



Global Conference on Multidisciplinary Research and Innovation

Hosted Online from Berlin, Germany

Date: 2nd March, 2026

Website: <https://econferencia.com>

THE PROBLEM OF UNDERSTANDING OTHERS AND SELF-UNDERSTANDING IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS (IN THE CONTEXT OF STUDENT–TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS)

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Abstract:

This article examines the problem of understanding others and self-understanding in conflict situations within the context of student–teacher relationships. The study analyzes the psychological and pedagogical factors that influence mutual understanding between students and teachers, particularly in situations where disagreements or conflicts arise during the educational process. Special attention is given to the role of empathy, communication skills, emotional intelligence, and reflective thinking in resolving conflicts and improving interpersonal interaction in the classroom. The article highlights that effective self-understanding and the ability to understand others contribute to the development of constructive dialogue, mutual respect, and a positive learning environment. The research emphasizes the importance of pedagogical strategies aimed at strengthening communicative competence and conflict resolution skills among both teachers and students.

Keywords: self-understanding, understanding others, conflict situations, student–teacher relationships, interpersonal communication, empathy, emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, educational environment, pedagogical interaction.



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It has been established that processes of interpersonal understanding constitute a significant factor determining the specific features of the emergence, development, and resolution of conflict. Within the education system, the distinctive characteristics of interpersonal understanding under conditions of conflictual interaction between students and teachers have been examined across various activity contexts, including intellectual activity, sports activity, managerial activity, and others.

The scientific foundations of the theory of perceiving and understanding one person by another in Russian psychology were developed in the studies of A.A. Bodalev and his followers. According to their view, understanding another person is a complex cognitive task aimed at identifying that individual's uniqueness and irreproducible personal characteristics. The process of grasping individuality depends on attitudes, reference standards, and stereotypes formed in the subject's prior communicative experience.

The volume and reliability of information about another person depend on the characteristics of both the knower and the person being known, as well as on the conditions of communication. In student–teacher relationships, the depth of penetration into another's inner world is determined primarily by the individual's level of development as a person and, likewise, as a subject of work, cognition, and communication.

Bodalev's research identified a relationship between adequate understanding of others and adequate self-understanding. Individuals who hold an inaccurate view of themselves and who often project their own negative qualities onto others develop distorted, inadequate perceptions of other people as well. This may represent one of the significant psychological causes of student–teacher conflicts. In psychology, two levels of pedagogical social perception are distinguished:



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1. The cognitive level—a system of representations and concepts formed about the student.

2. The emotional level—empathy, that is, the ability to enter into another person’s feelings and to respond with compassion and shared emotional experience.

Pedagogical social perception differs from the perception typical of other professional groups (e.g., physicians or lawyers) due to the specific features of pedagogical activity—particularly its meta-activity character and its reflexive nature.

B. G. Ananyev conceptualizes the human being as a three-level system:

- The individual level (temperament, innate dispositions, age- and sex-related factors);
- The subject level (skills, competencies, abilities);
- The personality level (status, social roles, value orientations, motives, and character traits).

These levels are interrelated. Depending on the content of activity and the manner in which it is organized, it is determined which aspects of the student’s psyche become most visible to the teacher.

In practice, teachers often prioritize the organizational outcome of an activity rather than its educational and developmental goals. In such cases, the product of students’ activity receives attention, whereas the knowledge, skills, and relationships being formed during the learning process may not be sufficiently evaluated.

When attention shifts from the student to the activity outcome, the student tends to be perceived primarily as a subject of activity. The teacher is more inclined to seek answers to the question “How does the student learn?” while the question “How does the student relate to others?” becomes secondary. As a result, the student is evaluated one-sidedly as a person.



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If learning activity is organized in an individual format, the student's personal qualities often remain inaccessible to the teacher. The teacher may have limited knowledge of the student's roles in the family and classroom, value orientations, motives, and other personal characteristics. This inevitably leads to serious shortcomings in educational and developmental work.

Personal qualities become more salient in conditions of collective activity, where mutual responsibility and mutual demands are formed.

Research indicates that a deeper understanding of students is associated with the teacher's personality. Female teachers tend to understand students more profoundly; each teacher generally understands students of their own gender better. Teachers of humanities disciplines provide more comprehensive descriptions of students' communicative and reflexive traits, whereas teachers in polytechnical fields more accurately grasp students' attitudes toward work.

Younger teachers (with up to five years of experience) often demonstrate a deeper understanding of students due to the relative absence of stereotypes. As professional experience increases, descriptions tend to become more generalized and, at times, stereotyping becomes stronger. However, among master teachers, generalization takes on a creative character and serves to reveal the student's individuality.

Empathy is of particular importance in conflict situations. Empathy is the ability to sympathize and to sense another person's emotional state. As S. L. Rubinshtein emphasized, the value of a person is determined by the kinds of relationships they are capable of establishing with other people.

Empathy consists of three components:

- Cognitive—understanding another person's emotional state;
- Affective—sympathy and shared emotional experience;
- Behavioral—active helping behavior oriented toward providing support.



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Pedagogical empathy develops within dialogical communication. When the student appears not merely as an object of influence but as a subject of interaction, empathic relations become more likely to develop.

Empathy is a developable quality. Empathic capacity formed in early childhood tends to persist into later developmental stages. In ontogenesis, two forms of empathy are distinguished:

- Immediate, impulsive compassion;
- Conscious, socialized compassion (associated with a healthy personal orientation).

When empathic behavior becomes a stable personal trait, it forms the core of pedagogical abilities.

In the study of conflictual communication, the issue of adequate understanding of both others and oneself is essential. The ability to view a situation from another person's perspective reduces conflict. Knowledge of another person's "personal policy," that is, their values and motives, enables more accurate prediction of behavioral patterns.

Accurate interpersonal perception leads to the attenuation of conflict, as real understanding replaces stereotypes. When the teacher begins to perceive the student—and the student begins to perceive the teacher—as a subject, conflict situations can be resolved through constructive dialogue.

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