

EMPATHY: THE KEY TO QUALITY IN MODERN EDUCATION

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Abstract: This article analyzes the role of empathy in the modern educational process. The article examines the profound influence of empathy not only on the relationship between teacher and student but also on students' academic achievement, motivation, social development, and classroom environment quality (Roorda et al., 2011; Durlak et al., 2011; Decety & Cowell, 2014). The essence, main components, and significance of SOE programs in school practice are also highlighted. In conclusion, the article provides practical recommendations for developing empathy.

Keywords: empathy, education, socio-emotional learning, SEL, motivation, academic achievement, inclusive environment, scientific research.

Introduction.

The principle of educating the "whole person" stands at the center of modern pedagogy. In today's world, there is a growing demand for individuals who are not only knowledgeable but also empathetic, responsible, capable of effective communication with others, and able to solve complex social problems. From this perspective, empathy should be viewed not only as a human quality but also as a strategic pedagogical tool. It directly influences the quality of relationships among all participants in education - teachers, students, and parents - as well as students' academic success and the formation of a healthy school culture. This article aims to serve as a guide for a deeper exploration of the importance of empathy in education based on scientific research, illuminating its various aspects and their practical application.

Literature review.

Empathy has a multifaceted impact on the educational process and serves as the psychological foundation of education, establishing a trusting connection between teacher and student. A teacher with well-developed empathetic abilities listens not only to what the student is saying but also to their inner feelings. This, in turn, creates an environment of "psychological safety" in the educational process - the student is not afraid to approach you with their thoughts, difficulties, and mistakes. A study by Roorda et al. (2011) demonstrates that students who have warm and supportive relationships with their teachers develop a positive attitude towards school, participate in lessons with greater enthusiasm, and achieve better academic results. A student who feels valued and understood by their teacher is more likely to take responsibility for their actions, work independently, and show greater resilience in overcoming challenges when completing tasks. Empathy expressed by the teacher, such as "I understand your difficulties" or "I'm here if you need help," instills a sense of security in the student. This, in turn, gives the

student the inner courage to ask questions, express opinions, and try new things without fear of making mistakes.

A meta-analysis of studies by Geitz & de Geus (2019) clearly demonstrates that teachers' empathic approach, which takes into account students' personal interests and listens to their perspectives, significantly increases students' intrinsic motivation. Students read because they are interested, want to learn, and desire to understand things. This shows that relationships built on empathy, rather than punishments or external rewards, transform students into the main protagonists of their learning and improve their academic performance. An empathetic teacher identifies each student's individual needs and interests and adapts the lesson accordingly. For example, teaching mathematics through statistical examples for a student interested in sports. This encourages active participation, as students understand the relevance of what they're learning.

Simultaneously, a comprehensive study on socio-emotional development and cooperation in education by Durlak et al. (2011) examines the effectiveness of implementing social and emotional learning (SEL) programs in schools. The core component of these programs is developing empathy. SEL programs not only increase academic achievement (by an average of 11%) but also significantly reduce classroom disruptions, symptoms of depression, and substance dependence. Students who have learned empathy choose dialogue over insults and honest debate over violence. It enables students to understand their peers' feelings, resolve conflicts peacefully, and work effectively in groups. This, in turn, creates a healthy and mutually respectful environment in the classroom.

A study conducted with middle school students by Oberle, E., & Schonert-Reichl, K. A. (2017) shows that adolescents who feel highly supported and understood by their teachers not only achieve better academic results but also experience higher psychological well-being. They exhibit significantly lower levels of depression symptoms, anxiety, and stress. This indicates that during the complex psychological changes of adolescence, a teacher's empathy plays a crucial protective role in bringing stability to students' personal and academic lives.

Neurological research on fostering an inclusive educational environment by Decety, J., & Cowell, J. M (2014) reveals that the brain's "cognitive system" (prefrontal cortex) and "emotional system" (limbic system, especially the amygdala) are actively involved in empathy. From this result, we can understand that teaching empathy requires exercising the parts of the brain that perform social functions. This, in turn, helps to partially eliminate discrimination and stereotypes. In a classroom where empathic abilities are well developed, every student - regardless of their culture, ability, or social group - feels "at home," increasing class attendance rates and making their time at school more satisfying.

The first stage of the "Design Thinking" method, which has begun to be widely used in modern education, is called "Empathy" (Empathize). At this stage, before solving a problem, students must deeply understand who it affects and how. This method views empathy not only as a human quality but also as a key component in finding innovative solutions.

At the same time, to develop empathy in the classroom, teachers should foster active listening, expand the vocabulary of emotions, conduct role-playing games in the classroom, and lead by example.

In the educational process, active listening on the part of the teacher lays the foundation for creating an empathic atmosphere in the classroom. This involves giving full attention to the

student when they are speaking, not looking at phones or other distractions, and encouraging them to express their feelings with questions like "How do you feel about this?" To expand students' emotional vocabulary, teaching them more nuanced emotions such as "amazed," "hopeless," "delighted," and "irritated" helps them express their states more accurately. Furthermore, when teachers illustrate conflict situations in the educational process through role-playing, it allows students to gain a deeper understanding of the feelings of opposing sides.

The scientific research analyzed above shows that empathy is not just a "good quality," but an integral and strategic aspect of modern education. An empathic learning environment provides students with a sense of security, high motivation, good academic performance, and strong social skills. At the same time, it allows teachers to create deeper connections with students, build trust, and foster a positive and effective learning environment in the classroom. In conclusion, school is not only a place of learning but also an institution that enables one to become a well-rounded individual. Empathy is the most important driving force in this process.

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