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Exploring trainer perspectives of emotional intelligence training program design

A thesis

presented in partial fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in Management

at Massey University Palmerston North, New Zealand

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2014
1.1 Abstract

The research explores the perspectives of 21 emotional intelligence (EI) trainers working in New Zealand to identify variables that contribute to the design of successful EI training. The development of EI abilities has been established as making a positive and observable difference to employee performance in the workplace. Therefore from an organisational and an individual perspective it is desirable to develop EI skills. While the importance of the contribution of EI theory is well established and reported in the academic literature, the perspectives of EI trainers who conduct this training has been largely under-represented and unreported. This research explores the perspectives of EI trainers to find out what variables contribute the success design of successful EI training.

The study uses an Action Research (AR) approach which is an iterative process of exploration, action and evaluation for the purpose of gaining greater understanding of the phenomenon under inquiry. The process is repeated until the desired understanding and pragmatic outcomes are reached. AR is a useful methodology for this study as it is a new field of research and therefore as a researcher I needed to respond to the findings as they emerged. The analysis of findings uses data from interviews, World Café reflection sheets, on-line descriptive surveys and researcher observations, depending on the stage of the AR process. The findings highlighted the strong alignment of EI trainer practice with EI theory, which reinforces the need for their ‘voice’ to be represented in academic literature. Discrete roles of academic, consultant and practitioner were identified within the generic term ‘EI trainer’ which has implications for learners, trainers and organisations. Successful EI training outcomes were also predicated on the importance of self-awareness for EI development, and the need to design a safe learning environment characterised by trust and observable through learners’ readiness to talk about issues in which they felt vulnerable. Two models were developed based on the findings. Firstly, the Emotional Intelligence Learning Environment model highlights the complexity of the learning environment which needs managing. The model is useful for helping EI trainers design their training programs in such a way as to create a safe learning environment so that learners are able to navigate the turmoil and chaos they experience in the process of achieving EI development. The second model, the Self-awareness Engine
of Growth Model was designed to assist EI trainers to develop learners’ self-awareness, a key component that learners need to increase their EI.

Additionally, EI trainers taking part in the study tended to practice in relative isolation from one another and expressed the desire to connect and engage with others. In response to this need, a symposium for EI trainers was organised, with the theme “Connect, Network, Engage.” The symposium was evaluated in terms of its contribution toward building a fledgling EI training community of practice.
1.2 Acknowledgements

Accomplishing this thesis is a significant milestone in my life made possible by the faithful support and generosity of spirit of so many wonderful people. Some have been there from the start while others have shared a special part of the journey. All have offered words of knowledge, advice, wisdom and encouragement that strengthened me along the way.

I am privileged to have worked with two extraordinary supervisors on this PhD journey, Dr Phil Ramsey and Professor Sarah Leberman, and Dr Alan Coetzer in the early stages. I am very grateful for their advice and support throughout the research process. My chief supervisor, Dr Phil Ramsey, has been an outstanding mentor; my appreciation for his wisdom and advice reach far beyond these pages.

I would also like to acknowledge the 21 emotional intelligence trainers who took part in this research, whose knowledge, expertise and stories have made this thesis possible. I am privileged to have ‘walked with giants’ on this PhD journey and thank them for the time and support they generously gave to this research and to me personally.

The thesis was completed while working at Otago Polytechnic. I want to thank my many colleagues who supported me on to completion; in particular Kay, Phil, Robin, Steve, Liz D, Ross, Leonie, Linda, Marje, Paul and many others. A special mention to those who PhD-journeyed along with me: Adam, Kirsten, Jane, Robert and Keron; a great effort! To all my friends who cheered from the sidelines – you will never know what your encouraging words and acts of kindness have meant; in particular Liz B, Tor, Liz G, Kylie, Pauline, Hilda and my Lifegroup ladies.

In particular, my family was my biggest supporters and I want them to know how much that support has meant to me. I want to acknowledge my late parents, John and Valerie Neilson who would be so proud, and who imparted the drive and tenacity to achieve anything I set my mind to, and the inspiration my brothers, Jim and John, and sister Maree and husband Darren and family have been, as well as extended family too numerous to name. I acknowledge the support of my husband Chris who walked many sunny and rainy days with me. To my children and grandchildren, Amanda and Nathan, Brooke, Sophia and Lilly-Grace; Peter; and Elise and Chris – thanks for your understanding during extended periods of
preoccupation, as well as the many things you said and did to convey your love and support, which is so much appreciated. You all make me so very proud.

I am inspired by Phoebe Miekle (1910-1997) who at the age of 83 was still writing her autobiography about her colourful ‘accidental’ career in teaching – her legacy was in raising awareness for holistic approaches to teaching and learning in New Zealand universities. Her legacy continues.

This PhD journey reinforces my belief that nothing is impossible and that with God’s help anything can be achieved once you set your heart to achieve it.

We cannot tell what may happen to us in the strange medley of life. But we can decide what happens in us – how we can take it, what we do with it – and that is what really counts in the end.

Joseph Fort Newton
1.3 Submission of a doctoral article-based thesis

This PhD was completed by articles for publication. It meets the requirements that have been listed below. Massey University allows the submission of theses based upon published research (or research submitted for publication), providing it conforms to the following:

The research must have been conducted during the period of candidature (this stems from CUAP requirements, and it has implications for funding).

The candidate may be the sole author of the publication(s), OR, where the candidate was a joint author, the research contributed by the candidate is normally expected to be in the capacity of primary author. The contribution of the candidate to jointly authored chapters must be clearly documented by a statement signed by the supervisor and candidate and bound into the thesis. To protect the interest of candidates, it is important that authorship is discussed at an early stage of candidacy, ideally with the involvement of an independent party.

- Published material may be submitted for examination once only and by one doctoral candidate, so where team research is involved, it is important to clarify roles at an early stage. Where material submitted for publication or examination by another candidate is critical to understanding the thesis, it may be included in a non-examinable appendix with an appropriate explanation. In special circumstances, different parts of the same publication may be submitted for examination by different candidates (e.g. where experiments and modeling have been done by different people).

- Theses based upon publications must have an appropriate introduction, including research objectives, and a comprehensive conclusion which clearly identifies the original contribution to knowledge of the subject with which it deals. The thesis must work as integrated whole and linking sections may also be used to this end.

- Submitted manuscripts and accepted and published work, in part or in full, may all provide the basis for chapters in the thesis. Where work has been previously published, a journal may need to

give copyright permission for the material to be included in a thesis which will be placed in the Library’s electronic repository. Candidates should gain copyright clearance as early as possible.

- Candidates are strongly advised to standardise the format and referencing of chapters. Copies of articles and/or creative works, as appropriate as published may be included in a pocket in the thesis, or in pdf form on the thesis CD.

- Candidates are advised to fully reference previous publication of their own sole-authored work, including graphs, tables and images that they themselves have generated. Any other intellectual content must be fully and appropriately referenced to the person(s) that supplied them. They are then able to sign a statement that the thesis is their own work. It is advisable to list in the preface publications that have arisen out of the work.

- The University sets the standard by which theses are examined, and acceptance of any part by a publisher does not necessarily mean that it meets examination standards. Examiners will be instructed to examine all parts of the thesis with equal rigour, and may request changes to any part of the thesis regardless of whether it has been published or not.

- The candidate is expected to have a working knowledge of all parts of the thesis, and to be able to answer questions about the thesis as a whole in the oral examination.

- The candidate is required to complete the form DRC 16 - ‘Statement of Contribution to Doctoral Thesis Containing Publications’ - for each article/paper included in the thesis.

NB: The thesis is submitted on the understanding and agreement that all articles have been submitted for publication.
Table of Contents

1.1 Abstract ................................................................................................................................. ii

1.2 Acknowledgements ................................................................................................................ iv

1.3 Submission of a doctoral article-based thesis ....................................................................... vi

Chapter 1: Introduction .................................................................................................................. 2

1.1 Rationale and research question ............................................................................................... 3

1.2 The researcher ........................................................................................................................ 6

1.3 Methodology overview ............................................................................................................. 8

  1.3.1 Overview of Action Research ......................................................................................... 9

  1.3.2 Critique of Action Research ........................................................................................... 20

1.4 Research methods and process .................................................................................................. 22

  1.4.1 Criteria for recruiting research participants ...................................................................... 23

  1.4.2 Semi-structured interviews ............................................................................................. 25

  1.4.3 Participant observation .................................................................................................... 26

  1.4.4 Online descriptive survey .............................................................................................. 27

1.5 Analysing the data ..................................................................................................................... 29

  1.5.1 Revising the propositions ................................................................................................. 30

  1.5.2 Analysing the words contained in the themes ................................................................. 32

1.6 Trustworthiness ......................................................................................................................... 35

1.7 Thesis at a glance: Article presentation ................................................................................. 38

1.8 Summary of the articles .......................................................................................................... 48

  1.8.1 Article 1: Emotional intelligence: How does theory inform practice? ............................ 48

  1.8.2 Article 2: Exploring emotional intelligence trainer roles ................................................. 49
1.8.3: Article 3: A systems approach to developing emotional intelligence using the Self-awareness Engine of Growth Model ................................................................. 50

1.8.4: Article 4: From chaos to transformation safely: The Emotional Intelligence Learning Environment Model ..................................................................................................... 51

1.8.5: Article 1: Article 5: Shedding light on trust ................................................................................................................................. 52

1.8.6: Article 6: Cultivating an emotional intelligence community of practice in New Zealand.................................................................................................................... 53

1.9 Conclusion .................................................................................................................................................................................. 54


2.1 Preface to Chapter 2 ............................................................................................................................................................... 56

2.2 Abstract ...................................................................................................................................................................................... 57

2.3 Introduction .............................................................................................................................................................................. 58

2.4 Literature Review .................................................................................................................................................................. 59

2.4.1 The evolution of emotional intelligence definitions ........................................................................................................... 59

2.4.2 The plasticity of EI ............................................................................................................................................................... 61

2.4.3 Not without controversy: the academic-populist debate ....................................................................................................... 63

2.4.4 Reviewing EI training program design ............................................................................................................................ 67

2.5 Developing the propositions ............................................................................................................................... 71

2.5.1 Self-awareness ................................................................................................................................................................... 71

2.5.2 A competencies focus ....................................................................................................................................................... 71

2.5.3 Cognitive-emotional-connotative ........................................................................................................................................ 74

2.5.4 Learner preparation ......................................................................................................................................................... 75

2.5.5 Learners in the driver’s seat ................................................................................................................................................ 76

2.5.6 Experiential activities ....................................................................................................................................................... 77

2.5.7 Empathy ............................................................................................................................................................................. 79
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.5.8</td>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.9</td>
<td>Customisation</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.10</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.1</td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.2</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.3</td>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>Findings and Discussion</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Theoretical implications and future research</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>DRC 16 Statement of Contribution: Article 1</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Preface to Chapter 3</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Research, practice and capacity-building roles</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Method</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Findings</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7.1</td>
<td>Relationships to client organisations</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7.2</td>
<td>Differences in the way work was carried out</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 4: A systems approach to developing emotional intelligence using the Self-Awareness Engine of Growth Model

4.1 Preface to Chapter 4
4.2 Abstract
4.3 Introduction
4.4 Systems Thinking and EI training
4.5 Methodology
4.6 Focusing on self-awareness
4.7 Findings
4.8 Constructing an Engine of Growth model
4.9 The Self-awareness causal loop diagram
  4.9.1 Loop 1: Building ‘Desire to Learn’
  4.9.2 Loops 2 and 3: ‘Feedback’ and ‘Self-awareness’
4.10 Demystifying the process for practitioners
4.11 Implications for EI training
4.12 Conclusion
4.13 DRC 16 Statement of Contribution: Article 3

Chapter 5: From chaos to transformation safely: The Emotional Intelligence Learning Environment Model

5.1 Preface to Chapter 5
5.2 Abstract
5.3 Introduction
7.5.2 Communities of practice ................................................................. 222

7.6 Principles for evaluation communities of practice .................................. 224

7.7 Methods .................................................................................................. 226

7.6.1 EI symposium design ............................................................................ 227

7.7 Evaluating the EI Symposium .................................................................. 230

7.8 Findings: Evaluating the EI community of practice ................................... 232

7.8.1 Domain ................................................................................................. 232

7.8.2 Community ........................................................................................... 234

7.8.3 Practice ................................................................................................. 238

7.8.4 Aliveness .............................................................................................. 240

7.9 Discussion ............................................................................................... 242

7.10 Conclusion ............................................................................................. 246

7.11 DRC 16 Statement of Contribution: Article 6 ........................................ 248

Chapter 8: Conclusion ..................................................................................... 249

8.1 Introduction .............................................................................................. 249

8.2 Reviewing the variables ........................................................................... 250

8.2.1 Strength of EI trainer’s knowledge base .............................................. 250

8.2.2 EI trainers’ contribution to theory-building .......................................... 251

8.2.3 Growth of the EI training field ............................................................ 253

8.2.4 Safety of the learning environment ....................................................... 254

8.2.5 Readiness to talk ................................................................................ 255

8.2.6 Learner self-awareness ........................................................................ 256

8.2.7 Organisation’s clarity of EI trainer roles .............................................. 257

8.2.8 Attractiveness of the EI training community of practice ...................... 258
8.2.9 Methods that encourage contribution ................................................................. 260

8.3 Connections between variables .................................................................................. 261

8.4 Research contributions ................................................................................................ 268

8.4.1 Answering the research question from an EI trainer practitioner perspective ........ 268

8.4.2 Identifying the impact of EI trainer roles on training design decisions ................. 269

8.4.3 Development of models to guide EI trainers in training design decisions .......... 270

8.4.4 New definition of trust .......................................................................................... 271

8.4.5 Establishing a fledgling EI community of practice ............................................. 272

8.5 Limitations of the research ......................................................................................... 274

8.6 Future Research ........................................................................................................... 275

8.7 Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 277

8.8 References ................................................................................................................... 279

Appendices 318

Appendix A: Permission sought to use the Self-awareness Engine of Growth .............. 318

Appendix B: Endorsement of the Self-awareness Engine of Growth model ................. 319

Appendix C: Biography of research participants ............................................................. 320

Appendix D: Information sheet ........................................................................................ 327

Appendix E: Consent form template ............................................................................... 330

Appendix F: Semi-structured interview guideline ......................................................... 331

Appendix G: Matrix linking interview questions to propositions .................................. 332

Appendix H: Ethics – Low Risk Notification application .............................................. 336

Appendix I: Words and themes linked to propositions .................................................. 337
Appendix J: Word search exported from NVivo 9 ................................................................. 339
Appendix K: Word and research participant count ................................................................. 342
Appendix L: EI Online Survey Results Overview ................................................................. 343
Appendix M: Self-awareness Engine of Growth exercise ...................................................... 345

1.4 List of Figures

Figure 1.1: Action Research cycles. Adapted from Coghlan and Brannick (2005, p. 22) ........ 11
Figure 1.2: Action Research process ..................................................................................... 13
Figure 1.3: Expanded Action Research process ..................................................................... 15
Figure 1.4: Online descriptive survey questions .................................................................. 28
Figure 1.5: Original propositions .......................................................................................... 31
Figure 1.6: Revised propositions ........................................................................................... 32
Figure 1.7: List of articles ..................................................................................................... 40
Figure 1.8: Thesis at a glance ............................................................................................... 47
Figure 2.1: Propositions derived from literature .................................................................. 85
Figure 2.2: Guiding principles for establishing EI training program design ......................... 101
Figure 3.1: Key differences in EI trainer roles ..................................................................... 123
Figure 4.1: A Core Theory of Success (Kim, 1997, p. 1) ...................................................... 141
Figure 4.2: Self-awareness causal loop diagram ................................................................. 143
Figure 4.3: The Self-awareness Engine of Growth ............................................................... 149
Figure 5.1: Kirk Model of Chaos (Kirk, 2010) ..................................................................... 170
Figure 5.2: The Emotional Intelligent Learning Environment Model (EILEM) .................... 190
Figure 6.1: Elements of trust ............................................................................................... 209
Figure 7.1: The 2012 Emotional Intelligence Symposium Program ...................................... 229
Figure 8.1: Guiding principles for an academically underpinned EI training program ........ 251
Figure 8.2: Circles of influence in EI training design .......................................................... 261
Figure 8.3: Causal connections between variables relating to learner self-awareness.......................263

Figure 8.4: Causal connections between variables relating to trainer’s strength of EI knowledge base.................................................................................................................................265

Figure 8.5: Collective causal relationships of variable in EI training success.............................................267