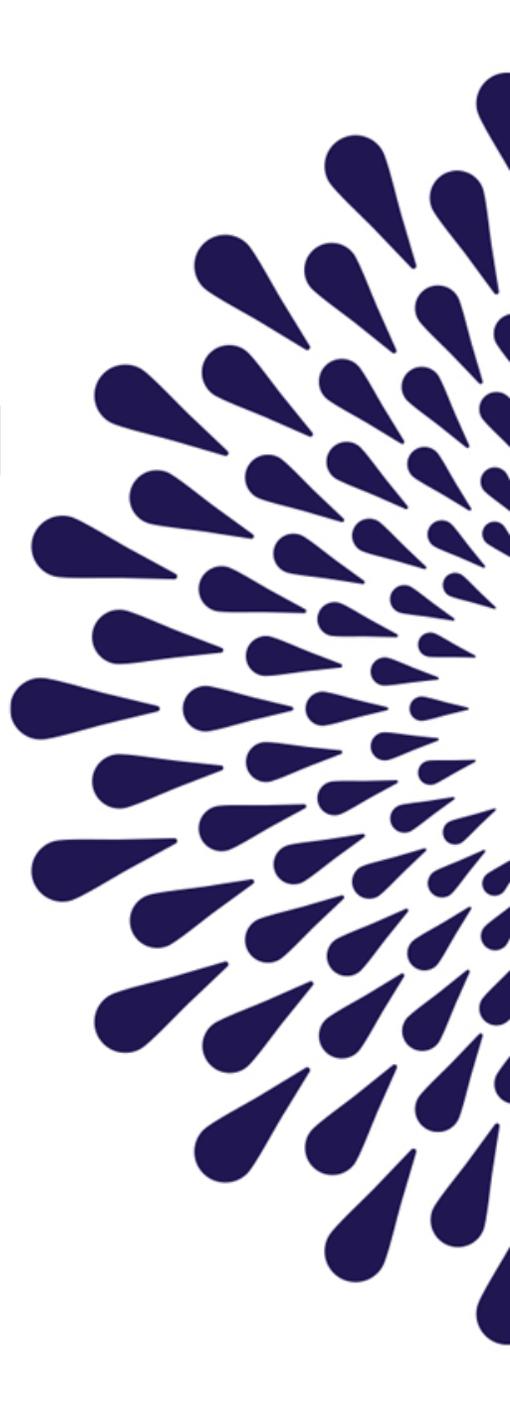# Developing Emotional Intelligence and Situational Awareness through Simulation Coaching

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SeAMK

City of Seinäjoki
– the heart of South Ostrobothnia region

- City population: 60,000
- One of the most rapidly growing urban areas, ranked as the most attractive city area in Finland (2015)

www.seinajoki.fi/en

Development of multiprofessional simulation-based education in South-Ostrobothnia (2016-2020), Finland

- a research and development project

- the project partners:

- Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences, School of Health Care and Social Work

- Seinäjoki Vocational Education Centre

The aims of the project were threefold:

* to create a network-like simulated learning environment

* to develop multiprofessional simulation education for medical students and for nursing students

* to create a multiprofessional simulation coaching programme for health and social care professionals in small and medium-sized enterprises

Simulation coaching project

- **The big part of the project was about developing a multiprofessional simulation-based coaching concept for small and medium-sized enterprises (n=20) in the health and social welfare sector in South Ostrobothnia**

- **this research and development project received funding from the European Social Fund for the years 2017-2019**

Target group

- **In all, the participants were 214 professionals in 20 private enterprises.**

- **The companies operate in various areas, including child protection, mental health services, geriatric care and disability services.**

The aim of the simulation coaching

- The aim of the coaching was to increase participants' theoretical and practical competence based on a learning needs assessment.

- This coaching program provided 160 simulation-based interventions to 214 participants in co-operation between Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences and Seinäjoki Vocational Education Centre

Developing Emotional Intelligence and Situational Awareness through Simulation Coaching

- **The study aim was to describe how the staff from mental health and child protection services experienced the development of their emotional intelligence and situational awareness with help of simulation-based coaching.**

- **The research question was:**

How does simulation coaching affect emotional intelligence skills and situational awareness in social and healthcare staff of small and medium-sized enterprises?

The target group

- The target group of this study represented five enterprises in mental health and child protection (foster care) services.

- They held a Bachelor's degree or equivalent in nursing (n=30) or social services (n=6), and there was an equal number of men and women.

- The participants' principal tasks were guide and support their clients' mental health, general growth and education.

- **When enquired about their continuing learning needs, the participants listed <u>emotional intelligence, empathy skills and situational awareness.</u>**

- **Based on the participant needs, simulation-based coaching interventions centered around the development of emotional intelligence and situational awareness were implemented in the five enterprises' own facilities (n=36), mainly in multiprofessional groups.**

Scenarios were planned based on the following themes:

- 1. The development of social intelligence and high quality interaction

- 2. Awareness of one's emotions in relation to other people's emotions

- 3. Regulating one's emotions and becoming aware of other people's emotions.

- **Each scenario lasted approximately 20 minutes and was followed by a one-hour feedback discussion.**

- **The sessions were led by two teachers, called coaches, selected based on their expertise in the topic.**

- **Participants were assigned carefully constructed challenging roles.**

- **At the onset of the scenario, they were only briefed about the initial situation and requested to respond to the situation at hand.**

- **One of the coaches portrayed the role of the client.**

- **For example, the coach played the role of a child or youngster displaying challenging behavior, while two participants worked together, looking for a constructive response.**

- **The other participants observed the management of the situation, especially concentrating on emotional intelligence and situational awareness.**

- **In the feedback discussion following the scenario, the participants worked out methods for developing interaction and social intelligence and discussed relevant domains of professional growth.**

- **One or two simulation days were arranged in each enterprise.**

- **It was decided that three scenarios per day was a suitable number, because acting out the roles could be an intense, sometimes a demanding experience.**

Data collection

- At the end of the simulation day, directly following the last feedback discussion, all participants were asked to write short essays about their learning experiences.

- They were instructed to describe how the simulation scenarios had affected their professional competence, emotional intelligence and situational awareness.

Data analysis

- Inductive content analysis was used to analyze the data.

- All units of thought that seemed to relate to the research question where picked out, written in Word files and then rewritten as reduced expressions.

- Attention was paid to retain the core thoughts or ideas contained in the original expressions.

- After this, reduced expressions were grouped into categories according to their content. These categories were grouped under higher order headings and finally collapsed into main categories.

The main categories were

1. Social intelligence and Placing Oneself in Other People's Position

2. Awareness of One's Emotions and Expressing Emotions

3. Emotional Intelligence and Situational Awareness

The first main category "Social intelligence and Placing Oneself in Other People's Position" consisted of the following lower order categories:

- interpretation of verbal and non-verbal interaction

- provision of constructive feedback

- appreciation of dialogic interaction

The second main category "Awareness of One's Emotions and Expressing Emotions" included three sub-categories

- recognition of positive and negative emotions

- naming unpleasant emotions

- the importance of exchanging experiences of emotions.

The third main category "Emotional Intelligence and Situational Awareness" consisted of four sub-categories

- different emotions resulting from the same situation

- reading and respecting another person's emotional state

- considerate attitude towards various emotions

- being aware of the importance of emotions for the collective atmosphere

Social Intelligence and Placing Oneself in Other People's Position

- **Respondents found that scenario 1, centered around the theme of social intelligence and interaction, had made them better prepared to understand people's opinions and perspectives, to relate to their experiences and to place themselves in their position.**

- **They felt that their conversation skills, listening to others and ability to provide feedback had improved.**

- **They felt more courageous about expressing their opinions.**

- **They became better aware of the importance of genuine presence, which could increase their concentration in interaction, both verbal and non-verbal.**

They reflected on how to give feedback in an empathetic and encouraging manner.

The feedback discussions following the scenarios had also opened up an opportunity to openly discuss issues which had often been neglected or avoided in routine daily work.

Simulation was considered to be a suitable tool for the supervision of work.

According to the respondents, simulation-based scenarios could increase team intelligence and wellbeing at work.

Awareness of One's Emotions and Expressing Emotions

- Scenario 2 dealt with participants' awareness of their emotions.

- According to the respondents, this scenario had helped them find what they called "mirrors" for their thoughts in other people.

- The roles, combined with reflection, had increased participants' self-knowledge, although naming emotions and expressing them – which here meant saying something about them aloud- was considered difficult.

- **Naming emotions had made participants feel more vulnerable, and it had not been easy for them to admit that not all of their emotions were positive.**

- **Despite this, this scenario was found to increase confidence and open interaction.**

Emotional Intelligence and Situational Awareness

- The topic for scenario 3 was regulation of one's emotions and awareness of other people's emotions.

- According to the respondents, the scenario was useful for increasing skills related to emotional intelligence, interaction, recognition of one's temperament, situational awareness and anticipation.

- The development of self-control and better control of emotions were mentioned as one result of the simulated training

- **The participants found it surprising that a great variety of emotions could emerge in the one and same situation, depending on participant roles and previous experiences.**

- **The respondents reflected on how becoming aware of their own and other people's emotions might affect the shared, collective space and atmosphere.**

- **The participants indicated that the learning experience had been intense.**

- **On the other hand, they found the scenarios and the debriefing, or discussing and reflecting on the roles, can be useful as a form of work supervision.**

Conclusions

- **Based on the results, it can be said that simulation coaching offers potential for the development of emotional intelligence and situational awareness in mental health and child protection professionals**

- **Simulation coaching can also be considered a form of work supervision, which provides an opportunity for collegial sharing and reflection.**
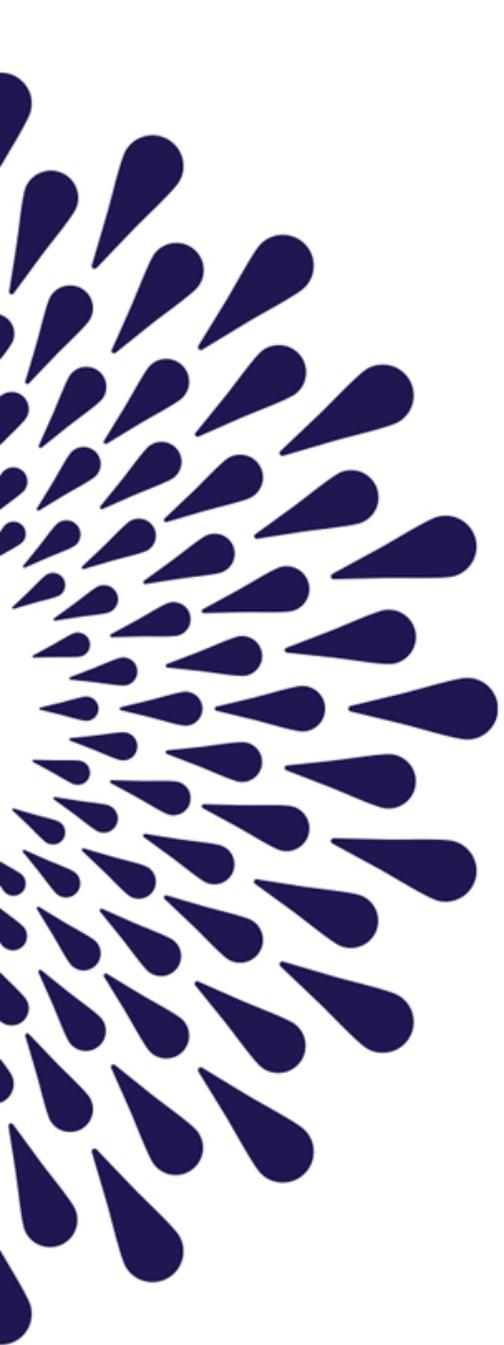
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