interests and encourage them to demonstrate organizational skills in lectures and practical classes. The teacher's presence in such situations as a person participating in joint activities can contribute to an authentic, meaningful dialogue with a program minimalist.

The experts suggest that things might be much more difficult with a *student-pragmatic minimalist* since their adoption of a specific pragmatic outlook can likely stem from a persistent conformist or conventional mode of participation in social life. Overcoming this attitude of the student requires powerful stimuli and genuine involvement of the teacher-researcher in solving real educational objectives arising in their joint experience with the student.

However, the most difficult for a teacher-researcher is the relationship with a *student-violator*. The teacher-researcher will fight the manifestation of student dishonesty and unreliability. Therefore, they will not tolerate any form of deception (including plagiarism) on the part of students. The price for this may be antagonism (sometimes even aggression) on the part of the student-violator, yet there may also be a change in the student's attitude in the form of effective re-socialization. The teacher-researcher, driven by a concern for the quality of education, will pursue this change in students who disrupt the educational process with pathological behavior (Titsworth et al., 2015). Experts believe that if the teacher-researcher finds themselves and the student unable to remedy this situation, they will take action to remove such a student from educational work.

A different quality of relationships with students is developed by a *teacher-entrepreneur*. In their contacts with students, they are understandably extremely inspiring to *students-entrepreneurs*. They also often give impetus to the development of *student-researchers*, as they can be interesting to them, attracting them with their ingenuity. Nevertheless, student-researchers can also be disappointed in this type of teacher due to the specific pragmatism of the latter.

Unfortunately, there are also *teacher-minimalists* in academic reality, who in their relations with students are guided primarily by the rules of formal propriety, preserving the principle of minimalism here as well. Therefore, they will not make great efforts to ensure that the student has a deep understanding of the teaching material. However, they will strive for a method of assessing students that is not burdensome for them by setting minimal requirements.

These teachers are probably the most favored by *student-minimalists* of all types. They regrettably do not give them

the impetus to approach the subject of study responsibly and creatively. In relations with *student-violators*, the teacher-minimalist may avoid open confrontation, so they will not make any special efforts to change the attitude of such a student. On the contrary, this teacher will, sometimes quite deliberately, turn a blind eye to their behavior, thus creating the appearance of social acceptance of such conduct.

Even more regrettable is the fact that the academic environment does have *teachers-violators*, whose presence, experts argue, "threatens the status of all members of the university community" and "introduces insincerity and hypocrisy, and even more or less hidden violence into the relationships between participants in the educational process". Such teachers are relatively least dangerous for *student researchers*, who, as a rule, identify this type of university employees rather quickly, often counteracting their dishonest endeavors with available legal and moral means. At the same time, it is the student-researcher's confrontation with the teacher-violator in committing morally reprehensible actions that can lead to various kinds of excesses. *Students-pragmatic minimalists* and *student-violators* sometimes deliberately play along with such a teacher.

Focusing on the easiest way to complete their studies, they do not enter an open conflict with the teacher.

However, teacher-student relations today are complicated by a certain liberalization of relationships on the part of students who are typical representatives of Generation Z. Brought up in mass culture, they lose adequate distance and respect for the teacher and prefer not to make too much effort to gain knowledge. This can be particularly tiring for a teacher-researcher who, while demanding maturity, creativity, and responsibility in the teaching process, is faced with students' helplessness or reluctance relating, for example, to an independent search of the literature on the subject under study, the inability of seminar participants to identify their research interests, and unfounded claims regarding the grading of examination papers (despite clearly identified logical and factual errors found in them).

The lack of distance and respect for the teacher observed today is manifested in the abandonment of polite forms, ignoring the rules of polite behavior, careless use of academic titles, hastily formulated, sometimes dismissive, and made without respect for the elementary principles of decency, remarks about the teacher.

CONCLUSIONS

The typology of academic teacher-student relations shows the diversity and ambiguity of modern university life. The emerging pluralism of teacher-student relationships should be alarming. The source of this concern is, first of all, that representatives of some of the above-described types of teachers and students have lost the most important goal of learning – the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and abilities. For this reason, the existing diversity of types of participants in academic relationships should pose a serious challenge to the actors formally responsible for the quality of education (university administration).

Furthermore, this poses a problem for the actors exercising the highest legislative and supervisory powers in this sphere. It is they who, when detailing to universities the way of realization of the educational process, can relatively easily fall into the trap of creating an impersonal model of teacher-student relations, and, consequently, involve the subordinate participants of the academic reality in it as well.

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