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Activity 2

Digital toolkit for innovative curriculum and methodological development

Module – Leadership

Method - Emotional intelligence workshops

Case study

Module 5 - Leadership

Case study - From Reaction to Reflection: Emotional Intelligence in Action

Related Method - Emotional intelligence workshops

Context and Background

The case takes place in a vocational adult education center in southern Italy that offers reskilling programs for unemployed adults aged 30–55. Many participants were previously employed in manual or technical jobs and now face reintegration challenges due to automation or long-term unemployment. As part of their leadership and personal development modules, the center introduced emotional intelligence (EI) workshops to support self-regulation, teamwork, and stress management.

Problem / Challenge Presented

Participants frequently displayed emotional reactivity—quick temper, withdrawal, defensiveness—especially in group discussions or role-play activities. This hindered communication, disrupted teamwork, and blocked leadership potential. Trainers noted that many learners lacked awareness of their emotional states and defaulted to “survival mode” in perceived conflicts.

Actions Taken / Method Applied

The centre designed a 2-session **Emotional Intelligence Workshop**, focusing on emotional awareness, regulation, and empathy. One core activity was *Emotion Mapping in Leadership Moments*, where participants revisited a challenging interpersonal situation and analysed it using a structured template. The workshops also included group scenarios, mindfulness exercises, and peer reflection moments to anchor emotional learning in practical situations.

Outcomes and Results

Participants reported increased ability to identify and name their emotions in the moment.



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Several learners began using simple regulation techniques (e.g., pausing, breathing) during job interviews or community meetings.

Emotional outbursts during sessions decreased, and group cohesion improved.

One participant noted: “Before this, I just exploded or walked away. Now I stop, breathe, and think.”

Trainers observed more reflective language and greater tolerance for differing opinions.

Lessons Learned

Emotional intelligence is a **learnable skill** that can be developed even among adults with limited formal education.

Self-awareness activities like emotion mapping are especially effective when based on **real personal experiences**.

Creating a **safe emotional space** is essential participants open up only when they feel respected and not judged.

Key Success Factors

Relatable tools (emotion wheels, real-life scenarios) helped demystify emotional language.

Personal reflection time allowed deeper insight than group dialogue alone.

Non-directive facilitation enabled learners to find their own meaning and growth without pressure.

Consistency and continuity: the fact that it was a 2-session format allowed deeper learning than a one-off workshop.

Challenges Encountered and How They Were Addressed

Some learners considered it “soft” or irrelevant. Trainers reframed EI as a leadership and workplace skill, not therapy.

A few participants became overwhelmed. Facilitators gave space for silence and allowed participants to opt out of sharing if needed.

Participants with limited vocabulary struggled to express emotions. Emotion cards and drawing tools were used to support expression.

Applicability / Recommendations for Educators



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Integrate EI development early in any adult leadership or communication course to build foundation skills.

Use **practical, visual tools** to support learners with low literacy or emotional vocabulary.

Avoid overloading participants—**short, regular activities** work better than one intensive session.

Model emotional intelligence as a trainer: listen actively, respond with empathy, and validate discomfort.

Reinforce learning by inviting participants to **apply regulation strategies** between sessions and reflect afterward.