

MEASURING TEACHERS' EMPATHY

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Empathy is a really complex concept, the meaning of which has gone through several alternations during the last century. Many disciplines (e.g. sociology, linguistics, psychology or ethics) show equal interest to empathy in different ways (Irishkanova et al., 2003), which can be a reason for it not being clearly defined so far. From one perspective, empathy is even a key factor for teachers' success. Several studies (e.g. Swan & Riley, 2012; Vorkapić & Ružić, 2013) deal with examining teachers' empathy using both qualitative and quantitative methods. According to Davis (1980), empathy is a multidimensional construct with four dimensions (fantasy, empathic concerns, perspective taking and personal distress), which can be measured by his Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI). Recently some international (e.g. Siu & Shek, 2005; Batanova & Loukas, 2011) and Hungarian (e.g. Guti, 2014) studies proved that some kind of structural problem occurred using IRI. The factors of empathy overlap each other or show a different connection structure in each study. Based on Eisenberg's (1994) studies, two kinds of empathy can be differentiated: affective and cognitive. Measuring affective components, the Multi-Dimensional Emotional Empathy Scale (MDEES; Caruso & Mayer, 1998) is the most commonly used, which reveals six subcomponents (empathic suffering, positive sharing, responsive crying, emotional attention, feeling for others and emotional contagion). Hogan's (1969) cognitive empathy scale is one of the most widely used instruments to examine the cognitive aspect of empathy (social self-confidence, even-temperedness, sensitivity, and nonconformity). From another perspective, empathy can also be defined as the basis for our ability to care about others, usually including communication as well, also emphasized by Buda (2006). Based on this approach, Bennet (1998), in addition to cognitive and affective empathy, differentiates communicative empathy too, which is really hard to measure. Usually qualitative methods are applied to examine the communicative nature of empathy. There are several ways of examining empathy, but neither of them covers all of the aspects. One of the major findings, using some of the mentioned instruments above, is that primary school teachers have higher levels of empathic concern and perspective taking than their secondary school colleagues (Swan & Riley, 2012). It was also shown that the affective component of empathy seems to be stronger in the case of teachers, but the cognitive one is also important (Szebeni, 2010). In my presentation I will give a clarified picture about the conceptual development and measuring of empathy, and show the importance of teachers' empathy in education. This can be a basis for developing an appropriate measurement for examining all components of teachers' (and other social workers') empathy.