



EIVET Emotional Intelligence for more effective Training

METHODOLOGY FOR TEACHING A THREE-DAY TRAINING OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE FOR THE TRAINERS IN VET CENTERS IN THE EUROPEAN PARTNERING COUNTRIES

Introduction

Emotions of people are essential aspects of their everyday life. People react to everything around them depending on what they think about specific circumstances, not the circumstances per se. People's emotions, consciously or not, determine their behavior toward achieving different goals in different training situations.

N. Frijda (2007) formulated several features of human emotions that we believe are relevant to designing and performing training in emotional intelligence in a VET center:

1. People process information about the situations they encounter and respond emotionally only to those generally positive or negative *situations that are personally meaningful to them*. For example, a particular vocational exercise is boring if participants appraised it as useless for creating skills in the job search or if participants expect to do a successful job search, or if the same exercise seems joyful if it is interesting and extends the current knowledge.

2. *Emotions result from events that are important to the individual's concerns*, such as a motive or need, a major goal or value, a preference to do something or a state of mind that gives the event some emotional meaning. Emotions address own interests and aims, priorities, appraisals of urgency and necessity of action, and control over the action. For instance, an exercise in class can be emotionally acceptable if participants feel secure and do not accept some punishment, they like other trainees and expect to get help from them. get support by their trainer, their contribution is recognized, etc. To be strongly emotional, the people's *appraisal should seem realistic* not just dreamed of.

3. Emotions *depend on expected changes in favorable or unfavorable conditions*. The greater the change, the stronger the subsequently experienced emotion. People respond with more intense emotions when they encounter major changes in their lives and/or less intense emotions when they become familiar with circumstances. For instance, at the beginning of a course, trainees experience intense uncertainty and over time they develop habits to practice discussions or exercises and feel calm, relaxed, relieved, and satisfied because of their adaptation to the course work. Essentially, this is the process of emotional adaptation

4. There is an *emotional asymmetry in adapting to positive and negative emotions*: pleasure is always caused by change and wanes with continuous satisfaction. In contrast, pain may persist under repeated adverse conditions. People get used to the events that earlier caused delight and joy but not to continuous harassment or humiliation, or shame. In addition, hope does not last long, but fear can go on forever. Therefore, in designing course training and ensuring a positive emotional atmosphere in the classroom, trainers need to frame the challenges in a predominantly positive light.

5. Time does not heal people. Negative emotions *diminish with time* but not due to time. Negative emotional events elicit emotions indefinitely unless neutralized by repetitive exposures that permit extinction or habituation. This characteristic of emotions means that trainers should be flexible in using emotions over time.

6. Emotions to various situations *express deliberation, calculation, or consideration*. For example, the experienced impulsive irritation could be reasonable but can be modified by viewing its possible consequences. The trainer can decrease trainee's impulsive irritation resulting from performing an assignment reminding trainees that the exercise will help them learn new communication skill that are important in their job search or future.

7. When a situation can be viewed in alternative aspects, people tend to *view as minimizing negative emotional load*. This tendency has a practical value, i.e., a trainer can model a positive

mindset in the undesirable and painful training activities to become more acceptable and eventually less enduring.

8. Emotions vary in their complexity as reactions to body stimuli. For example, the fear of something is related to bodily sensations of heartbeat, dry mouth, pale skin, and muscle contractions. These symptoms arise automatically and unconsciously. Feelings occur after we become aware in our brain of such physical changes and only then do we get the feeling of fear. Our feelings play a very important role in helping us to reach decisions (Damasio, 2005). Feelings result from the body's reaction to external circumstances, as well as our thoughts.

These characteristics illustrate typical aspects of processing emotional information by people in various circumstances in their work as trainers. Emotionally intelligent trainers have deep knowledge and are aware of their emotions, think about how they can apply their emotions in achieving various goals, and effectively manage their emotions and the emotions of their trainees.

Defining Emotional Intelligence

The widely accepted *definition of emotional intelligence* (EI) is the tendency to perceive, understand, use, and regulate our or others' emotions to adapt to various situations in life.

Two key *approaches* guide the fundamental and applied research and the application of emotional intelligence for increasing the effectiveness and efficacy of work, education, leadership, organizational operations, social interactions, and other areas of social life.

1. Emotional intelligence as a **stable component of personality** (trait EI). Trait emotional intelligence is a constellation of emotion-related dispositions (endurant preferences for feeling and behaving in specific ways) and self-perceptions of own skills to process emotion-related information and undertake behaviors (Furnham & Petrides, 2001). These constellations comprise four factors.

- The well-being factor includes self-esteem, trait happiness, and trait optimism.
- The self-control factor incorporates emotion control, stress management, and impulse control.
- The emotionality factor involves emotion perception of own and other people's feelings, emotion expression of own feelings to others, fulfilling relationships, and empathy.
- The sociability factor includes social awareness, management of others' emotions, and assertiveness.

Trait EI has been widely studied as a source of personal work performance, perceptions, and attitudes. For example, people with high levels of trait EI tend to develop strong total self-efficacy (Nikoopour et al., 2012), experience happiness (Furnham & Petrides, 2003), avoid repetitively engaging in negative thought patterns and dysfunctional attitudes, show effective coping, experience life satisfaction, less depression and personality disorders (Petrides et al., 2007). People with high trait EI perceive they are working in a cohesive group (Quoidbach & Hansenne, (2009), have better mental health, and have fewer body symptoms (Baudri et al., 2018). Emotion regulation helps people to maintain physical and mental health (Chen & Miller, 2014; Diefenbach, Miller, Porter, Peters, Stefanek & Leventhal, 2008). Our research on several emotional labor occupations found that three EI facets – impulse control, stress management, and empathy – consistently determine the well-being components, such as life meaning, task performance, and job satisfaction (Kardasheva & Radoslavova, 2021).

Emotionally intelligent teachers experience fewer burnout symptoms, such as exhaustion, depersonalization, and low accomplishment (Colomeischi, 2015).

2. Emotional intelligence is a **mental ability to process emotion-related information** defined as the ability to accurately perceive and express emotion, to use emotion to facilitate thought, to understand emotions, and to manage emotions for both emotional and personal growth (Mayer &

Salovey, 1997). Each of these skills incorporates various sub-skills. Empirical studies illustrate a long range of positive psychological effects of EI ability.

Employees with high EI ability have better job performance parameters, such as promotion, percent of merit increase, interaction among colleagues, job attitudes (Lopes et al., 2006), and higher task results (Côté & Miners (2006). Meta-analyses revealed that EI ability enhances the effects of personality traits and cognitive ability on job success in serving clients and solving emotional problems (Joseph & Newman, 2010; O’Boyle et al., 2010). Reappraisal and acceptance processes strengthen people’s focus of attention on task (Gross, 1998).

Emotionally intelligent individuals use more effective emotion regulation strategies (Ciarrochi et al., 2000), are more resilient and apply less risky behaviors (Ciarrochi et al., 2001), try more strategies to experience positive emotions and prevent negative emotions in selves and others (Gross & John, 2002). The positive outcomes are higher emotional well-being (Schutte et al., 2002), fewer symptoms of depression, anxiety, burnout, and stress, higher positive self-esteem, job, and life satisfaction (Brackett et al., 2006; Ciarrochi et al., 2000). Regulation and use of emotions increase job satisfaction (Güleryüz et al., 2008). Managing own emotions is the most significant factor for effective coping with stress (Choubey et al., 2009) and less rumination (Lanciano et al., 2010). Emotionally intelligent leaders tend to employ organizational changes by sharing visions and being people-oriented. Studies discovered that such leaders seem effective to others (Mills, 2009; Kerr et al., 2006), successfully achieving business goals and demonstrating effective interactions with followers (Rosete, 2007).

Emotional skills can be learned in educational settings. The neuroscience research shows that emotional and cognitive processes are interconnected (Dolan, 2002), and emotions impact perception, motivation, critical thinking, and behavior (Lazarus, 1991; Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Hence,

emotional intelligence can be seen as a significant factor in training people for building specific different mental and emotional skills.

When teachers plan lessons, instruct, grade student work, and attend staff meetings, they experience a variety of positive and negative emotions (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). Teachers feel enthusiasm, pride, and satisfaction when witnessing that students succeed, or receive support from administrators and colleagues (Emmer, 1994), angry or frustrated with misbehaving or failing students (Reyna & Weiner, 2001), uncooperative colleagues and administrators (Bullough et al., 1991), and when they fail in pursuing the teaching goals (Liljestrom et al., 2007). Teachers feel guilt when underperforming their teaching roles (Hargreaves & Tucker, 1991) and anxiety when dealing with uncertainties and complexities in teaching (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). Emotions facilitate thought by activating a choice and helping career development (Caruso et al., 2002) that require applying skills for the regulation of own and clients' emotions and expressing empathy.

Being unsatisfied with their managers, teachers' emotions impair classroom dynamics and student learning (Travers, 2001). The abilities to perceive, use, understand, and regulate emotions are integral to effective teaching (Hargreaves, 2001). Teachers who regulate their emotions experience positive affect, principal support, job satisfaction, and feelings of personal success (Brackett et al., 2010) and create a more supportive, and productive classroom environment to encourage students' learning and achievement.

The ability to regulate emotions can help students focus on learning, adapt to the school environment, deal with academic anxiety (Mestre et al., 2006), the focus of attention to learning during stress and strain (Rhoades, Warren, Domitrovich, & Greenberg, 2010), behave less aggressively, more prosocially, and feel more secure (Denham et al., 2003; Rubin, 1999), experience less physical and psychological symptoms (Southam-Gerow & Kendall, 2000), use less alcohol and tobacco (Trinidad & Johnson, 2002), feel less anxious and depressed (Rottenberg et. al, 2002),

undertake less impulsive and aggressive actions (Brackett et al., 2004; Winters et al., 2004). Students who can recognize emotions accurately interact more positively with others (Izard et al., 2001). Emotional intelligence also supports social interactions. Students tend to be more cooperative in class work (Wang, MacCann, Zhuang, Liu, & Roberts, 2009). Individuals high on trait EI are engaged in their academic activities because they can mobilize greater effort in the face of adversity, as well as better offset the negative influence of various types of emotionally distracting situations (Perera & DiGiacomo, 2015). In contrast, the students with lower trait EI, experience negative affect and undertake distracting behaviors (Valiente, Swanson, & Eisenberg, 2012).

Emotional experience can strengthen learning motivation, e.g., students are more engaged in class on regular bases thanks to their positive mindset (beliefs) about the future and put more effort to achieve their academic goals (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010; Nes & Segerstrom, 2006; Linnenbrink, 2007). Providing training in EI to both educators and students can ensure that student learning and achievement are optimized (Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004).

Below we present ideas about the EI education in VET centers in four European countries – Greece, Bulgaria, Slovakia, and Italy. In a survey, we established the needs of introducing emotionally intelligent training in the VET centers based on using two points of view – trainers’ and trainees’ perceptions and evaluation of the current educational and training practices. We conclude that VET centers need to include an EI course in their educational programs to increase the effectiveness of trainers’ work and trainees’ learning.

THE MODEL OF EI TRAINING

The analysis of the literature revealed that emotional intelligence training was widely conducted across the world for achieving two important goals. The *first goal* is to develop emotional skills in psychology students (Nelis et al., 2009), social sciences students (Enriquez et al. 2017),

managers (Nafukho et al., 2016), physicians (Dugan et al., 2014), military officers (Oden et al., 2015), and teachers as trainees (Gilar-Corbi et al., 2018). The *second goal* is developing emotional intelligence as a tool for achieving important objectives, such as improving teaching skills (Dolev & Leshem, 2017), reducing aggression and increasing empathy of students (Castillo et al., 2013), preparing students to adapt to educational context for effective teaching and interpersonal interaction, accurate perception of information and to respond to any changes, understand behavior of self and others (Muhina et al., 2016), reducing clinical symptoms (Jahangard et al., 2012; Pourmohamadreza-Tajrishi et al., 2013), improving general health (Foji et al., 2020), quality of working life (Esmaeili (2015), coping with COVID-19 (Drigas & Papoutsis, 2020). To be effective, the EI training should follow some general principles.

General Principles in Designing Emotional Intelligence Training in VET Center Programs

The model of emotional intelligence training presented below could serve the education of trainees, no matter who the trainees are – teachers or students. The model incorporates four components:

1. **Targeted skills:**

- a) Theoretical background of the training course determines the choice of the emotional skills that must be built, including transferable skills, such as communication, problem-solving, time management, etc.

- b) Integration of the EI training course with other courses of the VET curriculum. This means that emotional intelligence courses could increase the effectiveness of teaching other courses in VET centers

c) Achieving sustainable positive effects of EI training that enhances the life skills of trainees

2. Designing the EI course

a) Alignment of the trainers' and trainees' views on the set of needed skills to be developed. This can enhance the self-motivation of trainees to participate in EI training, and the motivation of trainers.

b) Personal accountability for the training success (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001; White, 2006) and the results achieved. These aspects can significantly motivate trainees

c) Trainers need to build emotional intelligence skills to be able to better train students in emotional skills and to apply these skills in learning the material in a particular area

3. Implementation of the EI training

a) Blending individual and group activities during the training through practical workshops. Research has found that group forms are more effective than individual learning (Boyatzis, 2007), create common goals, and promote synergy and mutual help that strengthens and motivates participants to work together. Individual coaching sessions can deal with personal challenges in the training, emotions, and attitudes (Chapman, 2005). Group coaching allows in a relatively short time to develop various skills of trainees.

b) Guidance and support to the trainers that can speed up the learning process.

c) Provide enough time for trainees to practice the skills chosen in the training program.

This will help trainees to build habits in applying emotional intelligence skills.

4. Evaluation of EI training effectiveness

Various methods are typically applied to collect data regarding the effectiveness of a VET training course, namely:

1. Conducting *pre- and post-assessment* of participants' level of emotional intelligence regarding the course. This approach will help flexibly establish the areas of EI that need improvement.
2. *Questionnaire surveys* for studying the opinions and behaviors of trainers and trainees related to different aspects of the process and results of EI training.
3. *Observation of and giving feedback* on different aspects of training sessions. This method can provide information about the course's effectiveness to improve or modify the training process.
4. *Organization metrics*: measurement of the effect of EI training on students' engagement in learning and success in other VET courses and planning new EI training if needed.

Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick (2016) offered detailed parameters for evaluating a training course. We adopted the metrics for evaluating the training course in a VET center in emotional intelligence at a VET Center. The metrics as *evaluated by trainees* are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Criteria for Evaluation of Emotional Intelligence (EI) Training

Levels	Metrics
1. Evaluation of the course by trainees and/or trainers	• Areas of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the training process and training results. • Adequacy of the time used during the course. • Relevance of training activities for developing EI skills and personal competencies. • Variety of training activities regarding the educational goals. • Experienced personal emotions during the training process. • Opinions and beliefs about the utility of learned emotional skills for performing learning tasks in VET educational courses.

2. Evaluation of the achievement of learning objectives	• Measurement of trainee's and trainers' expectations of developing the emotional and other skills in the course • Level of learned emotional skills - recognition of own and others' emotions, using emotions for solving problems, and management of emotions - after completing the course on the following criteria: (a) Awareness of the progress and the speed of learning, and (b) Comparison between the needed level and the achieved level of the emotional skills
3. Evaluation of the transfer from the acquired emotional knowledge and skills to personality behavior through the EI training	• Developed some personality skills, such as resilience, emotional well-being, etc. with the help of emotional intelligence skills, • Involving EI skills in performing everyday life activities • Emotional help provided to others, e.g., giving ideas and advice • Awareness of changes in the knowledge and behaviors of trainees
4. Assessment of the impact of EI training results on learning in other courses in the VET center	• Positive effect of the EI skills on trainees: (a) improving learning and succeeding in learning in other VET courses, (b) job search and employability in the labor market, (c) higher work results, and (d) individual career success • Material, financial, and human resources needed for conducting emotional intelligence training at the VET center

To ensure a profound evaluation of the EI training course, the listed parameters should meet several requirements. First, the metrics in the table should be specified in more concrete aspects that would give congenial information about the EI training course. Second, different experts must be involved in the evaluation process to consider different points of view and more aspects of attention. Including external experts can effectively extend the evaluation of the effectiveness of EI training, especially the connection between VET centers and the labor market characteristics. Third, sing the metrics in pre- and post-evaluation reveal dynamics that create opportunities to make more precise decisions. Fourth, applying different methods for measuring EI training at VET centers can also

promote the variety and quality of analysis of emotional intelligence educational practices in the European VET centers.

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