Development of Emotional Intelligence in the Czech Armed Forces

Eva Kozáková
Faculty of military leadership, Department of Applied Social and Human Sciences, University of defence, Brno, Czech Republic

eva.kozakova@unob.cz

Abstract: Emotional intelligence has become an increasingly important competency for effective leadership, particularly in military environments characterized by high levels of interpersonal interaction, operational pressure, and complex decision-making. Despite growing international recognition of its importance, emotional intelligence is not yet systematically incorporated into the professional development of commanders within the Czech Armed Forces. This paper aims to develop an evidence-based educational framework for emotional intelligence training tailored to direct-level military commanders. The proposed methodology builds on previous quantitative research conducted within the Czech Armed Forces, a review of international military practices, and established instructional design principles. The framework defines participant and graduate profiles, learning objectives, a five-module curriculum, implementation requirements, and a multi-level evaluation strategy based on Kirkpatrick's model. A SWOT analysis is employed to assess the feasibility of implementation within the Czech military education system. The proposed educational framework provides a structured approach to developing emotional competencies that support leadership effectiveness, interpersonal communication, decision-making, and unit cohesion. The paper contributes both to military leadership development and to the broader field of human resource development by presenting a transferable framework for emotional intelligence education in high-reliability organizations.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, Emotions, Regulation of emotions, Leaders, Military leadership, Czech Armed Forces, Commander development

1. Introduction

A growing body of empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that leader emotional intelligence (EI) is a key determinant of a wide range of constructive organizational outcomes (Cabral et al., 2020; Dartey-Baah et al., 2020; Fianko et al., 2020). This trend is closely mirrored in the field of human resource development, where research on affectivity and emotional competencies has established itself as a progressive and dynamically evolving subdomain (Miao et al., 2020; Shirmohammadi et al., 2021).

Although the epistemological roots of emotional intelligence extend back to classical philosophical thought and early psychological discourse (Mayer et al., 2004), its formal conceptualization was crystallized by Salovey and Mayer (1990). They operationalized EI as the cognitive ability to monitor, differentiate, and utilize emotional information to direct thought and behaviour. While initially confined to academic psychology, the construct gained substantial traction among organizational practitioners through the seminal work of Goleman (1996; see also Weinberger, 2002). This popularization corresponded with a broader paradigm shift in organizational behaviour; until the late 20th century, affect was largely marginalized in corporate research (Fox & Spector, 2002). Over the past two decades, however, this initial scepticism has been replaced by a robust and continuously expanding body of literature dedicated to the systematic study of workplace affect and emotional dynamics (Ashkanasy & Humphrey, 2011), (Gerhardt, Bauwens and van Woerkom, 2025).

Based on current empirical evidence, the construct of emotional intelligence emerges as a viable pathway for developing the essential skills required by commanders to facilitate their interpersonal work with subordinates. Emotional intelligence encompasses the capacity to accurately identify emotions in oneself and others, comprehend emotions and their conceptual language, regulate affect within oneself and others, and harness emotions to facilitate cognitive activities and motivate adaptive behaviour, thereby offering diverse applications. Emotional intelligence helps prevent interpersonal problems and fosters positive relationships between soldiers and commanders, particularly within small military units. Both scholarly literature and military leadership doctrines feature insights into emotional intelligence and its significance in leading military personnel.

The Czech Armed Forces, as a full NATO member, operates across direct, operational, and strategic leadership levels. At the direct leadership level commanders maintain daily face-to-face contact with subordinates, making interpersonal and emotional competencies particularly critical. Current Czech military professional education does not yet systematically integrate EI development into its curriculum, representing a gap this paper seeks to address. Direct-level commanders develop their subordinates through direct interaction and exert an indirect influence on the organization through those they lead. In comparison with commanders at

higher command levels, they operate in environments characterized by certainty and lower complexity. Their span of command typically ranges from individual soldiers to several hundred personnel. In contrast to the longer planning horizons characteristic of higher command levels, direct-level commanders operate within a time horizon extending from immediate actions to approximately two years. Professional competence is demonstrated through a leader's knowledge, skills, and behaviour. While the emphasis placed on individual competencies may differ across command levels, all of them remain fundamental to effective leadership.

The primary objective of this paper is to develop a comprehensive methodology for emotional intelligence training for direct-level commanders in the Czech Armed Forces. The proposed methodology builds upon previous empirical findings, a review of international military educational practices, and contemporary instructional design principles. The paper presents a structured framework for course design, implementation, and evaluation and discusses its potential contribution to military leadership development and professional education.

2. Emotional Intelligence in Military Leadership: Literature Review

The obligation to conduct professional educational activities constitutes an integral duty of every commander. It is essential for commanders to possess fundamental knowledge in this domain to effectively guide the educational process of their subordinates, thereby ensuring the overall performance and efficacy of the entire unit. Military leader development requires a combination of diverse approaches, activities, and learning opportunities, while concurrently integrating learning and development at the individual level with the learning of the organization (Mumford & Gold, 2004; Truneček, 2004).

A military unit operates as a complex organism wherein the commander plays a decisive role. For the unit to function effectively and achieve its objectives, the social climate also exerts a critical influence, shaping the overall dynamics of the relationship between the commander and their subordinates. Daily operational activities involve a bidirectional exchange of emotional information, specifically the ability to decode social cues in subordinates' behaviour on one hand, and to respond appropriately on the other. This interaction represents a convergence of all three examined domains: leadership, social climate, and emotional intelligence. Based on these insights, the pivotal question arises as to how emotional intelligence should be integrated into the training and development system for direct-line commanders in the Czech Republic to enhance and support the operational needs of their units.

Contemporary literature provides the professional community with empirical evidence demonstrating that a high level of emotional intelligence is positively correlated with effective decision-making, the establishment of positive relationships, and leadership. Training in emotional intelligence and developing its individual components (emotion perception, emotion facilitation, emotion understanding, and emotion management) would enhance the capacity to utilize emotions to facilitate thought, foster creativity, improve problem-solving efficiency, and manage emotions to promote personal growth (Hudson, 2016).

Learning effective strategies for emotional self-regulation and assisting others in managing their emotions is essential for laying a strong foundation for the development of positive interpersonal relationships and exerting a positive influence on the company's social climate. The ability to effectively build positive relationships across diverse environments represents a key attribute of cross-cultural competence, which can be enhanced through emotional intelligence training.

In 2015, experts from the Yale Center published a scholarly paper addressing the integration of emotional intelligence training into military preparation. The authors emphasize that numerous approaches and formats exist for incorporating emotional intelligence training into contemporary military training frameworks. The first variant is based on emotional intelligence training centred on simulation-based exercises that encompass realistic operational scenarios. Within this framework, teams learn how to resolve selected situations and make decisions under pressure using virtual reality technology. This approach provides military personnel with the opportunity to develop their skills through systematic practice and to receive feedback. These simulation-based scenarios should also encompass training in emotional identification and regulation, alongside cognitive and behavioral skills (Oden, Lohani, McCoy, Crutchfield, & Rivers, 2015).

Simulation-based exercises offer a suitable opportunity to evaluate training participants' performance. When applying this format, the instructor can adjust and adapt the timing in real time, allowing the commander to acquire a specific skill within a designated time spectrum, which facilitates performance evaluation throughout the entire simulation scenario.

These scenarios should feature a defined number of complexes, real-world events that demand rapid decision-making under emotionally charged circumstances. For training purposes, it is advantageous to utilize virtual technology, where emotions can be accurately mapped onto virtual characters to evoke emotional responses as appropriate. For instance, the United States Marine Corps developed a virtual program configured to immerse infantry units into highly realistic, complex simulated missions, known as the Infantry Immersion Trainer (Babb, 2019).

While the capabilities of modern technology provide military professionals with opportunities to acquire expert knowledge and skills within a simulated environment, consideration must be given to leveraging such technological advancements for emotional intelligence training. Through these means, social, emotional, and psychological aspects, alongside leadership training, could be explicitly addressed within a virtual environment. Such a program could incorporate emotionally expressive virtual characters, psychophysiological assessments, and instructional tools designed for skill-oriented feedback purposes (Oden, Lohani, McCoy, Crutchfield, & Rivers, 2015).

In the Australian Army, Major Moriarty (2018) examined the integration of emotional intelligence into the professional development of military personnel. The author emphasizes the necessity of incorporating an emotional intelligence model throughout the entire career span of an Australian soldier. It would be beneficial to build upon existing applied programs that cover stress and emotion management, where the focus on all components of emotional intelligence needs to be reinforced. Emotional intelligence is a potential key to true leadership success; however, much like cognitive intelligence, emotional intelligence is not a standalone solution. Authentic leadership requires both.

The modern soldier is professionally and emotionally exposed to immense pressure within today's complex environment. The preparation of commanders should encompass the development of self-awareness, awareness of others, emotional management strategies, and techniques for handling high-stress situations. Integrating emotional intelligence education is undoubtedly the path forward (Moriarty, 2018).

In doctoral dissertation, Hudson conducted research on emotional intelligence and leadership within a military educational setting in the United States. In the recommendations section, the author proposes that the training of military commanders should include an emotional intelligence development program. Emotional intelligence drives sound decision-making, while self-sufficiency provides the confidence necessary to execute these decisions. The military would benefit significantly from training its non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and commissioned officers in emotional intelligence to cultivate leaders capable of understanding both their own emotions and the emotional intelligence of others (Hudson, 2016). In civil environments, emotional intelligence is routinely integrated as a standard topic within leadership development courses.

A pilot quantitative study was conducted within the Czech Armed Forces to examine the level of emotional intelligence among direct-level commanders (Kozáková, 2021). The first stage of this empirical research focused on identifying the level of emotional intelligence (EI) among selected direct leadership commanders within the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic and subsequently comparing their scores with a standardized normative sample. The findings reveal that while sixteen respondents fell within the broad average range, thirteen scored in the below-average category, and only one respondent achieved an above-average classification relative to the reference population. These outcomes clearly indicate significant room for the enhancement of emotional intelligence within this cohort, highlighting a distinct opportunity to explore targeted developmental frameworks and propose a customized methodology tailored specifically for personnel of the Czech Armed Forces. Following the initial EI assessment, the research shifted focus to evaluating how subordinates perceive the social climate within individual military companies (Kozáková, 2021).

This second stage of the study rigorously tested six formulated hypotheses utilizing a comprehensive questionnaire designed to monitor organizational conditions within the work environment, workplace relationships and cooperation, commanders' professional behavior, and overall job satisfaction. The first four hypotheses examined the variances in mean values across these individual categories. At a significance level of $p = 0.05$, statistically significant differences were observed between the scores of individual companies, both within specific thematic blocks and in the overall evaluation. Conversely, regarding item forty-five, no statistically significant differences in response frequencies were detected among the individual companies at any significance level.

Furthermore, a demographic analysis was conducted to compare respondents across distinct age groups representing early adulthood (18–29 years) and middle adulthood (30 years and older). This analysis yielded

no statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level between the responses of these age cohorts, a consistency that held true both within specific companies and across individual question blocks. Ultimately, this project reflects the comprehensive findings of a quantitative study aimed at mapping the baseline emotional intelligence of commanders in a selected Czech military unit and systematically analysing its direct impact on the unit's internal social climate. In summary, this study serves as a critical foundational framework that objectively demonstrates a clear and open avenue for the strategic development of emotional intelligence among military commanders. By identifying specific gaps and linking EI directly to the workplace climate, these findings provide a rigorous justification for implementing targeted psychological and leadership training programs within the Czech Armed Forces (Kozáková, 2021). Although previous studies have demonstrated the importance of emotional intelligence for military leadership, no comprehensive educational framework has yet been proposed for the systematic development of emotional intelligence among direct-level commanders in the Czech Armed Forces. The proposed framework addresses this gap by integrating empirical evidence, international military practice, and instructional design principles.

2.1 Methodological Framework

2.2 Design of the Emotional Intelligence Development Program

The proposed educational framework aims to develop the core components of emotional intelligence among direct-level commanders serving within the Land Forces of the Czech Armed Forces, specifically company commanders, deputy company commanders, platoon leaders, and deputy platoon leaders. It is designed to strengthen the interpersonal competencies required for effective military leadership, including the ability to recognize, interpret, and appropriately respond to the emotional cues of subordinates. By enhancing these competencies, the framework seeks to improve leadership effectiveness, communication, subordinate management, and the development of a positive organizational climate within military units.

The proposed framework represents a structured professional development initiative based on educational needs identified through quantitative research conducted within the 7th Mechanized Brigade (Kozáková, 2021). It also draws on the four-branch model of EI, competency requirements defined in the Czech National Register of Qualifications, and leadership competency models adopted by selected NATO member states. A SWOT analysis was used to evaluate the internal and external factors affecting the successful implementation of the programme within the Czech military education system. Based on the training needs analysis, the following objectives for the educational event have been formulated.

Main objective is to enhance the individual levels of the emotional intelligence components (emotion perception, emotion facilitation, emotion understanding, and emotion management) among participants through the completion of the training course, and to develop their capacity to apply these components in practice within command positions of the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic. The training course is attended by individuals serving within the Land Forces Headquarters of the Mechanized Brigade of the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic.

Table 1: SWOT Analysis of the Methodology Implementation

	Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Internal factors	Interconnectedness of initial and continuing education High applicability of knowledge gained during educational activities in subordinate management Support for commander development Support for the fulfilment of commanders' duties as defined by the All-Arms Manual 1-1 Professional competency development for instructors and direct leadership commanders	Commanders' reluctance and lack of interest in self-education Insufficient instructor experience in developing emotional intelligence

	Opportunities	**Threats**
External factors	Expanding the educational offerings in alignment with the commanders' training system	Insufficient funding for the proposed project
	Supporting the educational policy for commanders as declared in the military leadership doctrines of NATO nations	Legislative changes impacting commanders' education
	Leveraging the potential of expert instructors and material resources to support the further development of commanders	Low awareness among the public regarding the benefits of emotional intelligence and a lack of knowledge concerning its development opportunities
	Drawing inspiration from international approaches to emotional intelligence development	

The SWOT analysis highlights that while the methodology strongly aligns with NATO leadership doctrines and enhances commander development, its internal success faces risks from commander reluctance and a lack of experienced instructors. Externally, the project can leverage international approaches and expanding training frameworks, though it remains vulnerable to funding constraints, legislative changes, and low public awareness of emotional intelligence benefits.

Table 2: Structural Framework of the Educational Program for Developing Military Commanders' Emotional Intelligence

Module and Core Objective	**Thematic Blocks**	**Key Subchapters and Covered Content**
MODULE 1: Introduction to Emotional Intelligence ***Objective: To introduce theoretical concepts of EI, its models, measurement methods, and the fundamentals of its application within military leadership.***	1. Introduction to EI 2. EI Models 3.EI Measurement 4. Application in Leadership	Cognitive abilities vs. emotional systems, theories of emotion, trait models of personality. Salovey & Mayer (original and revised models), Bar-On's mixed model, organizational approaches Diagnostic tools, validity of EI, and an in-depth structure of the MSCEIT method. Application of EI in the military, EI in the context of learning, success, and the commander's interpersonal skills.
MODULE 2: Perceiving Emotions ***Objective: To enable participants to recognize emotions as they arise, express feelings appropriately, distinguish manipulation from honest expression, and effectively apply empathy in practice.***	1.Emotional States and Perception 2.Expressing Emotions 3. Empathy	Characteristics of basic emotions, perception and decoding of emotional signals, self-awareness, Mindfulness. Verbal and non-verbal expression of emotions, social consequences of emotional expression. The concept of empathy and its utility in interpersonal relations, empathetic communication, and techniques for working with subordinates.
MODULE 3: Using Emotions ***Objective: To assess social context using verbal and cognitive skills, understand the impact of emotions on attitudes, and adapt flexibly to changing conditions.***	1.Cognitive Processes and Emotions 2.Positive Thinking and Emotions	Problem-solving, managerial decision-making, creative and innovative thinking. Building psychological resilience, managing emotional fluctuations under load and stress.
MODULE 4: Understanding Emotions ***Objective: To label specific emotions and understand their significance, comprehend the biological background of emotions, and manage negative states in subordinates.***	1. Context and Background of Emotions 2. Emotions and Leadership	The cognitive triangle (situation–emotion–thought), biological and neurobiological background of emotions. Managing and addressing anxiety, fear, and aggression in command practice.

Module and Core Objective	Thematic Blocks	Key Subchapters and Covered Content
MODULE 5: Managing Emotions ***Objective: To work with emotions in a social context, develop intrinsic motivation, and foster a positive social climate within the unit.***	1. Managing Emotions 2. Managing Emotions in Relationships	Social emotions, self-conscious emotions, group emotions, the phenomenon of emotional contagion, self-motivation, and the principles of emotions. Fostering a socio-psychological atmosphere (climate), the psychological nature and dynamics of interpersonal relationships within a group.

Assuming the primary objective is achieved, graduates will possess well-developed components of emotional intelligence and will be capable of applying this construct in practice within command positions of the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic. First and foremost, it is essential to establish the syllabus and the time schedule for the educational event. For this educational methodology, the author selected a modular syllabus design, which enables the fulfilment of the specific requirements of the course. The educational event will span five days. Table 2 outlines the individual modules, along with the corresponding number of days and instructional hours. Instruction will take place in a classroom equipped with the material and technical infrastructure necessary for interactive, project-based learning. At the beginning and at the conclusion of the educational event, diagnostics of emotional intelligence will be conducted using the MSCEIT test. Within the individual modules, comprehension of the lecture material will be verified through modified assessment methods. Upon completion of the educational event, participants who demonstrate the required knowledge and skills in fulfilling the assessment tasks will be awarded a certificate.

2.3 Implementation Requirements

To facilitate interactive teaching, the course enrolment must be limited to a maximum of 20 participants. To define the necessary didactic resources for the educational event, it is essential to divide them into two categories: tangible (material) and intangible (non-material). Within the first, tangible category, it is required that the training activity takes place indoors, in an irregularly shaped classroom with a capacity for 20 people and a minimum size of 55 m². This specific type of classroom has been selected because it allows for alternative seating arrangements for the participants. The overall equipment of the classroom should focus on supporting instruction characterized by mutual interaction and cooperation between the participants and instructors. The premises should accommodate the implementation of discussion-based, group, project-based, as well as traditional frontal instruction. The facilities should provide mobile furniture (chairs and desks fitted with casters for easy reconfiguration of the room layout according to the specific teaching methods and activities). The room should be equipped with 8 rectangular mobile desks with casters, 23 mobile chairs with casters, and one instructor's desk. The technical equipment of the classroom should consist of 12 laptops with internet connectivity, 4 LCD screens, 1 desktop computer (or alternatively a laptop with a monitor, keyboard, and mouse), a projector, a projection screen, audio-visual connectivity, a lapel microphone, a whiteboard, and a flipchart.

The software configuration for the 12 laptops should include Windows, MS Office-The single desktop computer (or laptop with an external monitor) should be equipped with the HTS program and MSCEIT test. Study materials will be prepared and uploaded by the instructors to the Moodle system, where they will be categorized into individual learning modules. Printed and paper-based materials will also be utilized during instruction. Course textbooks (study scripts) will be compiled for the program; however, due to cost considerations, they will be provided exclusively in electronic format.

The execution of the educational event will be supported by two instructors, a psychologist from the University of Defence, the academic registry, and a technician. The instructors will be responsible for delivering the educational modules, with one instructor being a civilian employee and the other a professional soldier. The academic registry will maintain the enrolment records of the course participants. The University of Defence psychologist will provide individual consultations upon request by the participants during or after the course implementation.

2.4 Evaluation Framework

The proposed educational programme will be evaluated using Kirkpatrick's training evaluation model. In this case, assessing the economic aspect would be of no significance. The evaluation process will take place at the beginning, at the conclusion, and following the completion of the training activity. The evaluation framework will be structured about Kirkpatrick's theoretical concept of training evaluation, incorporating three distinct

levels: reaction, learning, and behaviour. These three levels of evaluation aim to assess how well the participants received the educational program, what knowledge they acquired, and how they applied these new skills in practice (Dvořáková, 2020).

The initial evaluation at the beginning of the educational event will be conducted to establish the participants' baseline level of emotional intelligence. To determine this, participants will be administered the MSCEIT test on the opening day of the event during the introductory session inside the classroom. This baseline data will be utilized by the instructors throughout the execution of the training event and will serve as a foundation for assessing its overall success.

The evaluation at the conclusion of the educational event will serve two purposes. The first objective is to determine participant satisfaction with the individual modules and their content, the performance of the instructors, and the material and technical infrastructure of the classroom. The second objective is to obtain the post-training output emotional intelligence scores of individual participants. To achieve the first objective, the evaluation will be conducted via a questionnaire survey comprising both open-ended and closed-ended questions. This will be distributed to the participants during the final session on the last day of the course in the classroom. To fulfil the second objective, the MSCEIT test will be administered once again to allow for a comparison between the baseline and post-training emotional intelligence values. The MSCEIT test will be completed during the opening session of the final day of the course in the classroom.

The post-training evaluation, after the completion of the educational event, aims to ascertain whether the participants have applied the acquired skills to their professional lives, what impact this has had on their management of subordinates, and whether the training activity yields a long-term effect on the commanders' military practice. Subsequent cycles of the educational activity will be modified based on the findings of this evaluation. This evaluation will take place six months after the conclusion of the training program via an online questionnaire with open-ended and closed-ended questions, sent to the participants' personal email addresses. Upon successful completion of the training, the participant is entitled to receive a certificate of attendance in a continuing lifelong learning professional development program.

3. Conclusion

The project proposal for a methodology tailored for direct leadership commanders within the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic is presented, along with further recommendations. The primary objective of the methodology is to enhance the individual levels of the participants' emotional intelligence components (emotion perception, emotion facilitation, emotion understanding, and emotion management) and to develop their capacity to apply them in practice within command positions of the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic. The novelty of the proposed framework lies in integrating empirical evidence from the Czech Armed Forces with international military leadership practices and instructional design principles into a structured emotional intelligence development programme.

The presented methodology defines both the participant profile and the graduate profile of the educational event. Individuals serving within the Land Forces Headquarters of the Mechanized Brigade of the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic are eligible to participate. The prerequisite for participation is the completion of secondary education with a school-leaving examination. Graduates will possess well-developed components of emotional intelligence and will be capable of applying them to their command practice. The methodology comprises five learning modules, namely: Theoretical Foundations of Emotional Intelligence, Emotion Perception, Emotion Facilitation, Emotion Understanding, and Emotion Management. The developed syllabi define the module titles, structures, literature references, and methods of completion. Upon implementation of the educational activity, the course specification sheets (course annotations) would be updated to include the full names of the instructors.

To implement the methodology, it is necessary to secure material, technical, and financial resources. The staffing will be provided by two instructors, a University of Defence psychologist, the academic registry, and a technician. Furthermore, competency requirements are defined for each specific role. The evaluation process will take place at the beginning, at the conclusion, and following the completion of the educational event. The methodology is designed in full compliance with andragogical instructional requirements. Following the implementation of the educational methodology, a qualitative research study should be conducted using semi-structured interviews with commanders to evaluate the benefits and limitations of the methodology in command practice.

In the domain of pedagogical application, it is recommended to incorporate the topic of emotional intelligence into future degree program accreditations within the leadership course, as well as to design and implement an elective training course for students at the Faculty of Military Leadership of the University of Defence. Based on international leadership doctrines, it is further recommended that future Czech leadership doctrines explicitly include emotional intelligence as a specific individual characteristic of a commander and inherently link it to professional development within military command practice.

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