Exploring emotional intelligence trainer roles

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Abstract: While undertaking interviews with emotional intelligence (EI) trainers in New Zealand it emerged that they were coming from different perspectives, a discovery that challenges the tacit assumption of homogeneity amongst EI trainers. This finding has implications for how Human Resource practitioners engage EI trainers in staff development in their organisation. The research sought to answer the question: “What bearing does emotional intelligence trainer roles have on emotional intelligence training?” Three roles surfaced, that of ‘academic, practitioner and consultant’ EI trainers, which were based on the title EI trainers used to describe their role and relationship to their client organisation, and in the way they carried out their EI training work. The findings offer Human Resource managers understanding that different EI trainer roles likely fulfil different training needs within organisations, and that an EI trainer’s role brings with it a unique perspective that if understood and applied, would increase ‘fit’ for an organisation’s EI training needs.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence training design, trainer roles, organisational fit.

INTRODUCTION
Human Resource managers need to make good decisions when investing in staff development; decisions that are aligned to the organisation’s strategic direction and that keep pace with changing technologies while supporting employee development. Attention to the increasing need for soft skills such as the development of emotional intelligence (EI) is essential if employees are to learn skills for managing change, collaborating effectively, and expressing empathy for clients, customers and colleagues. Good decisions in these areas constitute an investment in the human resource of the organisation.

In this article, we review the literature on role theory and role differences within organisational communities. We consider how role differentiation is a useful lens for thinking about the way training roles shape key design decisions made by practitioners working in the field of EI training. We discuss these roles in terms of what HR managers need to consider when engaging an EI trainer.

The focus on EI trainer roles is a theme that emerged from a larger study aimed at exploring the training perspectives of 21 EI trainers in New Zealand. The research method we used is outlined and the findings presented. There is evidence to suggest that EI trainers come to their work from different roles, which in turn shapes their views on EI training. We discuss how these roles influence the way EI trainers go about their work, the perspectives they bring to designing EI training and how organisations can use this knowledge to achieve successful EI training outcomes in the workplace.
LITERATURE REVIEW
A review of the literature begins with an introduction to role theory and then proceeds to define the three roles identified earlier, and considers them in respect of similar roles identified by Senge and Kim (1997).

Role theory developed from an observation that human beings behave consistently and differently depending on the situation, social norms and expectations. Thought to derive from the arts such as in drama, ‘roles’ were used to describe predictable behaviours an actor undertook when playing a particular character based on a stated part, say in a play. This thinking about roles gave rise to describing behaviour within social roles (Biddle, 1986). Role theory is concerned with “patterned and characteristic social behaviours, parts or identities that are assumed by social participants, and scripts or expectations for behaviour that are understood by all and adhered to by performers” (Biddle, 1986, p. 68). The subjectivity of the term ‘role’ has resulted in diverging definitions that highlight different inclusions and exclusions, such as: a set of normalised behaviours that exist within an explicit function (Bates & Harvey, 1975); recognisable patterns of behaviour and attitude (Turner, 1979); and, expectations of others acting within a ‘position’ within a social system (Allen & van de Vliert, 1984). Role theory also encompasses power dynamics in social psychology which Osghry (1995) showcases in the three roles of top management, middle management and sub-ordinate roles. deLamater and Ward (2013) discuss roles in light of the framework they provide for self-conception. Roles afford their ‘owner’ distinction from others’ (roles); it highlights authenticity and defines and labels who one aspires to be. Turner and Killian’s (1987) research on role-taking and role-making, suggests role is a framework of the self, influenced by the reactions of others, which in turn affects how we communicate with others. The purpose of role theory is that it focuses attention on how the roles people play influence their interpersonal interactions, which then informs the question as to why people act the way they do. How a training role is implemented prompts the training methods and tools used, and the connectivity to the training audience (Humphreys, 2006). Role theory is relevant when considering what conversations and actions happen, or should happen within a particular role, and also for considering what happens across roles, for example, training that occurs from different paradigmatic perspectives, such as thinking about different EI trainer roles, discussed next.

Trainers who are involved in an academic training role have undertaken tertiary study to achieve appropriate academic qualifications such as post-graduate or doctoral studies in a particular discipline, or have significant expertise in a specific field of practice (Smith & Boyd, 2012). Academics pass on expert knowledge through formal learning situations within the context of specific disciplines, such as lectures (Gourlay, 2011). Apart from teaching, undertaking research and reporting on it is one of the tasks that differentiate academics from other trainers. Writing of a scholarly nature is a workplace task that defines the academic, as it is a practice through which academic work is expressed (Lea & Stierer, 2009). According to O’Siochru (2006) academics tend to be judgmental of theory that does not fit with their discipline, such as proponents of pure science who disregard promoters of social science; and those who make a distinction between academics who undertake research versus those who ‘only’ teach in universities. Such attitudes result in elitism within research fields and an ‘us and them’ mentality within academia. The use of academic language is a barrier that non-academics and new university students need to overcome to access the knowledge bound up in academic texts and academic talk; written and oral vocabulary. Academic thinking is dependent on the mastery of academic speak (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005; Nagy & Townsend, 2012).

The practitioner training role describes a specialised role within an organisation often positioned within the Human Resource Development (HRD) function or as an informal training position. HRD refers to:
...developing work-related capacity of people; people working as individuals, in teams, and in organisations. HRD is about providing people with the knowledge, understanding, skills, and training that enables them to perform effectively including EI development. It encompasses staff development and training, continuing professional development and execution, and workplace learning (Smith, 2003, p. 443).

Practitioner trainers are able to offer support at the point of practice within the workplace (Coulson-Thomas, 2010). Usually training practitioners are generalists who address many training needs within an organisation as their role encompasses delivering training to diverse groups on multiple topics; they are “custodians of learning in an organisation” (Holden, 2010, p. 706). Bierema (2002) noted that trainers take an holistic approach to staff training, focusing on life-long learning in the workplace which involves connecting individual learning tasks to workplace social contexts. Practitioner trainers also “contend with competing pressures, distractions and changes of priority” (Coulson-Thomas, 2010, p. 254) as they operate within the dynamic context of a functioning business. In practice this might result in a trainer having to shift their priorities from EI to some other training need because of a change in organisational strategy or focus.

Historically, consultants have been seen as external experts brought in to provide advice about a specific problem or undertake training that addresses that problem; usually where existing staff are unable or unwilling to provide it or where greater rational and objective ‘power’ is required. A consultant “helps the client to clarify what should be in the brief or terms of reference, tailors the service to meet the client's needs, and delivers this within the agreed time and budget” (Heyns, 1996, p. 57). According to Bryson (1997) consultants are utilised in four important ways for a client organisation. Firstly, they are an expert substitute for a perceived lack of expertise. Secondly, they are an addition, thereby increasing organisational capacity. “There is a particular dimension added by the presence of such an individual in the context of an organisation’s plan to develop its learning capacity” (Massey & Walker, 1999, p. 40). Thirdly, they augment what is currently happening and established in an organisation by offering complementary skills and expertise. Fourthly, they are a facilitator for achieving organisational objectives, where an external perspective is deemed to be more effective than using someone internal to the organisation. The external nature of the consultant to the organisation is described as the “nature of the boundary relationship between consultant and client” (Kitay & Wright, 2004, p. 2).

A consultant has the ability to act as a bridge between management and workers. One of the drawbacks was that because of their outsider status “they are particularly susceptible to being put in situations where they will experience a conflict between their personal moral beliefs and the demands of the job” (Redekop & Heath, 2007, p. 43). Client-consultant relationships exist in a tension between the perceived worth of the relationship to each other. For organisations, outsourcing some of the professional development work is beneficial (such as hiring a consultant for a short-term project) and outweighs the cost of employing a trainer. Consultants can challenge the “existing cognitive order and traditional way of seeing things...they can state the obvious, ask foolish questions...they are useful for reframing managerial perspectives” (Antal & Krebsbach-Gnath, 2010, p. 22) whereas this knowledge is assumed to be held by the EI practitioner.

Hiring a consultant may also be a useful way to inadvertently or deliberately identify non-performers or provide ‘evidence’ for the release of particular staff. An implication of this part of the consultant role relates to the integrity of consultants, as they are sometimes expected (or pressured) to do the ‘dirty work’ for the company (Heyns, 1996). Kitay and Wright (2004) acknowledged the complexities of the consultant-client relationship where consultants managed diverse and complex interactions between their client, and employees; relationships that can
become less clear over time. Sometimes consultants were engaged to take the blame off organisational managers, by having them undertake controversial tasks (Vlielander, 2011) or to legitimise an already made management decision. Consultants may also be called on to monitor particular employee behaviour with the expectation of relaying that information to management (Kitay & Wright, 2004).

These three roles encompassed within EI training are somewhat mimicked by the three roles that Senge and Kim (1997) observed within organisational communities, and are discussed next.

**Research, Practice and Capacity-Building Roles**

Senge and Kim (1997) discussed how individuals are called upon to fulfil different roles within organisational communities. They focused on three particular roles: ‘theory-building, practice and capacity-building’. Theory-building describes a role which incorporates research and represents any “disciplined approach to discovery and understanding with a commitment to share what is being learned” (Senge & Kim, 1997, p. 2). Practice is defined as the concentration of energy, tools and effort towards achieving practical objectives. It describes the people (practitioners) as ‘doers’, grounded in their experience. Capacity-building described people who integrated research and practice, and who had a focus on practical outcomes. Capacity-builders were “coaches, mentors, and teachers – people who help others build skills and capabilities through developing new methods and tools that help make theories more practical” (p. 3). Senge and Kim (1997) describe how each role within a community has its own perspective on the work being done within the community. When effort is made to integrate these perspectives each role can inform the others and lead to synergies that benefit the whole. Differences between roles also have potential to encourage distrust, undermine potential for collaboration.

The roles designated by Senge and Kim (1997) show similarities to the roles that emerged from interview data provided by EI trainers. For example, theory-building is closely related to the academic EI trainer whose primary interest is in theoretical and empirical research of EI concepts which in turn informs EI training, with a focus on establishing and maintaining academic rigour. They design their EI training to meet organisational objectives and to develop the organisation’s human resource. Capacity-builders are comparable with a ‘consultant’ role, which describes EI trainers who are externally positioned to the organisation they are contracted by to provide EI training.

As mentioned earlier, this study arose as part of a wider exploration of EI trainer perspectives on the design of training interventions. The similarities between the roles described by Senge and Kim (1997) and the those that emerged from an initial analysis of interview data, prompted us to consider the impact that role has on the perspectives and decisions of trainers and gave rise to the research question, “To what extent do the academic, practitioner and consultant roles shape the perspective of EI trainers?”

**METHOD**

Interviews were undertaken for the purpose of probing the knowledge and experience of EI trainers. Semi-structured interview is a qualitative research method that offers scope for exploring and understanding others’ experiences as told by those who lived it (Van Manen, 1990). Their stories provide access to understanding social phenomena, to explore meanings captured in authentic voice. It highlights the importance of language; the interviewee can think and talk about the subject under inquiry, the defining difference between natural science and social science (Seidman, 2013). This study explores how the role a trainer has within a community may shape the decisions they make, so it is appropriate to use a method that explores this phenomena.
Using an Appreciative inquiry lens, questions were put to participants asking them to talk about their EI training programs by describing the strengths of their program, telling their best stories, and identifying what they believed was important that learners learnt. Working through a lens of appreciation stresses the affirmative elements of the social phenomena under investigation, that is, ‘what works’ (Cooperrider & Avital, 2004).

Twenty one interviews were undertaken with EI trainers from throughout New Zealand. Recruitment criteria ensured all participants: (1) were currently actively involved in delivering EI training to groups of people; (2) has practiced EI training for more than a year; and (3) were based in New Zealand. The initial set of six interviews alerted us to the prospect that ‘role’ might be a factor, so we attempted to recruit further participants with roughly equal numbers of academics, practitioners and consultants. However, difficulty finding trainers in academic roles resulted in the final group of participants being made up of one academic, ten practitioners and ten consultants being interviewed. The lack of available academic trainers is likely explained by the limitations of the first criteria. Interestingly, of the 21 participants, four held PhDs: the academic, two consultants and one practitioner. While all four might be considered to have strong academic credentials, their roles at the time of the interviews determined how they were treated for the purposes of the study.

Questions were based on a review of academic literature related to design of EI training, and probed trainers about how they taught EI components such as self-awareness, empathy, and resilience among others, while other questions focused on ‘process’, such as trainer preparation, learner accountability and reflective practice. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed using NVivo 9 data analysis software which has the ability to index non-numerical data by cross-referencing links between variables and patterns in information (Richardson, 2001). Themes from the findings were analysed using NVivo 9, as it was most effective for analysing comments, for organising them into themes and assigning them to tree nodes. Comparisons of participant answers were made across 10 major themes.

FINDINGS
The comparison of these themes showed no identifiable differences in seven of the areas considered. Trainer role appeared to make a difference in two main areas: relationship to client organisations and differences in the way work was carried out, reported next.

Relationships to Client Organisations
This section considers EI trainers’ relationship to client organisations. Firstly, the EI trainer we designated as ‘academic’ positioned himself in relation to his career within university settings, including reference to his qualifications:

> Where it all began I suppose is that I started a PhD at the University of Toronto in the area of social comparison, that is; the idea that people’s sense of wellbeing is derived through their comparison with other people... Just this last month we’ve run, we’ve designed an assessment for the MBA [program at] University of Canterbury.

The academic EI trainer also drew comparisons between the mode of delivery of instructor to students which has relational implications of power; the very “structured formal training” he was involved in on the MBA program which he compared to other training events that were…
...very unstructured pieces of activity that people could project anything they wanted into it.

This quote also highlights a level of academic rigour. It also shows that he particularly values ‘structured’ programs that cover the subject. Other training is more focused on the people who might use the concepts, but is contrasted on the basis of its lack of structure, rather than a more personal and emergent approach to the work.

In contrast, practitioner EI trainers often referred to individual examples and learners by name, which shows they were relationally-connected to those that they train. The stories they told of participants in their training program included following up to stay in touch with the ongoing outcomes of people undertaking EI training, which suggests a personal connection, such as this comment shows:

*One of our managers is a nice guy but a bit of a grumpy bugger at times. He has taken on awareness of what he is like under pressure and how he reacts. He has listened to feedback, reflected, processed, and implemented changes. It has changed the [work] dynamics. He has one of the better areas in the whole organisation now. He’s engaged, a role model – he walks the talk. He manages the process and the people incredibly well.*

Practitioner EI trainers are aware of their colleagues’ time pressures and constraints. Although practitioner EI trainers might be considered in the best position to leverage change (vis-à-vis, to force change) they were also acutely aware of what else was competing for that training time, as this next quote demonstrates:

*The whole process of transfer of learning wasn’t successful organisationally, probably more because people didn’t give it the time it needed. The training is weighted against the demands of the job and the work, and feeling pressure about having to give up their time to attend [training] and you sometimes getting unwillingness associated with ‘I can’t afford the time to be here’ and, ‘this is not necessarily relevant to my work’ or ‘I’ve been working for 20 years; why do you need to tell me’.*

Practitioner EI trainers articulated a genuine commitment to the development of their colleagues and an affiliation and loyalty to their organisation, evident in the referent language they used such as “our” and “we”, which was not evident in the language of the academic or consultants interviewed. This seems to denote a sense of relationship, belonging, and responsibility to the organisation as these comments show:

*Our organisation decided back in 2004 that we needed to change the way in which we prepare our staff…and that’s when I moved from the project to the delivery stage.*

In effect, we have created our own model, because we deal with each skill and train to that skill. So any skill that was not directly covered in our framework was not targeted.
Knowing your fellow people and trying to empathise, or seek to understand what their work looks like, because it will be completely different from yours...that intra-personal stuff such as ‘teamwork’ is not about ‘how well we get along’ but how ‘well we work together’.

Practitioner relationships to their organisations emphasised not only performance outputs, i.e. the delivery of a training program, but demonstrated an ongoing link to the people (their peers) on the program horizontally and vertically in the chain of command. Their insider knowledge of the organisation helped consolidate understanding about what individuals and groups needed in their training program, along with an appreciation for the political influences at work. There is also an implicit implication that practitioner EI trainers were aware of the personal and professional boundaries they straddled to achieving EI training objectives.

Consultant EI trainers were all affiliated to a consultancy practice. Eight of the ten consultant EI trainers had a website or blog to inform their clients and others who joined up to it:

A blog on my stuff-ups! I get a lot of feedback about that [as] for a lot of people my blog arrives at the right time; they were pondering on something that they thought was hard. I do this every two weeks, but I may go back to once a week because I was more reflective on a weekly basis.

Consultant EI trainers were also hired on reputation, so the work they undertook in one organisation acted as a recommendation (or otherwise) for another, which explains why testimonials on their website were considered so important. Consultant EI trainers brought specialised skills into diverse organisational situations for a limited period of time, sometimes at very short notice, as suggested in this quote:

[I work for] a very broad cross section of organisations from Government departments to tertiary institutions through to tribal authorities – mostly medium sized enterprises by NZ standards...From senior management right through the organisation – different training sessions.

Typically, consultant EI trainers delivered EI training as an ‘outsider’ so the relationship to the organisation was more detached when compared to that of the practitioner EI trainer; they also referred to themselves as ‘consultants’:

Consulting work tends to be on a project basis.

We tailor the training to what different companies want.

This external positioning appeared to be an advantage for EI trainer consultants as organisations hired them to tackle issues on behalf of the organisation through EI training that they were reticent or unable to address themselves, as these comments suggest:

I went out on my own as a management consultant and very quickly determined that most of the issues companies have are often people related.

There was one group we dealt with last year, and we were given the job because they had some serious conflict in the office, and so we delivered the training.
An advantage of hiring a consultant EI trainer was that they were not unduly influenced by organisational politics, unspoken rules, historical events or relationships, and were relatively unaffected by corporate personalities or agendas, as this quote depicts:

There was low trust and high control within some companies. The people often wanted to talk about issues that were troubling them, but they felt like they couldn’t because of the environment. The Chief Executive would tell his staff, “tell me if there’s something bothering you”, but people didn’t do that because of the repercussions.

In summary, while we acknowledge the small sample, there were indications of differentiated roles. The academic EI trainer articulated a reputational association with academia through his PhD status and relationships with two universities which he articulated as the platform for the training. His primary relationship was with the subject itself. In contrast, EI training practitioners were ‘insiders’; familiar with workplace practices, knew many of their colleagues with whom they undertook the training, and had formed relationships with the staff they were training. There were indicators to suggest that the role of EI practitioner trainers was based on their organisational commitment and relationships with management and colleagues. Markedly, consultant EI trainers were described as ‘outsiders’ to the organisation whose relationship with the organisation was predominantly contractual. As expected, they were less influenced by organisational politics, power or culture than a practitioner EI trainer might be.

Differences in the Way Work is Carried Out
The data indicates that their roles shaped the way that EI trainers carried out their work. The academic EI trainer described his training in terms of their theoretical knowledge, referring to empirically-formulated assessment processes for informing practice as this comment shows:

I do some writing and some research…related to emotional intelligence. I am just in the process of doing an assignment with the university’s MBA program where we are developing assessment[s]…with the aim of helping managers reflect on how they’re handling different situations and how they might handle them better.

Most of my career has been academic teaching…I have designed and ran, over many years, a series of development centres for managers that started off as assessment centres.

Formal procedural processes appear to shape the way EI academic trainers come to their training work, along with an expectation that training is theoretically underpinned. Following prescribed frameworks also suggests the training environment is ‘controlled’ by the process, and is a traditionally a trainer-to-learner model; the trainer has the expertise and passes on the information to the learner which depicts a passive learning approach. Framing training in terms of a course that carries prestige, such as an MBA program adds another perception of credibility to the training.

In contrast, practitioner EI trainers aligned their training objectives with their organisation’s strategy as illustrated in the following comments:
[We hear] statements from our leaders about the role and importance of the courses and how they strategically fit with them.

Our training is ‘fit-for-purpose’ for our organisation; people have to live this experience, where they can transfer the skills they have learnt back to the workplace.

Part of that strategy was acknowledging that people in this organisation need emotional intelligence because of what they deal with and the fundamentals of public service [such] as giving of self and empathising with the customer; the client.

Practitioner EI trainers who work inside the organisation have the ability to respond to training needs quickly as the following quote shows:

*I try to make it ‘just in time’ so where the need is, rather than tell staff I am going to run a program in two months’ time, because if you don’t apply the training pretty soon after learning it, it’s a waste of time.*

Practitioner EI trainers showed high socialization in their organisation demonstrated in their commitment to design their training to align with organisational objectives. Their internal positioning made it easy for them to respond quickly and appropriately to training needs.

In comparison, consultant EI trainers generally oriented their training around a specific ‘toolbox’ of offerings that they endorsed. Although participants said they customised their training, they described how customisation generally happened within the offerings available in the ‘toolbox’ with one quote also showing the external position to the client organisation:

*So what that enables us to do is go into businesses where there are inefficient processes and I can sit there and use that tool.*

*I use a variety of psychometrics I think are really helpful and there’s a whole raft of tools that I may or may not use in a program.*

Consultant EI trainers employed a calculated approach in that they were able to get feedback that enabled them to make improvements to the tools being used, seen here:

*Typically if we’re rolling out something across an organisation or for a team, or run a management course, that give the managers the opportunity to learn those skills but also gives managers opportunities to provide feedback on what they think or where they think the content can be improved and tweaked to suit the operational needs.*

Consultant EI trainers focused on the use of tools they believed were effective in producing change. Typical examples described were the following:
Working on a team with an issue, we use the collusion model. We ask them to identify who the problem is, and what it is they do that is a problem. And then, how do they see themselves when they are being a problem and what do they do.

Consultants were hired to undertake training that utilised their specialist knowledge. Some consultants expressed the view that course participants were likely to perceive them as influential because they were from outside the organisation. Several suggested that in-house trainers, in contrast, might be perceived to be biased toward advocating executive decisions or strategy within the organisation. As the next quote shows, by using a consultant an organisation may be able to deal with difficult situations while keeping the focus on learning rather than managerial control:

*It was with an engineer, and he wanted to be promoted in the organisation, and they [management] had real concerns about him – they were having complaints from customers that he would override them, and that he did not connect with them. So they brought me in.*

Emotional Intelligence consultant trainers offered organisations a mix of training tools appropriate to their specific training needs. Organisations benefited from the external positioning of the EI trainer who was distanced from political, economic and social implications. The consultant EI trainer’s expert knowledge could be used by the organisation to influence employees’ attitude towards making change, and for the quality of training that is delivered. These key differences between academic- practitioner- and consultant EI trainer roles are summarised in Table 1.

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Differences in the way EI trainers carried out EI development work was demonstrated in the value the academic EI trainer placed on theoretical underpinning of their EI training programs. In contrast, practitioner trainers tended to describe their work in terms of its relationship to organisational objectives; their internal positioning afforded them the flexibility to respond quickly to training needs. Distinctly, consultant EI trainers as change catalysts, externally positioned to the organisation, were viewed as an advantage for the client organisation in that any blame attached to implementing change was deflected away from management. Consultant EI trainers focused on a ‘toolbox’ of training tools that they used to meet specific organisational training needs. They were also hired to mediate between challenging manager/employee dynamics in training environment.

DISCUSSION
This research offers a situational approach for thinking about how human resource managers consider EI trainer roles and how to base their choice of trainer on a ‘best fit’ to organisational needs. A situational approach allows for changing emphases regarding the issue at hand and the ‘audience’; EI trainers can be hired or employed based on the type of relationship that best suits the organisational context.

Managers have choice about who they appoint to undertake EI development training. Factors they may consider include: strategic alignment to the needs of the organisation; the nature of the learners within the organisation; situational ‘baggage’ inherent within the organisation they wish to address; and the political, economic and social positioning of the organisation at any given time. The role in which a trainer operates may influence the degree to which they are capable of achieving outcomes that are important to the organisation in regard to these factors.

The diversity that EI trainer roles bring relationally means that managers have the flexibility to choose an EI trainer based on the trainer-to-learner, and trainer-to-organisation ‘fit’. For example, a consultant EI trainer who is perceived as politically neutral to the organisation, might achieve greater success than one constrained by organisational politics such as the EI trainer practitioner who is an employee of the organisation. According to Oshry (1984), people can, by default, find themselves in the middle of an ‘us’ and ‘them’ conflict between levels of the organisation. Consultants may be better placed to insist that executives take part in EI training alongside others, rather than being used by executives to fix those lower in the hierarchy.

Similarly, an academic trainer who delivers training to learners established on empirical findings is likely to make a training investment in those who are reassured by academic rigour and do not necessarily want a personal connection with the trainer. An advantage for the practitioner EI trainer is their relational connection to his or her colleagues, which offers a unique basis for undertaking the training. Additionally time and cost is not spent on orienting the trainer to the organisation; induction and socialisation has enhanced understanding of the cultural and political issues that could negatively impact the training. Further, others may recognise the practitioner trainer as a committed member of the organisational community, and a person who empathises with them as a colleague with shared interests and experiences.

The choice does not have to be “once for all time”: different EI trainer roles bring different perspectives from which the organisation would benefit. An organisation that employs a practitioner trainer, may find that a combination of factors makes it worthwhile to augment current offerings with training provided by a consultant or academic.

Our study identified five participants who held PhDs (one academic, four consultants and one practitioner) which suggests that the roles are not entirely exclusive. It is reasonable to suggest that EI trainers could be predisposed to one role but also influenced by another, thus bringing
multiple associated strengths and therefore brings a broader perspective to the training event than a trainer who is positioned in a single role. From the trainer’s perspective, increased understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of each of the three roles is an advantage in that it gives them choice as to how they will present themselves during training. For example, one of the authors, who splits his work between academic teaching and consulting, was recently asked to conduct training for the university at which he was employed. In this context, and because of the nature of the work and his relationship with learners, he was introduced as a colleague (that is, in the practitioner role) even though there was a consultancy arrangement operating between him and the university.

Differences between the work that happens in different roles also highlighted the need for trainers to have opportunity to share ideas and knowledge with others operating in other EI trainer roles. Senge and Kim (1997) point out that an effective cycle of knowledge is dependent on all three perspectives (theory-building, practice and capacity building) being present. Relating this point to our findings, there is an identified need for developing a platform for all three roles to be able to connect, network and share within a common EI community of practice.

Further research into the influence of roles on EI training is needed in order to better understand the function they play in achieving successful training outcomes. This study was limited by the number of EI trainers operating within the New Zealand context, particularly from the academic role. Extending the research to other countries or finding ways to connect with a wider range of New Zealand trainers would generate richer data. Establishing an alive and mutually beneficial EI training Community of Practice in which EI trainers can connect, network, collaborate and strengthen each other would be a way in which this could happen and could create opportunity for future research.

CONCLUSION
This research sought to find out what bearing ‘role’ had on EI training. The emergent findings suggest that the three EI trainers’ roles do generate different perspectives and result in different approaches to the work of EI training. Table 1 highlights three key areas of differences among EI trainer roles: primary relationships; connection to the organisation; and the focus of work. The primary relationship of academics is concentrated on the subject of EI, whereas practitioners’ is their collegial relationships, while the client is the consultants’ primary relationship. The academic’s connection to the organisation is as an external expert; and affords the opportunity and ability to introduce research-underpinned concepts. The practitioner is a committed insider with an objective of making a long-term contribution, while the consultant is a concerned but neutral agent who is able to address challenging problems. The focus of the academic’s work is in extending knowledge within the field of EI. The practitioner is concerned for achieving organisational objectives while the consultant focuses on refining and implementing an effective toolbox of training offerings.

From a managerial point of view, awareness of the way role influences trainer decision making can influence how choices are made to achieve situational organisational-to-EI trainer ‘fit’. EI trainers can use the distinctions of their EI training role, thereby offering them opportunity to leverage the strengths inherent in the role, to the client organisation.

Importantly, the existence of role differentiation among EI trainers draws attention to the need to consider ways for actively developing an EI community of practice for bringing EI trainers together to share training design and practices to learn of new research outcomes in EI, take part in research activity, and to connect with EI trainers in and across their different roles.
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