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THE RELEVANCE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP PRACTICE IN A HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT

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It is widely accepted that the success of higher education institutions is dependent on effective competent leaders and leadership. There is growing evidence to support the proposition that emotional intelligence is strongly linked to effective leadership in the higher education environment. However, current research has failed to explicate the emotional intelligence skills, strategies or characteristics that can have an impact on effective leadership. This presentation is based on a study which aimed to address this gap by identifying and thereby better understanding the emotional intelligence competencies and abilities that will promote effective leadership in a higher education context. A mixed mode case study approach engaged eleven participants in semi-structured interviews. A leadership competency framework consisting of five effective leadership practices was developed and the relevance of emotional intelligence competencies and abilities for leadership in a higher education context was explored in relation to the framework. The research supported the premise that emotional intelligence is highly relevant for effective leadership in higher education and established that emotional intelligence related to regulating and managing emotions of oneself and others was most significant. Empathy was identified as an important strategy that underpinned all of the leadership competency framework practices. The ability to be able to appreciate an individual's motivations and concerns and appropriately manage these to bring about a desired outcome was found to be critical to effective leadership. This presentation will expand on these findings and provide practical illustrations and strategies, drawn from the case studies, of how emotionally intelligent leadership in a higher education context can be exercised.

Keywords: effective leadership, higher education