

# THE INFLUENCE OF EMPATHY AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE SOCIAL COMPETENCES ON SUCCESSFUL SOCIAL INTEGRATION

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*Abstract: The presentation of the results of social project evaluation is an area which reflects methodological aspects specific to the analysed field. The necessity to replicate and multiply the good practices identified within the implemented activities proposes a collection of analysed projects with the purpose to promote the initiatives regarding the control of exclusion from the basic services in the disfavoured communities, particularly in the Roma communities.*

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The problem of empathy has a high importance, being appreciated at an empirical level as being essential for the social performance of an individual. Not only at a social representation level, but also in normal relationships, inter-individual, the empathy's role is supposed to be special. A. Manstead and M. Miles appreciated that empathy received in the last two decades a special attention from social psychologist maybe because of the strong link between empathy, pro-social behavior and social competence.

In approaching the empathy phenomenon we guide after:

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- Theoretical considerations on empathy of D.Hoffman;
- Theoretical consideration on social competences of D.Goleman and S.Moscovici.

We consider empathy highly important for social integration and socio-professional, essential phenomena for a human as a social being. In this context, empathy is the base of certain social behaviors, manifested through so called social competences.

Through this we understand the social behavior's patterns which form capable individuals regarding from a social point of view, able to produce the desired effects on other individuals (Moscovici S., 1998, p.75).

Generally, it is considered that the presence of these competences can radically influence social life and even mental health.

Thorndike defined social competence as being the capacity of understanding and acting appropriate in inter-human relationships. It shows the ability of being able to argument ideas, controlling emotions in stead of using rough force. The best art of relationship is based on social competence through which the person is able to easily cope with people and straighten the "un-adjustments" from the social environment. Lacking this ability, intellectual performance makes the person arrogant and insensitive. Social competence facilitates inter-human contacts (Roco M, 2001).

Social competence is the perception and someone's authority of saying his point in a problem of the society or the group he belongs to at a certain class (according to DEX dictionary).

Many psychologists realized that social competence assures the success in day to day life and is a way of specific sensitivity towards relationships with people. Sociability makes the personality to constantly develop and create fine demeanors and contributions, ideals and aspirations carved by the environment's demands.

Social competence to which P.Muresan refers is always taking place, comes into phases of disorientation in puberty and adolescence and than it strengthens in a specific way with boarders of tolerance, morality, culture, civilization and even sociability.

R.K. Morton is convinced that tactical preparation in developing the social competence of every person would favor the hierarchical role he gets. According to Morton, this training is done not only through information and knowledge, but also through a slow process of the demeanor's accordance with the potential status. The author claims that introverts are less sociable and do not feel the need to participate to social reunions, on the contrary, they avoid them, despite the extrovert who is sociable, active, involved in more forms of public, social activities at the same time (apud Ogien A, 2002).

Th. Hatch and H. Gardner consider that the art of leading is a form of sui generis of the social competence which is the recognition of the other's feelings and the capacity to rapidly make connections between them. In their vision, social competences include some abilities: group organization, negotiating the solutions, personal connections and social analysis (study, research), all these abilities being ingredients needed for charm, success in society (apud Roco M, 2001).

Through a simple analysis of the social competences, we identify constitutive elements of the social competences: influence, communication, conflict management, establishing relationships, collaboration, cooperation, team work capacity.

A classification of the social competence components, argued from a scientific point of view, is presented by Daniel Goleman in describing the dimensions of emotional intelligence (Goleman D, 2001). Therefore, to the five dimensions of emotional intelligence correspond 25 competences, of which 13 are social, such as: empathy, assertiveness; other's development; tolerance; social conscious; influence; communication; leadership; conflict management; building relationships; collaboration and cooperation; team spirit; the change factor.

One essential element of the social competence (or a competence that contributes to social competence building, appreciated as macro-competence) is empathy. Empathy is acknowledged as:

- Altruist behavior;
- Regulator mechanism of inter-personal relationships;
- Effective means of developing and engulfing the interior meaning of moral relationships;
- One of the most important factors of personality development;
- Major demand for artistic creation;

Empathy is a common feature of all men, having at the base hereditary predispositions. As an expression of this capacity, during the individual existence, an empathic appreciative style is created and an emphatic behavior. Between empathic capacity and emphatic behavior as a constant way of manifesting it, there are tied relationships. The empathic capacity through manifestation at the individual level contributes to:

- Psychologically knowing the other;
- Understanding and predicting the other's behavior;
- Facilitation of the interpersonal communication

- Facilitating the social adaption through elaborating a private strategy of an individual's behavior and other's behavior;
- Achieving performances in profession and social efficiency.

The empathic attitude is always moved by moral judgments, in moral dilemmas. M. Hoffman, preoccupied by this problem, sustains that the roots of morality are in empathy, because it makes us care about the potential victims, makes us share their grief and help them. M. Hoffman supposes that the same capacity for empathic affection, the possibility of putting yourself in someone else's place makes people respect certain moral principles (Goleman D., 2001).

Empathic behavior is determined by three variables, two cognitive ones: the ability to encode and classify other's affective moods and the ability to hypothetically evaluate the way of behaving and the other's perspective, and the third of affective nature-emotional impressionability (the capacity of associating your own emotions with someone else's).

Highly empathic people are altruist, generous, tend to give a helping hand to other people, have a well defined pro-social behavior, and are well socially adapted and generally a bit anxious.

A. Mehrabian established four aspects of empathy:

- Clear perception of personal and other's emotions;
- Exercising the capacity replying with emotion and adequate behavior;
- Involvement in an interpersonal relationship, having the ability to honestly express emotions, showing respect and consideration;
- The capacity of working equilibrates (Roco M, 2001).

Steven Stein and Howard Book define empathy as being the ability of being aware, understanding and appreciating the other's feelings and thoughts. Empathy means being sensible to what, how and why people feel and think this way. This means to be capable to "read them, from an emotional point of view". People who have these qualities show interest towards others and are preoccupied by their situation (Steven S. J. Howard E.B., 2003).

For Roger the empathy is not the mood, but the process, which implies "entering someone else's personal world and being as home, being sensible to any change that may occur" (Roger K., 1994).

In Roger's work three essential characteristics of the empathic process are described:

- maintaining your personal position in this process;
- the existence of compassion, not just a positive attitude towards the other;
- the dynamic character of empathy.

Steven Covez describes empathic listening being so strong because it gives information about how we must understand the other. Instead of projecting your own biography and suppose thoughts, feelings, reasons and interpretations, we deal with the mind and soul reality of another person (apud Юцынов И. М. 1995).

Empathy determination as a cognitive-affective process was presented in L. Vispe's works, who claims that compassion is a state of being aware of another human's suffering, which would be relieved. Empathy would be the attempt to understand without judging negative or positive sensations of another person. This is an active process, tied to making some efforts, while we try to understand the other one.

M. Hoffman's conception is original; he describes empathy as an affective reaction. According to him, in the development process, children pass from the stage of not knowing the difference "me" and "not me" to which they react to someone else's suffering as to his, to the stage in which he starts to make the distinction between those from around him, in report with his personal sensitivity and emotional troubles (apud Goleman D., 2001).

T.G. Grigorieva says that empathy appears when being aware of the emotional state of someone else, and in negative situations this receptiveness appears like compassion, sadness, pity. In her studies she distinguishes receptiveness and compassion as empathic forms, receptivity being the experience of those emotions felt by the other person. The individual relives because he had felt such emotions in his past experience and maybe he will encounter another one in the future (Григорьева Т.Г., 1997).

Other studies show empathy as one of the most important phenomena of interpersonal relationship, in the process of whom the value system is born, which will prior determine a person's behavior. At the same time, in empathy one of the following can dominate: gnosiological –manifested through exact understanding of the other's mood; affective- manifested through emotional implication in the affective mood of someone else; behavioral –manifested through support actions. Approached this way, empathy is one of the basic mechanisms of adjusting interpersonal relationships (Сивицкая Л.А., 1998).

The level of empathy development is positive or negative influenced by a series of factors from childhood. Therefore, studies have identified factors that help empathy development:

- mothers, their behavior towards children are: non-punitive, non-authoritarian and receptive;

- relationships with other children and promoting the idea that behavior manifestations towards the other must be good;
- shaping parental behavior towards children and others in the presence of children;
- parents encouraging children to talk about emotions and problems.

At the same time there also are factors that stop empathy development:

- threats or body punishments;
- unaware care and rejecting the baby in the moments when he needs emotional support;
- mother abuse;
- extrinsic rewards for improving the child's behavior.

Therefore, the roots of empathy are somewhere in childhood, and parents have a fundamental role in what regards the degree of empathy development through the fact that they are behavior models. Researches have shown that there is a correlation between certain commotion and the level of empathy. Autism, borderline commotion, nervous anorexia, adult's abusive behavior are due to empathy deprive from at least one of the parents (Florian, Gh. 2001).

From all these we can see that the necessity and importance of empathy in personality building. This phenomenon assures social opening and contributes to creating a mechanism of self-accomplishment.

- it coordinates the actions in a rapid and automatic way, which allows them to respond more efficient to potential threats or opportunities;
- it helps solve the problem of understanding thoughts and intentions;
- The link which guarantees solidarity.

As a complex process, empathy does a series of functions

- a) **Cognitive function** – involvement in psychological transposition in the reference system of the other's through which an act of empirical knowledge of the partner is made (how friendly, interesting, optimistic, aggressive, anxious etc he is) a tacit and circuted knowledge.
- b) **The communication function**- answers to the needs of a dialogue and temporary change of your perspective with his, a condition in an efficient interpersonal communication;
- c) **The function of affective contagion** –it comes from getting close and identifying me with the other's "I", situation which attracts the phenomenon of temporary