


Adult Education and Empathy: The Impact of Empathy Development on Students' Academic Competencies and Classroom Engagement Post Covid-19

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ABSTRACT

Post COVID-19, the world experiences tension politically, socially, and educationally. COVID-19 brought a new world reality. This integrative literature review addressed how encouraging empathetic classroom activities boosts students' empathetic use in their community; how institutional empathetic communication post COVID-19 enhances students' abilities to meet educational challenges by fostering those learners' resilience due to the expansion of mutual care; how engaging learners academically, interculturally, mentally, and emotionally requires new development in institutional communicative approaches; how institutional practice and activities should embrace collaborative learning through well-designed activities; and how interpersonal perceptions shape institutional empathy practices. Therefore, infusing empathetic leadership develops a sense of belonging and profound trust in the community. Additionally, the review provides some researched pedagogical practices to spur empathy in educational environments, which support learners' academic competencies.

KEYWORDS

Care-Oriented Human-Centered Pedagogy, COVID-19 Pandemic, Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning, Pandemic Pedagogy, Pedagogy of Care

1. INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 has induced uncertain times and constantly changing conditions in educational environments. The recent educational struggles for quality learning, digital equity, emergency management, and students' and teachers' well-being shaped how educators and students manage their lives. Therefore, societies are permeated by an overarching sense of tension. Learners became vulnerable to the rapid changes in their communities. Therefore, teachers need to play a vital role in fostering kindness and empathy in their classrooms and serve as role models by developing positive communication with students. Empathetic understanding is considered an influential success trait for learners during difficult times. Researchers and writers use the word "empathetic" to label a person who owns empathy,

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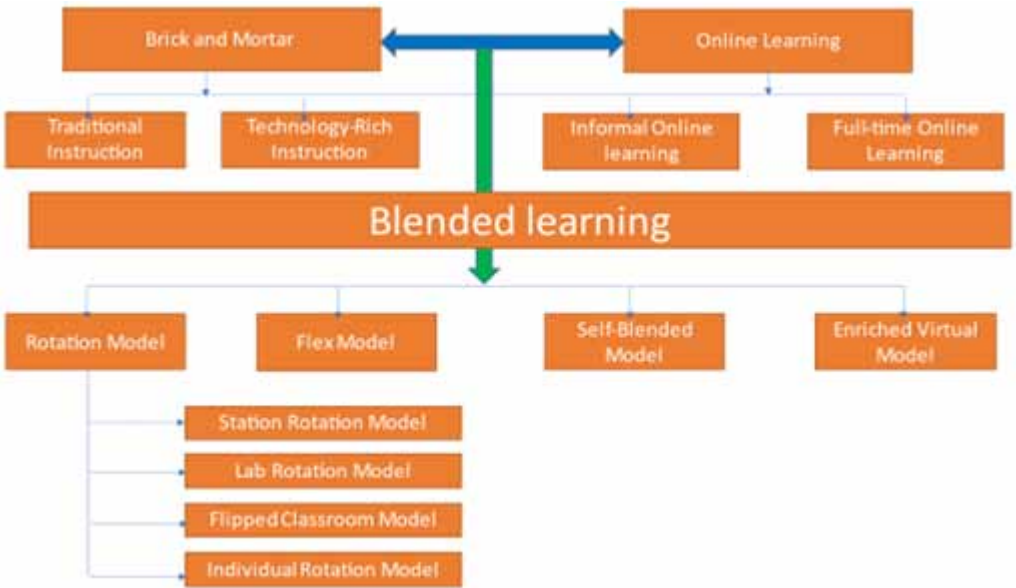
communicates with others, and views oneself through the eyes of others. Examining one's beliefs and conditions in terms of those of others fosters others' appreciation and respect. This communicative attitude enables learners to shift the focus from the differences to the areas that bring people together (Jones, 1990; Vogus et al., 2020; Zaky, 2022).

1.1 COVID-19 and Pedagogy

COVID-19 was not expected to hit the entire world in such a ferocious manner. Nations that were in the prosperity race entered a survival one instead. The origin of the virus, which addresses human incompetence, remains unknown. Therefore, pedagogy development is classified into three chronological waves: Face-to-face education, in which direct contact between teachers and students is centralized in teaching and learning processes. Virtual and screen-to-screen education emerged from the information and communication innovations in educational environments (See Figure 1). The last experienced wave is the mask-to-mask, in which health regulations and procedures guided learners and educators. It is a teaching wave to protect all participants in the learning process. It was a protective practice against the pathogenic nature of Covid-19. It was a new teaching method to ensure the continuity and effectiveness of education (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020a; Barbour et al., 2020). The disruption to the traditional teaching processes and the known educational experiences induced a new pedagogical approach to cope with the rapid global changes (Bergin, Hicks & Hamilton, 2020; Radina & Balakina, 2021). Thence, educators, and learners would be prepared to adopt the new normal in educational settings by humanizing education and guiding its practice through care and empathy. Teachers need to differentiate the delivered curriculum based on the content, process, product, and environment. They also need to consider their student's readiness, interest, and learning profile in their area of study (Tomilson & Murphy, 2015; Zaky, 2023).

To this point, the article explores the relationship between empathy development, learners' academic competencies, and engagement. It highlights some related variables that could drive this relationship: Teaching Modality, Used technology, and connections. The article tries to address the answers to the following questions:

Figure 1. Learning Modalities and Models in the New Teaching Era
(Adapted from Dweck, 2017; Palloff & Patt, 2009; Simonson et al., 2011)



- RQ1:** To what extent does developing empathy in the classroom foster learner's engagement in educational settings?
- RQ2:** How could teachers utilize available educational entities to build learners' empathic behavior to embrace classroom diversity and inclusion?
- RQ3:** To what extent is there a correlation between empathy and learner academic improvement post-Covid-19 era?
- RQ4:** How can educators build community connections to foster their student body during unprecedented changes?

To analyze recent trends in empathy, leadership, inclusion, diversity, and classroom engagement, the researcher has sampled peer-reviewed research articles, books, and book chapters that have been peer-reviewed over three decades. The researcher identified the selected corpus of 80 articles through a multiple-step process—first, the perspective papers published in the domain of empathy and educational institutions. The keyword “Empathy and Students’ Engagement” was used to identify the list of review papers. The other research keywords were “Inclusion and Empathy” and “Leadership Skills.” “Students Engagement,” and “Academic Competencies and Empathy.” The researcher critically reviewed the collected articles and identified the research domains under Empathy and academic competencies construction toward deepening diversity and inclusion in the classroom. The researcher, therefore, streamlined the collected set of articles through the lens of the significance of the problem statement, data used, and recommendations to answer the raised research questions. In what follows, the researcher provides literature reporting the defining characteristics of empathy and the related factors in educational settings. Following that, some suggested strategies and teaching recommendations are reported.

2. DEVELOPING EMPATHY AND LEARNER’S ENGAGEMENT (RQ 1)

2.1. New Pedagogical Norm

Post- COVID era brought a new norm of education with it. This new norm implied evolving rather than contrasting the used pedagogical approaches in today’s educational discourse (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020b; Xiao, 2021). Xiao (2021) stated that the current world normality extends yesterday’s challenges, a new, evolving educational realm. The evolution within the educational systems led to a radical shift in learning and teaching. Post-COVID, educators must focus on creating new norms and not returning to the pre-COVID era, as all obstacles reside in the past (Cutrara, 2021; Ladson-Billings, 2021). Directing eyes to the future and remembering past experiences would effectively transit teachers and learners away from their comfort zones. To this point, the previously known norm no longer exists, and the new norm is absolute. To move forward, educators and societies, in general, need to accept the reality of the new norm, reshape the teaching mindset in a way that copes with the changes, and consider the designated educational goals.

Teachers, learners, and researchers should revisit the previously stated pedagogical definitions of learning, teaching, and researching in education. Educators and researchers should ask open-ended questions about pedagogical theories, practices, and used technologies. Within the educational setting, all stakeholders should be actively involved in the process. When they seek open-ended responses to their questions, they need to include all participants to reach a broad consensus on those responses. Reengineering and reconstructing the educational pedagogy could be tractable, restored, and utilized. Therefore, educators should re-evaluate the nature of education as a process whereby teachers merely transmit information and learners receive it. Educational ecology could shape educational outcomes, such as online, onsite, offline, and virtual. Educational ecology, therefore, should involve learners, content, interaction criteria, space (schools, universities, homes. etc.), time (synchronous, asynchronous), and facilitators (teachers, instructors, coaches... etc.).

Ecology refers to a living thing with a collective consciousness operating in a complex, nonlinear, self-developing, and internal organization that leads to collaboration, creation, and sharing behavior. The ecology climate shapes its nature, impacting all living and nonliving entities. These living and nonliving entities are bonded and might have a symbiotic relationship. Understanding the natural ecology of education could help educators understand the dynamic relationships among all participants in the learning and teaching processes. Learning is ecology, which may occur on a formal-informal continuum and is guided by the needs of the learners and the stated standards from the respective society. In keeping with this analogy, learning only occurs partially due to the dynamic relationships among all the involved entities in the process. Ecology is always on and open for changes with multiple entries and exit points to keep improving and foster sustainability. To this point, effective teaching needs to create an educational ecology in which learning and teaching dynamics are relevant, authentic, and contextual. Nevertheless, COVID-19 brought deeper chaos to teaching and learning environments; therefore, pedagogy is required to be revisited to heal societal ecology and produce good citizens.

3. EDUCATIONAL ENTITIES AND LEARNERS' EMPATHIC BEHAVIOR (RQ 2)

3.1 Empathy vs. Sympathy

The distinction between empathy and sympathy is an essential process for understanding both empathetic and sympathetic phenomena in educational settings. Sympathy reveals some concepts related to empathy; therefore, overlapping could be a challenge. To make the difference between them more explicit, it is useful to make up a conceptual framework of their notions and run a comparison between them. The sympathy framework includes affinity, compassion, understanding, support, and agreement. Affinity, understanding, and compassion are often sources of confusion and, at the same time, produce different profiling at all levels of communication. The empathy framework profiles understandings from the perspectives of a different culture, while the frame of sympathy profiles is not at the top concept but as an additional one; it is understanding from the perspectives of the speaker's own culture (Bennet, 1998; Balasubramanian & Fernandes, 2022).

Sympathy is an understanding mode of an individual's emotional resonance. Research shows that the nature of sympathy is shaped by the subject to other stimuli and behavioral outcomes, which are automatic (Taylor, 2002; Cuff et al., 2016; Mayer & Oosthuizen, 2020). On the other hand, empathy could be provoked by witnessing another's emotional state. Sympathy is the phenomenon of being moved by the suffering of others as an element of moral life (Bennett, 1979). The sympathetic responses are deepened in human conceptions of human nature. Sympathy is a primitive response to another suffering as a human being. This human suffering could take many complex forms beyond the simple physical distress to understand what life looks like for others (Andrea & Valentina, 2020; Andrew et al., 2022). It presents a species of human caring that stresses the golden rule of communication and promotes effective individual practices of sympathy. Consistently using the same treatment standards is at the heart of ethnocentrism, which leads to more effective sympathetic communication strategies.

All in all, sympathy is a matter of being actively or passively influenced toward action, generally in the direction of rescue, aid, or assistance. Therefore, the individuals could be passively sympathetic without actions. Sympathy is a minimally objective attitude toward interactions. So, one can't be sympathetic and objective. The sympathetic observer is involved emotionally with the encountered object and conditions. The reactions, therefore, often are automatic and without understanding and mainly lead to unconscious roots, including defenses to the action. To this point, sympathy is "feel with," and empathy is "feel into".

3.2 Empathy as a Concept

Empathy is the ability to define one's feelings and understand those of others. It has three main distinctive components: Affective empathy- the ability to share emotions with others; Cognitive

empathy- the ability to understand the emotions of others and realize that these emotions are different; and empathetic concern- the internalized motivation to consider others' welfare. This later interaction is the compassion a person can bring to the communication setting. It is not static- it fluctuates (Riess, 2018). Mastering empathy shapes collaboration, teamwork, cultural awareness, and well-being (Wills & Hofmeyr, 2019; Singer & Klimecki, 2014). Individuals should regulate their emotions for empathy to be enacted (Singer, Klimecki, 2014; Zaky, 2023).

3.2 Empathy and Pandemic Pedagogy

Pandemic pedagogy involves learning, teaching, and all factors shaping dynamic relations in the educational setting. Referencing learning ecologies, pandemic ecology secures the opportunities to implement asymmetric design and pursue pedagogical minimalism, where the focus could be on a human empathy approach. This created focus effectively manipulates the power dynamic in the learning ecology using equity and justice. Friere (1985) asserts that "to transform the world is to humanize it" (p. 70). Xiao (2021) stressed the same approach while writing about education "primarily about human beings, for human beings, and by human beings" (p. 3). To this end, if educators want to put learners at the center of the used pedagogy, they need to promote inclusive learning ecology by adopting human-centered modalities to meet each learner's needs (Karakaya, 2021). These modalities could equip learners with the tools to face pandemics, crises, and unprecedented challenges that might evolve into an educational emergency.

Emergency education is a concept that has been introduced previously in pedagogy. It appeared as an educational catalyst to solve current and anticipated challenges (Aguilar & Retamal, 1998; Kagawa, 2005; Rosso, 2021). Covid-19 is unique as it disrupted the global scale and learning ecology, exacerbating national and international inequalities. It increases learners' traumatic, anxiety, and stress experiences in developing and developed communities (Bozkurt, 2021; Talidong & Toquero, 2020). It capitalizes upon inclusiveness to remove contextual barriers and stresses the importance of creating an environment where learners are listened to and cared for. Therefore, the need for care and empathy is a necessity regardless of the geographical and industrial realms. Researchers highlight the importance of empathic communication as learners experience vulnerability during difficult times (Baran & AlZoubi, 2020; Barbour et al., 2020; Zaky, 2023). The communication role fosters the learner's resilience as it expands the scope of mutual care (Schwartzman, 2020). To this point, a humanizing pedagogy is a vital approach to focusing on learners' needs rather than being merely receivers of information so that liberating the minds of learners could be transformative accordingly (Freire, 1970/ 2000; Salazar, 2013).

Adaptable and transformative mindsets are the keys to surviving in pandemic eras. The pandemic has forced learners and educators to adapt to new and unprecedented conditions. Humans realized the possibility of experiencing dark future scenarios (Costello et al., 2020). However, educators' approach to supporting learners opens the gates to more learners' coping mechanism creation. To this end, developing individual and collective consciousness is the only impetus for humanization (Salazar, 2013; Shuck et al., 2019).

4. EMPATHY AND LEARNER ACADEMIC IMPROVEMENT POST COVID-19 (RQ 3)

4.1 Distance Education and Learning

The teaching space is always a critical issue in online education. As a result, there are many related difficulties supporting distance education (Moore & Kearsley, 2012; Oruh et al., 2021). Therefore, educational technology has been adopted along the educational landscape (Crompton et al., 2021; Pelletier et al., 2021). Despite the increased use of technology, there are still some related psychological and communicational distances. Consequently, educators should focus on the affective aspect of teaching and learning. Learning ecologies should be informed by care and empathy to save the affective

proximity in any teaching environment. Affective proximity is essential for providing meaning and social actualization in national and international settings. To this point, learners could recognize their individuality and their social interactions.

4.2 International Students' Connection and Empathy

Politics, culture, economics, natural disasters, and public health impact students' mobility all over the globe. Covid-19, though, unprecedentedly disrupted education. It hit all educational systems worldwide as students' university relationships became unstable. It influenced how students learn, teach, and work in university settings. Students' connections, either formal or informal, are effective tools for shaping students' well-being and academic trajectories (Tran & Gomes, 2017). It is essential to frame international students' connectedness within the formal teaching and learning contexts and in a broader setting, considering the diverse dynamic in terms of transnational mobility. Some vital dimensions to strengthen students' social and academic experiences are connecting with the discussed content and teaching and learning process, engaging with the university communities, integrating into relevant social and professional networks, and online digital connections. Four main pillars could underpin international students' engagement in their universities: Identifying students' study purpose, needs, and expectations; understanding their academic needs, pastoral care, employment accommodation, and finance; realizing the importance of classroom community; and considering those students as an integral part of campus communities (Green, 2019; Tran 2013a). It is important to develop approaches to engage them academically, interculturally, mentally, and emotionally. Table one summarizes the six interrelated dimensions of teaching and learning that emerge from the research conducted by Green and colleagues.

4.3 Teaching With Empathy

COVID-19 altered the structure and design of all traditional educational programs. Therefore, educators need a frame that guides their transition to the new teaching era- POST-COVID-19. Human-centered

Table 1. Framework for Teaching and Learning for International Students

Dimension	Summary
Connecting	It is important to secure opportunities to engage students intellectually, culturally, socially, and effectively. To make transnational knowledge, universities should create activities, use assessments, build their curriculum, and foster people-to-people connections (Tran, 2013 a).
Accommodating	Effective learning and teaching could be achieved by understanding students' backgrounds, characteristics, identities, and learning purposes. Good teaching is tailored to educators' capacities to manage their curriculum and pedagogy to cater to the needs of students.
Reciprocating	Reciprocal learning and teaching is the core of the educational process. It is formulated by positing students as co-constructors of knowledge and educators as reciprocal co-learners (Tran, 2011, 2013b). It is built upon mutual understanding, respect for diversity, and using diverse resources and experiences. To this end, students feel included and valued as an integral part of the curriculum and university community.
Integrating	Integration refers to intentionally incorporating content, perspectives, and pedagogy in the teaching and learning processes. It enriches students' global awareness, mindfulness, and cultural awareness.
Relationalizing	Rationalizing is crucial in assisting domestic and international students to develop open-minded perspectives. It helps educators engage students in comparing, contrasting, and reflexive processes about professional practices, prior knowledge, and cultural awareness to develop their intellectual and personal capacities.
Empathy	The teachers' shared empathy shapes international students' sense of belonging in the classrooms. Teachers can develop activities around what it feels like to be an international student using a second language in an unfamiliar academic and social environment.

design, though, is a creative approach to problem-solving that emphasizes empathy toward people (Luka, 2014). Educators and preservice teachers, though, need to practice design mindsets such as risk-taking, empathy, optimism, and learning from failure to secure their teaching development (Henriksen et al., 2018; Razzouk & Shute, 2012).

Do educators expect their students to walk in another's shoes? is a highly complex question since the surrounding factors are not defined. When educators think of the working situations in which students work as they manage many emotional and practical challenges of COVID-19, those educators need to enable learners to access the available tools to foster their empathy and ensure othering so that stress and burnout would not occur. Therefore, students could experience the impact of empathetic actions in their organization. To this point, educators need to facilitate learning that models ways to see oneself and others as organizational empowerment could develop this discovery responsibility. Teachers could create a classroom that is directed by interactive activities that integrate students' interests. Consequently, students' social and psychological needs could be met at school (Dewey, 1987).

Additionally, educators need to consider the emotional aspect of learning and teaching. In this context, Social-emotional learning (SEL) highlights the school's need to support learners' social and emotional components. SEL is a teaching approach through which educators teach, regulate, and manage their life's social and emotional aspects. So they can successfully manage their students' life tasks. SEL researchers stress that every individual is equipped with the skills to know one's emotions and those of others. These skills could be taught, therefore, through various designed classroom activities. Implementing SEL in a classroom brings many academic and social benefits (Joseph et al., 2007). On the social level, for example, SEL reduced negative social interactions, interpersonal violence, and unhappiness. Therefore, incorporating SEL in the classroom could enhance overall communication and foster empathy.

Empathy secures the tools to connect all aspects of social interactions as it develops kindness, peaceful conflicts, resolutions, and controllable disruption in classrooms. It encourages individuals to consider others' emotions; students could be more compassionate in their interpersonal relations. Consequently, there would be a high possibility of fostering a peaceful conflict and reducing hostile behavior such as pushing, hitting, insulting, and promoting compromise. The COVID-19 era is full of global and personal tensions, which are sometimes unidentified. It is difficult to escape the reminders of wars and economic insecurities (Taylor et al., 2020; Zaky, 2022). Therefore, educators need to equip their students with skills to excel in such a complicated world. The necessary skills for living and working together include conflict resolution, managing emotions, and making decisions.

4.4 Empathy in Democratic Classrooms

When teaching empathy, the means is as necessary as the ends. Dewey argued, "Never is a method something outside of the material" (Dewey, 1916, p. 194). Dewey's pedagogical philosophy effectively supports students' learning and secures various applications for empathy engraved in classrooms. To this point, the way of teaching the content is more important than the actual focus on the same content (Aronson, 2000; Foster, 2021). One of the essential characteristics of the democratic classroom is the positive and respectful student-student and student-teacher interaction. Such interaction allows teachers to be learning facilitators rather than deliverers of knowledge. Dewey argued that classrooms should reflect humans' natural, social, and communicative behaviors. This level of interaction creates an ample environment to practice empathy and train students to actively create a safer and more productive learning environment (Waks, 2011; Hougaard, Carter, Hobson, 2020).

Teaching empathy in classrooms depends on the teaching approach and the content used. Research shows that Collaborative learning is an effective tool to foster empathy in classrooms through well-designed activities to teach cooperatively and bring learners to a common goal. Dewey suggests that students and teachers should come together to decide the classroom's rules rather than imposing these rules. (Crawford, 2005). During the class meeting, if teachers intentionally allocated some time to integrate students' learning conditions, those students would develop a better understanding of the

viewpoint of others in the classroom (Crawford, 2005). Additionally, impeding literary positions into classroom discussion plays an influential role in fostering empathy as students encounter related narratives that could provoke them to think in a particular way. Consequently, they could change their behavior during learning (Garner, 2010; Landers, 2020). Activities such as role-playing and share-pairs could develop empathy through a personal connection. Freire (1970) embraced education for liberation as it enables learners to reflect on their experiences, reflect on their past, realize the reality of the present, and anticipate the future. This learning and teaching approach awakens learners' expectations of change to seek expression in a more collective transformational social action. Elucidating and illuminating teaching principles are fundamental to identifying the tools to shape educators' in-class communications to foster learners' empathy.

Research shows that empathy training could foster empathetic feelings and increase prosocial behavior in a learning environment. The very core components of empathy training are interpersonal perceptions and empathetic responses. These components are cognitive-related factors fostering empathetic skills (Kremer & Dietzen 1991; Pecukonis 1990). Therefore, it is important to encourage learners to focus on their feelings and consider the types of related situations. To this point, those learners could increase their awareness of other people's reality. Thus, identifying the similarities among the encountered situations is the second important step after realizing personal feelings. In the classroom, cross-cultural empathy could be fostered if the activities focused on similarities between the available cultures and one's culture. To this end, empathy could be supported by increasing learners' awareness of their feelings and the feelings of others, even if those others bring a different cultural perspective. However, this awareness could be shaped by gender roles, reframing the way individuals could pursue it.

Empathy training produces more significant increases in the empathetic understanding of males than females (Kalliopuska, 1983; Landers, 2020). Research shows that females exhibit a higher level of empathy than do males (McDevitt, Lennon & Kopriv, 1991). However, some researchers highlighted that empathetic modeling in learning environments could potentially reduce the gap between men and women (Clarke, 1984; Henderson & Jones, 2017). Teachers' role is to investigate how they could build empathy with their students in specific teaching environments. Most educators should ask, "What do students experience, feel, or say that might not yet be heard?" and "What are some inspiring examples teachers might share to foster empathy in classes?". The process became complicated with the pandemic surges in 2020. COVID-19 brought a completely different worldview to the learning and teaching processes. Researchers need to investigate more closely the gender role impact of empathetic practice in online teaching and learning environments.

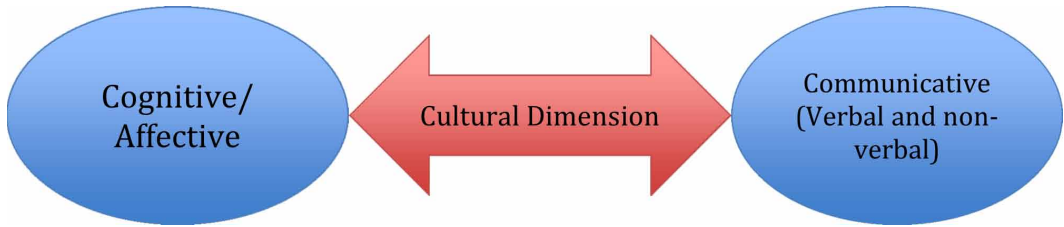
5. BUILDING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS AND UNPRECEDENTED CHANGES (RQ 4)

5.1 Empathy and Intercultural Communication

Empathy is considered the central intercultural competency. It is a concept that scholars need help with for quite a long time to define. The traditional definitions of empathy have been disputed by scholars in several disciplines. The notion of intercultural competencies has been challenged in the context of power relations in communications. Empathy is widely perceived as an unquestioned component of intercultural competence. In this world of intensified global mobility, international exchange, and multicultural exposure, Intercultural communication (IC) has become a necessity for mastering everyday life. Empathy, though, has been listed as an essential component in all IC models (Bloom, 2016). Empathy is commonly described as a three-dimensional phenomenon: Cognitive, Affective, and Communicative. However, a cultural dimension links the Cognitive and Affective dimensions on the one hand and the Communicative on the other (See Figure 2).

Figure 2. Intercultural Dimensions

(Adapted from Bloom, 2016; Bram et al., 2017)



Any action of empathy can qualify concerning the top concept of understanding from cultural perspectives: “ Concern, compassion, friendliness, affection, devotion.” It is understood from a different cultural perspective, which is always true of empathy and indicates the three dimensions simultaneously- Cognitive, affection, and Communication - as it applies a shift in the cultural perspectives of the speaker in the process of communication that shapes the teaching and learning environment.

5.2 Empathetic Leadership

The research addresses that empathetic leaders are declined to:

- Listen carefully and take opportunities to ask questions in order to seek possible ways to help and provide assistance.
- Be present and consistently active participants in the conversations.
- Build connections with the various members of the team in order to capitalize upon the sense of belonging (Nita, 2020; Barello et al., 2020).

Cultivating empathy is a leadership skill that develops a sense of belonging and profound trust practice in the community. It gives teachers deeper insights into feeling and thinking to better adjust their practice during crises. An individual’s ability to relate to difficult challenges and hurdles most likely impacts others and oneself. Research shows four pillars for integrating empathetic leadership into any existing institutional system. These pillars could lead the entire community to support its members and target clients (Barello et al., 2020):

- **Mindfulness:** Institutional leaders should develop their capacities to increase their focus on the present moment awareness and the cultivation of compassion in themselves and others around them.
- **Progressive Dialogues:** The influential conversations are mindful communicative approaches that might facilitate a shared understanding among diverse perspectives on campus.
- **Collaboration:** Participants should capitalize upon the collaborative conversation among vital institutional stakeholders to create a positive change atmosphere.
- **Change:** The individual readiness to change is the key to generating a positive and sustainable impact at the workplace

To this point, individuals need empathy in all aspects of life. A person can turn to colleagues to obtain and sustain their workability at the workplace. However, leaders could create a powerful bond that releases individual ability and sustains followers in the needed endeavors to improve workplace performance (Holt & Marques, 2012; Edmondson & Lei, 2014; Morrow-Howell et al., 2020). Leadership studies have shown that empathy provides a bedrock behavior for all employees,

and leaders could use empathy to create a positive working atmosphere. Empathy equips leaders with the tools to understand their subordinates' needs and foster their performance. It helps leaders decide what management technique will improve poor working performance and enhance the required performance (Owens & Hekman, 2012; Westerman, Reno, & Heuett, 2018).

High empathy in the workplace helps leaders use appropriate feedback to foster the followers' trust and confidence. Followers deepen their confidence in what they need to achieve and specify how to accomplish these designated tasks (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2012a; Linda, 2018). This type of leadership approach fosters employees' self-efficacy and self-regulation, helps individuals to create a safer working environment, and enables those individuals to be innovative with the tools and paths for better performance at the workplace (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998; Mayfield, 2009, 2012a; Barron, 2017). Rego and colleagues conducted a study in 2007 and found that empathy leadership significantly increases team creativity. They reported a strong relationship between empathetic leadership and individual innovation at workplaces. The same proposition was addressed by Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller (2012), who reported that if subordinates feel positive at the workplace, they will be engaged in more everyday innovations and feel positive about their workplace. Consequently, a leader's empathy provides all workers with two sources of support: Emotional and instructional. Leaders, therefore, use words and actions to deliver the required support. Words provide a solid initial signal, and activities support the raised reactions. Hence, empathetic leadership fosters not only subordinates' sense of belonging but also their productivity.

5.3 COVID-19 and Empathy

Changing the teaching modality from face-to-face to virtual and hybrid and then back to face-to-face reshaped educators' understanding of empathy. Research shows the vital role of creating a community of inquiry to secure the smooth transitions of the teaching modality. Educators explored a variety of teaching models to instruct their students effectively. The COL model, though, allows educators to address their students' needs using three main dimensions: Social, Cognitive, and teaching presence (Garrison, 2011). Teaching presence could be achieved by constantly sharing videos using teaching platforms such as Learning Management Systems (LMS). Educators might prepare these videos to sustain their students' academic and psychological growth and cope with the current changes in the field. Educators could continually check their student's health, needs, and well-being through emails or short videos using online platforms and the administration's shared data. Additionally, social presence in online classes is integral to the process. Educators, though, could incorporate asynchronous activities such as discussion boards and peer feedback to address all their students' needs (Lowenthal & Snelson, 2017). Teachers could open resource centers using their LMS to allow students to share their techniques to be healthier and reach other colleagues with the proper help to face challenges. Cognitive presence could be established by providing clear instructions and attainable classroom expectations (Hosler & Arend, 2012).

Using drama to foster empathy is an effective teaching tool. Teachers could use various strategies to foster students' empathetic realization. Acting and role-playing come at the top of the recommended classroom practices. Working on acting skills supports students' cognitive domain and enhances their abilities to portray empathy in their environments. Research highlights two different domains of empathy: Cognitive and affective. The cognitive dimension is deemed a skill learners could develop with time, driven by their preferences. Meanwhile, the affective dimension of empathy is the personal trait of the learners. This dimension is beyond the control of educators and trainers (Bayne, 2011; Breithaupt, 2017). Interventions and training make a significant impact on fostering this dimension. Research shows that learners' inherited experiences direct their empathy toward certain groups with similar experiences. To this point, educational strategies could modify empathy (Bombeke et al., 2011; Fernández-Olano & colleagues, 2008; Moriarty H, Huthwaite M, 2011).

Colleges and universities deal with COVID-19 impacts differently. Teachers, therefore, grapple with a variety of contradictory requirements. Students are considered emotional responders. Receiving

educational institutions as locations for places for academic and social-emotional development is primarily a neoliberal construct (Au, 2018). Given the societal and global changes, educators need to consider the new reality and the required necessities for effective teaching and learning. These necessities include the students' input and offering services in a classroom setting. Understanding the devastating impact of global and societal traumas requires educators to chart a path forward by reanalyzing educators' tools to assess their students' performance and identify effective tools for the teaching and learning environment. Trauma-informed pedagogy is considered one of the most effective educational tools within current practices that need progressive re-examination. Educators could meet their student's needs by providing a place for teaching with empathy (Abdi et al., 2020).

The committed educational institutions to empathetic teaching enhance teachers' efficacy and retention by treating teachers with trust, resources, and understanding. Developing workplace empathy results from various factors: First, the environment with all surroundings, such as people, values, and rituals. To build empathy, the conditions should be controlled. Therefore, unlocking safe spaces and a trusted-based environment is at the heart of initiating the process of building an empathetic working place. Research reveals the importance of developing participants' self-understanding of their feelings and emotions, "Emotional Literacy". Self-reflection and leading by example are effective teaching tools among adults (Nichols & Ojala, 2009; Tran, 2020).

6. PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE: ACTIVITIES

Empathy has been analyzed by scholars from different fields as one of the essential topics in the social and behavioral sciences (Bloom, 2016; Breithaupt, 2017). Empathy is a very important attitude and skill when it comes to teaching and learning because it helps "feel with" or co-experience with another person. To lead class discussions and facilitate learning successfully, teachers need to be able to relate to their students' emotional situations. It is challenging for students to learn in a classroom setting when they don't cognitively understand their teachers' intentions and dynamic set-ups. Despite this axiom, there is a significant gap in pedagogical practice regarding hands-on tools for systematically developing empathy when engaging students in intercultural classroom activities. Education should focus on creativity, collaboration, flexibility, and problem-solving to keep the learners engaged. Community project-based learning (PBL) is a practical teaching tool that fosters learning by actively engaging students in a real-world situation through which learners can personalize their learning and interactions with the shared curriculum. These interactions stimulate students' awareness and foster their empathy. Involving students in these projects equips them with the psychological tools to effect change through compassion, awareness, advocacy, empathy, thoughtfulness, and social action.

Research shows that integrating meta-cognitive tasks in classrooms by creating opportunities for students to describe, share, and evaluate emotions fosters empathy in educational environments (Bloom, 2016; Landers, 2020). The following activities attempt to develop a sequence of tasks for fostering students' empathy with academic settings.

6.1 Activity One

Plan of Action Objectives: Students will:

Identify how empathy exists in the school community.

Discuss ways for students to show more empathy toward one another.

Materials: Computer with Internet access Pen and lined paper

Class time- Educators could follow the following steps to complete the activity:

- 1 Start with a question about defining empathy: "Do you know your next-door neighbor? Have you thought about walking in someone else's shoes?"

- 2 Instructing time: Educators could share some previously graphic information about empathy and its benefits for individuals and communities.
- 3 Open discussion: Educators could ask learners about the steps to know their fellow students more and more to show empathy daily to create a more positive institutional environment.
- 4 Extension: Educators could ask students to write short articles for institutional newspapers. In these written contributions, students should share strategies to foster empathy in and out of schools' borders.

6.2 Activity Two: Walk a Mile in Another Man's Shoes

Educators share some created scenarios with their students (See some available scenarios in Table two). Students must select two scenarios and conduct an empathetic analysis to share with the entire group.

6.3 Procedure

- 1 Read the scenarios and recognize ways to show empathy.
- 2- Students share individual strategies to foster community empathy with the scenarios' main characters.
- 3 All participants create a list of ways that students can show compassion for people in their community
- 4 Students could replace scenario characters and respond to those who reached them with the proper help. They can write a thank-you letter directed to those community helpers.

6.4 Activity Three: Stop, Breathe, Listen, and Respond (SBLR)

SBLER is an effective practice at all educational stages. Educators could follow the following steps to implement the activity (Zaky, 2023; Xiao, 2021; Stephen, 2017):

- 1 Educators could introduce the activity to the class by addressing the various parts of the acronym: "Stop," which means that a person is dominating all other activities and doing the listening. "beath" means taking time to digest the received information and fully understanding the shared situation. It is a stage in which a person should seek a quieter place for more effective communication with others. "Listen" actively engages in the listening process without being

Table 2. Empathy Classroom Shared Scenarios (Adapted from Bozkurt, 2021; Dweck, 2017)

Scenario	Detailed Description
Life-Related Activity	A group of students is milling about in the hall. Micah teases Adam, a younger student, about not making the soccer team, and Adam argues back. The argument escalates to a shouting mat.
Friends' Activities	You are excited to go out with your friends on Friday night, but your mom wants you to go to dinner with the family. You refuse, your mother grounds you, and you storm to your room.
Personal issue	Sarah is telling Jeanne how to hurt she is by her recent break-up with her boyfriend, but Jeanne isn't paying attention and keeps changing the subject. Sarah eventually yells at Jeanne for not listening to her.
School Challenges	You get your Biology 101 test back only to discover you got a low grade. You are not surprised because you have been busy preparing for the school play, but when your friend picks up the test and starts showing everyone, you feel angry and embarrassed. You rip the difficulty out of his hands and stomp away.
Personal Challenges	You have a big weekend date and want to borrow one of your sister's sweaters. When you ask her to borrow it, she says no because she doesn't want it ruined. You beg her, explaining that the date is significant, but she won't budge

distracted by other surrounding activities. In the “Listening” stage, a person should motivate others to share whatever is in their mind. “Respond” means responding more compassionately. Using words such as “What can I do for you?” or “What do you think you should do?” might positively impact this communication and foster empathetic use.

- 2 Educators ask students to be in pairs and practice the “SBLR” strategy. They could suggest some scenarios to practice the strategy. For example, “Share something that has upset you with your partner.” Partners could practice the stages of strategy. Teachers could limit the timing practice to 30 minutes.
- 3 Reflection: After practicing “SBLR,” participants need to share their reflections. The participants must address the following in their reflection: “What did they feel while doing the activity?” “What would they do differently?” and “Putting themselves in others’ shoes and sharing their feelings.”
- 4 Conclusion: Educators could ask the entire class the following questions:
 - Why do you think empathy is essential to being a good leader?
 - Why do you think empathy is essential to being an effective parent?
 - What do you like about environments/spaces where empathy is part of how people are?
 - How are you feeling right now?

7. CONCLUSION

Education plays a vital role in developing students to work well and remain resilient and compassionate in their communities. Research shows that being mindful is significantly related to being empathetic. Therefore, encouraging empathetic classroom activities fosters students’ empathetic use in the school community and beyond the classroom environment. Students could reflect on their past to learn and not make the same mistakes, while the future holds hope for the better. When learners merge care and empathy in their communication, they can truly understand each other and nurture their social and educational communication. Training students to foster empathy tremendously impacts their interpretation of their needs and wants due to the challenges and obstacles such as the COVID-19 Pandemic. COVID-19 created a lot of disruptions and hardships on various levels: Individual, societal, and Global. Individuals experience a lot of pressure and trauma. Therefore, institutions need to develop innovative, communicative approaches to engage learners academically, interculturally, mentally, and emotionally.

Sense of belonging, therefore, has a powerful impact on fostering empathy in classrooms. Students feel they matter and are valued, seen, and heard in class. A teacher’s role is critical to ensure all students have a place in the educational setting. Students need to feel physically and emotionally safe, supported, and offered equal opportunities to share their identities without fear of reprisal. Practicing empathy and care, though, with a human-centered approach prioritizing students’ needs, contexts, access to resources, safety, and well-being. To this point, the humanistic teaching approach deepens those students’ recognition of empathy implementation. It sustains inclusivity and equity in the educational setting (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020a). Teaching and learning need to emphasize empathy and connections in culturally responsive teaching to equip students with the tools to meet their needs progressively and those of other fellow citizens (Bozkurt, 2020; Bozkurt & Zawacki-Richter, 2021).

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