



Samanthians secondary teachers' essence of empathy.

A hermeneutic phenomenological study

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Abstract

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to understand what the nature of empathy for secondary teachers at Samanthians Day School is. Through interviews with six teachers the interviewer found three categories of understanding: Attainment, Attributes, and Teacher Environment. Each category moved through subsequent sub-categories. The methodology of the study allowed for the centering of these subjects' lived experiences and of their contextual understanding of the phenomenon. The findings point to a combination of understanding and practice of both cognitive awareness of empathy an affective practice of the phenomenon. Both which may follow or precede one another, and which are highly motivated by experiences and the philosophy that underpins the school's empathy objectives. Such unearthing of multiplicities, which are typical in such methodological inquiries, should be a key consideration when undertaking empathy understanding for teachers. The implications of the study mean that teachers' practice and considerations of empathy can assist not only their personal teaching objectives but also one's interpersonal learning awareness.

Key Words: Empathy; Empathetic Environments; Teacher Empathy; Teacher Development; Teaching Environment

1. Introduction

There is increasing social and political polarization in the world right now. In the United States, where this investigation took place, there is currently an intensified backlash against initiatives that speak about fairness, and equality, as well as to expansions and accessibility to diversity and equity programing (Glassdoor, 2022; Butler, 2023). These are subjects that promote perspective taking a key component of empathy understanding (Andel, 2017).

This increase in social unrest has risen permission for individuals and groups to actively flaunt their privilege with less and less concern for the consequences. As a result, we have seen increases of social disparities that impact Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). With hate crimes also on the rise, we are turning into a culture that would rather be at the extremes, either combative in nature, or simply cancelling what we find unappealing (Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI], 2022; Millet, 2023).

Generally, it is in our schools where we have come to depend on social education. We entrust such

institutions to produce just and empathetic individuals that create and contribute to equitable societies. The role they play is increasingly more complex and demanding (Skovdal et al., 2015).

Teacher attrition continues to be a concern for school leaders and policymakers in many countries, with teachers leaving before even reaching their full abilities in the field (Madigan, et al, in press, Rosensteel, 2020). If we add to this the inherent diversity increase in the nation with the foreseeable population changes, and the culture-based changes that come with it, we can surmise the effect the nation's public and private schools will have (Cardona, 2023). This means teachers will need to be more empathetic and conscientious in their educating frameworks (Goldstein, 2019).

Goldstein (2019) shares that it is important that from an “ethical point of view” faculty and staff need to “develop a level of cultural competence, awareness, and sensitivity to work effectively with increasingly diverse student bodies as well as to prepare students to effectively participate in a diverse global workforce” (p. 347). And Furman (1998) says that a “culture that recognizes and promotes acceptance of differences, proactively teaches staff and students to cooperate within difference, incorporates the metaphor of global community, and attends to members’ feeling of belonging, trust, and safety”.

2. Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand what the essence of empathy is for secondary school teachers at Semanthian Day School. At this stage in the research empathy will be generally defined as “the ability to recognize or infer what another person is feeling, including whether they are suffering (cognitive empathy), and our emotional response to their thoughts and feelings which impels us to action (affective empathy)” (Andel et al., 2017).

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Teachers and Empathy

Teachers are important individuals in our social relations frameworks. They are people in a profession that inherently involve interpersonal interactions. Such interactions can result in high demand scenarios which in turn can sometimes lead to emotional burden (Shoji et al., 2016). As such empathy plays a pressing role. Its function allows the transferring of experience and understanding, such as those of needs, of feeling and desires, and other similar traits. This essentially frames our emotional bridges, that which encourages and connects prosocial

behaviors (Riess, 2017). Teachers also provide a range of support roles in our learning communities that are not simply in school services (Pedler et al., 2000). Unfortunately, through a review of the literature one can see the absence of information on this combination of interests, teachers and empathy, especially relating to phenomenology (Meyers et al., 2019). As such, not much attention has been given to this group regarding their views and positions on empathy, a contribution this study proports to do (Hen, 2010).

3.2 On Empathy

The term ‘empathy’, as we have come to understand it in English, dates to early twentieth century. The term was first used in shared connotations by Tichener (1909) in his translation from the writings of the German psychologist Lipps. Lipps (1907) said that empathy is ‘the name for an original and irreducible, yet simultaneously wondrous, state of affairs.’ What he meant by this was one’s ability to both understand mental states that are unfamiliar to oneself ‘in and with’ a perceptual consternation of other, less or non-recognized, bodies (Jahoda, 2005).

Husserl and Stein are two of the earliest phenomenologists that identified fissures in Lipps arguments on empathy (Husserl, 2002; Ezekiel, 2021). Essentially, for these phenomenologists, to understand what another is going through it is important to recognize similarities between experiences. This means one must understand what one has gone through personally but also have some understanding of what another has gone through.

For Husserl and Stein, they explain empathy is about 1. intentional experience, 2. it is a perception like phenomenon, and 3. that a higher level of empathy practice is keener to an extension of the imagination in understanding the other person’s position from their own individual viewpoint. As such they express that these are multi-dimensional modes of understanding. Phenomenologists often speak about moving beyond focusing on bodily expression to understanding the wider social complexities we live in and that is often embedded in the self (Moran, 2012). It is essentially a practice of thematizing empathy, a practice that is still present in contemporary discussions.

3.3 Measuring Empathy

There have been two general ways of breaking down and researching empathy in the last 40 years,

situationally and dispositionally. Situationally means measuring empathy through specific situations. One can arrive at answering some research questions by measuring immediate experiences by way of studying expression and gestures, even heartbeat or skin tone, etc. (Zhou et al., 2003). When we speak about dispositionally we are referring to an activation that moves through one's personal traits. Both measures rely on interpretation and the variations inherently in such processes. As such we can suppose imperfection in the process of such measuring. Because many such answers rely on self-reporting there will always be difficulties of accuracy especially when speaking of distinctions between empathy, sympathy, distress, etc.

4. Methodology

4.1 Justification and Design

To answer the investigation questions and arrive at the objectives the researcher used a qualitative, social constructivist approach. This approach lends itself well to studying social and human problems. It seeks to collect data from the natural environment of the subjects and utilizes the researchers as a key instrument. It also allows for “complex reasoning through inductive and deductive logic (Creswell et al., 2018)”. The process utilized a phenomenological method which is well suited for research in education and human services as it inspects deeper layers of subjects' experiences and seeks more profound understanding of what is underneath (Van Manen, 2023).

Understanding that new theories would be explored and extrapolated from the participant's contributions a grounded theory approach was also incorporated. It is a method that allows the studying of a process, event, activity, etc., and generate theories from them.

4.1.1 Setting, Participant Selection Procedures, and Samplings

Samanthian Day School is a private school in a seaside town in New England, United States. Like many private schools in the country, it is mostly funded by tuition fees, paid by the parents and guardians of the students at the school. It was founded in the 1930s and has an average class size of 14 students, with a 5.1 student to faculty ratio. It represents 34 neighboring communities with 72% of faculty holding a post graduate degree. They have a mission of *encouraging each other to uncover one another's full selves and using the understanding for good.*

4.1.2 Study Participants

The study participants are made up of 2023-2024 Samanthians Day School Faculty. All the participants were well integrated in the school system and held a variety of positions. As such we have representation from the administration sector to specific departmental roles and positions. Seven faculty members decided to participate. Phenomenological studies suggest a participation number between 5 and 25 (Creswell et al., 2018), considering the size of the school a number between 5 and 10 is a good sample size for the study. The final participation number was 6.

4.1.3 Data Collection Method

We used a phenomenological in-depth interviewing process to collect the information. We selected to use Bevan's (2014) method of phenomenological interview which structured three themes of practice: contextualization, apprehension of the phenomenon, clarification of the phenomenon. The interviews took an average of one hour.

4.1.4 Analysis

We selected Colaizzi's (1978) phenomenological descriptive method for our analysis. Colaizzi's method has 7-steps which seek to assist the structuring of phenomenological inquiry.

In our first stage of analysis each interview was read multiple times, and sub-categories were introduced following Colaizzi's suggested methods. In the second stage of analysis, we clustered themes, re-reading all the information (quotes) in the codes to create clusters that either sought to continue Bevan's (2014) categorization method or break away into other categorizations of clusters. What we found is that the information was clustering under codes more so than in Bevan's categorizations. As such, new clusters began to emerge, new categories and within them the re-structuring of previous codes and creation of sub-categories.

Three main categories emerged: Attainment, Attributes, and Teaching Environment. Under Attainment we ended up with Experiences, Realizations, Recognition, and Relationships. Under Attributes: Experiences, Feeling, Interactions, Recognition, and Understanding. Under Teaching Environment, we had: Consideration, Interaction, and Size. In the third and final stage of analysis we created the final categorization. This is available in the results section.

4.2 Validity and Reliability

We used triangulation to assist the credibility of the research and used established interview and data analysis methods for reliability, along with continuous tutoring and peer review.

5. Results

5.1 Themes

5.1.1 Attainment

Attainment of empathy for our subjects seems to move through four pillars: Realization, Experience, Recognition, and Relationships.

5.1.1.1 Realizations

When we speak here of realizations, we are speaking of one becoming aware of something, or one achieving something that one has been contemplating the possibility of. The process of realizing that self-work is an important component to empathy understanding as expressed by Richard, who was an individual that was preoccupied with being right, but later learned that “that righteousness...was a constant impediment to (his) own growth and capacity to be empathetic.” He realized that it is “really hard to be empathetic in a meaningful way if you haven’t done work on yourself.”

5.1.1.2 Experiences

Experiences impact the levels of empathy understanding our subjects hold. Be it with experiences one has or how non-experiences can obstruct pathways towards this holding. For some of our subjects this means that with direct experiences such as those of bullying, mental health, or being othered (marginalized) they’re needs went unseen. As such, those experiences have a direct impact in their activities now as teachers, (de-marginalization of diverse students, making sure that students feel seen in their everyday learning school interactions, etc.).

5.1.1.3 Recognition

An identification of something or someone. Identification needs identifiers, those identifiers need to come from some reference or have reference to the person. For one of our subjects his process of empathy reference clearly comes from a constant recognition of the acts that were not done to you, what you’ve wanted, hoped for or longed for as in the case of Ruth who said that part of what got her into the teaching profession “is not having someone like (her) in her life.”

5.1.1.4 *Relationships and Interactions*

Relationships is another theme that promotes the attainment of empathy in our subjects. Some speak to the importance of having interactions that push back and challenge views in the learning and teaching environment. While others speak about early relationships and how they helped frame their first understanding of empathy. And yet others speak about current interactions in relationships.

5.1.2 *Attributes*

Empathy Attributes for our subjects seems to move through five pillars: Experience, Interactions, Process, Recognition, and Understanding.

5.1.2.1 Experience

Our subjects speak of empathy through experience they have had or have gone through, such as being an immigrant, having children, experiencing the stories of others through literature, first-hand encounters, and prolonged conversations. They do this as a way of identifying themselves with empathy.

5.1.2.2 Interactions

Interaction for our subject seems to also be an important component to their empathy practice and understanding. In some ways it seems to enable one’s review of their practice. For most their interaction with students is a central process where this takes place. But the importance of interacting with others isn’t only viewed by way of teacher-to-student, but also teacher-to-teacher.

5.1.2.3 Process

One could look at the process of empathy as the mechanisms teachers identify in its make-up; we are looking here at what is needed to make it work. The process also involves knowing. Creating and structuring internal libraries of things one feels more comfortable with and things that one feels insecurity and discomfort with. The process also involves learning, be it through relationships that involved empathetic interactions, or learning how non-empathetic actions look like.

5.1.2.4 Recognition

A part of the attributes of empathy is that of recognition. Like recognition in the previous theme attainment, here it is also about an identification of

kinds, of something or someone. This identification comes by way of some previous experience or encounter. Having encounters that one can bring into reference, through feelings and thoughts, be they emotional or cognitive, produces references that build one's capacity to understand empathy, and better know what it is.

5.1.2.5 Understanding

Understanding is yet another core element of attributes given to empathy by our subjects. Through the reflections of our subjects, understanding seems to be connected to core patterns in one's history that positions the empathizer in an immediate reference point. For our subjects at times this immediate inter-relational reference needs to occupy not only the emotional but the cognitive

5.1.3 *Teaching Environment*

Teaching environment for our subjects moves through two pillars: Considerations and Interactions.

5.1.3.1 Considerations

Consideration seems to be an important characteristic in empathy practice, most communicated by the teaching environment. It is fundamentally a process of thinking, of thinking thoughtfully, carefully, sensibly about the other. For many of our subjects it's about this action towards students, colleagues, and families of students.

5.1.3.2 Interactions

Interaction in the teaching environment mark another important component. Interactions with their colleagues, and how such interactions impact how they process information. These interactions are not only colleague-to-colleague. Our subjects expressed that students can also provide these spaces for understanding. They are spaces where some of our subjects have learned to receive and move through confrontation, those that allow for growth through perspective challenges.

6. Discussion

6.1 *Attainment of Empathy*

The process of achieving empathy understanding, or the structuring of a working framework with which empathy is understood by our subjects, is one that converges elements of realizations, experiences, recognition, and relationships. Realization is a

process of becoming aware of something. For many of our subjects such awareness was not limited to other bodies, as the early understanding of empathy emphasized (Jahoda, 2005), but an awareness that encompassed experiential processes with the world they encounter. Our subjects point to a constant realization, a continuous learning of sorts that interact with their experiences and previous recognitions of what they've understood as empathic practices.

Being aware of someone other than oneself is concurrent theme of most of the theories on empathy (Husserl, 2002; Ezekiel, 2021, Rogers, 1995), and it seems for our subjects that attainment of empathy is linked to experiential elements in their daily interactions and relationships. These experiences move through points of experiential recognition, a trace-back of sorts. Such variety is not unlike what Kohler (2012) expresses of when he speaks about empathy as multi-layered yet unitary mode of intentionality. This too lines with the early phenomenologist's views, that direct experience and perceptions move along with us in our lives (Moran 2015). It is such experiences that created points of recognition, what phenomenologists point to when they speak of one being able to foresee the actions and emotions of the other through their own individual viewpoints (Moran, 2015; Ezekiel, 2021; Kohler, 2012).

Our subjects spoke on many occasions about how their relationships and interactions motivated thinking on the other. These interactions and modes are based on a constant flow of information between individuals. They move through spaces of imagining and wondering. The subjects spoke about imagining with a kind of care that is similar to Roger's (1995) 'as if' condition, where he says that it's like *...if I were hurt or pleased and so forth entering the private perceptual world of the other and becoming thoroughly at home in it*. This, of course, would be at its highest level. Our subjects don't speak about this depth, though some have express experience such levels. It seems the practice for them is less methodical, relying mostly on a more simplified practice of the 'as if'.

The attainment of empathy then seems to be through modes of experiences and the recognition and realizations of how those experiences constitute practices of empathy. As such, repeating such a cycle builds attainment for our subjects. This, cycle is one that is possible because of the social-relations and interpersonal field teachers occupy, which provides a consistency of understanding and re-understanding that makes empathy attainment an ongoing process.

6.2 *Attributes*

The construct of empathy for our subjects moved through attributions they assign to the phenomenon. Here, like in Attainment, there are elements of experience and interaction, and recognition, but there is also those of understanding and process. Having spoken above about experience, interactions, and recognition, in attainment (although their roles are somewhat different in the attributes, limitations of time and space means we cannot expound on those theories at this moment), I will focus this section more on process and understanding.

For our subjects process then is a sort of breakdown of the mechanism with which they understand how empathy functions. They speak of examples in one's life, points of experience that mark certain characterizes in their minds that, at that moment or sometime after, become useful resources in their practice. We are speaking here of personal libraries that act as the homes for our subject's references. Be it through personal experiences or information that was read, studied, etc.; what we can understand is that the process needs points of references to link to.

This referencing is what aids the "epistemic grasp of other minds" (Ezekiel, 2021) what the early phenomenologist spoke of. That to understand what another is going through it is important to recognize similarities between experiences. This means one must understand what one has gone through personally (as a reference point) but also have some understanding of what another has gone through. ("I think it's really hard to be empathetic in a meaningful way if you haven't done work on yourself." [T4-Richard]).

This understanding of the self and the other for our subjects is essentially the process that underpins their everyday empathy construction, how they measure their ability, progress, attainment, etc. They speak of the building of 'social skills,' but also of a naturalness that is involved in the process, something you are born with but must practice to make it stronger; a muscle essentially.

When we explore understanding in our subject's responses, we see that it seems to be connected to core patterns in one's history which allows for, or is connected to, perspective taking which Davis (1996) considers an aspect of empathy. Hakansson (2003) through his studies and research connects this understanding to knowledge but finds it that it is unclear what type of knowledge empathy encompasses. He speaks about the possible different types of this knowledge, experiential, cognitive, emotional, but he also points out how different researchers communicate this 'understanding', whether 'share', 'feel', 'perceive', 'comprehend', and others. Our subjects don't specifically clarify this perplexity, but constantly revert to references, as

mentioned previously, accumulation of experiences in their lives that they reference.

Our subjects speak of cognitive and emotional processes of empathy not often separate but with some distinctions. In the study findings, sometimes a cognitive position is followed by an emotional and at times this process is reversed. This is supported under the practice that most studies "typically combined and assess the two in unison (Bekkali et al., 2021). It seems the emotional practice of empathy is a kind of co-participant with the cognitive practice. As such the distinction that our subjects hint at should be cause for further study.

6.3 Teaching Environment

Although we structure our research questions and thinking of both cognitive and emotional empathy, affective empathy is also recognized as emotional empathy, that which deals with feelings of the self and of the other. When we hear 'feeling what the other is feeling' we are most often speaking of affective empathy, an interpersonal way of tuning into what the other is feeling (Meyers et al., 2019). For our subjects the combination practice is important but also influenced. It is a part of the environments (the school) objectives. This is because research shows that the higher the level of emotional and cognitive empathy interactions with students, the more teachers' behaviors and attitudes change towards their students (2019)."

For our subjects the close environment that underpins the school's teaching and learning dynamics is a one of the key characteristics in their promotion and approximation of empathy practice and understanding. Studies show that school and class size do matter (Liang, et al 2023), and the effect on time is also a strong by-product of such closeness. Classroom management skills is linked to an increase to effective and cognitive skills in students (Ozen et al., 2020). There are also study results that point to the effectiveness of leaderships styles in positive teachers' outcomes, work motivations, and overall performance (Astuti et al., 2020). Our subjects communicated such understanding and links. Often sighting the importance of practical examples being carried out by leadership.

6.4 Mirroring

Our subjects also spoke about needing to embody the environment around them, sensing how their students and colleagues are. Needing to be aware of differences in comportment and even practicing a kind of mirroring (trying to understand what the other is feeling by attempting to experience what they're going

through vicariously). This relates to the studies of the mirror neurons that point to our capacities to mirror sentiment and activity (Arcuri et al., 2022). Although the initial mirror neurons study was heralded as a new turn in the psychoanalysis world the subsequent studies are producing a wide range of results when linking them to empathy (2022), however, there is enough evidence that there is a relationship (Bekkali, 2021).

For our teachers such a practice of trying to identify what the other is going through is aided by their ongoing conversations with one another. This too proves to be a characteristic of empathy understanding for them, the sharing of views, thoughts, experiences, and most importantly, strategies on the part of the school. Here too they most often seek guidance in school leaders that have shown to understand the practice best, from their head of schools who has focused on empathy as a social and emotional awareness target, to their diversity and belonging director who centers student wellbeing and understanding in their diversity and equity policy. Our subjects speak of mirroring what works and how such practices allow them better entry to understanding others, to reach an overall growth of/in their environment.

7. Limitations and Delimitations

It should be taken into strong consideration that this is a case-study, the information from this process needs to be viewed from a very specific lens, that of the school and its environment. This, in context, presents some limitations of the depthness of congruency that there can be in the study relative to previous, or many other, understandings on empathy and teachers.

8. Implications of Findings

8.1 Methodological Implications

The choosing of the hermeneutic phenomenology method used in this study meant that a more complete and accurate understanding of what these teachers understand as empathy could be surmised.

The methodology allowed for the centering of lived experiences and contextual understanding in the process of discovery. The objective of understanding what empathy means in this groups of teachers in Samanthians Day School means engaging with what is particular and intimate to them. This is very much in line with hermeneutic phenomenology which “requires interpretation to bring out the ways in which the meaning occurs in a context. The lived experience

of the participants needs to be seen in the context of that individual’s life situation (Dangal et al., 2020).”

8.2 Practical Implications

This study’s findings point to teachers’ empathy understanding as a key consideration in creating positive, interpersonal learning environments. It speaks to how teachers practice this phenomenon and how it assists not only their objectives, which can be both professional and personal, but also those of the school. The complexity with which they describe their understanding means the approach to building stronger empathy awareness in teachers lies in multiple areas, and that the school environment is only one. Teachers’ histories of experiences is possibly a stronger player in such activities because the findings show that experiences act as points of reflection. When teachers recognize such experiences in their histories and link them with moments of empathetic needs, the outcome seems to a much more positive one.

The study finds that these teachers are engaged in and with their work. For many of our subjects they were made aware of such levels of school engagement through their ruminations of their empathy awareness. Klassen (2013) proposes four classifications of engagement: *cognitive engagement*— being present in their day-to-day, and how they contribute to their requirements, *emotional engagement*— how they emotionally connect and relate to their work, *social engagement with colleagues* and *social engagement with students* how they see the engagement with their colleagues and with their students.

We can see here that such engagements move through the cognitive and emotional practice, and that finding situation where one can reflect on such actions can raise one’s awareness of their empathy practice and understanding. This implies a strong need to incorporate such discourses and spaces of reflection in professional development objectives that often accompany teachers’ careers.

8.3 Philosophical Implications

Our subjects spoke at length about how leadership at Samanthians either contributed to their understanding of empathy as a tool to achieve classroom objectives or as a means by which equity in diverse realities could be achieved. Samanthians follows a philosophy of incorporation and social-emotional wellness. They believe in academic enrichment by creating environments that speak directly to students’ needs, and by working with parents and teachers to reach individual and collective goals.

The school's position is about caring for the student and the complexity they bring with them, believing that such complexities are the engines of each one's learning pathways. Our subjects spoke of the importance of such philosophies. They mentioned a constant practice of the empathic characteristics that underpinned these efforts and how frequently school leadership expressed them. These characteristics then were not only encouraged in policy but motivated and communicated daily.

Garvin (2008) argue for three building blocks. 1 A Supportive Learning Environment, 2. Concrete Learning Processes and Practices, and 3. Leadership that Reinforces Learning. All our subjects spoke of feeling supported, not only by leadership but by their colleagues. They mentioned an organic sense of care and affection for other colleagues, that almost automatically attended to another's life needs without much refuse. Colleagues at Samanthians seem to never hesitate in providing a hand. They also spoke about opportunities to learn, from practicing new policies in group form and using each other as learning support groups, to being given space and time to try new teaching strategies.

9. Conclusion

For many of our subjects such awareness of the phenomenon was not limited to other bodies, but an awareness that encompassed experiential processes with the world they encounter. They don't speak about this as a profound practice, though some have expressed experiencing such levels more deeply, the practice for them is less systematic. The Attainment of empathy then seems to be through modes of experiences, and the recognition and realizations of how those experiences constitute practices of empathy.

The subsection of the theme Process is a breakdown of the mechanism that makes empathy work. They speak of examples in one's life, points of experience that mark certain characterizes in their minds that, at that moment or sometime after, become useful resources in their practice. This means understanding what one has gone through and connecting this to what another has or is going through. It is an understanding that underpins their everyday empathy construction, how they measure their ability, progress, attainment, etc.

In the study findings, we also see that sometimes a cognitive position is followed by the emotional and at times this process is reversed. It is a combination practice that is important but also influenced. It is a part of the environment's, in this case the school's,

objectives and practices. The school's teaching and learning dynamics is one of the key characteristics in their promotion and approximation of empathy practice and understanding.

Our subjects also spoke about requiring a type of personification the environment they work in, sensing how their students and colleagues are and even practicing a kind of mirroring (trying to understand what the other is feeling by attempting to experience what they're going through vicariously). It is here too that they most often seek supervision and direction from their school leaders.

10. Recommendations for Future Research

This study has opened an array of other possible questions, of which we are excited to tend to at least a few of them in the coming works. In a most basic form, a hermeneutic phenomenological method allows for the sharing and life study of individuals of groups. The findings of this study demonstrate areas that could produce further information on how teachers view empathy. For example, conducting comparative studies between different school settings (e.g., public vs. private, urban vs. rural) can provide insights into how school context influences teacher empathy. What can this tell us about a school's ability to direct their own pathway and movement on empathy practice and awareness?

We can see that a school like Samanthian can structure empathy objectives that range from learning, to practice, to teaching, and more. They are doing this not only as an exercise but as a philosophy.

In keeping with the possible distinctions of public and private school another question we can ask is: How do private learning environments such as Samanthians Day School teach empathy as a philosophical and practical objective? Can a longitudinal study examine how teacher's empathy develops over time? And can such a study help identify key factors influencing growth and identity effective professional development strategies? Having more information on the practice and how an institution's philosophical underpinnings contribute to it, could help learning communities better understand how environments motivate and structure understanding.

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