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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

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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.

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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.

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