

Report on the workshop:

From Emotional to Cultural Intelligence



On 21 September 2018 a well-visited workshop was held on the topic 'From emotional to cultural intelligence' at WUR. The aim of the workshop was to heighten self-awareness about identity and value-systems of the participants, while at the same time reflecting on emotional intelligence and cultural competences. The workshop showed how cultural intelligence is even more relevant than emotional intelligence when living or working in an international context.

Introspection

A first step in developing the ability to deal with differences is introspection, an awareness of yourself that enables you to understand your reactions to others. Knowing yourself helps you predict your own behaviour and know why you feel and react in a particular way. This insight is fundamental to managing your emotional reactions and behaviour.

While emotional intelligence is the ability to identify and manage one's own emotions and the emotions of others, cultural intelligence is the degree of cultural competences. For a teacher, both are important skills when dealing with students with diverse backgrounds.

In the face of increasing diversity where differences stimulate strong emotional responses, the power of emotions has to be recognized as a source for learning from each other.

It is at times like these that the energy of emotions needs to be managed and channelled in a constructive inclusive direction. In a respectful, healthy working climate students feel connected and are stimulated to get the most out of their potential.

Understanding and managing your emotions is not enough, understanding of cultural rules, norms and values, while also being able to empathize with them and metaphorically walk in their shoes.

Exercises

A series of progressing self-experiential exercises helped participants recognize some of their own values and aspects of their identity and that of the others. This only happens when the necessity and an inner motivation helps to stretch the own frame of reference

This was followed by discussions which led to reflection and new insights. Some of the activities were done in pairs or in groups. Theoretical foundations, [Daniel Goleman and the EIDI](#), were also

presented and discussed. Throughout the activities and discussions, connections between emotional intelligence and cultural intelligence were highlighted.

Participants' experiences

The participants realized that being aware of one's own identity and value-system doesn't happen automatically, but only through interaction with others and reflection about it. As one participant pointed out at the end: "How difficult it is, to know yourself and your own values and that it is very useful to discuss this with others".

Another commented that emotional intelligence needs to be worked on and further developed by learning. This could be achieved by consciously attending to one's level of empathy or trying to see beyond first assumptions or interpretations by being aware of potential stereotypes. The level of empathy can vary from person to person and it requires some degree of motivation, which entails wanting to engage with a situation beyond the surface, which is relevant to understanding others.

Another participant was able to recognize that he has a hybrid identity and how he switches from one cultural context to another. He said that to him, this takes a lot of energy and that he needed to think about it some more in order to keep exploring what this new realization meant to him. This personal insight might help him, as a teacher, to empathize with others with hybrid identities, a trait that is becoming more and more diffuse due to today's degree of mobility and global interconnectedness.

For a Chinese participant, living in a different culture from her own, the exercise made her realize that she now can identify what she wants. She also said that the workshop made her aware of the many invisible aspects of people's cultural imprints. This shows that experiencing a different way of life and worldview can expand one's own horizon.

Applying emotional intelligence in order to become aware of what people really mean and intend was the learning outcome for another participant. This can be done by increased active listening and paying closer attention to nonverbal signals, as well as opening up to several possibilities of interpretation.

All these insights, which were the result of a productive and fruitful process of self-reflection and individual learning, highlight several aspects of working and interacting in a multicultural environment. This workshop gave participants some tools to better navigate cross-cultural situations in their education.

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