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Teachers' empathy in the development of bilingual communication strategies

Abstract

The objective of this study is to analyze the essence of lived experiences related to teacher empathy in the development of bilingual communication strategies; understanding empathy as understanding other people's experiences and warning of what someone else has lived as an alert to be attended to. The research corresponds to the interpretive paradigm, qualitative approach, with a phenomenological-hermeneutic design; The sample is made up of five Quechua-speaking teachers; the individual anecdotes were used as an instrument of the direct observation technique and the semi-structured interview guide based on the anecdotes that correspond to the conversational interview technique. From the analysis of the results, thematic units called individual physiognomy emerge as reflection, trust, identity, empathy, satisfaction, insecurity and amazement; Subsequently, the results were categorized and triangulated, from which the group physiognomy or central thematic unit called empathy arises because of its relevance and significance in the lived experiences of teachers. It is concluded that teacher empathy is an emotional situation of the subject from the moment he apprehends the experience of the other; it is a particular experience capable of tracing the path towards a phenomenology of intersubjectivity and, also, towards the constitution of the shared objective world.

Keywords: Empathy, trust, identity, satisfaction, insecurity, amazement phenomenology-hermeneutics.

Introduction

In the field of education, at all levels and in all modalities, the term linguistic diversity is becoming increasingly relevant; the political education system, with different presentations and points of view, is revaluing the cultural variety that exists in Peru as a response to the demand of all Peruvians, who are demanding

greater equality in rights with the aim of ensuring that socio-cultural diversity is recognized and valued, with greater reason, in educational institutions (Villalta, 2016). The education system aims to establish standards and policies to take into account social demands for equity and social inclusion. The National Education Project (PEN), as of 2021, maintains that it is essential to have teachers

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trained in an intercultural perspective; that is, with the capacity to relate to various sociocultural configurations, not only to understand and value them, but also to organize learning activities that seek to recognize this diversity in the classroom, based on the cultural wealth of students and their communities, promoting dialogue between different world views, values and representations (Minedu, 2007). In the Quechua-speaking regions of Peru, students communicate in their mother tongue; this reality is a motivation for proposing quality teaching through the use of different bilingual communication skills and thus progressively extrapolating to the second language.

In the rural Quechua-speaking educational establishments of the Ancash region, there are two groups of teachers designated to instruct the different subjects: the first group conducts its classes in Spanish without taking into account the attendance of Quechua-speaking students, forcing them to learn Spanish, an attitude that hinders learning in the mother tongue, for which reason the cognitive results are counterproductive (Vilca, 2017).

Teachers sent to bilingual institutions must be proficient in two languages, Quechua and Spanish; however, they do not know how to handle Quechua in its written and oral form. In addition, the teachers do not specialize in Quechua, so they deploy learning activities in Spanish, which is of little use to the student. A command of Quechua as a second language is essential for those who work in areas where it is the mother tongue of the people of the region; mainly the professionals who will be working in rural areas (Oyola and Quispe, 2016).

As if this were not enough, the teachers show little empathy in not using communicative tactics according to the student's need to improve learning from communicative exchange in Quechua; furthermore, the teachers show little motivation in exchanging with them in their mother tongue during the teaching-learning process, this causes distrust and fear in the students to participate in the session.

A second group of teachers obtains better effects on the students' communication skills because they sing, declaim, stage plays, and also exchange inside and outside the classroom in their mother tongue, an admirable scenario. The language of our ancestors, Quechua, underlies the experiences of Peruvians since the Andean origin is part of our culture; therefore, it is necessary to know this language because it is the root of it. The knowledge of a second

language implies the knowledge and mastery of its didactics (Rojas, Valencia, Llamaconcca, Mendoza and Cajavilca, 2019). Therefore, the objective of the research was to analyze the essence of the experience of the teacher who achieves successful learning and bilingual communication skills.

The research was carried out with descriptions of the phenomenological hermeneutic method that aims to describe the way in which each person is oriented towards the experience (Van Manen, 2003); because of its evocative characteristic, it allows reflection on what has been lived and experienced, for which the foundations of the aforementioned method were used. The first: *epojé* is the distancing of all that restricts us from perceiving things themselves; to practice *epojé* is to abstain or to do without, (Fuster, 2019), and, in second place: the reduction that is understood as the recovery of the articulating axes of the life of the consciousness; but this can only be executed by deepening one's experience (Villanueva, 2014).

From the results of the study, emerged the research topic called "Teacher's empathy in the development of bilingual communication strategies"; because of its greater importance in the teacher's experience and because it is a fundamental aspect in their pedagogical work with a different expectation of their bilingual students. In the transmission of knowledge, it is assumed that the teacher understands his or her students in various circumstances, taking into account attitudes, feelings and difficulties. Empathy is then founded and explained.

Theoretical Framework

Empathy is understood as a person's ability to experience what others feel and understand their feelings, which can lead to better understanding. Infante (2012) refers that Husserl (2005) mentions empathy as a particular experience, able to mark the way towards a phenomenology of the intersubjectivity and also towards the constitution of the shared objective world. Empathy is perceived as the ability to understand the needs, feelings and problems of others, putting itself in their place, attending kindly to their emotional relations.

Infante (2012) quotes Stein (2005) who maintains that we cannot completely understand the problem of empathy, if we do not first understand the original problem that constitutes a unit; also, he mentions that empathy, more than being a feeling that connects us with another person affectively,

turns out to be a cognitive phenomenon; that is to say, it is not possible that empathy can be given without, necessarily, a sensitive affection. For Garzón (2018), empathy is an invitation to "live with oneself"; in this way, it is located as the capacity to live the others, the possibility that others participate as active observers in the experiment of the I-originator and author of the experience.

Empathy is a cognitive process from which an affective knowledge of the other person is feasible, the close knowledge of the experience of the other person's self, of which I possess an experience proper to the life experience of others, in which the experience is integrated, the experience of evocation in a present experience.

The empathy of the teacher is an emotional mechanism that consists of the capacity to feel what others feel or, at least, feel something similar; its complexity allows to cover from diverse representations in the formative field by the only and productive aim to foment the personal improvement from the centers of study since it creates a space of cordiality and confidence that allows the student to feel accepted, valued and safe (Martinez and Perez, 2011).

In all educational institutions (IE), empathy assumes an important role as it is a dimension that promotes the improvement of the personality because teachers develop the ability to feel emotion as others experience it. Empathy is the ability to relate to other people; it is getting to form bonds of trust, where the first place is respect in the teacher-student, teacher-teacher and teacher-educational community relationship, whose relations contribute to education (Segovia, Fuster and Ocaña, 2020; Sazesh, & Siadat, 2018).

The teacher's empathy is a feeling that develops in front of the students' experience, deploying an understanding and collaborative attitude during the teaching-learning process. Alonso and Kraftchenko (2003), quoted by Mejía, Poveda, and Paoli (2012), mention that teachers are referents insofar as they exert a great influence in the students' formation process; therefore, they should consider developing empathy as an essential point in their training and, in this way, exert their function adequately. Various educational programs are concerned with updating teachers in curricular and pedagogical aspects, teaching strategies, materials, and teaching resources, including teacher performance assessment.

To the question of whether there are studies on any updating directed at teachers in relation to empathy in the workplace or whether there is any assessment of empathic

performance, the answer is no. It was found that there are no studies on the preparation and assessment of teachers in training regarding empathy (Segarra, Muñoz, Segarra, 2016). The teacher, as a human being, has a special ability to experience empathy using all of the tools available, including his or her innate quality; however, he or she should be trained in this subject.

In a teaching-learning environment, empathic communication is essential, so that students' feelings and desires will be heard as concrete realities until they know their experiences through reciprocal communication. In this regard, Yarhi (2000) points out that, when a student feels listened and loved, he will be motivated with more facility to interact with others, besides having initiative to investigate, ask and satisfy his needs. Luque (2017) indicates that teachers should: "(...) Help reinforce communication with active listening and empathy for students" (p.51); therefore, the empathetic attitude of the teacher is fundamental in a pedagogical environment to create an active, participatory environment and, in this way, be able to help students optimize their affective and communicative development because it offers their understanding of the difficulties they have during the teaching-learning process.

In this line, Guzmán (2018) indicates that empathic communication is a responsibility that teachers have to guarantee that their pedagogical mediation is distributed in a horizontal communicative process; it is vital to favor with dynamics that allow the creation of harmonic environments and that open communication paths.

Teacher empathy in bilingual institutions, a subject of research, is relevant because it allows us to know their pedagogical work with bilingual students. Putting oneself in the other's place in moments of discouragement and anguish, getting involved in that experience, describes an empathetic teacher with an attitude of understanding the difficulties, desires and aspirations that the students have. The development of empathy is observed in the teacher in the classroom and it can be established that, through it, the problems experienced are solved (Hernández, Stella, and Caro, 2018). Furthermore, in an environment of diversity, empathy means sharing experiences and feelings, generating a pleasant and participatory atmosphere throughout the teaching-learning process.

The empathic attitude allows the teacher to make a change in his or her teaching style, making it friendly, accessible, and of exchange with the Quechua-speaking students, thus entering into their internal states to get to

know each person in a unique way with their different problems and aspirations. This attitude makes it easier for the teacher to act differently in the classroom with an honest attitude to gain trust. The teacher uses relevant strategies to develop meaningful learning in the Quechua-speaking students; for example, through stories, local songs, or with scenic presentations of local activities.

These strategies allow for a natural exchange in their own language; therefore, the teacher has to discard the idea that Quechua-speaking students, because they do not speak their language, make teaching difficult or do not learn; it is time to abandon the myths that the Quechua language restricts a person's development to his or her own community; Quechua speakers are simplified peoples, treasures of the Inca Empire, with a less modern lifestyle because they are more dedicated to the countryside; for this reason, the empathetic teacher must point out that he or she values this cultural richness.

Methodology

Due to its particular characteristic, the research focuses on the interpretative paradigm, typical of the social sciences, based on the exercise of interpretation, which is the act by which we assign a certain meaning to a certain reality in which some intentionality is shown (Bautista, 2011). The study is approached from the qualitative approach; in this regard, Rodríguez, Gil and García (1999) point out that it is subject to the naturalistic perspective and the interpretative understanding of human experiences.

This work is focused on the phenomenological and hermeneutic design; in this regard, Rodríguez, Gil and García (1999) quote Van Manen (1990), who points out that phenomenological research seeks to know the meanings that people give to their experience, what is relevant is to apprehend the process of interpretation by which people define their world and act accordingly; to achieve this, it is helped by hermeneutics. For Martínez (2006), it has as objective to discover the meanings of things, to interpret in the best way the words, texts, gestures and, in general, the human behavior conserving its singularity; thus it discovers the meaning of the experiences told in the anecdotes and interviews.

The investigation, for greater importance and coherence, uses the empirical and reflective methods; Van Manen (2003), cited by Ayala (2008), indicates that the first is oriented to the collection of experiential material; while the reflective method analyzes and determines the essential structures of the

collected experience; both methods, in phenomenology, go beyond the mere particularity of the object. The phenomenological hermeneutic design supported by Van Manen (2003), Martínez (2006) and Ayala (2008), cited by Fuster (2019), proposes four phases: 1) the previous stage or liberation of prejudices, Martínez (2006) sustains that an investigation can begin with the reduction of the budgets; 2) the phase of data collection or experiences through anecdotes, written stories and the conversational interview (Ayala, 2008); 3) the reflective and interpretative phase of the experiences using the macro and micro thematic reflection and 4) the phase that consists on writing and reflecting about the experience, here the phenomenological text is written with the findings in the investigation. Van Manen (2003).

For the selection of the sample, the technique of non-probabilistic sampling was applied; five Quechua-speaking teachers from different districts of the Ancash region participated, who were assigned a pseudonym: Huarino, Accino, Pontorino, Uqueño and Zeballino. Zeballino, a teacher who worked in the educational institution Horcio Zevallos district of Pontó, province of Huari; Huarino, a teacher from the Hurín farmhouse, district Chavín de Huantar; Uqueño, a teacher from the district of Uco, province of Huari; Accino, a teacher from the district of Aczo, province Antonio Raymondi; finally, Pontorino, a teacher from the district of Pontó, province of Huari.

Two techniques were used: close observation and interview. For Van Manen (2003), close observation allows the collection of experiential material through anecdotes used as instruments and the conversational interview for the deepening of the narrated experience. Through the interview, information is requested to obtain data about a specific problem (Fuster, 2019).

The validity of the research was evidenced by the proximity and interaction with the experience; reliability was achieved through the process of preparing the fieldwork, as well as in the data analysis. The results were called group physiognomy and phenomenological text, in which the data of the particular structures are integrated to a general one (Martínez, 2006; Tambunan, 2018).

Results

Teachers are committed to having an empathetic attitude since, due to work situations, they have to experience different

realities and participate with subjects of multiple characteristics, cultures, traditions and beliefs that are present in the teaching and learning process of bilingual institutions; Nevertheless, what is projected is not always fulfilled, unfavorable situations arise or, in many cases, adverse situations that the teacher cannot control; from there, the importance of understanding the feelings of others and putting oneself in their place; in this way, one will understand that not everyone reacts the same way if a fact is presented.

Empathy stimulates teachers to interact with greater affection and naturalness during the teaching-learning process; at the same time, it makes them sensitive to the experiences of students throughout the teaching process and, consequently, to getting involved in order to gain their trust.. (Huarino, UT 3, párr. 8- 15), *I noticed a negative attitude of rejection, for that reason, I had to use some strategy, first I won their trust by seeking dialogue more naturally in Quechua, I began to introduce myself, I told them that I was also from the district of Pontó, that I knew how to speak Quechua, that I understood what they were talking about, then I asked them to introduce themselves in Quechua. Telling my personal stories, I told them about my years as a student, that I was also afraid of the teachers because of the belt punishments, they made us kneel on pointy little caps if we didn't do our homework or when we were late for school. At recess, they came to talk more freely, in the classroom they were suspicious; outside the classroom, they showed more openness, finding the opportunity to ask them more questions, for example, how, where they lived, what their houses were, how many brothers they had, etc. The aim was to gain their confidence.*

Empathy, through time and by sharing in daily life situations with others, increases and intensifies. The teacher, by putting himself in the students' place, makes his greatest effort in teaching students with learning difficulties due to their lack of understanding of Spanish; he prepares to teach by dialoguing in Quechua with joy, motivating them with flattery after their participation.

Sometimes the students do not know how to read or write and, as a teacher, he models the word one by one on the blackboard so that they write well; the students grasp it more quickly because they are older, but always speaking in Quechua, a language that they master (Pontorino, UT1, para. 3-6).

They used to call me "keyta yacharcatsimey" - teach me - it made me happy, I congratulated them, I helped them by speaking to them in Quechua and Spanish,

with a positive attitude, despite the family problems; a story with the animals was also created in Quechua. I was constantly motivating them, every achievement was applauded by all the classmates, and a prize was offered to the one who participated the most and, if they participate actively, they will pass the course. In the teaching-learning process, empathy facilitates an improved relationship between teachers and students in order to achieve academic success and a sincere attitude towards the teacher, thus annulling conflicts and antipathy.

To achieve this, in many occasions it is necessary to be permissive since empathy in the teacher encourages mutual respect, even more it promotes to maintain a pleasant atmosphere in the classroom to have better learning.

The empathic teacher internalizes the feelings of the students, he cares about their state of mind after their participation in the class. They looked at me attentively and I could hear whispers in Quechua, there was no need to say anything to gain confidence, I asked them, but the room was completely silent, they were shouting at each other, I approached them to ask their names and I could hear their voices emitted in fear (Huarino, UT3, Para. 6 and Para. 3).

When they did not want to participate, I did not demand, I asked them questions and what they knew they answered with enthusiasm, it was to begin to explore previous knowledge and thus insert new learning into Quechua (Accino, UT 2, para. 3). After participating, the students feel good because it makes them happy to be asked how they are doing (Zeballino, UT 2, para. 4).

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Empathy is the feeling of the experience of the other, which progresses when there is more trust. This approach reflects a natural coexistence inserted into the teaching-learning process, where jokes, laughter, sadness, and happiness are important. The teacher is empathetic with them and carries out the pedagogical activity in the language that the students master most, making it more active. *The student Denia made a spontaneous joke, she said: "Imagra gam shamicargueki añomi cacurga profesornihuan" (why did you come? I was better off with my previous teacher), the jokes in Quechua are said with complete normality, generating familiarity, even those who did not speak began to participate* (Uqueño, UT 3, para. 6 and para. 7).

They are already gaining confidence; they are already getting to know my way of working with them and my way of demanding. They ask me, they approach me and they speak to me in Quechua, they ask me if they are doing well, they express themselves, without fear or shame, they intervene and they realize if they are wrong and they question in Quechua the songs, stories and debates during the classes. (Zeballino, UT 3, para. 5 and 11).

Reflective empathy is elementary since it can question our work by the way we see others; empathy is linked to the memory of life experience; therefore, reflection is important that allows us to experience our own experiences. The teacher reflects on his or her academic work based on the results obtained with the students. This reflection gives the teacher the feeling of appropriating the experience of the students, using their mother tongue. Similarly, empathic reflection allows teachers to analyze their academic work from the results of learning. (Uqueño, UT 2, para. 7)

When I taught my classes in Spanish, the students did not understand, I asked them questions and they did not answer. When I evaluated them, they disapproved, I felt helpless and I wondered what I was doing wrong, perhaps I was the problem. I reflected and changed my teaching style, explaining to them in Quechua. Because of the inappropriate method I was using, they were not learning and their learning needs were not being met; a great experience and lesson for

me in realizing that my students were learning better in their native language (Accino, UT 1, para. 1, 7).

Figure 1.

La empatía es el sentimiento de la vivencia del otro, que avanza al haber más confianza. En ese acercamiento, se refleja una convivencia natural insertada en el proceso de enseñanza- aprendizaje, donde las bromas, risas, tristezas y alegrías son importantes. El docente es empático con ellos y realiza la actividad pedagógica en la lengua que más dominan los estudiantes haciéndola más activa. *La alumna Denia hizo una broma espontánea, dijo: "Imagra gam shamicargueki añomi cacurga profesornihuan" (¿a qué habrás venido?, estuve mejor con mi profesor anterior), las bromas en quechua las dicen con toda normalidad, generando la familiaridad, incluso los que no hablaban comenzaron a participar* (Uqueño, UT 3, párr. 6 y párr.7).

Ya están entrando en confianza, ya están conociendo mi forma de trabajar con ellos y mi forma de exigencia. Me preguntan, se aproximan y me hablan en quechua, me preguntan si lo están haciendo bien, se expresan, sin temores ni vergüenza, intervienen y se dan cuenta si se equivocan y cuestionan en quechua las canciones, cuentos y debates durante las clases. (Zeballino, UT 3, párr. 5 y 11).

La empatía reflexiva es elemental ya que puede cuestionar nuestra labor por la forma cómo vemos a los demás; la empatía está ligada al recuerdo de la experiencia de vida; por ello, es importante la reflexión que permite experimentar nuestras propias vivencias. El maestro reflexiona acerca de su labor académica a partir de los resultados obtenidos con los estudiantes. Esa reflexión hace que en el docente surja el sentimiento de apropiarse de la vivencia de los estudiantes, utilizando su lengua materna. De igual forma, la reflexión empática permite al maestro analizar su labor académica desde los resultados de aprendizaje. (Uqueño, UT 2, párr. 7)

Cuando yo desarrollaba mis clases en castellano, los estudiantes no comprendían, les preguntaba y no respondían, al evaluarlos desaprobaban, sentía impotencia y me preguntaba qué estaba haciendo mal, acaso yo era el problema. Reflexioné y cambié mi estilo de enseñanza, explicándoles en quechua. Por el método inapropiado que estaba usando, no aprendían ni satisfacían sus necesidades de aprendizaje; una gran experiencia y lección para mí al percatarme que mis estudiantes aprendían mejor en su lengua originaria (Accino, UT 1, párr. 1, 7).

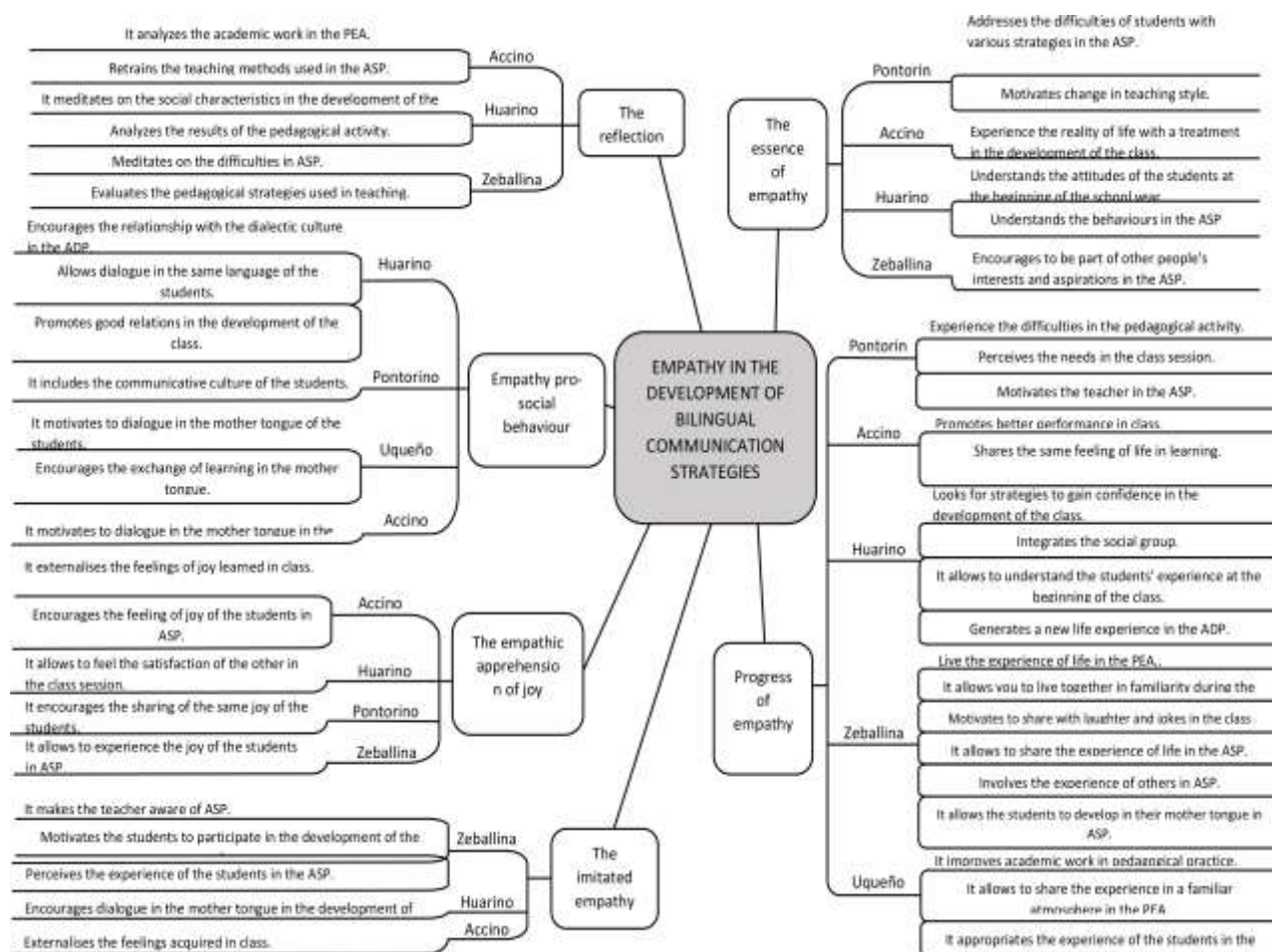


Figure 1.
Functional meanings or group physiognomy

Discussion and Results

Empathy, as social interaction, promotes a good relationship with educational agents throughout the teaching-learning process; in this regard, Servín (2010) points out that having a pleasant behavior in a social environment is essential for the formation of the person; likewise, Lapeña (2012) indicates the relevance of what has been said as an essential factor for a good relationship, free of conflicts in work situations. Empathy leads to social interaction only with the fact of understanding what another person may feel or think in order to generate a good relationship with a pleasant behavior. To what mentioned, Meyer (2008), in Olivera (2010), indicates that empathy would be a motivating factor of social interaction and prosocial behaviour.

Empathy is progressive; it is observed when the teacher understands attitudes, behaviours, feelings and difficulties, creating a reflection in the educational actors; Servin (2010) agrees with it, who mentions that the understanding being is to understand in many ways the situations of others. Similarly, Galvis

(2014) argues that empathy is of vital importance in education to develop the human side, ie to be more sensitive to the environment. Also, Allport (1968), in Mestre and Samper (1997), defines empathy as the manifestation of the personality in society. The progress of empathy begins with the understanding of the other in diverse scenarios, considering the attitudes, behaviours, feelings and difficulties of those around us so that they in other circumstances assume the same reflection.

In this regard, Olivera (2010) mentions that empathy is to get in touch with the internal state of another person, to take the position or adopt the mental response equal to that of the other person who is being observed, to feel what the other person feels, to project oneself into the other person's situation, to imagine how the other person thinks or feels, to imagine how one would feel in the situation of another person, to suffer in the face of the observation of another person's suffering, a feeling that is awakened by another person who is suffering. Empathy is an appropriate emotional reaction; it allows one to be involved

in the experience of the other in a progressive manner, beginning with emotional contagion and understanding of the other's feelings.

From the experiences gathered, it is stated that emotional empathy is the reaction, apprehension and understanding of the students' situation by the teacher in the pedagogical process; in accordance with this, Servin (2010) points it out as an important factor that provides solutions, understanding what the other person is feeling with a real feeling. Hernández, Stella and Caro (2018) argue that empathy decreases aggressive behaviour from its strengthening and self-regulation. In the same way, it is understood that emotional empathy is the capacity to apprehend the external world of others to accompany them in their feelings and help them in their difficulties. Rapson (1994), in Olivera (2010), refers that it is a natural and automatic tendency that leads the common people to synchronize facial expressions, voice, posture and movements of others.

Emotional empathy is the individual's willingness to experience other people's emotions; for him, trust with students is fundamental as an important point to perceive and feel his experience completely. In this regard, Servin (2010) indicates that trust is a situational determinant in the appropriation of the experience of others, playing a key role in the sincere and unconditional appropriation of the lives of others. Similarly, for Marandon (2003), trust is based on identification with the desires and intentions of the other so that a mutual understanding is developed between the parties present. In this phase, the degree of trust is high, so that each can count on the support of the other. From the knowledge of experience, mutual trust involves cooperation in the desires and feelings of others; thus, we can consider it to be a fundamental condition for optimal co-existence within a society.

For Galvis (2014), what is primordial is the empathic formation of students; therefore, he calls on all educational agents to promote such formation to avoid aggressions and conflicts in harmony. Abovsky, Alfaro and Ramírez (2011) point out the importance of the understanding of the experience of the other, generating necessary conditions for reliable manifestations. It can be stated that trust and empathy have a cyclical relationship with mutual dependence, important in a communicative process because they provoke authentic friendship links favouring a better learning with the active participation of all the educational agents.

On this point, Marandon (2003) maintains that empathy is the condition of confidence that encourages and facilitates the opening,

the receptivity and the availability with respect to the other. In other words, confidence stimulates empathy because there exists a biconditional-circular relation between both; empathy generates a pleasant atmosphere in which the lived experiences are shared, whereas confidence initiates a cordiality experience.

There is a relationship of reciprocity between trust and empathy since both achieve a good relationship between all social members sharing the same feelings and desires. Affirmation corroborated by Marandon (2003) in which he states that trust is the fundamental situational condition of cooperation and empathy is the primordial personal condition of trust. Empathy and trust are fundamental conditions for successful coexistence within a social context.

Reflective empathy is identified as a meditative capacity of the teacher who uses it in his daily work, relevant to the reality of his students. Lapeña (2012) points to reflection as an important factor of empathy, which is presented in various work circumstances for a good communicative interrelationship (Guzmán, 2014).

Conclusion

It is concluded that empathy, as a teaching task, leads to decision making before, during and after the pedagogical action; therefore, the empathic reflection of the educator is fundamental during the pedagogical process since, from that reflection thought in the students, he will make better decisions that favor his educational work.

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