



EARTHE

Activity 2

Digital toolkit for innovative curriculum and methodological development

Module - Leadership

Method – Leadership simulations



Module 5 - Leadership

Case study - Leading Through the Storm

Related Method - Leadership simulations

Context and Background

The case comes from a community learning centre in rural Romania that offers soft skills training for adults in professional transition—many of them recently unemployed or from underrepresented backgrounds (low income, over 40, or returning to work after long gaps). The centre partnered with a local NGO to implement a leadership module as part of a larger reskilling initiative.

Problem / Challenge Presented

Participants showed low self-confidence in taking initiative or coordinating teams. Most avoided leadership roles due to fear of failure, lack of prior experience, or communication anxiety. This became a barrier in both employment contexts and community involvement. Traditional lectures on leadership had minimal impact on behaviour.

Actions Taken / Method Applied

The centre integrated **Leadership Simulations** into the training. Learners were placed in rotating leadership roles within time-limited, high-pressure simulations (e.g., crisis at a community event, conflict in a work team, urgent project deadline). Each simulation included observers with feedback sheets, role play twists, and structured debriefing.

Outcomes and Results

Over 80% of participants reported feeling more confident to take on leadership roles. In post-training interviews, participants demonstrated greater awareness of their leadership style and emotional triggers. Some participants applied their new skills in organizing local volunteer campaigns or taking initiative in job interviews and workplace meetings. Trainers observed significant improvement in assertive communication, decision-making under pressure, and group facilitation.



Lessons Learned

- Leadership is best developed through **practice**, not theory alone.
- Rotating roles and feedback build **self-awareness** and mutual learning.
- Emotional safety and structured reflection are critical for meaningful learning in vulnerable groups.

Key Success Factors

Realistic scenarios that mirrored participants' life and work situations

Safe, non-judgmental environment with permission to fail and learn

Clear feedback tools that helped translate observation into growth

Facilitator flexibility in adapting simulations to the emotional readiness of the group

Challenges Encountered and How They Were Addressed

Resistance to leadership roles: Some participants refused to lead at first. Facilitators normalized discomfort, shared their own failures, and gradually built trust.

Uneven participation: Dominant voices were managed by assigning balanced roles and coaching leaders to involve quieter members.

Emotional reactions (frustration, anxiety) were addressed in debriefings, where feelings were validated and reframed as learning opportunities.

Applicability / Recommendations for Educators

Use role-based simulations in any adult education context where leadership, communication, or emotional intelligence is a goal.

Start with low-stakes, relatable scenarios and increase complexity as learners gain confidence.

Ensure peer and facilitator feedback is supportive and actionable.

Always include a guided reflection phase—this is where the deepest learning happens.

Consider using rotating roles and observer checklists to engage all learners actively, not just the "leaders."