

Article

Empathetic and Dialogic Interactions: Modelling Intellectual Empathy and Communicating Care

Nadya Shaznay Patel

Singapore Institute of Technology, Singapore

Received: 5 November 2022; Accepted: 9 April 2023; Published: 10 June 2023

Abstract

Recently, in light of the global pandemic and calls for a shift in teaching with care (e.g. [Bovill, 2020](#); [Gravett, 2021](#)), research has focused on the kinds of classroom discourse that create a supportive environment and establish social connectedness in blended learning environments or, in other words, teaching with care. According to [Noddings \(2012\)](#), teaching with care requires empathy. In fact, empathetic dialogue incorporated purposefully as part of a teacher's instructional strategy can produce positive learning outcomes and may be considered relational pedagogy. Relational pedagogy focuses on establishing meaningful interpersonal relationships between teachers and their students ([Hickey & Riddle, 2021](#)). Yet, teachers find it hard to weave intentional empathy in their instruction. They find it challenging to sustain empathetic and dialogic interactions in class as many consider teaching to be 'mechanical' (p. 6) and their relationship with students to be more 'business-oriented rather than a personal one' ([Sarki & Anjum, 2020](#), p. 24). This study aims to show that it could be done. It shows how I sought to be socially connected with and emotionally present for my students by focusing on empathetic and dialogic interactions in a critical thinking and communicating course. Data for this study were drawn from transcriptions of teacher-student interactions, student evaluation feedback and critical reflections. A convergent qualitative analysis through open and template coding revealed that empathetic and dialogic interactions do not need to be separately adopted instructional practices. They can be woven into classroom discourse while the teacher and students are engaged in intellectual discussions. Further, 38 pharmaceutical engineering undergraduates described their experiences of empathetic, dialogic interactions when they feel (1) cared for as individuals, (2) supported in their learning, and (3) acknowledged for the struggles they face. This study recommends that teachers of higher education adopt a relational pedagogy, focusing on their relationships with students and practising empathetic interactions. The practical suggestions of modelling the language of intellectual empathy and the communication of care will build a safe space for our students within diverse classrooms and a landscape of global uncertainties.

Keywords

Empathy, dialogic teaching, relational pedagogy, social presence, emotional connection

1 Introduction

Relational competence is the ability to develop a supportive teacher-student relationship through interactions with individual students (Biesta, 2004; Aspelin & Eklöf, 2023). Teachers who have relational competence adjust their behaviour to motivate students to learn without ignoring their role and responsibility of being teachers (Jensen et al., 2015). Aspelin (2012) posits that relational competence leads to better student learning outcomes than their classroom management skills and subject knowledge expertise do. It is thus interesting that higher education (HE) faculty tend to place more emphasis on research than on adopting relational pedagogy (Hickey & Riddle, 2021). In fact, scholars highlight the importance of research qualifications rather than teaching effectiveness in faculty promotion and tenureship (Kaynardağ, 2019). However, the lack of attention to a pedagogy of care can affect the quality of learning as it would deter a positive teacher-student relationship (Noddings, 2012). Considering that the quality of teacher-student relationships affects students' personal, social, and academic competencies (Jensen et al., 2015), more research is needed to study the impact of teachers' adoption of relational pedagogy on student learning.

Scholars posit that learning outcomes and student success will be supported when teachers focus on building relationships with students (Grantham et al., 2015). Other studies also suggest that developing teacher-student rapport can improve students' self-efficacy and success (Micari & Pazos, 2016). Moreover, creating a supportive atmosphere has significant potential for promoting students' academic achievement (Khan et al., 2017) and empowering their sense of well-being (Tettegah & Anderson, 2007). These studies also point to the importance of teachers' relational competence to develop relationships with students that are based on values such as empathy (Aspelin & Jonsson, 2019). In fact, developing empathic competencies is increasingly researched among studies on relational pedagogy (Weinberger, 2017). Weinberger and Bakshy's (2015) study developed a conceptual framework of the Complete Empathic Act (CEA) for teachers to cultivate empathy in teacher education programmes. The authors defined the CEA process with three main dimensions: empathic awareness, empathic understanding and empathic behaviour. While there is abundant research on effective talk and classroom discourse on facilitating understanding and scaffolding learning, focus on empathetic, dialogic interactions as part of a teacher's adopted pedagogy of care to facilitate learning remains largely under-researched.

This study presents how I sought to be socially connected and emotionally present for my students by focusing on empathetic and dialogic interactions in a critical thinking and communicating course. In the next few sections, 2-4, I provide (1) an overview of research on empathy in teaching and learning, (2) the role of empathy in promoting positive classroom interactions and developing higher-order thinking skills, and (3) the adoption of dialogic scaffolding as a pedagogical framework in developing intellectual empathy for my students.

2 Empathy in the Classroom

Empathy is a complex and multifaceted construct that has garnered increasing attention in education, particularly in classroom interactions. In this section, I aim first to provide an overview of the research on empathy and examine how it is demonstrated in the classroom.

The disposition of having empathy is often referred to as the ability to perceive what another person is feeling, akin to putting oneself in the shoes of others. Empathy may also be considered a skill which can be consciously developed as cognitive actions or communication skills (Kunyk & Olson, 2001). Scholars propose two categories of empathy: (1) basic empathy, which is a developmental trait inherent to humans, and (2) trained empathy (or clinical empathy) that can be developed as a skill within a professional setting (Meyers, 2009; Meyers et al., 2019). A large body of research discussed trained

empathy, particularly in relevant disciplines of care like nursing (Reynolds & Scott, 1999). Kunyk and Olson (2001) identify six studies in nursing education that identify empathy as a professional state of being and nine studies that identify empathy as a learned communication skill.

Other studies in educational research show that empathic concern, which may be considered a kind of trained empathy, is an essential part of a teacher's professional identity, especially when building relationships with students. Scholars define empathic concern as the form of empathy related to the motivational and behavioural components of empathy, often perceived as outward expressions of compassion and care (Baston, 2011). According to Cooper (2011), a focus on empathetic concern in the classroom can support the creation of inclusive learning environments. While the ability to be empathetic may vary in individuals (Baron-Cohen & Wheelwright, 2004), scholars suggest that it can be developed through conscious training like professional communications skills. A survey of K-12 teachers found that 41% of teachers ranked empathy as the most critical quality, while 62% ranked empathy in the top five qualities of teachers (Cooper, 2004). Perhaps, empathy is expected in K-12 because of the children's young age. Hence, it is not a surprise that few studies suggest empathy to be the quality that is expected of teachers in higher education.

Broadly, there are three kinds of empathy with different focuses: cognitive, affective, and motivational (Morse et al., 1992). According to Goleman et al. (2017), the cognitive kind refers to the ability to understand another person's perspective, while the affective kind refers to understanding another person's emotion. The authors also referred to a motivational empathic concern, which involves a compassionate response to another person's distress (2017). At this stage, more investigation is needed in studying how the three kinds of empathy may be applied in the classroom, particularly within instruction. Scholars in educational research suggest that teachers can provide support (Rogers, 1958) with empathy in scaffolding student learning.

This study will consider all three kinds of empathy as demonstrated (1) during teacher-student interactions and (2) as perceived by students in their feedback. As the study aims to investigate how instructors can use empathetic and dialogic interactions in instruction, it is important to consider how the three kinds of empathy, cognitive, affective and motivational, are enacted in classroom discourse. For example, an instructor will need to understand students' varied points of view (cognitive) and emotions (affective) while remaining compassionate towards their learning struggles and needs (motivational).

In education, empathy, specifically empathic concern, can be a powerful tool for teaching and learning as it allows teachers to deepen their understanding of students and communicate care and concern for students' well-being. Meyers et al. (2019) define empathic concern within education as the ability "to understand students' personal and social situations deeply, feel caring and concern in response to students' positive and negative emotions, and communicate their understanding and caring to students through their behaviour" (p. 2). Such an empathic concern is referred to as an other-oriented emotion in response to another individual's well-being (Baston, 2011). This plays a vital role in the motivational and behavioural (cognitive and affective) types of empathy that prompt instructors and students to express understanding and communicate care toward others (Goleman et al., 2017).

Empathy and care are values that are indeed essential in supporting students. Noddings (2012) suggests that caring involves listening, reflecting, and responding with others. In higher education (HE), scholars have explored the concept of care to build teacher-students' relationships. A review of care in HE by Meyers (2009) found that the interpersonal rapport of their teachers is ranked higher than their intellectual and instructional roles. Meyers reported that some of the most effective strategies for improving teacher-student connection include: (1) speaking with the student outside formal class; (2) communicating respect, interests, and warmth to students; and (3) focusing on the student's feelings (p. 206). Teachers who observe these strategies are able to establish better rapport with students. More importantly, the use of these strategies can lead to students becoming more engaged, improved attendance, and enjoyment of the lesson (Benson et al., 2005).

While useful, such studies (Benson et al., 2005; Meyers, 2009) mainly highlight the use of empathetic interactions outside formal instruction. This points to the need for evidence-based research to investigate the application of empathetic interactions as part of instruction. Hence, the focus of this study is to investigate the instructor's intentional weaving of empathetic, dialogic interactions in the teaching and learning environment such that student learning outcomes are enhanced.

3 Intellectual Empathy and Critical Thinking

In this section, I discuss the role of empathy in promoting positive classroom interactions and developing intellectual empathy in a critical thinking class.

Research suggests that incorporating empathy in intellectual pursuits, specifically through intellectual empathy, can enhance learning outcomes. Intellectual empathy is defined as the ability to put oneself in another's cognitive or intellectual perspective, enabling the understanding of others' thought processes, reasoning, and viewpoints (Linker, 2014). It enables teachers to adapt their instructional approaches, customise their explanations, and facilitate meaningful discussions, all while considering the diverse perspectives of their students. While empathy involves the ability "to imaginatively put oneself in the place of others to understand them genuinely" (Paul & Elder, 2019, p. 169), intellectual empathy is an intellectual, rational exercise in analysing others' feelings. It includes a deep analysis of prejudices, backgrounds, and perceptions of others (Benson et al., 2005). In doing so, teachers foster an inclusive and supportive learning environment that caters to individual needs and promotes academic success.

Research suggests that applying empathy in intellectual pursuits can improve learning outcomes. However, "intellectual empathy" is often referred to without a clear and universally accepted definition. Similarly, the definition of "critical thinking", often with links to the development of having "intellectual empathy", has not reached a consensus among scholars. This reflects the concepts' complexity and the challenge of adequately unpacking the constructs. Richard Paul's work (2000) on "intellectual virtues" was one of the first to unpack the term "intellectual empathy". According to Paul (2000), intellectual virtues are capacities vital to cognitive and moral development, without which "intellectual development is circumscribed and distorted" (p. 163). These virtues include "intellectual humility, courage, integrity, perseverance, empathy and fairmindedness" (Paul, 2000, p. 166). In a critical thinking class, it is important to consider varied perspectives without prejudice and unfair judgement. When students are taught to read and evaluate the evidence that authors present critically, it is important to remember that some of this evidence may be accompanied by arguments that do not necessarily align with the students' views. In addition, in pursuing authentic inquiry and democratic dialogue, intellectual empathy is needed to keep the teacher's egocentric tendency to identify truth with their own perceptions in check. According to Paul, intellectual empathy also correlates with the teachers' willingness to remember that they have also made mistakes in the past. Thus, having intellectual empathy points to the value of meaningful pedagogical approaches that value teachers' relationships with students.

Linker (2011) examines how social identity and differences can be barriers or bridges to more critical thought. She defines "intellectual empathy" as "the cognitive-affective elements of thinking about identity and social difference" (Linker, 2014, p. 12). This definition offers another approach to examining evidence and arguments more critically when students are unaware of their positionality (e.g., various privileges and disadvantages) and how they influence their worldviews and relationships with others. Empathy here is a matter of thinking, feeling and reflection. Linker (2011, p. 125) explains:

"Thus, the objective of intellectual empathy is not to imagine that one can feel what another person is feeling but rather that one treats the reports of others, particularly those whose social experiences are vastly different from one's own, as credible sources of information for reflectively assessing one's system of belief."

Linker's objective of intellectual empathy is crucial in HE as students engage in critical reasoning collectively despite being diverse in terms of their intellectual backgrounds and identities. Linker (2011) highlights the importance of valuing and listening to the experiences and perspectives of others, despite their diversity in backgrounds and identities, so that they can think more critically. Such an individual considers the social differences of others before making a judgement about their intellectual reasoning. However, how do teachers and students respect one another's viewpoints despite their diverse intellectual backgrounds and identities? Thus, this study aims to study the demonstration of relational competencies to develop criticality of thought in students by answering the following research questions: (1) How do I, the teacher, demonstrate expressions of empathic concern in my interactions with my students during lessons? (2) How do my undergraduate students perceive a pedagogy of care in their experiences in my critical thinking and communicating class?

This study is premised on the idea that the demonstration of empathetic, dialogic interactions can be part of an instructional approach. Moreover, such a pedagogy of care will establish teacher-student relationships that support positive learning experiences (Christe, 2013). While the importance of empathic concern among teachers is recognised in the literature, this study highlights how empathetic, dialogic interactions have a place in seemingly "objective" lessons of critical thinking and provide specific recommendations to implement this essential practice in HE.

4 A Conceptual-Pedagogical Framework Adopted: Dialogic Scaffolding

In this section, I discuss the use of dialogic scaffolding as a pedagogical framework in developing intellectual empathy for my students.

There has been a growing interest in scholarly work related to dialogic pedagogies (Murphy et al., 2018). Alexander's (2001) seminal work on a 'dialogic teaching' framework encourages educators to rethink the instructional strategies and approaches for dialogic engagements and the classroom relationships fostered. Other scholars define dialogic pedagogy as teaching and learning processes in which:

1. authentic problems play an agentive role in the joint construction of knowledge and negotiation of meaning,
2. students are empowered to express their voices, resulting in the interaction of multiple perspectives,
3. an open and critical approach is adopted toward knowledge claims,
4. the classroom community is characterised by respectful, supportive and inclusive relationships (Lefstein & Snell, 2014, p. 43).

Other scholars define dialogic pedagogy as teaching and learning processes that:

1. use authentic problems to construct knowledge,
2. empower students to express their multiple perspectives,
3. adopt an open and critical approach to ideas,
4. create a community that is characterised by respect, support, care and inclusiveness (Lefstein & Snell, 2018).

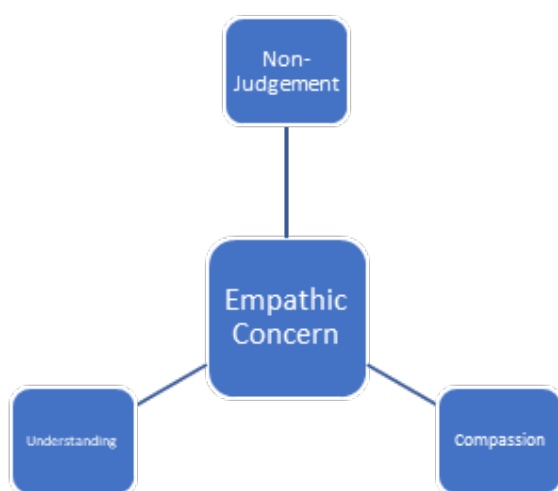
Dialogic interactions allow teachers to balance the power between them and their students. While interacting with students, teachers aim to achieve collective participation, reciprocal sharing of ideas, a supportive learning environment, the building of knowledge, and focused, purposeful learning (Alexander, 2008). In another study, Teo (2019) focused on classroom dialogue conducted in General Paper (English language) lessons to develop critical thinking and communication skills among pre-university students in Singapore. In this study, Teo (2019) concluded that if students' critical thinking and communication skills

are to be honed, teachers would need to adopt a more dialogic approach to help students explore ideas critically and construct their understandings collaboratively.

Aligned with my socio-constructivist teaching philosophy, I have always adopted dialogic approaches to facilitate learning and scaffold student understanding (Patel, 2021a). I have prioritized social connectedness with my students (Patel, 2021b) and ensured that the three kinds of empathy (cognitive, affective, and motivational) in my pedagogy of care translate into empathetic and dialogic interactions in the classroom. These three kinds of empathy also support my expressions of empathic concern for my students: understanding, non-judgement, and compassion (see figure 1) (Rogers, 1975). This framework is based on the description of empathy in relationships like that of the assistance provided by the teacher in supporting student learning.

Figure 1

Components of Empathic Concern in Helping Relationships (Rogers, 1975)



Understanding refers to the component of cognitive and affective types of empathy that are antecedents of empathic concern (Baston et al., 2002). This would allow a teacher to understand students' perspectives. Non-judgement supports the creation of a space where students can safely share their feelings or learning needs (Wiseman, 2007), while compassion refers to motivation and behavioural kinds of empathy that support acts of care or concern (Baston, 2011). Using dialogic scaffolding as a pedagogical framework, the three kinds of empathy and components of empathic concern (Morse et al., 1992; Goleman et al., 2017; Rogers, 1975) compliment my instructional approach towards developing intellectual empathy for my students.

5 Methodology

In this study, I examine the effects of my empathetic approach by focusing on empathetic and dialogic interactions in a critical thinking and communicating course. Data were drawn from transcriptions of my teacher-student interactions during lessons, student evaluation feedback at the end of the trimester and student critical reflection essays submitted at the end of the module. A qualitative analysis was conducted with open and template coding. A total of 38 students, who consented to the study, were enrolled in two seminar groups of the module. All the students were from year one of the Pharmaceutical Engineering programme. The identification process of empathetic and dialogic interactions was carried out through an

in-depth analysis of teacher-students' interactions during two 120-minute recorded lesson observations. The research assistant (RA) present during the lesson sat in the corner of the room. The video recording equipment used the Swivl robot to "follow" the teacher. An audio recorder was hung around my neck to capture high-quality audio. The RA used a lesson observation template to record notes about the seminar. Both teachers' and students' nature of interactions and instructional activities were recorded. The RA and I reviewed the recording and notes after the lesson observation. We discussed my reflections and the RA's notes about the lesson.

Following this, the RA conducted a selective transcription of the teacher-student interactions, which specifically focused on the "intellectual" pursuits of the lesson. This entailed a talk that highlighted the learning objective of the seminar, which was to develop critical thinking skills in students. The RA had undergone a training session on the Paul-Elder (2019) framework used in the critical thinking and communicating module. Using specific critical thinking tools as thematic nodes, the RA selected the teacher-student talk that surrounds the use of the tools. When the transcription was completed, I conducted a thematic analysis using qualitative methods that are promising and productive in unbiasedly exploring empathic competencies and behaviours (Bylund & Makoul, 2005). First, an intuitive process was conducted to categorise the utterances identified as empathetic and dialogic interactions from the bottom up (open coding) (Bowen, 2009). Subsequently, a template coding was conducted using the Empathic Patterns in Interpersonal Communication (EPIC) conceptual model (Weinberger et al., 2022). The EPIC model was conceptualised using an 'etic-emic' approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008); etic categories come from existing theories during analysis, while the authors developed emic categories inductively.

Data from student feedback were analysed using template coding with the software NVivo. I used the following keywords as nodes: (1) communicate, (2) interest, (3) approach/support, (4) feedback, and (5) effective learning. These keywords were chosen as they are linked to each statement in the student evaluation feedback (see Table 1). NVivo could also identify "similar words" or synonyms for these keywords. Thirty-eight students (from two seminar groups) were invited to complete the university-wide student evaluation feedback exercise at the end of the trimester. The coding results were presented with the number of references for the node and the percentage coverage of text (see Figure 2).

Table 1

Keywords in Student Evaluation form as Template Coding

(1) communicate:	The academic staff communicates clearly.
(2) interest:	The academic staff stimulated my interest in the subject matter.
(3) approach/support:	The academic staff is approachable.
(4) feedback:	The academic staff provided timely feedback that enhanced my learning.
(5) effective learning:	The academic staff used technology effectively to enhance my learning.

Next, student critical reflections were analysed with bottom-up analysis of open coding. Only reflections explicitly linking student learning to instructional approaches or teacher's effectiveness were considered. In interpreting the overall results, I looked for any (converging or diverging) relationship in the data analyses. This was done using a side-by-side comparison that allowed me to see how the results of one set of data confirmed or refuted the findings of the other set. The coding results were presented with the number of references for the node and the percentage coverage (of text). The iterative side-by-side comparison ensured that the analytical process was defensible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). References to the themes were indicated with percentage coverage. A sample is presented in Figure 2, while the full coding results are presented in Appendix 1.

Figure 2

A Sample Coding of Student Evaluation Feedback and Critical Reflections

Files\\Student Evaluation Feedback AY21_ Student Critical Reflections 67 references coded, 22.5% coverage
Node (1) care – from student evaluation feedback (Reference 1:0.17% coverage) Very competent and caring . I really appreciate her encouraging us at every moment she can! She is really nice and sweet , love her. Very kind voice, genuine and helpful . A very motivated speaker and always did her best to engage everyone in her seminars. I really like Prof Nadya! She is really helpful . She is engaging in classes — one of the only profs that I do not fall asleep in classes for.
Node (1) care – from critical reflections (Reference 2:4.61% coverage) In addition, during the oral defence, I was super nervous to the point where I couldn't articulate my words properly. I felt so bad for my team. Luckily, Prof Nadya was very understanding , and she gave me tips on how to calm myself down before a presentation. Furthermore, during the presentation debrief, Prof Nadya gave us a very helpful advice , which was to prepare additional 1 – 2 "surprise" slides for the QnA section. These tips will definitely help me in the future presentations. Apart from the usual presentations I had, this oral defence was a little bit different in a way such that it was a persuasive presentation. The purpose of the presentation was to create awareness of the problems in the pharmaceutical industry and how the current measures are not helping to resolve the problem. Prof Nadya taught us a lot on how to deliver a pitch and emphasized on how we should sound convincing compared to the usual tone of giving presentations. The skills that I learnt could be relevant in my workforce where I may be tasked to hold a presentation to propose a solution to a problem. In a nutshell, I enjoyed this module and would like to express my appreciation to Prof Nadya for making this a fun journey for us instead of a boring one. She has helped us so much to ensure we do our best for all the assignments. Because I am still not confident in my oral defence and writing my own voice, I will now need to practice more in front of an audience. In the future, I will contact Prof Nadya if I need some guidance in any report writing or my presentation deliverables. Although knowledge and skillsets are essential, this module's boost in individual confidence levels should never be overlooked. An aspect of this module that contributed the most to my learning would be the encouragement and acknowledgment of my professor. The increase in morale and confidence has enhanced my performance and productivity throughout the module.

To understand students' perception of the empathetic dialogic talk I employed in classroom interactions, I used data source triangulation as a qualitative research strategy to analyse the data sets from the student feedback and critical reflections through converging information from different sources (Patton, 1999). The triangulation exercise was applied to the various sources of data: lesson observations transcriptions, 38 student feedback reports and another 38 student critical reflections. The study was approved by the institutional IRB (ethical approval No 2021127) on 13 September 2021. All the subjects provided appropriate informed consent to use the video-recorded lessons for academic investigation and publication purposes. The information was gathered anonymously, and the subjects were not identifiable.

6 An Analysis of Teacher-Students Interactions

The EPIC model describes four ways of incorporating empathy into discourse: (1) positioning the conversation; (2) open-heart strategies; (3) managing reactions, and (4) setting boundaries. Each of the four categories includes sub-categories associated with many identified interactions from the lesson video transcripts (see tables 2 and 3). When a conversation is 'positioned', the teacher encourages a dialogic teaching and learning experience, specifically focused, purposeful learning for students (Alexander, 2008). In applying 'open heart' strategies, teachers can utilise the affective type of empathy in the classroom discourse to understand students' thoughts and feelings (Morse et al., 1992). For the management of reactions, teachers can utilize the cognitive type of empathy instead (ibid). In the following Tables 2-3, I present a selection of identified interactions for each EPIC sub-category.

Table 2

*Selected Coding of Teacher-Student Interactions Using Categories 1 and 2 of EPIC Model***Category 1: positioning the conversation**

These sub-categories are meant to start the interaction in a focused, positive, and promising manner.

1. Using opening remarks that convey a positive spirit and trust:

Let's aim to sharpen... and focus and refine our reasoning. Don't be intimidated... by the article.

2. Presenting the purpose of the conversation:

I want to see the process of you engaging in criticality and putting it into words.

Category 2: open heart strategies

These sub-categories necessitate listening with an attentive ear, without prejudice and while suspending judgment, to engage in a respectful dialogue and promote a chance to learn about the other person. Speakers shift their attention to the other, rather than focusing on themselves.

1. Listening attentively to a different point of view:

Ok. I see where you are coming from. Although you may want to consider that, not enough has been done.

2. Echoing the words of the other (paraphrasing):

So, you think the author's point of view is that animal testing needs to be replaced?

3. Using expressions that acknowledge the difficulties:

I know it can be cumbersome to substantiate. Well, you can think about searching for keywords to find a source that can support this.

4. Stepping into the shoes of the other:

You see a source, you read it critically, you pick out some elements of reasoning, and you wrestle with it by applying the standards.

5. Encouraging dialogue by inviting a response:

What steps are you going to use to talk about the concept of...

6. Asking open and clarifying questions:

Now that you've picked up the EOT, what have you got to say about this? What comes to mind?

7. Using the plural forms which express partnership:

The assignment itself, the scenario, is just to have a feel of why we were doing this... "we want to know what's problematic about this alternative; confirmation bias, evidence and support can help us see what the flaws to this evidence are."

In the first category of positioning the conversation, I found that using an inclusive “let’s” assured my students that we were involved in the critically reading of and responding to an article together. This is consistent with what scholars have posited on the use of empathic design in the curriculum to achieve inclusion (Afrough et al., 2021). I made sure my students were not “intimidated” and earned their trust in our “intellectual pursuits”. I communicated a purposeful intent for the work by saying something like, “I want to see the process of you engaging in criticality and putting it into words.” Furthermore, by including students, a learning environment that is more interactive and collaborative can be encouraged. This allows students to learn from one another and develop a greater sense of collective participation, reciprocal sharing of ideas, and a supportive learning environment (Alexander, 2008). With these focused and positive dialogic interactions, I demonstrated empathetic communication to show that while I scaffold my students’ learning, I care for them too.

In the second category of “open-heart strategies”, I showed my students that I could listen to their perspectives without prejudice while suspending judgment by saying something like, “I see where you are coming from, although you may want to consider that ...” I engaged in respectful, dialogic interaction with my students so that they could learn about different perspectives. Paraphrasing my students’ response was also crucial to showing that I listened. For example, I might say, “you think the author’s point of view is that animal testing needs to be replaced?” The use of open-heart strategies also meant that I was explicit about my acknowledgement of the challenges that my students faced when I said things like, “you pick out some elements of reasoning, and you wrestle with it”. I empathised with them by saying, “I know it can be cumbersome ...” I encouraged them to co-construct their understanding with me through the use of open and clarifying questions by saying, “What comes to mind?” By using open-hearted strategies, students could shift their attention to me rather than focusing on themselves and the critical responses expected of them. Moreover, these strategies allow for the practice of ‘inner resonance’ so that the teacher considers students’ thoughts and feelings about the learning materials (Morse et al., 1992).

Table 3

Selected Coding of Teacher-Student Interactions Using Categories 3 and 4 of the EPIC Model

Category 3: managing reactions

These sub-categories provide a basis for fruitful interaction by arousing mutual awareness of the other’s presence, feelings of value, belonging and trust (Shady & Larson, 2010).

1. Using explanations, rationalizations, and reasoning:

I think there’s a lot of information where they quote evidence and talk about what they’re doing...but how can it be EOT? If it’s just evidence. Some groups like to pick up perspective, some groups like to pick up assumptions, and your group is picking up information. What standard are you going to use to wrestle with this information?

2. Using concrete examples as a means of refraining from generalizations:

The fact that you have nothing else to say about this sounds like more needs to be done to understand this. Now, why do we use intellectual standards in our writing?

3. Alleviating verbal conflict:

I think there’s a better way to explain...

4. Suggesting alternatives:

Why not show the other side of the perspective? Why animal testing?

5. The absence of response:

Nil

Category 4: setting limits

These sub-categories point to new understandings by all, which can move the interactions towards a turning point.

1. Sending a clear message, such as:

Nil

2. Conducting an assertive discourse, such as:

Nil

3. Separation between personal and professional, such as:

Nil

In the third category of managing reactions (see Table 3), I sought to achieve a fruitful interaction by arousing mutual awareness of the tasks between my students and me. I did so by using explanations (e.g., “some groups like to pick up perspectives”), concrete examples (e.g., “sounds like more needs to be done”), and suggesting alternatives (e.g., “Why not show the other side of the perspective? Why animal testing?”). I also achieved empathetic, dialogic interactions by alleviating verbal conflict (e.g., “I think there is a better way to explain ...”) Managing reactions is akin to demonstrating objective cognitive empathy (Morse et al., 1992).

Interestingly, there is no evidence of the fourth category of setting limits during class discussions. There were no instances where I had to be assertive to move the interactions away from where they were. Perhaps there was rapport and mutual respect between my students and me, so there was no need to draw boundaries or separate a personal discourse from a “professional” one in the classroom.

This analysis using the EPIC conceptual model thus outlines three out of the four categories where I addressed the cognitive elements of empathy. The findings present varied and impactful empathic patterns found in teacher-student interactions. They also show that empathetic and dialogic interactions need not be an additional instructional practice. It can be woven into classroom discourse.

7 An Analysis of Student Feedback and Critical Reflection

Sixty-seven references were coded from student evaluation and critical reflections, which is about 22.5% of the qualitative data analysed with template coding. A template coding informed by the concepts of three types of empathy (i.e., affective, cognitive and motivational) (Morse et al., 1992) and empathic concern (i.e., understanding, non-judgement and compassion) (Rogers, 1975) was used. The broad themes of care, support and understanding emerged from the analysis. In Nvivo, “care” was referenced with 4.78% coverage; “understand” was referenced with 8.58% coverage; and “support” was referenced with 9.15% coverage. The findings revealed that the 38 Pharmaceutical Engineering undergraduates described their experiences of empathetic, dialogic interactions with me as their teacher when they felt (1) cared for as individuals, (2) supported in their learning, and (3) acknowledged for the struggles they face.

7.1 Students felt cared for as individuals

Students highlighted in the evaluation survey that I was “caring” and often “encouraging” them. They highlighted specific dispositions like “genuine”, “kind”, and helpful” that demonstrate the traits of care. Similar themes of demonstrating care were also elaborated on in students’ critical reflections. There were specific examples when a student was too nervous about presenting her work that she could not continue. She highlighted how I had shown care for her well-being and gave her tips on how she could calm her nerves. Such one-on-one interactions showed how I empathised with students and cared for them as individuals. While I reiterated some communication skills to deliver a compelling pitch, I was also focused on personally diagnosing how the student felt. These empathetic, dialogic interactions were unplanned and unstructured, woven into the instructional approach adopted. In addition, students reflected on how they were encouraged to apply everything they learned to their workplace. They highlighted the “encouragement and acknowledgement” they had received from me that have increased their morale and confidence to improve critical thinking and communication skills.

Hence, the empathetic, dialogic interactions, both verbally and non-verbally, like facial expressions, contributed to the face of care. This was also found in the teacher-student interactions when it was found that I had used “open-heart strategies” in the EPIC conceptual model. Using paraphrasing to

acknowledge students' difficulties and step into their shoes further exemplified the pedagogy of care adopted such that students reported feeling cared for as individuals.

7.2 Students perceived a sense of support in their learning

Students reported in the evaluation survey that I often "checked in" and "reassured" them so that they were able to "voice their thoughts during class discussions". Many students highlighted the "timely feedback" and "level of energy" they felt in class. In addition, they felt encouraged to practice "critical thinking continually". Despite "having difficulties in writing (with) their voice", the one-on-one and group consultations provided excellent guidance. These highlighted that students thought they could approach me for support whenever needed. Instead of feeling abandoned and alone in their learning, students felt my support. In fact, many students highlighted timely feedback as a crucial form of support. Students consequently felt "inspired and motivated" and were excited about the possibility of their proposals being implemented in the industry. The fact that students' reports, which responded to an authentic GSK-Singapore Call for Proposal, were shared with their Pharmaceutical Engineering professors also increased students' confidence.

The theme of being supported was also found in the coded student-teacher interactions. Empathetic, dialogic interactions were demonstrated when I managed reactions during class discussions, which is category 3 of the EPIC conceptual model (see Table 1). These were in the form of explanations, rationalisations and reasoning, like "I think there's a better way to explain..." which I used to show the mutual pursuit of knowledge with the students as partners in learning. In addition, I used concrete examples as a means of refraining from generalisations. This, too, was instrumental in showing how empathetic, dialogic interactions were used to ensure that students felt supported in their learning.

7.3 Students felt acknowledged for the struggles they face

Students used specific dispositions like "easy-going, understanding, and negotiable" and "encouraging, flexible and empathetic" to describe me in the evaluation survey. Some students allude to a "unique approach to teaching" that "is very refreshing", allowing them to "learn at an appropriate pace". These descriptions highlighted how much the students appreciated that I acknowledged their struggles. When I showed flexibility and understanding, I was aware of the challenges the students faced, either in grasping what is taught or time management. It was also heartening to learn that students dispelled the misconception that "good critical thinking was something only the "gifted" students have". Students also reflected that the learning experience might have been "an emotional roller-coaster ride of a mix of sentimental moments". However, they felt that it was most helpful that I was aware of their struggles and had provided assurances that I was there for them. Many students felt "overwhelmed" initially but only to feel "assured and confident" later with my support and guidance.

The theme of acknowledging students' struggles was also found in teacher-student interactions. I positioned dialogues in class in a focused, positive, and promising manner. I always conveyed a positive spirit and assured students that I was there for them. At other times, managing students' reactions (category 3 of the EPIC conceptual model) by alleviating verbal conflict with suggestions and alternatives also showed students how I adopted a pedagogy of care.

8 Discussion and Recommendations

The study's findings show that empathetic and dialogic interactions must be integrated into instructional

practices. It can be woven into classroom discourse while the teacher and students are engaged in intellectual discussions. Also, students perceived their experiences of empathetic, dialogic interactions when they felt (1) cared for as individuals, (2) a sense of support in their learning, and (3) acknowledged for the struggles they faced. The analysis of both teacher (transcribed teacher-student interactions) and students' voices (evaluation feedback and critical reflections) demonstrated the enactment and perceived impact of the adopted pedagogy of care.

The study demonstrated empathy for students in classroom discourse and students' perceived sense of receiving empathy related to the concept of care developed by Noddings (1984). The students recounted their learning experiences as being intertwined with the support they received from me. Students described the support they felt with feedback that showed I cared for them, supported their learning, and acknowledged their struggles. Students also viewed me, their teacher, as their "carer" when they expressed how I prioritised their learning needs and well-being. I made my students feel valued (Noddings, 1984). Through the analysis of the teacher-student interactions, it was found that I was using empathetic, dialogic interactions to facilitate learning in the classroom. Empathetic communication was embedded in the discourse and was not separate from the intellectual pursuits of the discussions. They felt cared for and treated as just as important, if not more, than the curriculum. This was seen when students cited various examples when I was perceived as empathetic towards their nervousness during final student presentations. Here, I was displacing my own needs surrounding the completion of curriculum to focus on meeting the needs of my students to be cared for. My students thus highlighted that I cared by listening and thinking about them.

From the analysis of the transcription of teacher-student interactions, it was found that I had used the various strategies in the EPIC conceptual model of caring relationships. These include positioning the conversation as positive and trustworthy, open-heart strategies, which include listening attentively without prejudice and judgment, engaging in a respectful dialogue and giving everyone opportunities to speak. These strategies enacted the overall empathetic, dialogic interactions in the classroom so that students could feel like they were worthwhile conversation partners with the teacher. The students acknowledged that their teacher had fulfilled her role as a "carer" when they wrote about the positive relationship established through "caring" interactions. Furthermore, they were inspired to show care for their teacher by doing well academically and later professionally. This indicates that a positive relationship has been developed, as when the cared-for (students) and the carer (teacher) both fulfil their roles of perceiving and delivering care (Johnston et al., 2022).

Therefore, I recommend the development of a positive student-teacher relationship, where a positive rapport between students and teachers is nurtured. A healthy and harmonious student-teacher relationship will form when teachers are socially connected and emotionally present. Scholars assert that a positive student-teacher relationship is pivotal for student success at school (Engels et al., 2021). Others report that when students perceive their teachers as caring, they invest more in their studies and are generally more motivated (Rubie-Davies et al., 2010). Noddings' (1996) philosophy posits that teachers are ethically responsible for creating caring relationships with students. More importantly, when carers like teachers communicate care, they "develop the virtues and capacities to care" in others (Noddings, 2013, p. 21). Thus, motivating students to learn could be as simple as building a positive relationship with them. In such a caring relationship, teachers will listen to their students' expressed needs and set aside their needs (Noddings, 2012). This is also central to the concept of relational pedagogy discussed earlier in the paper.

Relational pedagogy practices emphasise personal, interhuman encounters between educators and students. It shifts teaching focus from simply a dichotomous form of either student-centred or teacher-centred to that of the teacher-student relationship. Scholars posit that such a relationship between both entities (teacher and students) is ontologically more critical than the single entities in the learning process (Aspelin, 2014). Thus, aligned with my socio-constructivist teaching philosophy, I, too, advocate for

the learning process to shift from the teacher-centred and student-centred approach to a more relational-interaction approach built on empathetic, dialogic interactions, as this study presents. Similar to a previous study, where I emphasised the importance of being socially present and emotionally connected with students (Patel, 2021b), I recommend the adoption of a relational pedagogy, where the focus is on Noddings's (1984) pedagogy of care and the caring teacher-student relationship. The teacher focuses on valuing and appreciating students' needs and learning about students' interests while integrating these findings into classroom teaching and learning experiences.

Furthermore, McAllister and Irvine (2002) found that incorporating empathy can lead to positive student interactions and create a more student-centred learning environment. Researchers highlight that demonstrating empathy and perspective-taking in the classrooms, particularly in diverse student populations, will allow for the successful implementation of culturally responsive teaching (Warren, 2015). Empathy will enable teachers to promote inclusion by valuing differences, promoting tolerance amongst students, and ensuring that everyone's worth and value are recognised (Cooper, 2011) such that a positive learning experience is achieved. Therefore, empathic concern demonstrated during classroom interactions will be central to a teacher's pedagogical approach.

A practical suggestion is for teachers to model the language of intellectual empathy and the communication of care in the classroom. This involves demonstrating a deep understanding and appreciation for students' perspectives, experiences, and feelings and fostering an environment of trust, respect, and support within the instruction. Earlier, intellectual empathy was discussed in the context of teaching students critical thinking and communication skills. However, intellectual empathy, which is the acknowledgement of the viewpoints of others without judgement, can be frequently modelled in any course. After all, it is said that teachers should acknowledge and validate students' thoughts and feelings (Sybing, 2019). When a student shares an idea or expresses a concern, teachers can respond by paraphrasing what they said and acknowledging their perspectives and feelings.

Secondly, teachers should use inclusive language that incorporates language that reflects a sense of community and mutual respect (Rozaki et al., 2020). For example, I addressed my students with "Let us". This creates an environment of care and support within the teaching and learning experiences in the classroom. Thirdly, teachers should encourage open and dialogic communication (Alexander, 2008). This can involve asking open-ended questions, listening attentively, responding thoughtfully to students, and thus creating a safe space for students to express their thoughts. Fourthly, teachers should strive to be responsive and accommodating when interacting with students. If students require extra support in their learning, teachers can co-create a plan that meets their needs. This can involve providing additional resources, offering one-on-one support, adjusting assignment requirements, or partnering with students whenever possible. These recommendations will allow teachers to model the language of intellectual empathy and the communication of care effectively in instruction. Ultimately, teachers strive to create a teaching and learning environment built on trust, respect, and support that acknowledges and responds to the needs and feelings of students.

Regardless of the subject matter or discipline, teachers will always be eliciting responses from students and, in doing so, will be demonstrating their initial reactions to these responses. It is an excellent opportunity for teachers to model such a virtue of intellectual empathy, so students will learn how to pursue knowledge while demonstrating grace and empathy. When teachers encourage the modelling of intellectual empathy, they show students that they are interested in understanding the arguments presented from the student's perspective. The modelling of intellectual empathy and communication of care in the classroom will build an edifying culture that encourages mutual respect among teachers and students and the mutual purpose of co-constructing knowledge for deeper understanding. It will create a safe space for students a landscape of global uncertainties.

8 Conclusion

Teaching with care requires empathy and dialogue. Teachers can establish meaningful interpersonal relationships with their students through a relational pedagogy. It was assumed that intentional empathy has to be a separate and added instructional approach adopted in the classroom. Many teachers found it challenging as the practice was deemed to be unrelated to intellectual pursuits. However, this study showed how the practice of empathetic and dialogic interactions could be woven into classroom instructional activities. Students also perceived their experiences of empathetic, dialogic interactions when they feel (1) cared for as individuals, (2) supported in their learning, and (3) acknowledged for the struggles they face. The recommendations for higher education teachers to adopt a relational pedagogy with the language of care and intellectual empathy modelled for students will ensure a safe space for students to thrive.

Acknowledgment

This research was part of a large-scale study funded by Applied Learning and Innovation Grant (ALIGN) at the Singapore Institute of Technology (IRB: 2021127).

Appendix

Coding of Student Evaluation Feedback and Critical Reflections

Files\\Student Evaluation Feedback AY21_Student Critical Reflections 67 references coded, 22.5% coverage
Node (1) care – from student evaluation feedback (Reference 1:0.17% coverage)
<p>Very competent and caring. I really appreciate her encouraging us at every moment she can! She is really nice and sweet, love her. Very kind voice, genuine and helpful. A very motivated speaker and always did her best to engage everyone in her seminars. I really like Prof Nadya! She is really helpful. She is engaging in classes — one of the only profs that I do not fall asleep in classes for.</p>
Node (1) care – from critical reflections (Reference 2:4.61% coverage)
<p>In addition, during the oral defence, I was super nervous to the point where I couldn't articulate my words properly. I felt so bad for my team. Luckily, Prof Nadya was very understanding, and she gave me tips on how to calm myself down before a presentation. Furthermore, during the presentation debrief, Prof Nadya gave us a very helpful advice, which was to prepare additional 1 – 2 “surprise” slides for the QnA section. These tips will definitely help me in the future presentations. Apart from the usual presentations I had, this oral defence was a little bit different in a way such that it was a persuasive presentation. The purpose of the presentation was to create awareness of the problems in the pharmaceutical industry and how the current measures are not helping to resolve the problem. Prof Nadya taught us a lot on how to deliver a pitch and emphasized on how we should sound convincing compared to the usual tone of giving presentations. The skills that I learnt could be relevant in my workforce where I may be tasked to hold a presentation to propose a solution to a problem. In a nutshell, I enjoyed this module and would like to express my appreciation to Prof Nadya for making this a fun journey for us instead of a boring one. She has helped us so much to ensure we do our best for all the assignments. Because I am still not confident in my oral defence and writing my own voice, I will now need to practice more in front of an audience. In the future, I will contact Prof Nadya if I need some guidance in any report writing or my presentation deliverables. Although knowledge and skillsets are essential, this module's boost in individual confidence levels should never be overlooked. An aspect of this module that contributed the most to my learning would be the encouragement and acknowledgment of my professor. The increase in morale and confidence has enhanced my performance and productivity throughout the module.</p>

<p>Node (2) support – from student evaluation feedback (Reference 3:2.91% coverage)</p> <p>She engages us to voice out our thoughts during class discussions. Prof Nadya always checked in with us and was always reassuring us. She is effective in her communication and gives timely feedback. I could feel your passion in your teaching and you have given us the same level of energy in every class which I love. I really wish that you could teach us more modules as learning from you is very enjoyable.</p> <p>She believes in allowing students to do their own critical thinking and provides timely feedback on how we should improve.</p> <p>Though UCS is, on the surface, a simple module, Professor Patel adds a lot of value to the module and gives us a very in-depth look into critical thinking. It is also great that she does her own personal research in our specific field, though it is not necessary for her module, allowing me to not only learn about my own industry but also learn how to apply critical thinking to it. I am still having difficulties in writing my own voice, but from the consultations by Prof Nadya, she will always guide me on what to write.</p>
<p>Node (2) support – from critical reflections (Reference 4:6.24% coverage)</p> <p>As my group mates and I rallied together to find a solution to resolve the issue, I felt inspired and motivated despite the solution only being on paper. The possibility of it being manifested and implemented into the industry to improve on the current situation excited me to want to invoke such change in the industry as I seek to embody the skills and lessons imparted to me in this module upon graduating as a student and moving onto my next phase of life of working in the Pharmaceutical industry.</p> <p>All in all, I am grateful to have the opportunity to take this module during my course of study and to Dr Nadya who coordinated the lesson and teaching plan to ensure that us students are taught adequately. I'm looking forward to applying all the teachings I learnt here in other facets of my life as this module comes to a bittersweet ending.</p> <p>I recalled vividly on my first day of Critical Thinking and Communicating (CTC) lesson, my professor projected a picture on the screen and asked us to describe the photograph. I was super anxious because I was afraid that the way I think was not critical enough. I was also worried that anything that was to come out from my mouth won't make any sense. Then again, there's no right or wrong answers. My professor always reminds us not to be afraid to give our own voices. She used the Paul-Elder framework to even better her thought process. Initially, I was skeptical about this Paul-Elder framework. Professor was telling us how by the end of this lesson, we will see improvements in the way we think and give reasoning.</p> <p>I like how interactive classes are and how being able to think critically, act critically, speak critically, and write critically is not correlated with being academically inclined. I have enjoyed attending this particular module and learnt a lot from this and the advantages it could bring about</p>

<p>Node (3) understand – from student evaluation feedback (Reference 5:0.56% coverage)</p> <p>Easy-going, understanding, and negotiable.</p> <p>Prof Nadya is very very encouraging and understanding</p> <p>Very well-spoken, flexible, and empathetic.</p> <p>Professor Patel's unique approach to teaching is very refreshing, allowing me to learn at an appropriate pace.</p>
<p>Node (3) understand – from critical reflections (Reference 6:8.02% coverage)</p> <p>The UCS1001 learning experience has by far being the most unique module framework I have taken in my life. Throughout my primary, secondary and polytechnic years, critical thinking was a skill that was never talked about in detail by my schools. Teachers would briefly mention it to be used in the application of projects or any form of activities we were tasked to. However, no one has ever mentioned how it could be done in an effective manner. Before joining this course, I always thought that good critical thinking was something that only the "gifted" students have. However, this course has managed to open my eyes that everyone, including me are able to hone on our critical skills with proper guidance and practice.</p> <p>My learning journey throughout this module has been a much of an emotional roller-coaster ride consisting of a mix of sentimental moments. At the start of this module, I was having a difficult time trying to comprehend the idea of critical thinking alongside with its intellectual standards and element of thought. Everything was foreign to me, trying to grasp the concepts and even applying them was tough. However, as time passed and with both the support from my friends and Dr Nadya's guidance, my perception of this module started to change. Gradually, I was slowly able to piece together all the information that was being taught, bit by bit picking this new skill. Eventually, I found myself taking a liking to this module, utilising critical thinking towards the various assignment guided me to think out of the box and learn to engage my audiences be it through presentation or in writing.</p> <p>My learning experience for critical thinking has been a very profound one. On the very first day when I walked into Dr Nadya's class, I felt very overwhelmed by this new skill that I had to pick up. It was then when I realized that critical thinking was more to this than met the eye, when I first heard about the Elements of Thoughts and Intellectual Standards. I had heard about critical thinking before but was taken aback by how abstract and complex this topic was. Initially, I had trouble and was struggling, trying to grasp and apply this skill onto the assignments. I doubted the importance of this skill and thought that it was not very useful in any aspect, and that I would not gain much from picking up this skill. However, with Dr Nadya's guidance, I gradually understood and could apply critical thinking more easily. Picking up this skill was a bit of a challenge as it was completely different compared to the things I have learned throughout my years of studying</p>

References

- Afroogh, S., Esmalian, A., Donaldson, J., & Mostafavi, A. (2021). Empathic design in engineering education and practice: An approach for achieving inclusive and effective community resilience. *Sustainability*, 13(7), 4060. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13074060>
- Alexander, R. J. (2001). *Culture and pedagogy*. Blackwell.
- Alexander, R. J. (2008). *Towards dialogic teaching: Rethinking classroom talk*. Dialogos.
- Aspelin, J. (2012). How do relationships influence student achievement? Understanding student performance from a general, social psychological standpoint. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 22(1), 41–56. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09620214.2012.680327>
- Aspelin, J. (2014). Beyond individualised teaching: A relational construction of pedagogical attitude. *Education Inquiry*, 5(2), 233–245. <https://doi.org/10.3402/edui.v5.23926>
- Aspelin, J. & Jonsson, A. (2019). Relational competence in teacher education. Concept analysis and report from a pilot study, *Teacher Development*, 23(2), 264–283. <https://10.1080/13664530.2019.1570323>
- Aspelin, J. & Eklöf, A. (2023). In the blink of an eye: Understanding teachers' relational competence from a micro-sociological perspective. *Classroom Discourse*, 14(1), 69–87. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19463014.2022.2072354>
- Baer, A. (2020). What intellectual empathy can offer information literacy education? In S. Goldstein (Ed.), *Information literacy, democracy, and citizenship*. Facet Publishing.
- Baron-Cohen, S., & Wheelwright, S. (2004). The empathy quotient: An investigation of adults with Asperger syndrome, high functioning autism, and normal sex differences. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 34(2), 163–175. <https://doi.org/10.1023/B:JADD.0000022607.19833.00>
- Baston, D., Ahmad, N., Lishner, D., & Tsang, J.-A. (2002). Empathy and altruism. In C.R. Snyder & S. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (Vol. 1, pp. 584–597). Oxford University Press.
- Baston, D. (2011). These things called empathy: Eight related but distinct phenomenon. In J. Decety & W. Ickes (Eds.). *The social neuroscience of empathy* (pp. 3–15). Bradford Book.
- Benson, T. A., Cohen, A. L., & Buskist, W. (2005). Rapport: Its relation to student attitudes and behaviors toward teachers and classes. *Teaching of Psychology*, 32(4), 237–239. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15328023top3204_8
- Biesta, G. (2004). Mind the gap! Communication and the educational relation. In C. Bingham & A. M. Sidorkin, (Eds.). *No education without relation* (pp. 11–22). Peter Lang Publishing.
- Bowen, G.A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>
- Bovill, C. (2020). *Co-creating learning and teaching: Towards relational pedagogy in higher education*. Critical Publishing.
- Bylund, C. L., & Makoul, G. (2005). Examining empathy in medical encounters: An observational study using the empathic communication coding system. *Health Communication*, 18(2), 123–140. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327027hc1802_2
- Chika-James, T. A. (2020). Facilitating service-learning through competencies associated with relational pedagogy: A personal reflection. *Higher Education Pedagogies*, 5(1), 267–293. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23752696.2020.1820886>
- Cooper, B. (2011). *Empathy in education: Engagement, values and achievement*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Cooper, B. (2004). Empathy, interaction and caring: Teachers' roles in a constrained environment. *Pastoral Care in Education*, 22(3), 12–21. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0264-3944.2004.00299.x>
- Christe, B. (2013). The importance of faculty-student connections in stem disciplines: A literature review. *Journal of STEM Education*, 14(1), 22–26.

- Costantini, G. (2019). Empathy in education: The successful teacher. In R. G. Aguilar (Ed.), *Empathy: Emotional, ethical and epistemological narratives - At the interface / probing the boundaries* (Series) (vol. 123, pp. 73–81). Brill.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2008). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research – Strategies of qualitative inquiry. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (pp. 3–7). Sage.
- Engels, M. C., Spilt, J., Denies, K., & Verschueren, K. (2021). The role of affective teacher-student relationships in adolescents' school engagement and achievement trajectories. *Learning and Instruction, 75*, 101–114. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2021.101485>.
- Rozaki, E., Achim, S., Đurić, N. (2020). *Inclusive communication manual subtitle: A practical guideline on how to communicate inclusively with international youth*. Erasmus Student Network AISBL. Retrieved from https://siem-project.eu/documents/inclusive-communication-manual_2022_10.pdf
- Felten, P., & Lambert, L. (2020). *Relationship-rich education: How human connections drive success*. Johns Hopkins.
- Goleman, D., McKee, A., & Waytz, A. (2017). *Empathy* (HBR Emotional Intelligence Series). Harvard Business Review Press.
- Grantham, A., Robinson, E. E., & Chapman, D. (2015). That truly meant a lot to me: A qualitative examination of meaningful faculty-student interactions. *College Teaching, 63*(3), 125–132. <https://doi.org/10.1080/87567555.2014.985285>
- Gravett, K., Taylor, C. A., Fairchild, N. (2021). Pedagogies of mattering: Re-conceptualising relational pedagogies in higher education. *Teaching in Higher Education, 1-16*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2021.1989580>
- Gravett, K., & Winstone, N. E. (2020). *Making connections: Alienation and authenticity within students' relationships in higher education*. Higher Education Research and Development. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2020.1842335>
- Hickey, A. & Riddle, S. (2021). Relational pedagogy and the role of informality in renegotiating learning and teaching encounters. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society, 30*(5), 787-799. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2021.1875261>
- Jensen, E., Skibsted, E. B., & Christensen, M. V. (2015). Educating teachers focusing on the development of reflective and relational competences. *Educational Research for Policy and Practice, 14*(3), 201–212. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10671-015-9185-0>
- Johnston, O., Wildy, H., & Shand, J. (2022). 'That teacher really likes me' - Student-teacher interactions that initiate teacher expectation effects by developing caring relationships. *Learning and Instruction, 80*, [101580]. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2022.101580>
- Kaynardağ, A. Y. (2019). Pedagogy in HE: does it matter? *Studies in Higher Education, 44*(1), 111-119. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1340444>
- Khan, A., Khan, S., Islam, S. Z., & Khan, M. (2017). Communication skills of a teacher and its role in the development of the students' academic success. *Journal of Education and Practice, 8*(1), 18–21.
- Kunyk, D., & Olson, J. K. (2001). Clarification of conceptualizations of empathy. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 35*(3), 317–325. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2648.2001.01848.x>
- Lefstein, A., & Snell, J. (2014). *Better than best practice: Developing teaching and learning through dialogue*. London: Routledge.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Linker, M. (2011). Do squirrels eat hamburgers?: Intellectual empathy as a remedy for residual prejudice. *Informal Logic, 31*(2), 110–138.
- Linker, M. (2014). *Intellectual empathy: Critical thinking for social justice*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

- McAllister, G., & Irvine, J. J. (2002). The role of empathy in teaching culturally diverse students: A qualitative study of teachers' beliefs. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(5), 433–443. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002248702237397>
- Mehta, J. (2020). *Make schools more human*. New York Times, 23 Dec. 2020.
- Meyers, S., Rowell, K., Wells, M., & Smith, B. C. (2019). Teacher empathy: A model of empathy for teaching for student success. *College Teaching*, 67(3), 160-168. <https://doi.org/10.1080/87567555.2019.1579699>
- Meyers, S. A. (2009). Do your students care whether you care about them? *College Teaching*, 57(4), 205–210. <https://doi.org/10.3200/ctch.57.4.205-210>
- Micari, M., & Pazos, P. (2016). Fitting in and feeling good: The relationships among peer alignment, teacher connectedness, and self-efficacy in undergraduate satisfaction with engineering. *European Journal of Engineering Education*, 41(4), 380–392. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03043797.2015.1079814>
- Morse, J. M., Bottorff, J., Anderson, G., O'Brien, B., & Solberg, S. (1992). Beyond empathy: Expanding expressions of caring. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 17(7), 809–821. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.1992.tb02002.x>
- Murphy, K., Greene, J. A., Firetto, C. M., Hendrick, B. D., Li, M., Montalbano, C., & Wei, L. (2018). Quality talk: Developing students' discourse to promote high-level comprehension. *American Educational Research Journal*, 55(5), 1113-1160. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831218771303>
- Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring: A feminine approach to ethics and moral education*. University of California Press.
- Noddings, N. (1996). The Cared-for. In S. Gordon, P. Benner, & N. Noddings (Eds.), *Caregiving: Readings in knowledge, practice, ethics, and politics* (pp. 21-39). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Noddings, N. (2012). The caring relation in teaching. *Oxford Review of Education*, 38(6), 771-781, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2012.745047>
- Noddings, Nel. (2013). *Caring: A relationship approach to ethics and moral education*. 2nd ed. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Patel, N. S. (2021a). Development of criticality in thought: A conceptual framework for online student discussion forums. *International Journal of TESOL Studies*, 3(3), 22-40. <https://doi.org/10.46451/ijts.2021.09.02>
- Patel, N. S. (2021b). Establishing social presence for an engaging online teaching and learning experience. *International Journal of TESOL Studies*, 3(1), 161-177. <https://doi.org/10.46451/ijts.2021.03.04>
- Paul, R. (2000). Critical thinking, moral integrity and citizenship: Teaching for the intellectual virtues. In G. Axtell (Ed.), *Knowledge, belief, and character: Readings in virtue epistemology* (pp. 163–75). Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Paul, R. & Elder, L. (2019). *The miniature guide to critical thinking concepts and tools* (8th ed.). Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Patton M. Q. (1999). Enhancing the quality and credibility of qualitative analysis. *Health services research*, 34(5), 1189–1208.
- Reynolds, W., & Scott, B. (1999). Empathy: A crucial component of the helping relationship. *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, 6(5), 363–370. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2850.1999.00228.x>
- Rogers, C. R. (1958). The Characteristics of a Helping Relationship. *The Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 37(1), 6–16. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2164-4918.1958.tb01147.x>
- Rogers, C. R. (1975). Empathic: An unappreciated way of being. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 5(2), 2–10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001100007500500202>

- Rubie-Davies, C., Peterson, E. & Irving, S., Widdowson, D. & Dixon, R. (2010). Expectations of achievement: Student teacher and parent perceptions. *Research in Education*, 83, 36-53. <https://doi.org/10.7227/RIE.83.4>.
- Sarki, A. A. & Anjum, G. (2020). Effects of incorporating empathy in teaching practices. *Educational psychology & praxis in Pakistan (Institute of Business Administration Karachi)*. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.15184.74240>
- Shady, S. L. H. & Larson, M. (2010). Tolerance, empathy, or inclusion? Insights from Martin Buber. *Educational Theory*, 60(1), 84–96. Board of Trustees University of Illinois. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1741-5446.2010.00347.x/pdf>.
- Sybing, R. (2019). Making connections: Student-teacher rapport in higher education classrooms. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 19(5), p.18-35. <https://doi.10.14434/josotl.v19i5.26578>
- Tettegah, S. & Anderson, C. J. (2007). Pre-service teachers' empathy and cognitions: Statistical analysis of text data by graphical models. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 32(1), 48–82. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2006.10.010>
- Chika-James, T. A. (2020). Facilitating service-learning through competencies associated with relational pedagogy: A personal reflection. *Higher Education Pedagogies*, 5(1), 267-293, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23752696.2020.1820886>
- Teo, P. (2019). Teaching for the 21st century: A case for dialogic pedagogy. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, 21, 170-178. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2019.03.009>
- Warren, C. A. (2015). Conflicts and contradictions: Conceptions of empathy and the work of good-intentioned early career white female teachers. *Urban Education*, 50(5), 572–600. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085914525790>
- Weinberger, Y., & Bakshy, I. (2015). Teacher empathy: The complete act. *Scholar-Practitioner Quarterly*, 9(1), 109–122.
- Weinberger, Y. (2017). The role of empathy in dealing with the complexity and uncertainty within the educational field: meaningful learning at the “Museum Adventure” course. *In TechOpen*. <https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.68670>
- Weinberger, Y., Levi-Keren, M., Landler-Pardo, G., & Elyashiv, R. A. (2022). Empathic patterns in complex discourse. *Journal of Organizational Psychology*, 22(1). <https://doi.org/10.33423/jop.v22i1.5109>
- Wiseman, T. (2007). Toward a holistic conceptualization of empathy for nursing practice. *Advances in Nursing Science*, 30(3). <https://doi.org/10.1097/01.ANS.0000286630.00011.e3>
- Zaki, J. (2017). Moving beyond stereotypes of empathy. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 21(2), 59–60. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2016.12.004>

Nadya Patel, an Assistant Professor in the Business, Communication and Design cluster, has had the privilege of accumulating over twenty years of experience as an educator, researcher and trainer. With a passion for critical design futures thinking, she co-develops design innovation and multimedia design modules that aim to develop learners' creative confidence and critical competence for the future of work. She facilitates professional development workshops for local and international institutes of higher learning on pedagogical approaches to improve teaching and learning practices. For business leaders, she offers training on empathetic leadership communication, personal branding and corporate coaching and mentoring. She aims to bridge the research-practice gap and engage industry partners in applied research collaborations. Patel is very much a teacher-researcher and seeks the smallest of ways to be a better one every day!