THEORETICAL MODELS OF EMPATHY AS ONE OF THE MAIN APPROACHES IN TEACHING THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN PRIMARY SCHOOL AGE

Abstract: The report presents the theoretical nature of empathy and some models of understanding the empathic approach in the work of teachers in children of primary school age from 1st to 4th grade in the context of teaching children's rights as part of the educational process in Bulgaria. The children's rights described in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child are part of the domestic law of Bulgaria and ensure children's protection by law. Parents, teachers and various institutions make efforts to respect the rights. The object of study of this article is the systematization of the basic theoretical models of empathy; awareness of empathy as an opportunity to understand children's emotions. For the purpose of this article, a survey was conducted among 62 teachers of children up to 4th grade, the results of which leads to the conclusion that teachers need to raise awareness regarding children's rights.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In 2020-2021 the intensified digitalization processes in Bulgaria and around the world create conditions for continuous information exchange, online teaching and testing, synchronous communication via video links, asynchronous teaching. Nowadays, terms such as net-generation and digital generation are becoming more and more popular. The education system must respond and responsibly prepare teachers and students to create good practices to facilitate their joint work and communication. The new generation of teachers should show a higher degree of sensitivity to children, to their opportunities and rights. One of the ways for this increased sensitivity is the empathic approach - the ability to empathize, to put yourself in the place of the other, to put yourself in somebody's shoes.

II. THE ESSENCE OF THE CONCEPT OF *EMPATHY*

Empathy (from Greek - empathy) is a concept in philosophy and psychology, which means perception of the inner world of another person with its emotional and semantic nuances, empathy for his soul life; ability to understand the experiences of the other, to join the emotional life of the other [1]. Empathy should be understood as an opportunity to "get into the other's shoes", to take another point of view non-judgmentally, with respect for others. The term "empathy" was introduced back in 1909 by psychologist Edward Bradford Titchener to denote one person's ability to recognize and share another person's emotions. Empathy requires the ability to recognize the suffering of another from his point of view and to share this emotion openly, even if it is painful and frightening. The definition I

will use is of Wakabayashi and team, who see empathy as the tendency to identify the emotions and thoughts of others and respond to them with similar emotion [2]. Thus, empathy is perceived as a phenomenon composed of emotional, cognitive and mixed components [3]. In support of this is the view of the pioneering psychologist Paul Ekman, who distinguishes three types of empathy - cognitive, emotional and compassionate [4].

The empathy and types of empathic patterns

Since the 1990s, people have been studying empathy in terms of emotional intelligence. In the first place, the model of D. **Mayer** and P. **Salovey** stands out, who also introduced the term "emotional intelligence". Empathy is considered to involve the perception and understanding of other people. Their model of development of emotional intelligence consists of four sections: 1. the ability to accurately perceive emotions in you and others; 2. the ability to use emotions to facilitate thinking; 3. the ability to understand emotions, emotional language and the signals transmitted by emotions; 4. the ability to manage emotions to achieve specific goals [5]. Another example is the so-called **Bar-On** model of emotional and social intelligence. He argues that empathy is a component of a factor we call interpersonal skills, i.e. the ability to realize and understand other people's emotions, feelings and ideas [6]. However, these two models are less integrative and focus more on the cognitive component.
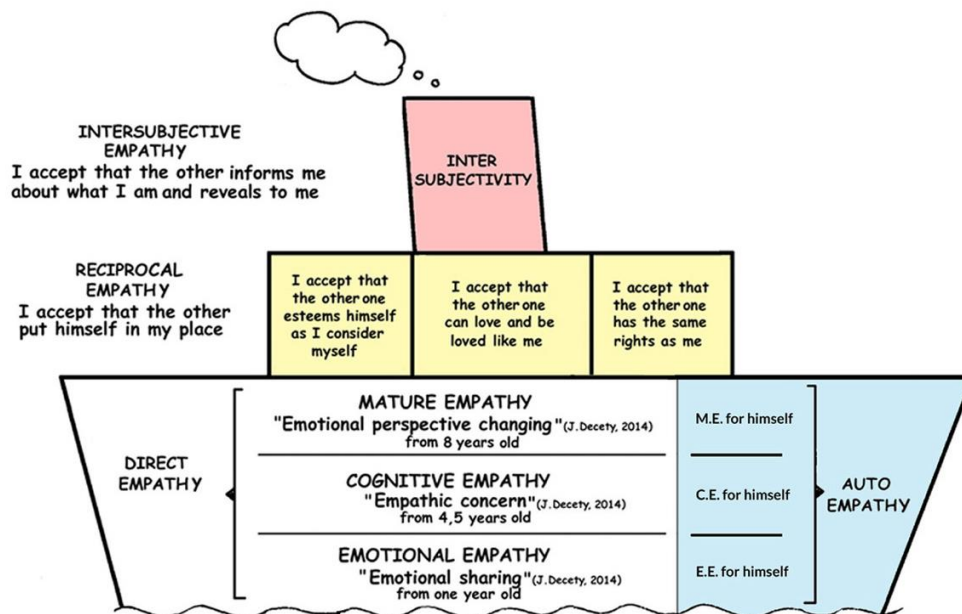
One of the most comprehensive theories on the development of empathy is that of Martin L. **Hoffman**, who states that the central idea is the integration of attachment and knowledge, which goes beyond the approach to information processing. He sees genetic, neurological and parental variables (especially disciplinary practices) as factors influencing the development of empathy. [7]. According to Hoffman, the development of empathy from an early age consists of four stages:

1. Global - in the first year of a child's life. It still does not perceive others as different from itself;
2. Egocentrism - corresponds to the second year of man. The child understands that others may also experience unpleasant situations, but believes that other people's internal states are the same as his own;
3. The feelings of others - from the second to the third year. The child recognizes that the feelings and emotions of others may be different from his own.
4. Other living conditions - the last stage of the last period of childhood, during which the feelings of others are already perceived not only as momentary reactions, but also as an expression of a complete life experience. [7]

Between 2005 and 2008, French psychiatrist and doctor of psychology Serge **Tisseron** developed and tested an activity designed to develop empathy in preschool children, calling it a "Three-Piece Game" [8] in relation to the three characters present in most scenarios: the perpetrator, the victim and the avenger. Empathy - this is the ability to put ourselves at least partially in the place of the other - really plays a significant role in social life, in particular as a prevention of violence. The three-figure game, designed to be practiced by the teachers themselves after a three-day training course, meets five of the six goals set in kindergarten: to learn the language, to learn the rules of socialization and to live well together, to acts and expresses through his body, using his imagination and improving the reference to writing. This model is also a form of preschool education in images and learning to "pretend" at the same time, as it reduces violence by increasing empathy, and without stigmatizing any child.

The three floors of empathy

(Tisseron, S. (2013). *Subjectivation et empathie dans les mondes numériques*, Dunod (Dir.)

INTERSUBJECTIVE EMPATHY
I accept that the other informs me about what I am and reveals to me

INTER SUBJECTIVITY

RECIPROCAL EMPATHY
I accept that the other put himself in my place

I accept that the other one esteems himself as I consider myself

I accept that the other one can love and be loved like me

I accept that the other one has the same rights as me

DIRECT EMPATHY

MATURE EMPATHY
"Emotional perspective changing" (J.Decety, 2014)
from 8 years old

M.E. for himself

COGNITIVE EMPATHY
"Empathic concern" (J.Decety, 2014)
from 4,5 years old

C.E. for himself

EMOTIONAL EMPATHY
"Emotional sharing" (J.Decety, 2014)
from one year old

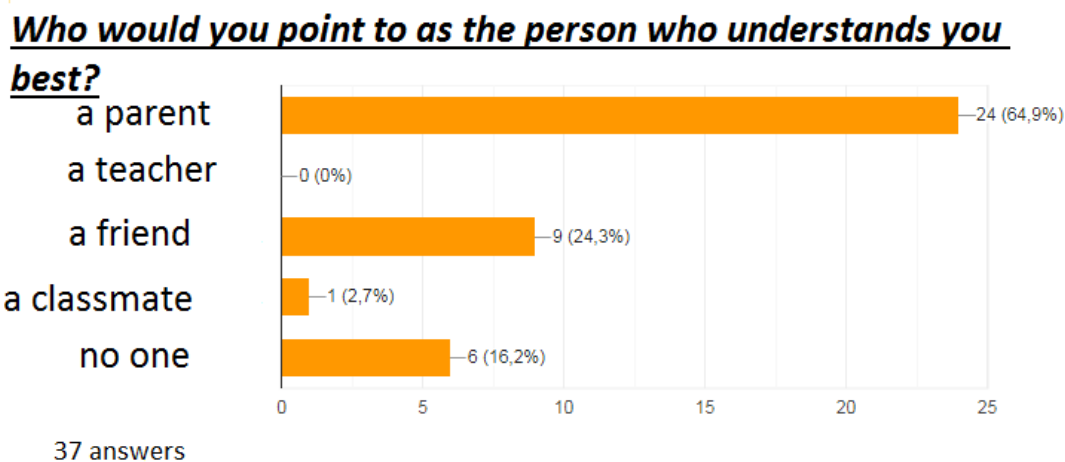E.E. for himself

AUTO EMPATHY

Empathy is the core of the personality-centered approach of one of the most influential psychologists of our time, Carl **Rodgers** (1902-1987). What does it mean to be empathetic to another human being is one of the questions that excites Rogers throughout his life? It's like giving up for a moment. From your own identity and allow yourself to dive into the world of the other. "To be in a state of empathy means to perceive the inner world of the other precisely while preserving the emotional and semantic nuances. It is as if you become this other, but without losing the feeling "as if". You feel the joy or pain of the other as he feels them. [9] For him, empathy is "a process rather than a state", to be sensitive, to free oneself from prejudices and to "temporarily live his / her life" [10].

Jean **Decety** (1960) is an American and French neuroscientist specializing in developmental neuroscience, affective neuroscience, and social neuroscience, who has worked hard in the field of empathy, creating several books and articles on the subject. According to him, empathy accounts for the naturally occurring subjective experience of similarity between the feelings expressed by self and others without losing sight of whose feelings belong to whom. Empathy involves not only the affective experience of the other person's actual or inferred emotional state but also some minimal recognition and understanding of another's emotional state. In the same article Decety argues that there are, however, evolved biological predispositions (e.g., the capacity to distinguish agents from other objects and to engage in reciprocal interactions with the former but not the latter) that are necessary for the full maturation of empathy. But without social interaction and emotional bonds with others, it is unlikely that empathy develops [11].

During the period September - October, 2021, a survey was conducted, in which 37 children aged 7 to 12 (26 girls and 11 boys) took part. The purpose of the questionnaire was to find out whether children recognize the concept of "empathy", whether they think that there is someone who understands and empathizes with their emotions and whether this person is a parent, teacher, friend or no such relative at all. 92.1% of respondents said they had never heard the word "empathy". After explaining the essence of the concept, 59.5% of the children answered in the affirmative that there is a person in their environment who recognizes and fully understands their feelings. When asked who

they would point out as such a person (with possible answers - parent, teacher, friend, classmate or no such person), 64.9% think that it is a relative, 24.3% answer that it is a friend, 16.2 % give a "friend" as an answer and none of the respondents indicate that this is their teacher:

Who would you point to as the person who understands you best?

a parent — 24 (64,9%)
a teacher — 0 (0%)
a friend — 9 (24,3%)
a classmate — 1 (2,7%)
no one — 6 (16,2%)

0   5   10   15   20   25

37 answers

The answers to the last question from the survey are also interesting - whether the children think that the teacher with whom they spend the most time understands them, whether he feels their moods and difficulties. 30 of the children answered "no", 2 answered "I don't know" and only 5 chose a positive answer:

Do you think that the teacher with whom you study the most understands you completely and that he senses your moods and difficulties?

- yes.
- no.
- I don't know.

81,1%
13,5%
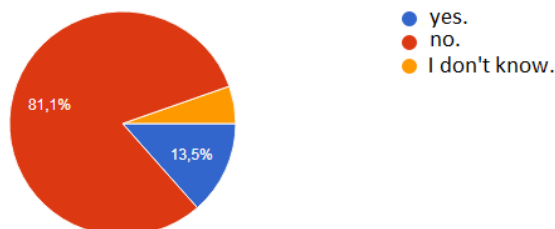
III.   CONCLUSION

The data collected show that children definitely need more support, more understanding and compassion. In the conditions of digitalization of the educational process the connection between the teacher and the student becomes difficult; the emotional aspect of the relations between them is lost. As an active teacher, in my daily work with children I constantly try to build relationships based on trust and empathy. The directive method of teaching, in which the teacher only transmits direct information to students, gradually lags behind in time, giving way to methods in which the empathic approach lies, as a way of better cooperation and better communication.

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