

How to better leverage the opportunity to teach Emotional Intelligence in management courses

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Abstract

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is an essential attribute for success for managers within any workplace. In management courses, students engage in activities that have the potential to provide rich opportunities to experience and navigate their own emotions and those of their peers. However, by itself, the experience of emotions is not sufficient to develop EI, individuals also require explicit activities that are designed to acquire such skills. In this workshop, I aim to address two key aspects: firstly, how classroom dynamics inherently create emotional situations, and secondly, how educators can guide students in utilizing these situations as valuable opportunities for enhancing their EI.

Key words: Ability Model of Emotional Intelligence, Emotions in Management Education, Teaching Emotional Intelligence.

Session Format: Roundtable Provocation

Length: 60 minutes

Introduction

Mayer and Salovey (1997) defined EI as “the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth” (p. 5). In the context of management, EI holds particular significance. A manager's role often involves leading and working with diverse individuals, each with their own emotions (Sy, Tram, & O’hara, 2006). Managers with a high level of EI tend to motivate team members, communicate empathetically, and resolve conflicts effectively (Langhorn, 2004; Nguyen, White, Hall, & Bell, 2019) because they are good at managing their own emotions and skilled at managing those of others (Cuéllar-Molina, García-Cabrera, & Déniz-Déniz, 2019). Meta-analytic evidence suggests EI is related to performance in both workplace and educational settings (Joseph & Newman, 2010; MacCann et al., 2020).

Findings from a recent systematic review on EI showed that EI can potentially be improved by both short-term (e.g., 2 days) and longer-term (e.g., 13 weeks) EI training programs across various contexts such as educational and workplace settings (Kotsou, Mikolajczak, Heeren, Grégoire, & Leys, 2019). Importantly, the study emphasized the need for ongoing practice and application of EI skills in real-world contexts to maintain and further enhance EI. Similarly, a study suggested that the level of EI can be improved by structured intervention in EI (15 hours, split into 3 days) and this can increase individuals’ self-efficacy and employability (Hodzic, Ripoll, Lira, & Zenasni, 2015) which could further increase wellbeing and relieve suffering of individuals.

To truly grasp and enhance one's EI, immersion in emotional experiences is paramount. In an education context, emotional experiences relevant to learning about EI manifest in the classroom in various ways. For instance, class discussions can be a significant

source of emotional experiences. When students share personal experiences, debate, or express differing thoughts and opinions, they may experience a range of emotions such as empathy, passion, or even frustration.

However, EI does not result simply by experiencing emotions. Explicitly learning about and repeatedly practicing EI skills is key for the long-term development of EI. Thus, there is an opportunity for educators to formally provide students with explicit guidance on how to effectively develop such skills. This might involve incorporating structured activities or workshops explicitly focused on emotion knowledge and skills within the classroom. By creating a framework for students to explore and engage with their emotions in a deliberate and intentional manner, educators can enhance their capacity to develop and apply EI skills effectively both in academic settings and in their future professional endeavours.

Theoretical Foundation

EI is a concept that encompasses abilities, knowledge, and skills that are relevant for solving problems and processing information related to emotion (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). The most prominent model of EI focuses on actual abilities rather than personality traits or self-perceived emotional skills (see Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2016). According to this model, the four key components or branches of EI are:

Perceiving Emotions: The ability to perceive emotions in oneself and others. It encompasses skills such as recognizing and identifying emotions in vocal tones, body language, facial expressions, and gestures.

Using Emotions: The capacity to employ emotions to facilitate thought. It includes using emotional information to solve problems, guide thinking, and to improve decision-making.

Understanding Emotions: The ability to comprehend complex emotional information. This includes recognizing how emotions transition across time, discerning emotions from each other, and understanding the causes and consequences of emotions.

Managing Emotions: The capacity to regulate one's emotions and to influence the emotions of others. It includes the individual strategic skills to cope with stress and to maintain positive emotions even in challenging situations.

Teaching Implications: To develop students' EI, we should explicitly teach how to perceive, use, understand and manage emotions.

The four-branch model of EI can be used as a framework for leveraging emotional experiences in management courses to enhance EI. This workshop provides a specific example of a classroom context educators can use to increase students' ability to perceive, use, understand, and manage emotions.

Context: Group Work

Group work refers to a collaborative learning approach where students work together in small groups to complete specific tasks or achieve common academic goals (Sridharan & Boud, 2019). Group work has long been recognised as a powerful approach to foster students' engagement in developing affective and cognitive skills (Davies 2009). Students experience a range of pleasant and unpleasant emotions before, during and after group activities (Hilliard, Kear, Donelan, & Heaney, 2019). Positive emotions such as enthusiasm, satisfaction, and enjoyment often arise when group members effectively collaborate and produce high-quality work (Gillies, 2016). Conversely, challenges in communication, coordination, or differing work styles can lead to negative emotions such as irritability, frustration, shame, and stress. Additionally, feelings of trust, cohesion, and camaraderie within the group can contribute to a positive emotional atmosphere, enhancing productivity (Gottschall, & García-Bayonas, 2008; Lawler, Thye, & Yoon, 2000).

In the following example, I will outline details of a group-based project in a management course that I teach and how such an activity can be used to develop students' EI related knowledge and skills (in parallel to learning the primary content of the course). Over the final four weeks (of a ten-week course), students engage in five-person group work that involves analysing the global environment of a particular industry. Specifically, in the first week, students have an initial meeting with group members to set a group goal, schedule meetings and allocate tasks for individual members. They then spend two weeks researching their specific industry, producing a written report that documents their analyses, and developing an oral presentation of their findings. In weeks three to four, students deliver their presentations in class. Beyond teaching course-specific knowledge, the group work provides educators the opportunity to blend in specific activities that teach students EI knowledge and skills, as outlined next.

In the first week of group work, prior to the first group meeting, the educator (e.g., class tutor) conducts a session in which they introduce the concept of EI by emphasizing its significance in group work (e.g., Farh, Seo, & Tesluk, 2012). As the first activity, which is designed to facilitate the skill of *perceiving emotions*, students are instructed to think about different types of emotions that could arise in the context of group work. As a check on their understanding, they are presented with a list of emotions that are typically encountered in achievement settings (e.g., Pekrun, 2006) along with images of faces depicting these emotions. Following this, the educator plays videos that show how individuals in a team interact with each other in a workplace and asks students to observe facial expressions and body language. Educators and students discuss how these non-verbal cues can be useful in identifying others' emotions. Students are then asked to complete a questionnaire to rate the extent to which they expect to experience the various discussed emotions during their group work over the following week. As homework activity to be completed during the week,

students are asked to keep a journal that discusses the emotions they experienced in the context of group activities.

Week two focuses on teaching skills associated with *using emotions* and *understanding emotions*. At the beginning of the class, students are asked to complete the same questionnaire that they did at the end of the first week, except they now report the extent to which they actually experienced various emotions during their group work (using their journal recording as the source of information). This task leads to a discussion of the usefulness of various emotions as part of group work. First, the educator focuses on the utility or otherwise of negative emotions. Students are asked to think about their negative emotions (e.g., stress, anxiety, tension, irritability, and self-doubt) in the context of the group work and the implications of these emotions (both positive and negative) for their performance. Second, they do the same for positive emotions. The educator then presents students with material on how different emotions facilitate different types of cognitive processes, and how this knowledge can be used to better achieve their group objectives.

Having discussed using emotions, the educator then discusses knowledge and skills related to understanding emotions. To introduce the concept, students are asked to compare their expected emotion ratings from the previous week with the actual emotions reported this week. This is used as an illustration of the concept of *affective forecasting*, which is a key element of understanding emotions (Mayer et al., 2016). Discrepancies between actual and projected emotions are used to explain how people often display biases in their affective forecasts. Students are also asked to discuss why they and their group members experienced particular emotions. This discussion is supplemented by information presented by the educator on the main factors that are *antecedents* of emotions in group contexts, and the particularly important role of *appraisals* (see Pekrun, 2006), as well as how emotions are likely to *transition over time* (Mayer et al., 2016). Finally, the educator can use discrepancies

among students in their understanding and evaluation of emotion to highlight the important role of individual differences and *culture*. As a take home activity for this week, students are asked to document the causes and consequences of emotions they experienced during their group work and strategies they used to bring about emotions that were useful in the context of group work.

In the third week, students learn skills associated with *managing emotions*. At the beginning of the class, students are asked to report on the main factors that they identified as causes of emotions, and the usefulness of different strategies they used to elicit emotions. The educator uses this activity as a lead into a discussion of strategies that are helpful to manage emotions in different situations. For example, the educator can distinguish between task-oriented, emotion-oriented, and avoidance-oriented strategies (Saklofske, Austin, Mastoras, Beaton, & Osborne, 2012). Students can also be presented with a list of different strategies for managing emotions and their usefulness, based on findings from evidence-based literature (e.g., Kato, 2015). Students are instructed to use such resources to develop their own personalized emotion regulation strategies, which they then use to manage emotions that arise as part of the completion of the group assessment for the course.

The oral presentation assessment for the group activity in the third and fourth weeks serves as an important context in which the EI skills taught can be practiced. Oral presentations are particularly useful for practising such skills as they are emotionally laden events (Savitsky & Gilovich, 2003). From the perspective of the presenter, presentations can elicit a range of emotions, both positive and negative. Students can use their acquired skills to better identify what emotions they are experiencing both before and during the presentation, why they are experiencing the emotions, whether such emotion are likely to be useful, and how they can manage their emotions to engage with useful emotions and disengage with unhelpful ones. From the perspective of the audience, they can observe and try to identify the

types of emotions experienced by presenters, how long these emotions persist, and the effectiveness of the strategies used to deal with these emotions. In sum, oral presentations provide a platform for students to exemplify their EI and connect effectively with their audience, preparing them for future professional endeavours.

Workshop Description

The round table discussion is designed to provide a dynamic platform for participants to explore the significance and development of EI in the context of management education. This interactive session will delve into why EI is crucial for management students and how it can be effectively integrated into our classroom. Participants will reflect on personal experiences and discuss the above issues. Strategies for teaching EI will be shared, and participants will discuss effective teaching methods. The session will conclude with key takeaways and reflections.

The workshop agenda

Time	Activity	Lead
5 minutes	Welcome and Brief Overview of the Discussion Introduction of Participants	Facilitator
10 minutes	Opening Activity: Emotional Intelligence Reflection	
	Facilitator discusses “What is EI?” and introduces the ability EI model	Facilitator
	Participants take a few minutes to reflect on a personal or professional or educational situation where emotional intelligence played a significant role.	Participants
15 minutes	Discussion Segment 1: How students experience and deal with emotions in classroom settings?	

	Facilitator illustrates how emotional experiences relevant to learning about EI manifest in the classroom in various ways.	Facilitator
	Participants share different types of emotions that students experience and deal with in their classroom.	Participants
25 minutes	Discussion Segment 2: Teaching Ability EI: Strategies and Approaches for dealing with emotions in the classroom context.	
	Facilitator introduces strategies for teaching Ability EI in a management course.	Facilitator
	Participants share their experiences and insights on effective ways to teach Ability EI.	Participants
5minute	Wrap-Up and Closing Remarks	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator summarizes key takeaways from the discussion. • Participants share any final thoughts or reflections. • Thank participants for their active participation. 	All

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