Original Article

Relevance of empathy in educational relationships and learning processes

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Abstract
The aim of thistheoretical argumentative study is to summarize the significant and overall aspects of the educational and training value of the teaching-learning activity, highlighting the relevance of empathy in all of the aspects of learning processes (cognitive, motor, emotional, communicational) and in the educational relationship. It is useful to consider the role of emotions, human relationships and learning to support a careful teaching approach combined with a high educational quality in meeting with students. The strong link between cognitive and emotions is constantly present in the learning process, particularly in the process of knowledge acquisition produced at school. In this place the cognitive activity has distinct features, such as: social, interactive, relational features, which require a vertical skill construction, in the relationship with teachers, and also a horizontal skill construction in the relationship with classmates. To help students to develop a greater empathy, stronger relationships and an effective communication, it is useful to induce them to put themselves in the shoes of others, so that they can become aware, for instance, of the suffering that leads children to an exclusive condition. At the teachers is required, always more, a strong educational sensitivity, they can recognize an effective empathic educational approach, which is the pedagogical and educational competence par excellence. In the first part, after proposing some stimuli for thoughts on the close interrelation between emotions, learning process and related implications in the teaching activity. In the second part, pedagogical considerations on the role of empathy in the teacher-studenteducational relationship will be described.
Key words: Teaching, emotional and social dimension, cognitive and motor learning.

Introduction
        The development of each person takes place through the cognitive, physical-motor, emotional and social dimension. These aspects operate as to be interconnected and interdependent with each other, so much so any change that occurs in one of these areas influences the other areas and is influenced by them (Altavilla, 2015). Schools represent a fundamental context for the formation of students, that is to say a harmonious development of students as human beings and for ensuring maximum educational success for everyone. In this perspective, it is important that teachers reflect on educational, relational and communicative methods used in the school environment (D'Elia et al, 2018).Considering that an open, flexible and empathic educational method creates a positive class environment of well-being (Tiziana et al., 2017), stimulating and facilitating, precisely because there is a greater sensitivity towards different educational needs of students. In this sense, it is possible to avoid the establishment of potentially dysfunctional relational dynamics towards students that would affect their mental growth **(**Esposito et al, 2020) and learning acquisition process (Raiola et al., 2017). Teaching tostudents with different kinds of needs is an aspect of knowing how to properly teach (Altavilla G., 2014;Cascone et al, 2020; D'Elia et al, 2020). The relation between body and motor dimension of the person and the process of learning acquisition (Raiola, 2011), constitute the science of human movement (Galimberti, 2002). The education is generally defined as an activity that facilitates the physical, intellectual and moral development of the human being.while the formation is understood as a process through which personal potential abilities are honed or learning how to. The formation is achieved by interacting with the environment and with the social and cultural participation and mediation, or by the support of figures and institutions, such as family, school, groups, associations, etc. (Farinelli, 2005). As a matter of fact, motor learning – as well as cognitive, relational, emotional and communicational learning – stimulates the learning acquisition by experiencing life, (Dewey, 1949) physical moving (Izzo et al, 2020; Di Domenico et al, 2019**;** D'Isanto, 2016) by the educative competition of social life and group (Carraro&Lanza, 2009).In line with the theories of Bandura (1977), the student experiences activities involving their emotions and the affectivity through the psychomotor practice (Di Domenico et al, 2019; Altavilla& Di Tore, 2016). Starting from the early months of children's life, the importance of the educational relationship in the forming of a cognitive, communicative and

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socio-emotional competence is thus emphasized. Such competence allows children to express their maximum learning potential (D'Elia, 2018). There is a close relationship between affectivity, motivation and learning (Altavilla et al, 2015), because affective variables exert a relevant action in the processes of knowledge, of understanding and of socialization, which take place in the school environment (Bloom, 1979). Emotions perform a key role in guiding thoughts and decisions, as also the great Victorian novelist George Eliot (1857) stresses the importance of sympathy "[...] which cherishes things in proportion to their nearness, and feels its reverence grow in proportion to the intimacy of its knowledge" (Eliot,1990). In fact, studies in neuroscience have also highlighted the fundamental role of emotions in the learning processes (Immordino-Yang, 2017). From an educational point of view this has important consequences, since knowledge, emotionallydeprived, cannot be used effectively in concrete experiences (D'Elia et al, 2019). If negative emotions produce a deficit of attention, critical and analytical thinking; positive emotions have beneficial effects on learning, broaden attention and produce creative thinking (Seligman, 2007). Success or school failure, anxiety, self-esteem and insecurity problems, depend on the early learning experiences and must absolutely be taken into account by the teacher. The fundamental task of a teacher is to create a learning setting (D'Isanto, 2019) in which the choice and use of more suitable strategies to achieve the various pedagogical objectives, always take place within a relationship of help and encouragement (Boffo, 2007).

Material and Methods
The study is theoretical argumentative to summarize the significant and overall aspects of the educational and training value of the teaching-learning activity, highlighting the relevance of empathy in all of the aspects of learningprocesses and in the educational relationship.The approachisfounded on documentaryresearch and argumentativeaccording to psico-pedagogicalparadigm of education, to summarize the complexity of scientific idea in educational process.

Results
In table 1, the major developmental needs are summarized: the need for strong, supportive relationships that enable students to take advantage of productive learning opportunities in cognitive, social, and emotional domains, plus additional supports (physical, social, emotional, and/or academic) needed to address individual circumstances that need attention at a moment in time to maintain a positive developmental trajectory(Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

Table 1 - The major developmental needs

1.	**Supportiveenvironment**	Supportive environmental conditions that foster strong relationships and community. Thesesustained attachment and emotionalconnections.
2.	**Productiveinstructionalstrategies**	Productive instructional strategies that support motivation, competence, and self-directed learning.
3.	**Systems of support**	Social and Emotional Learning that fosters skills, habits, and mindsets that enable academic progress, efficacy, and productivebehavior.
4.	**Social and emotionaldevelopment**	System of supports that enable healthy development, respond to student needs and address learning barriers (personalized resources in and out the classroom).

Learning processes take place mainly within a relational context, therefore the quality of the communicative interactions influences the peculiarity of the learning experiences itself (Boffo, 2007). Communication is the way in which school relationships are built, modeled and transformed (Altavilla et al., 2015).Hence, communication is what allows you to create a relationship and a good communication quality, which is an essential condition for establishing and maintaining a meaningful educational relationship.

Discussion
Empathy can be defined as the ability to identify what someone else is thinking or feeling and to respond to those thoughts and feelings with a corresponding emotion (Albiero&Matricardi, 2006). We can distinguish two main components: cognitive empathy allows you to understand the feelings of others, to put yourself in their shoes and to predict the mental state of others.On the other hand, the emotional empathy consists in reacting in an emotionally appropriate way to the psychic state of the interlocutor. Furthermore, it has been experimentally demonstrated that the observation of an emotion stemming from another people can determine, in the observer, the activation of the same cortical region which is activated when the observer experiences a particular emotion (Rizzolatti&Vozza, 2008). Empathy is considered a dimension of emotional intelligence and also defined as the ability to motivate oneself, to persist in pursuing a goal despite frustrations, to control impulses and, again, as the ability to be empathetic and hopeful (Goleman, 1999). In our times, often marked by conflicts and tensions (at school, at home, in society) it is essential to train the awareness and

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listening to oneself and to others' feeling. This means teaching to train the emotional and rational part of the mind at the same time. Empathy, like physical and sports activity, is an important weapon to reduce and contrast prejudice, discrimination and social exclusion (Raiola, 2015). New approaches must be experimented in classes that will affect the relationship and the sense of belonging to a group, breaking down prejudices and conflicts and promoting the sharing of common goals. It is important to stimulate the acceptance of diversityto enhance both the cognitive and affective component, which foster the acquisition of knowledge. Some research has documented that bullies, for instance, have a lower level of empathy than their companions (Menesini, 2019). It is believed that the bully's poor ability to feel empathy negatively affects his sense of moral responsibility, which cannot be separated from understanding the other's suffering and discomfort (Hoffman, 2008). Therefore,it is necessary to promote empathy at school. In the teacher-student relationshipemotional experiences and the acquisition of knowledge through emotions in daily interactions play a fundamental role in the construction of socio-emotional competence and in the development of cognitive processes (Bartolomeo, 2019). Teachers carry out a profession characterized by a high complexity in relationship management, which is called relational professionalism (Blandino, 2002). This relational competence implies self-awareness and the awareness of others' emotions, and lastly a good empathetic capacity which is reflected into the meeting dimension with pupils. This aspect helps both the development of their socio-emotional competence and the quality of their cognitive processes. Learning empathy allows the understanding of feelings and emotions, but also of hardships and difficulties with which all those in training are afflicted. Only the teacher's understanding of the difficulties and difficulties of the students can remove the obstacles that stand in the way of the educational project. The educational relationship is thus supported with a pedagogy of attention so that students feel themselves welcomed to school as theyare, both for their innate skills and for the results they can achieve. The use of empathy is therefore fundamental in the educational and teaching relationship. It is essential to connect and understand students, but it is also a tool to establish an effective educational relationship to promote self-esteem, to identify potential abilities and encourage better forms of learning and performance (Raiola et al., 2018), educating to the value of a person. The educator's task is to accompany students to plan their existence and be responsible for it. This is the self-formative component of education, especially to the extent that the relationship with the other is a place of encounter with the self. Rogers (1994) himself, in defining the conditions of effectiveness of the educational relationship, adds empathic understanding, defined as the most powerful condition of effectiveness within the educational relationship.

Conclusion

      An authentic educational relationship multidisciplinary experiences and the empathic ability allow to understand students and their discomforts. The importance that result from this study is that there is a strong link between cognitive and emotions is constantly present in the learning process. Therefore, is essential giving space to empathy in a school context and means also considering empathy a fundamental resource to be strengthened by encouraging a pro-social behavior. Empathy, like physical and sporting activity, is an important means to reduce and contrast prejudice, discrimination and social exclusion. New approaches must be experimented in classes that will affect relationships and the sense of belonging to a group, breaking down prejudices and conflicts and promoting the sharing of common goals. Empathic education and physical-motor activity allow to overcome loneliness and indifference and lead to accept diversities, to tolerate and, lastly, torealize the concept of inclusion. To help students develop a greater empathy, stronger relationships and an effective communication, it is useful to induce them to put themselves in the shoes of others, so that they can become aware, for instance, of the suffering that leads children to an exclusive condition. At the teachers is required,always more, a strong educational sensitivity, they can recognize an effective empathic educational approach, which is the pedagogical and educational competence par excellence.

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