

**WORKSHOP « Education to Empathy »**  
**EAP – ESEN, Poitiers**  
**Anne GRANGE - January 13th 2017**

**I- Introduction**

a/ The workshop aims at questioning the place of feelings and empathy in the educational process of children and young people, by making central the aspects of the body and its expressions, of collective work and interindividual experiences. These experiences show the children and young people how to behave in front of others, how to put themselves in someone else's place, to investigate a field in which behaviors are discussed and better understood. These experiences also help to (re)build self-esteem and allow a better confidence in one's physical or moral capacity.

By adopting someone else's perspective, empathy also enables to reduce extreme positions which never questions « Who are others ? ». The results of different programs led in this field of education reveal that sharing emotions in a well defined frame can encourage the social link by making individuals more supportive to one another and creating better understanding of others.

b/ If we refer to our French motto « Liberty-Equality-Fraternity », we acknowledge that we have worked on the two first themes and made lots of progress, by improving integration and welcoming. But there is still a lot to do concerning the third point Fraternity, Solidarity, Brotherhood, and in taking into account the human part in the others. We have to keep in mind that with LIBERTY comes **RESPONSIBILITY**.

Fraternity refers to HUMANITY, which means :

- An holistic, systemic logic
- To actually create the conditions for that
- Not to wait for politics to consider this dimension, but to act at a local level
- To adopt a positive view of human being, and not to be fatalistic.

This workshop is built after Omar Zanna's theory and experience. He is a Doctor at the University of Le Mans, Doctor in sociology, Clinic Psychology and Education Sciences, Omar Zanna has written books about empathy ; he started to study this subject with juvenile offenders, minors in jail.

He showed that education to empathy is actually possible, from childhood to adult age and that experiencing empathy can change someone's beliefs and behaviors.

**II- Goals of the workshop :**

- to make you feel like investigating and learning more about this subject in your professional life,
- to develop projects and actions in your schools or institutions,
- to make it the base of a positive education.

**III- Exercise n°1 - by 2**

- Give us a definition for « to educate »
- Give us a definition for « to teach »

Round table - To synthesize

#### IV- Exercise n°2 - « *On the edge of the border* »

A symbolic line is drawn on the floor : it symbolizes the border.

Question to the group : « ***Do we have to be afraid ?*** »

- Those who think yes go to the **right side** of the border.
- Those who think no go to the **left side** of the border.
- In groups, find arguments and reasons to justify your position.
- Groups are crossing the border.
- Groups are crossing a 2<sup>nd</sup> time, and while crossing, you are going to watch someone else in the eyes.
- Groups are crossing a 3<sup>d</sup> time, this time you are going to watch someone else in the eyes **and** shake hands.
- You are in the other ones' camp : you are going to search and express the other group's arguments, try to find what they have in their mind, their answers to the initial question.
- Then each group express to the other what has come out (sharing time). Ask each group if the other one has actually found their arguments.
- Then you go back in your camp
- Finally we all go back in « **our** » camp (all together).

What we notice :

Sometimes we get lost in the other one, we have our certainties shaken as we consider the other ones' point of view.

What makes the difference :

- Looking at someone
- Touching someone
- Changing of camps

If ever someone can't make the decision of any camp (hesitation between « yes » and « no » to the question), you can bring him back to the debate at some other point of the game « *And you, what do you think about these arguments ?* »

**Goals of this game :**

- To learn about principles to make a better living together.
- To think by oneself and with others.
- To act individually and collectively.

Exercise you can use both with pupils, students or adults.

Another way to make it : each students answers the question « *What are you worried about, concerned about right now ?* ». Answers are written on pieces of paper, then put in a hat or box. Then the teacher chooses one paper. It often has to be reformulated or developed. For example, the word « *freedom* » can be changed in « *Are you feeling free right now ?* ». The advantage is that the students are involved from the beginning because the words and the subject come from them.

#### V- The Concepts (Powerpoint)

a/ What is your definition of EMPATHY ?

b/ Empathy is the action (capacity) of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner.

**EMOTIONAL EMPATHY****To react to emotional states of others***Feeling / Resonance / Recognition*

Body movement are emotionally loaded.

Empathy is always an interpretation, it is not a certainty. It is a type of conjecture and of assumption, for example someone who looks in a bad mood.

As soon as the bodies face each other, it creates an echo.

If you smile, I will tend to smile too – If you are sad, I will feel sad too.

**COGNITIVE EMPATHY****To understand others' point of view, while taking differences into account***Understanding / Reasoning / Knowledge*

To understand others' point of view, and to take differences into account.

It can be first considered between 2 and 4 ans ; *the other one does not think like me.*

Used in teaching for example.

On peut être empathique et manipulateur.

**MATURE EMPATHY****To have a representation of both emotional and mental states of others**

Emotional empathy ⇔ Cognitive Empathy

**To educate to empathy implies :**

**A PEDAGOGICAL ORGANIZATION INCLUDING 4 CONDITIONS****Condition 1**

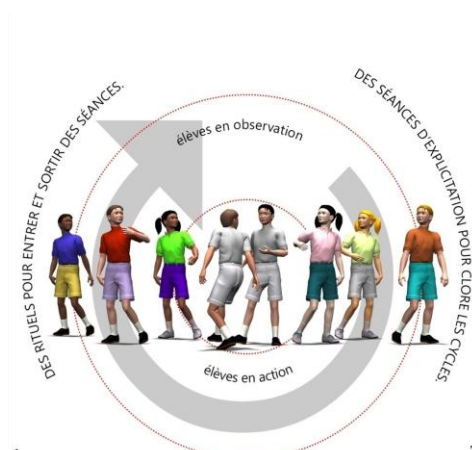
To practise together

The students practise together so that they synchronously feel the same sensations.

**Condition 3**

To reverse the roles

The students reverse the roles so that they diachronically and synchronously experience the same feelings .

**Condition 2**

To study, to watch others

The students watch one another so that they get prepared to feel empathy.

**Condition 4**

To talk about feelings

The students talk about their feelings so that they can describe and express their sensations and emotions in front of peers without suffering from it.

## VI- Conclusion

a/ A few additional points :

- Nothing ever becomes real as long as it has not been experimented.
- A concept, a knowledge, learned on an emotional basis is more willing to last in time.
- On the other hand, negative emotions (fear, sadness, loss of self-esteem...) can prevent from learning. As teachers, we have to avoid highlycharged emotionally situations (for example, we have to reconsider sending students to the board in front of others).
- With language development, the thought becomes more complexe. As teachers we have a tendency to spend more time and provide more space to activities that make more intelligent and to leave aside emotional intelligence. For example, we notice that it is very hard for a child who is angry to describe his body, what he feels in such a situation (lack of vocabulary in this field).

b/ Saying of Khalil GIBRAN, *The Prophet*, 1923

Lebanese poet and painter, also called the Lebanese Victor HUGO

**«... Your children are not your children.**

***They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself. They come through you but not from you, and though they are with you, yet they belong not to you. You may give them your love but not your thoughts. For they have their own thoughts. You may house their bodies but not their souls, for their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams. You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you. For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday... »***