The effect of healthcare education on students’ moral competence in Poland

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Abstract

In competitive education test scores and scientometric indicators are ‘the alpha and omega’. This can be mis-educative for healthcare students’ moral competence. A pilot research study with n=114 Polish healthcare students was conducted to examine how their moral competence development was affected by learning environment with the focus on competition. Data were obtained with the standard Moral Competence Test. Results. The sample allowed the identification of a regress in moral competence during students’ pre-clinical curriculum, and then progress during their clinical curriculum. Also, a reverse gender gap effect concerning participants’ C-scores (C for moral competence) was observed, but no significant segmentation effect was noticed. Explanations. Scholarly literature usually suggests a decrease or stagnation of medical and healthcare students’ C-scores (particularly during their clinical curriculum) resulting from, e.g., competitive trends in higher education. Polish tertiary education only tries hard to increase its competitiveness and position in national and international rankings. This delay effect seems beneficial for the development of students’ moral competence against trends in moral competence education during medical education documented between 1983 and 2021, and additionally discussed in the following article.

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