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SPECIFIC COMMUNICATION MEANS IN DEVELOPING STUDENTS' EMPATHY IN HIGHER ART EDUCATION

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Szczególne środki komunikacji w rozwoju empatii studentów kierunków artystycznych w szkolnictwie wyższym

Abstrakt

Niniejsze badanie koncentruje się na rozwoju empatii jako istotnego elementu kształcenia zawodowego na poziomie szkolnictwa wyższego na kierunkach artystycznych. Jego celem jest zbadanie istoty empatii w myśleniu przyszłych specjalistów i podkreślenie technik komunikacyjnych rozwijających empatię u studentów kierunków artystycznych. Badanie podkreśla znaczenie zdolności empatycznych w działalności zawodowej projektantów i sugeruje włączenie empatii do metod nauczania. Wyniki tego badania uzasadniają konieczność rozwijania umiejętności empatycznych studentów w procesie kształcenia. Sugeruje się rozwój środków komunikacji empatycznej i wdrożenie ich do całokształtu procesu nauczania na kierunkach artystycznych.

Abstract

This research focuses on the development of empathy as a crucial component of professional training in higher art education. It aims to explore the essence of empathy in the thinking of future specialists and highlight communication techniques for developing empathy in art students. The study emphasizes the importance of empathetic skills in the professional activity of designers and suggests integrating empathy into teaching methods.

Findings of this study justified the necessity of developing students' empathetic skills during the studying process. Possible communication means of empathy development and implementation into professional training of art students as a whole are suggested.

Keywords: communication means, empathy, professional training, art education, soft skills.

1. Introduction

Nowadays Ukraine is experiencing significant social and economic changes that necessitate significant reformation of the activities of all social institutions. As the National Doctrine of the Development of Education in Ukraine in the XXI Century (2002) states, one of the priority tasks is defined as "the comprehensive development, harmony and integrity of the individual, the development of his abilities and talents, enriching the intellectual potential of the people, their spirituality and culture on this basis". According to this task special attention is paid to the training of specialists in art higher educational establishments. One of the components of professional training the students of art educational establishments is empathy, that is the ability to look at the world through the eyes of other people, to understand their needs, desires, and tasks facing them.

The presence of empathy is one of the most important qualities for a specialist that in a substantial way guarantees the success of professional activity. When a specialist is not able to show empathy for his client, he or she will not be able to understand the full depth of the task and to find the appropriate approach to solving the problem. Therefore, it is important to develop students' empathy and to teach them to practice the key components of empathy in order to better understand and interact with people in their life.

A review of the scientific literature shows that in psychological researches the problem of empathy is divided into two main areas – cognitive and emotional. Empathy is seen as a way of understanding another person, as well as "mental communication" or intellectual reconstruction of the inner world of another person as a purely intellectual process (Cooke et al., 2018), (Decety, J & Cowell, JM., 2014).

Empathy is also defined as understanding the inner life of another person, as a kind of sensory cognition. Within this direction there is a tendency that considers empathy as an intuitive knowledge of the emotional state of another person (Carr et al., 2003). Empathy is considered as an affective phenomenon, the essence of which is to penetrate into the affective orientations of another person, to empathise with the experience of this person, the ability to join his emotional life, to share his emotional state (Aderman; Berkowitz, 1970).

The scholars distinguish not only the cognitive and emotional, but also the behavioral component of empathic interaction (Doktorová et al., 2020). They claim that there is a significant link between empathy and life satisfaction in a positive way. Some psychologists consider empathic experiences as a motive for altruistic behavior (Fry & Runyan, 2018).

Our review of the publications by the Ukrainian scholars (Kairis O., Fenina, O., Obozov M., Zhuravlova L. and others) confirms the diversity in the definitions of its essence, mechanisms, functions, the role of empathy in the moral development of the individual, prosocial behavior, altruism, and so on. Understanding the phenomenon of empathy in modern scientific works is characterized by a variety of interpretations.

Empathy development is one of the most vital scientific problems. It should be emphasised that a considerable number of empirical researches have been directed to the study of students' empathy development. And many research works are devoted to empathy development in foreign languages teaching. According to Stevick, (1980) 'success in the language classroom depends less on materials, techniques or linguistic analysis, and more on what goes on inside and between the people in the classroom…the most important aspect is the presence or absence of harmony: it is the parts working with, or against, one another.'

As Brown (2000) stated, language is one of the primary means of empathising, and communication requires a sophisticated degree of empathy. 'In order to communicate effectively, a learner needs to be able to understand the other person's affective and cognitive states.'

In higher art education, there are several specific communication means that can be used to develop students' empathy.

1. Artistic expression: Artistic expression is a powerful communication tool that allows individuals to express their emotions, thoughts, and perspectives in a creative manner. By engaging in artistic expression, students can develop a deeper understanding of their own emotions and experiences, as well as those of others. This can help them develop empathy and a greater sense of connection with others.

2. Reflection: Reflection is a critical component of empathy development. By reflecting on their own experiences, students can gain a deeper understanding of their emotions and how they impact their interactions

with others. This can help them develop greater empathy and understanding of others' experiences.

3. Active listening: Active listening involves paying close attention to what someone is saying, and responding thoughtfully and empathetically. Students can develop this skill by practicing active listening in class discussions, critiques, and other interactions with their peers.

4. Collaborative projects: Collaborative projects provide opportunities for students to work together and develop empathy by understanding different perspectives, working through conflicts, and learning to appreciate and value diverse contributions.

5. Storytelling: Storytelling is a powerful way to communicate and connect with others. By sharing personal stories or stories from other cultures, students can develop empathy by learning about different experiences and seeing the world from different perspectives.

Overall, these specific communication means can help students develop empathy in higher art education by providing opportunities for personal reflection, active listening, collaboration, and learning about different perspectives and experiences.

Hadfield J. (1992) claimed that a positive group atmosphere has a beneficial effect on the morale, motivation, and self-image of its members. Therefore, it significantly affects students' learning by developing in them a positive attitude to the language being learned, to the learning process, and to themselves as learners. Members of a group are more likely to have a sympathetic and harmonious relationship if they make an attempt to understand each other's feelings and points of views.

Consequently, we can conclude that the differentiation of empathy as a process is dictated by the three components prevailing in it: cognitive, emotional and behavioral. For example, the advantage of the cognitive component in understanding and reflecting the state of another person is characteristic of an adequate understanding of another person. The essence of the emotional component in empathy indicates the emotional response of a person to the experience of another one. In active empathy the subject does not only understand the emotional state of another person, but it is also able to actively support it. Thus, empathy is one of the regulators of human relationships. Empathic states of compassion become a property of the individual. That is, empathy is seen as a property that manifests itself in understanding the inner world of another person and the ability to be emotionally involved in his life.

When empathic person's experiences (compassion, empathy, pity) are realized in the forms of the helping behavior, it becomes an especially valuable state. In this case, empathy has a special socio-practical significance for the moral improvement of personality, as well as the optimization of relationships, and it is developed in activities and communication.

The study attempts to define the concept of implementation of students' empathy development as an integral part of professional training of art higher educational establishments in Ukraine. The questions addressed in the research are: 1. What is the role of empathy as a component of professional training in higher art education? 2. What specific communication means can be used for developing empathy in students?

In the context of our study, particular interest is expressed in terms of cognitive aspects of empathy. Empathy as the ability to truly understand another person is the basis of humanistic personality, ability to act altruistically; it helps to express care and trust, support and assistance.

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

The study is aimed to identify and theoretically interpret the characteristics of students' empathy, to determine some ways to optimize the development of the first and most important component of design thinking in art students, namely, empathy, in modern higher education. Empathic testing was used for the research. The decision to conduct the experiment in this way was based on the analysis of methods and tools relevant to our problem.

In the process of studying students' empathy development we investigated the level of students' empathic abilities according to the method of Kazan psychologist I. Yusupov (1995). The study involved 30 students, masters (2nd year) of the Kharkiv State Academy of Design and Arts. The study took two months. The experimental methods were applied once a week in the English language classes and in the classes of the Theoretical and methodological foundations of art school pedagogy discipline.

2.2. Measuring instruments

During our experimental work we used special forms with instructions and questions according to the method of I. Yusupov that assesses the development of student's empathy. On this basis the level of empathy "before" and "after" the exercises and techniques for the development of emotional intelligence was measured.

Students had to answer 36 questions using 6 options: "I don't know" (0); "never or no" (1); "sometimes" (2); "often" (3); "almost always" (4); "always or yes" (5).

We started processing the results by determining the openness and reliability of the data. To do this, we counted how many answers of a certain type are given to the following statement numbers of the questionnaire: "I don't know": 3, 9, 11, 13, 28, 36; "always or yes": 11, 13, 15, 27.

After that we summarized the results of individual calculations. If the total was 5 or more, the result of the study was considered unreliable; with an amount equal to 4 the result was considered doubtful; if the amount did not exceed 3, the result of the study could be considered reliable.

In our case none of the subjects scored more than 3 points on the reliability scale which indicates that all students answered openly the test (see Table 2.1).

Next, it was necessary to identify the level of students' empathy summing up all the points assigned to the answers and also to compare the received results with a scale of development of empathic tendencies. According to the number of points scored the level of empathy was determined as follows.

If a student scored from 82 to 90 points, that meant he had a very high level of empathy. At this level in communication a person subtly reacts to the mood of the interlocutor who has not said a word yet. It is difficult for him because others use him as a lightning rod throwing his emotional state at somebody else. Adults and children willingly entrust him with their secrets and seek his advice. A person often feels guilty and afraid to bother people not only with words, but also with his glance. Anxiety for family and friends does not leave him. At the same time he is very vulnerable. A person may suffer when he sees a crippled animal or finds a shelter for himself after the accidental cold greeting of his boss. When he is upset, he needs emotional support from others.

By scoring from 63 to 81 points, a student was considered as a person with a high level of empathy. Such a personality is sensitive to the shortcomings and problems of others, in addition to being generous and prone to forgive people around. He can feel someone's genuine interest and appreciate people's sincerity. He is sociable, thus he quickly establishes contacts with others and finds common ground. Such a person tries to avoid conflicts and finds compromise solutions. When evaluating events, he trusts his feelings and intuition more than analytical conclusions. Teamwork is more preferable for him than working alone. A person constantly needs social approval of his actions. Despite all these qualities, he is not always accurate in painstaking work. It doesn't take much efforts to get him off-balance.

The normal level of student's empathy comprised points ranging from 37 to 62. It was typical of the vast majority of students. Such students are not devoid of emotional manifestations, but for the most part they are under self-control. In communication they are attentive trying to understand beyond what is said in words, but due to the excessive influence of the interlocutor's feelings they can lose patience. They try not to express their point of view without being sure that it will be accepted. When reading works of art and watching movies, such people often follow the action than the experiences of the characters. They have difficulty in predicting the development of relations between people, so it happens that their actions can be unexpected for others.

When a student scored from 12 to 36 points, that meant he had a low level of empathy. Such a person usually has difficulty in making contact with people, he feels uncomfortable in a large company. Emotional manifestations in the actions of others sometimes seem incomprehensible and meaningless. He prefers individual hobbies to specific things, rather than working with people. Precise formulations and rational decisions prevail when dealing with people. He or she probably has few friends who are most often valued for business qualities and a clear mind rather than for sensitivity.

The low level of student's empathy comprised points 11 or less. Empathic tendencies of an individual are not developed. It is difficult for him to be the first to start a conversation. Contacts with children and people much older than him are especially difficult. In many situations he has misunderstanding with others. In most activities he is too focused on himself. He can be very productive in individual work but in interaction with others he does not always look his best. He painfully accepts criticism to his address, although he may not react violently to it.

3. Results

3.1. The role of empathy as a component of professional training in higher art education

The first question of the research was: 1. What is the role of empathy as a component of professional training in higher art education? Empathy as a special kind of understanding of another person is an important tool and factor in the effective interaction of the practitioner with different categories of clients. It ensures adequate perception and understanding of other people's problems, facilitates emotional feedback and constructive building of interrelations, and determines the balance of professional relationships. It is the cognitive aspects of empathy, in our opinion, that determine the formation of professional empathy, which is a component of professional training of future professionals in the art and design sphere. As the first stage of design thinking is empathy, it can be a powerful way of teaching students to solve another person's problems by providing creative and innovative solutions that relate to his needs. Professional empathy ensures the ability to establish constructive relations in professional interaction and the ability to manage the emotional intensity of business situations. The work in the field of art whether you are an artist or designer, especially the latter one, belongs to the socionomic professions which are dominated by situations of constituent interpersonal business communication that can evoke emotional tension and the cognitive complexity of social interaction.

Besides, inclusive education started to develop in Ukraine in recent years. In particular, only in January of 2020 the Concept of Inclusive Art Education was adopted. It implies that successful organisation of inclusive education in art schools and colleges is not possible without adequate training of teachers to work with students with special needs. Today prospective teachers in art schools and colleges do not acquire the competences needed to work with students with special educational needs (SEN), while teachers who want to acquire the necessary knowledge, guidance and assistance improve their skills mainly through self-study. Moreover, in the learning process it is necessary to take into account the peculiarities of mental, physical and psychological development of pupils. Therefore, it is important to provide flexibility of educational programs and forms of organization of the educational process. The necessary prerequisite for the successful implementation of inclusion in art schools and colleges is appropriate educational and methodological support.

This requires art spelialists to have profound professional knowledge, formed lifelong skills and personal skills to help other people in solving the problems and difficulties of their lives. Standards and professional ethics in this sphere define professional intellectual and personal qualities for this professional group. The student's age is a sensitive time for development and formation of professionally significant intellectual and personal qualities, the development of basic competences, social and professional competences, etc.

3.2. The communicative techniques useful for developing empathy in students

In order to develop empathy skills towards their future clients the students need to act. They need to observe others, try to learn how to read their behavior, understand subtle indications, both verbal and non-verbal expressions, etc. We suggest that special exercises will help the students get a deeper and more meaningful empathic experience.

Among the exercises performed during the experimental study to develop empathy there were exercises where each student talked about their failures and successes during the week (including professional). Then we all discussed the information together. We also conducted role exercises in which students played the roles of customers and designers, and with the help of empathy they tried to solve the problems of a design project.

Here are some English phrases that can foster developing empathy:
1. "I can understand how you feel."
2. "That must be really tough for you."
3. "I'm sorry you're going through this."
4. "What can I do to help?"

5. "I'm here for you."
6. "I can see how much this means to you."
7. "Tell me more about how you're feeling."
8. "I'm listening."
9. "Is there anything you'd like to share?"
10. "Thank you for trusting me with your feelings."

We processed and interpreted the test results which gave us the following data on students' emotional intelligence.

Table 1
Test results according to the method of I.M. Yusupov

№ i/o	Scale of empathic tendencies	Level of empathy	Reliability	№ i/o	Scale of empathic tendencies	Level of empathy	Reliability
1	58	normal	2	16	41	normal	0
2	61	normal	0	17	44	normal	1
3	58	normal	0	18	36	low	0
4	68	high	2	19	30	low	0
5	55	normal	2	20	49	normal	1
6	37	normal	0	21	55	normal	0
7	61	normal	1	22	43	normal	0
8	53	normal	3	23	41	normal	0
9	36	low	1	24	49	normal	0
10	60	normal	3	25	56	normal	2
11	44	normal	2	26	51	normal	0
12	50	normal	0	27	47	normal	1
13	39	normal	2	28	36	low	1
14	47	normal	0	29	51	normal	2
15	33	low	0	30	54	normal	0

According to the data obtained, we identified the predominant levels of empathy: 80% with a normal level, 3% with a high level, 17% with a low level.

Also, based on the fact that none of the subjects gave answers that would indicate a very high level and a very low level of empathy, they were not taken into account in the chart.

After testing to determine the level of students' empathy we began to work on the practical development of students' empathy of in the experimental group using special exercises and techniques.
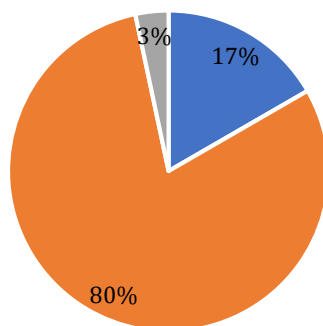
Diagram 1
The levels of students' empathy before performing exercises and technics (80% with a normal level, 3% with a high level, 17% with a low level)

On the first day we started with the concepts of emotions focusing on what emotions are distinguished and how they are felt. The subjects were shown several images with basic emotions to verbally describe the expressive features of the six emotional states: joy, surprise, disgust, anger, fear, and suffering. After that each student focused on recognizing the emotional states of people in the photos, and then in turn they described the state of people. Then we had a joint discussion. Participants noted common symptoms and corrected negative symptoms.

Verbal means are essential in empathy development in higher art education because they allow students to express their emotions, thoughts, and insights about the art they are studying or creating. In order to develop empathy for an artwork, students need to be able to analyze, interpret, and evaluate the work, and then communicate their understanding to others.

Some of the verbal means that can be used to develop empathy in higher art education are:
1. Discussions: Group or class discussions can be used to explore and share different perspectives on an artwork. Students can reflect on the emotions, ideas, and messages conveyed by the work, and how it relates to their own experiences.
2. Critiques: Peer or instructor critiques provide an opportunity for students to give and receive constructive feedback on their own artwork and that of others. This helps to develop empathy by encouraging students to consider different viewpoints and understand the intentions behind the work.
3. Writing: Reflection papers, artist statements, and other written assignments allow students to express their thoughts and emotions about an artwork in a more structured way. This helps to develop empathy by encouraging students to articulate their ideas and feelings in a clear and thoughtful manner.

4. Presentations: Oral presentations can help students develop empathy by requiring them to research and present information about an artwork to their peers. This helps to deepen their understanding of the work, and allows them to share their insights and perspectives with others.

Overall, verbal means are essential in fostering empathy development in higher art education as they provide students with tools to analyze and interpret art, communicate their thoughts and feelings effectively, and engage in meaningful discussions with others.

The next step was the exercise where the subjects stood in a circle and each participant in turn nonverbally showed what he was feeling at that moment. And everyone else repeated these movements 2 or 3 times after him. Too many students showed shyness and very few students demonstrated joy. However, at the end of the class almost everyone picked up a happy emotion. So, starting with general concepts and the exercises to be less embarrassing, we gradually moved on to the exercises for the development of empathy. Several of them are described in the Discussion section.

Table 2
The results of retesting according to the method of I. Yusupov

№ i/o	Scale of empathic tendencies	Level of empathy	Reliability	№ i/o	Scale of empathic tendencies	Level of empathy	Reliability
1	60	normal	3	16	45	normal	1
2	70	high	1	17	65	high	2
3	54	normal	0	18	51	normal	0
4	76	high	2	19	38	normal	0
5	75	high	3	20	64	high	1
6	40	normal	0	21	57	normal	1
7	63	high	0	22	56	normal	0
8	64	high	1	23	45	normal	0
9	41	normal	0	24	66	high	2
10	69	high	3	25	65	high	2
11	46	normal	0	26	64	high	2
12	63	high	0	27	53	normal	1
13	42	normal	0	28	60	normal	1
14	54	normal	0	29	51	normal	2
15	41	normal	0	30	61	normal	0

After conducting all the planned meetings with the students of the study group and completing the exercises for the development of empathy, we again conducted a survey according to I. Yusupov's method which gave us the following results (see Table 2).

According to the data obtained, we again determined the prevailing levels of empathy: (60% with a normal level, 40% with a high level, 0% with a low level).
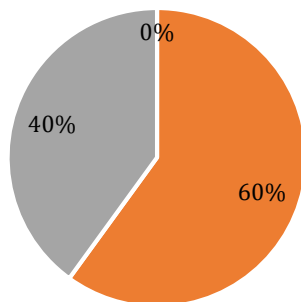
Diagram 2
The levels of students' empathy after performing exercises and techniques (60% with a normal level, 40% with a high level, 0% with a low level)

The results showed the development of students' empathy. The low level of empathy completely disappeared that indicates the success of the study. The comparison of the development of empathic tendencies before and after exercise showed that 96.67%, i.e. 29 students became more empathetic.
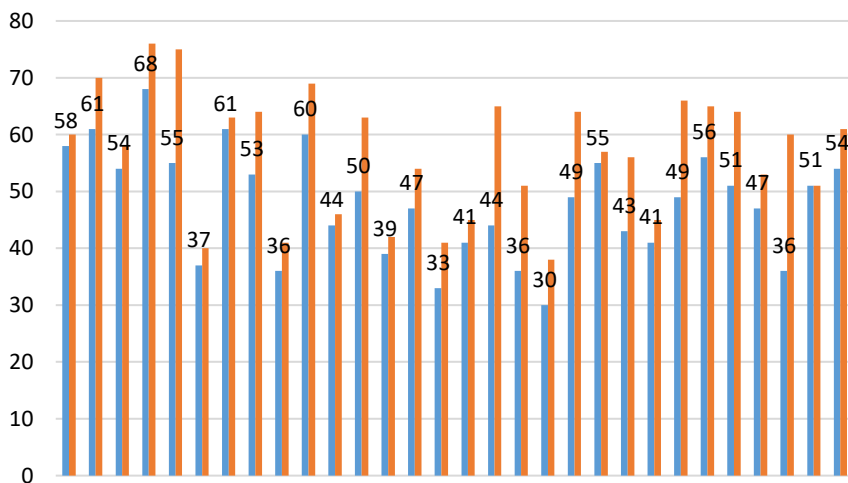
Diagram 3
Comparison of empathic tendencies before and after performing exercises and techniques for empathy development

4. Discussion

The results of the research support the idea of empathy development as a significant and necessary component of professional training of art students. The research emphasizes the necessity of developing students' empathetic skills during the studying process. According to I. Yusupov's method of testing, the research shows the raising level of students' empathy due to the use of special techniques and exercises for developing empathy.

At the beginning of the experiment, the students' empathy levels were as follows: 80% of the normal level, 17% of the low level and 3% of the high level. Then, in the course of the research, after a number of exercises and techniques aimed at developing students' empathy, empathic abilities were tested. There were 60% of the normal level, 40% of the high level, and there was no one with the low level. The results obtained indicated that the students' empathy towards those involved in the experiment increased.

Circle of emotions exercise

The aim: to learn to immerse yourself in a state as needed

Description: Group members are divided into pairs standing in a circle. On the coach's command everyone needs to immerse themselves in one or another emotional state, emotion or feeling. The coach can suddenly stop all participants in the poses in which they are. You can select one pair, then others observe them. Pairs can be changed to cover more participants and emotions.

The trainer may offer to convey nonverbally the experiences of such dangerous situations, emotions and feelings as: a friend did not call and did not come to the party; an unexpected surprise, a gift; pride in yourself; arrogance; suspicion; hostility; anger; love; joy; image.

After the exercise it is advisable to have a general discussion. It is possible to make generalizations about how these or those feelings are expressed.

Understanding story technique

The aim: to teach to understand another person's story.
Description:
1. Ask your close friend to think (or write down) about someone he or she is afraid of or does not want to communicate with for any reason.
2. Ask this person to think about why the person they don't like behaves in this way and write down the reasons.
3. Ask him to share his emotions about the feelings of an unpleasant person now.
   Example:
— I don't want to be friends with John because he rarely talks to me.

— I realized that John was an unhappy and lonely man. And that his mother is unable to pay for the apartment.
— Now that I understand that this may be true, I want to be friends with him, because his silence and gloom are not about his attitude towards me but about his feelings caused by domestic problems.
  Technique outcomes:
— Did your thoughts about a person you feared or did not want to deal with change after this exercise?
— Think about how understanding the story of a person's life affects your perception.

Rearrangement of roles technique

The aim: to imagine yourself playing the role of another person.
Description: Empathy is manifested when you imagine yourself in the role of another person. Remember all your acquaintances and relatives, make a list of these people. Then take turns trying to immerse yourself in these roles.

Answer the questions: What is your name? What is your age? What are your favorite books? Where did you go on vacation? What do you like the most? What upsets you the most? What excites you? What is something that makes you feel nostalgic? What are you afraid of? What or whom do you most often hope for?

The point of the exercise is to stop thinking about your problems and think about what the other person is feeling and why. You can make your own list or embark on an imaginary journey.
  Technique outcomes:
— Ask the person if your guesses about him are correct. What are you right about and what are you wrong about?
— How do you feel about the role of different people?

Clients and a designer technique

The aim: to learn to empathize with your client
Description: one of the participants acts as a customer (who has a specific design order) and the other as a designer. The task for a client is to honestly answer a designer's questions. The task for a designer is to pass through the feelings of a client, through the question of this design project and its role in the life of a client and theoretically work out the best solution to the request of a client to please him.
  Technique outcomes:
— What was the difficulty at the beginning of the conversation?
— What was the most difficult part of this exercise?

— Did you manage to feel your client?
— When exactly did you realize that you were on the right target?
— What questions helped you feel like a customer?
— How do you feel after the exercise?
    It is better to repeat the exercise changing the roles of the participants.

5. Conclusion

Analysis of the characteristics of empathy by representatives of pedagogical science allows us to conclude that, on the one hand, they all unanimously attribute the factors of direct influence on the formation of personality empathy features of education, individual communication, shade of interpersonal relationships. On the other hand, different scholars give an individual vision and understanding of this concept, in particular understanding of the emotional state of another person which causes the expression of their understanding of these feelings; penetration into the experience of another person and comprehension of his emotional state; it is a phenomenon of the psyche that is not related to a certain level of consciousness; understanding the emotional state of another one; comprehension of another person's emotional state in the form of compassion, empathy, desire and ability to put oneself in the place of another; the ability to understand and feel the state of another person, the ability to express this understanding.

We consider empathy as an important factor in the moral development of the individual and as an effective means of revealing and assimilating the inner nature of moral relations. Empathy can be also viewed as one of the means of limiting a person's aggression and one of the regulators of human relations. So, finally, empathy should be a necessary component for the development of personality, its emotional maturity, interpersonal understanding and collaboration.

A look at the empathy of future professionals as a professionally important quality makes it possible to optimize the educational process in art universities and develop new learning technologies.

Verbal means are a key aspect in developing students' empathy because communication is essential for understanding and connecting with others. By using verbal means, such as discussion, reflection, and active listening, students are able to articulate their own thoughts and feelings, while also gaining insights into the perspectives and experiences of others. This promotes a deep understanding of different viewpoints and fosters a sense of empathy towards others, allowing students to truly put themselves in another person's shoes. In addition, verbal means help students practice effective communication skills, which are essential in building positive relation-

ships throughout their lives. Overall, using verbal means is vital in developing students' empathy, as it allows them to relate to others, develop important skills, and build a sense of compassion for the world around them.

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