

**The Role of Emotional Intelligence Training in Developing Meaningfulness at Work**

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## **The Role of Emotional Intelligence Training in Developing Meaningfulness at Work**

### **Abstract**

To date, there remains a significant gap in the western management literature in understanding how individuals proactively shape their work environments to create meaningfulness. Equally, little is known about how training and development supports this process. This article shows how emotional intelligence (EI) training in the UK nurtures meaningfulness through the development of EI skills and aptitudes. The article explores how EI skills are then used at work to develop tasks, roles and relationships of worth and value. Data is collected from participant observations and interviews with trainers and managers attending three externally provided, 'popular' EI training courses. Interpreting the data through Lips-Wiersma and Morris's (2009; 2011) model of meaningful work enables a clear articulation of managers' independent capacity to shape their work environments to create four, interconnected sources of meaningfulness: inner development, expressing one's full potential, unity with others and serving others. The findings also show the tension between the 'inspiration' and 'reality' of fulfilling these four existential needs at work through EI skills and aptitudes. Findings also exemplify how this is a constant process of search, balance and struggle which sometimes pivots work against life values and demands. Practically, the study demonstrates the importance of training for meaning making at work and offers recommendations for HRD practitioners. Implications for transferring innovative western management practices such as EI and meaningfulness/engagement processes across national contexts are discussed. Overall, this study provides empirical evidence that sources of meaningfulness are a core ingredient of EI training when popular EI models are used. It points towards future research on meaningfulness training and transfer to new contrasting regional contexts such as the middle east.

## **Introduction**

To date, western management and organizational scholars have been interested in meaningfulness because it is considered ‘good for business’. For example, research has examined the sources and processes of meaningfulness because of salient outcomes on worker engagement, attachment, motivation, productivity and satisfaction (e.g. Hackman and Oldham, 1980; May, Gilson and Harter, 2004; Spreitzer, Kizilos and Nason, 1997; Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). Research also shows there are personal benefits of purpose and meaning including increased happiness, greater longevity and reduced risk of stress and illness (e.g. Baumeister, 1991; Hill and Turiano, 2014; Knoop, 1994).

Yet, despite a wide coverage of themes, little is understood about meaningful work from the employee’s perspective (Fineman, 1983; Lips-Wiersma and Morris, 2009). For instance, the way employees proactively shape their work environments to create meaningfulness has been poorly addressed (Rosso, Dekas and Wrzesniewski, 2010). This seems surprising given that individuals can feel strongly responsible for meaning making at work (Lips-Wiersma and Morris, 2009:497) and have agency to do so (Berg, Grant and Johnson, 2010; Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). Compared to company practices (e.g. job design, leadership), individuals’ day-to-day acts of meaning making may be just as significant in their contribution to organizational and individual gains. Yet, when organizations lack resources to fulfill employees’ existential needs, the onus lies on the individual to influence the qualities of their work. Thus, greater understanding of how individuals actively create and develop sources of meaningfulness at work is a topic of considerable interest. Equally, given that the

meaningfulness literature relies on western assumptions and understandings of the term, we know little about how transferrable these are to other contexts such as the middle east.

Given the reported gains, western organizations would benefit from encouraging employees to proactively instill meaningfulness into their work environments. One potential approach stems from training. In the Human Resource Development (HRD) literature, development themes are explicit in meaningful work given the emphasis on self actualization, life purpose, engagement (Fairlie, 2011) and bringing the whole self to work (Chalofsky, 2003). Work also becomes meaningful when there is an opportunity to perfect one's skill set. Following this, strategies to develop meaning in work include continual learning, improving competencies, developing worthwhile relationships and stimulating work (Chalofsky and Cavallaro, 2013). Yet, despite HRD's significant role in fostering individuals' efforts to create meaningfulness at work, such themes have been poorly addressed in HRD literature (Ardichvili and Kuchinke, 2013; Chalofsky and Cavallaro, 2013), including any cross-cultural considerations.

One useful way to attend to this omission is to investigate employee training which focuses explicitly on frameworks of meaningfulness. To achieve this end, this article directs attention to how sources of meaning are developed at work through an exploration of emotional intelligence (EI) training. Whilst it is well known that emotional intelligence's central concern is recognizing, understanding and regulating emotions and handling relationships (Goleman, 1998; Thory, 2013b), the concept has also been linked to work meaningfulness and self actualisation (Bar-On, 2001; 2010; Goleman, 1998; Orme and Bar-On, 2002). Following this, the aim of the study is to provide an understanding of how managers actively create and develop meaning in their work after attending an emotional intelligence training

course. Through a focus on meaningfulness, this project makes a novel contribution to a small but growing body of scholarly work on EI training (e.g. Clarke, 2010a; 2010b; Groves, McEnrue and Shen, 2008; Slaski and Cartwright, 2003; Thory, 2013b; forthcoming). **At the same time the article highlights the emphasis placed on EI as an Anglo-American concept and on meaningfulness research rooted in western values and beliefs. This raises a number of questions about the utility of such innovative management practices when transferred across cultures, especially to distinctly different regions such as the middle east. Particularly pertinent to this issue is the extent to which HR practices can be homogenised or localised when inter-site transfer takes place within multinational corporations (MNCs) and the trade-offs involved (c.f. Afiouni et al, 2013; Thory, 2008).**

This article explores the following research questions: How does emotional intelligence training promote sources of meaning at work? How do managers take up the learning themes of EI training to actively create and develop meaningful work? What are the tensions and constraints for managers attempting to generate meaning at work through EI teachings? Theoretically, the study draws on Lips-Wiersma and Morris's (2009) framework which describes sources of meaningful work from the individual perspective. The first section of the article briefly reviews the meaningfulness at work literature and introduces Lips-Wiersma and Morris's (2009) model. Next, emotional intelligence skills and aptitudes are described and related to the meaningfulness framework to explore employees' opportunities to generate elements at work that constitute worth and value. **This section is followed by the methodology, findings, discussion and conclusion, including a discussion on cross-cultural transferability of EI and meaningfulness concepts.**

### **Meaningfulness at work**

The term meaningfulness refers to the amount of *significance* something holds for an individual, (Pratt and Ashforth, 2003). Questions such as ‘what do I live for?’, ‘why am I here?’, ‘what is truly important to me in life?’ convey enquiries into meaningfulness portending to experiences of worth, existential significance or purpose of life. In management studies, May, Gilson and Harter (2004:14) define meaningful work as: ‘the value of a work goal or purpose, judged in relation to an individual’s ideals and standards’. Ghadi, Fernando and Caputi (2013: 22) define the term: ‘When an employee feels, experiences and perceives that the tasks they undertake in the work have a reason, and when performing those tasks provides them with a sense of significance, this demonstrates meaningfulness’.

In a recent management review, Ghadi, Fernando and Caputi (2013) describe ten models which they categorise as either work-related or human-centred frameworks of ‘work as meaningful’. In a similar attempt to give structure and integration to the literature, Ross, Dekas and Wrzesniewski (2010) identify a number of mechanisms and sources of work meaning. However, in a field of research littered with different definitions, theories and measurements (Ghadi, Fernando and Caputi, 2013; Martela, 2010; Rosso, Dekas and Wrzesniewski, 2010), core criticisms refer to a lack of clarity of definitional terms, a narrow examination of ‘singular factors or processes contributing to the meaning of work’ (Rosso, Dekas and Wrzesniewski, 2010: 93) and a lack of consensus over what constitutes antecedents, sources and mediators of meaningfulness. For example, Baumeister (1991) claims that the search for meaning stems from four sources or needs: purpose, values, efficacy and self worth. Whereas, Rosso et al (2010) identify sources of meaningfulness to include the self, others, work context and spiritual life. There is also a need to view meaningfulness making as an active, ongoing process between the individual, job

characteristics, organization and wider society (Martela, 2010:4) At the same time, there are obvious economic, social and political hurdles to positioning existential value at the heart of an organisation's human resources strategy. Such considerations must account for the ongoing struggle towards coherency and completeness which lies at the heart of a meaningful life (Lips-Wiersma and Wright, 2012: 656).

Drawing from individuals' accounts of work and life, Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2009) have developed a multidimensional model of meaningful work (Lips-Wiersma. 2002; Lips-Wiersma and Morris, 2009; 2011). Highlighting themes of 'self' vs 'others' and 'being' vs 'doing', the framework identifies four sources of meaningfulness: developing the inner self (self/being), expressing full potential (self/doing), unity with others (others/being) and serving others (others/doing). Their model has influenced, and resonates with, other theoretical frameworks which pivot similar polarities between self and other, activity and thought (e.g. Pratt and Ashforth, 2003; Rosso, Dekas and Wrzesniewski, 2010). What makes Lips-Wiersma and Morris's (2009; 2011) model particularly attractive though, is its careful focus on the source of meaningful work itself through an articulation of deeper layers of need (e.g. belonging, growth, connection and development) (Lips-Wiersma and Wright, 2012). Also noteworthy, the framework amalgamates multiple sources of meaningful work which have been explored theoretically and empirically in management studies, sociology and the humanities (e.g. moral development in the humanities). In doing so, the model acknowledges it is often a combination and interplay of sources which enhances the meaning employees make of their work (Lips-Wiersma and Morris, 2009). Given the model's strengths and its ability to capture meaningfulness from the individual perspective, it has been chosen as the focus of this article. The four sources are next described.

*Developing the inner self* is an inward and reflective process, based on being true to oneself, wanting to be a good person, becoming one's higher self or the best one can be (Lips-Wiersma and Morris, 2009; 2011; Lips-Wiersma and Wright, 2012). For example, meaningfulness is experienced as a result of being one's authentic self by maintaining one's unique identity. As Munn (2013) explains enjoyment in a job is greatly influenced by whether we feel we have the freedom to be ourselves at work. Opportunities to be authentic occur when a person acts in accordance with personal values and beliefs or experiences task, role, structures and work interactions which affirm one's self concept (e.g. as a leader). Similarly, Chalofsky (2003) refers to bringing the 'complete' or 'whole' self to work (mind, body, emotions, spirit) as a constituent of work meaningfulness.

Active and outward directed in nature, the second dimension is *expressing one's potential*. This refers to meaningfulness found in expressing talents, creativity, influencing others and having a sense of achievement. For example, achieving refers to mastering or completing something, gaining recognition, achieving success, feeling competent and effective or improving standards (Lips-Wiersma and Morris, 2011) Influencing describes meaningful acts such as getting others on board, inspiring others, improving conditions, offering direction, drawing attention to important issues and setting an example (Lips-Wiersma and Morris, 2011).

The next source, *unity with others*, refers to meaningfulness derived from working together with others. Organisations are a key source of connection, collegiality and belongingness for employees, providing meaningfulness through group identification, shared values and group roles (e.g. Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999; Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Pratt and Ashforth, 2003). Lips-Wiersma and Morris's (2009) model relates to three themes: a sense of shared

values; belonging; and working together. Sharing values entails articulating and having values in common. Belonging reflects connection, companionship and being part of a group. Working together conveys increased power resourcefulness that is stimulated from group dynamics (e.g. energy, motivation, stimulation), mutual support and fun (Lips-Wiersman and Morris, 2011).

The fourth dimension, *servicing others*, refers to meaningfulness derived from making a contribution to the wellbeing of others and the world we live in, such as helping an individual or making a difference in society. Examples include giving back, helping others grow, supporting others in hard times or speaking up or challenging ideas that do not benefit employees (Lips-Wiersma and Morris, 2011). There is ample evidence that when employees are able to provide something of value to other members of their organization they experience greater purpose and influence which is perceived as meaningful (Grant, 2007; Kahn, 1990).

Unlike other frameworks, Lips-Wiersma and Morris's (2009) model pays particular attention to the tensions between being/doing and self/others. For example, where there is limited time to 'be' (contemplate or reflect for inner development) and when too much service to others creates exhaustion and martyrdom. The model also highlights that there is always a pull-push tension between the 'inspiration' and the 'reality' of organizational life. Usefully, the model shows how employees are torn between the rhetoric and reality of wholeness and integration as an 'ongoing dynamic' (Lips-Wiersma and Wright, 2012: 656). For example, daily battles for resources, a focus on profit-related goals are inter-twined with the need to share and live organizational goals and receive professional development. **However, one limitation is the model's cultural insensitivity given that personal and societal values will determine what is meaningful (influenced, for example, by moral judgments and ethical/religious**

**principles).** This point is returned to in the discussion. We next turn to a discussion of how EI skills and aptitudes are related to Lips-Wiersma and Morris's (2011) model.

### **How emotional intelligence contributes to meaningful work**

Emotional intelligence was first introduced by academic researchers as an ability to perceive, use, understand and manage emotions in oneself and others (Mayer and Salovey, 1997). Since then, the concept has been popularised by writers such as Daniel Goleman (1998) and portrayed as a set of emotional and social skills (Bar-On, 2004; Goleman, 1998; Higgs and Dulewicz, 2002). For example, Goleman (1998) describes Emotional Intelligence as the skills or competencies to be able to know one's own emotions, manage one's own emotions, self-motivate as well as recognise others' emotions and handle relationships. Termed as 'mixed' or 'trait' models because critical commentators argue they believe a mixture of affective, personality and motivational traits and dispositions ( Jordan et al, 2010; Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts, 2002), emotional intelligence has become a major management trend in contemporary organisations. EI's popularity is accounted for by promises of huge financial and performance gains (Bar-On, 2004; Boyatzis and Sala, 2004; Cherniss, 2001; Goleman 1998). Despite much criticism over conceptual, theoretical and measurement issues (Day and Kelloway, 2004; Matthews et al, 2002; van Rooy and Viswesvaran, 2004) the broader skill-based models are the most popular in commercial settings (Bar-On, 2004). However, as demonstrated elsewhere in meta-analyses, popular (or 'trait') EI models contribute to performance and productivity (Joseph and Newman 2010; O'Boyle et al. 2011). Amongst the mixed or EI models, the most frequently used are Bar-On's (2000) Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) and Goleman's Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI) (Boyatzis and Sala, 2004), which are the focus of this study.

Arguably, the connections between emotional intelligence and meaningfulness at work have been under-explored despite clear associations made (e.g. Bar-On, 2010). The first way emotional intelligence promotes meaningfulness is through its emphasis on emotional self awareness (recognising and understanding one's emotions) (Boyatzis and Sala, 2004, Bar-On, 2004). We can only know what is meaningful if we recognise and understand the emotions evoked by what is significant in our lives (Kraus, 1997; see also Fineman, 1983).

Emotional intelligence is also linked to work meaningfulness through its skills of 'self actualisation', 'achievement drive' and 'influencing' (Bar-On, 2004; Goleman, 1998; Orme and Bar-On, 2002). Bar-On (2010: 59) explicitly includes the skill 'self actualisation' in his model, arguing: "Self-actualisation involves a lengthy process of attempting to realise one's potential and searching for a more meaningful life". Similarly, Goleman claims that people have the choice and opportunity in their work lives 'to gravitate to what gives them meaning, to what engages to the fullest their commitment, talent, energy, and skill' (Goleman, 1998: 58). Goleman's (1998) model also includes the competency 'achievement drive', defined as 'striving to improve or meeting a standard of excellence' as well as the skill 'influencing'. Thus, through these skills, EI is equated with an ability to achieve personal goals, persuade others and become one's best self, all of which resonate with evidence-based sources of meaningful work (Lips-Wiersma and Morris, 2009; 2011). In addition, Bar-On's (2004) model includes the aptitude 'authenticity' which may further encourage individuals to be true to who they are at work, as a form of developing one's inner self.

Other links are forged with meaningfulness because emotional intelligence models emphasise civility, service, social responsibility and the nurturing of social relationships (Bar-On, 2004;

Sawaf and Cooper, 1997; Orme and Bar-On, 2002; Goleman, 1998). For example, Bar-On's (2004) model includes the competency 'social responsibility', defined as the ability 'to identify with one's social group and cooperate with others'. Bar-On and Goleman include a range of social skills in their models such as 'interpersonal relationships', 'teamwork and collaboration' and 'developing others'. Given the substantial evidence that co-worker relationships enhance work meaningfulness (Kahn, 1990, May et al, 2004; Lips-Wiersma and Morris, 2009) it seems likely that the social skills components of emotional intelligence could enhance belonging, unity and social connection which are sources of meaningful work. The competency 'social responsibility' in Bar-On's model is also likely to emphasise 'serving others'. In addition, empathy underpins many of the social competencies in the mixed EI models. Integral to relationship building and creating a sense of community, empathy helps people to understand others more effectively (Goleman, 1998; Mayer and Salovey, 1997). Equally, emotional self awareness can lead to honest and sincere exchanges enabling interactions to be experienced as genuine and respectful which can generate a sense of belonging. In turn, both emotional self awareness and empathy may lead to meaningful work because these skills promote unity with others which is a key source of work meaningfulness (Lips-Wiersma and Morris, 2009; Rosso et al, 2010).

**However, criticisms have been made because EI ignores cross-cultural differences (e.g. Fambrough and Hart, 2008; Matthews et al,2002). For example, Syed, Ali and Winstanley (2005) highlight some of the ethnicity issues underlying emotion management in working traditional Islamic women. They explain that in a culture where a woman is required to be modest and restrained and yet her organisation wishes her to be candid, self-assured and assertive, tensions arise as she attempts to navigate her way along a path of opposing prescriptions ( Syed et al, 2005). As the authors note:**

**“More generally, what might be seen as ‘modern’ work is not designed around the emotional requirement and displays required of ‘modest’ women in Islamic societies” (Syed et al, 2005: 160-161).**

Despite these limitations, EI training provides an ideal context to explore how meaningfulness can be nurtured through the development of EI skills and aptitudes. To fulfil this aim, the research study explores voluntary attendance at open EI programmes, run by external consultancies. When training is not a compulsory requisite of employment or one’s role it is more likely to capture managers’ own volition and independence in applying EI teachings at work.

## **Methodology**

The three courses in this article represent a typical sample of externally provided ‘open’ popular EI training courses in the UK. These courses were labelled ‘Bar-On’, ‘Goleman’ and ‘Hybrid’, based on the popular EI models they adopt. Table I provides details of the three training providers, the duration and location of the course, content covered during the training, the generic influences of each course and the trainer’s background/experience. As Table I shows, all three training courses focused on developing a wide set of EI ‘skills’.

INSERT TABLE I HERE

This study adopted a case study approach. Case studies provide insights into contextualised organisational processes particularly within exploratory research (Merriam, 1988). Although a case study does not enable analytical generalisations (Yin, 1994) it allows theoretical

understandings. The research methods adopted were forty hours of participant observation during the training courses where the researcher was fully immersed as a participant, semi-structured interviews and analysis of training documentation (training manuals, supplementary books, hand-outs and other presentational documents). The researcher conducted 30 semi-structured interviews with participants, of which 27 were with training delegates and four with training consultants (two trainers participated together in one interview). Shorter, second interviews were conducted with seven of the participants to clarify and expand on data where necessary. Participants came from a broad cross-section of industries including IT (1), banking (4), manufacturing (3), energy (2), local government (4), police (1), education (2) pharmaceutical/medical (3), consultancy (5), transport (1) and animal welfare (1) (numbers of participants are in brackets). Most participants were aged between 35 and 50 and had more than three years of managerial experience. The sample composed of eight line, twelve middle and seven senior managers.

The sampling strategy for interviewees was steered differently by each training consultancy. On the 'Goleman' course the trainer emailed the participants prior to the event notifying them that there would be a researcher on the course who wanted to learn more about EI. At the beginning of the training day the researcher was introduced to the group by the trainer. On the 'Bar-On' course, the researcher was briefly introduced to the delegates by the trainer in the morning on the first day. Time was spent chatting to participants during coffee and lunch breaks briefly outlining the general aims and objectives of the study and inviting them to participate. On the 'Hybrid' course participants were recruited prior to the training day via email invitation. Across all three courses, the majority of participants attended the training voluntarily, and this was paid for by their employer.

Manager interviews took place 3-4 months after the training, to give them the opportunity to try out the EI ideas and practices learnt on the course. Trainers were interviewed shortly after the training programme. Each interview lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. All participants agreed to their interviews being tape-recorded. All interviews were transcribed manually in full by the researcher, resulting in 310 pages of interview data. Participant observation notes amounted to just over 100 pages of data.

The interview topic guide with the trainers explored the content, aims and emphasis of the EI course and its evolution. The interviews with managers were split into three parts: their reasons for attending the EI course; their experiences of the training event; learning EI and their uses of EI at work since the course. Whilst the interview structure was roughly crafted to explore managers' experiences and outcomes of developing and using EI at work, it was anticipated that interests and foci would emerge. Thus interviewees were given the space to talk at length and to pursue topics of particular interest to them. Self-reflection techniques were a useful tool during the interviews because paraphrasing the content and emotion of what was conveyed frequently led to further discussion (Gillham, 2004).

On the training courses, 'live' note taking throughout each training day focused on visible trainer presentation and delivery of the training material. This enabled a focus on data which was of high quality and easy to collect (Silverman, 2005). Discreet but extensive note taking was possible throughout the five training days because all participants sat at tables writing notes. Notes were fully written up at the end of each training day. A diary was used to record thoughts, ideas, feelings and reflections on the data throughout the data collection period and to capture a running record of analysis and interpretation. The same research

journal was maintained into the data analysis and writing period to record summaries of key points, issues raised, questions, suggestions, concepts and ideas (Bazeley, 2013).

In this study meaningfulness was an emergent theme which initially surfaced during the Bar-On training course and became more apparent during data analysis. Initially, the interview transcripts were read and re-read. Next all the interview audio-recordings were re-listened to. Both these activities served to build a sense of the whole picture, before the data were broken down (Bazeley, 2013). Next all interview transcripts were annotated with comments, thoughts and observations. A key observation which surfaced from this phase was participants' frequent referrals to instilling practices which met deeper, existential needs (belonging, growth etc), and which often transcended organisational demands. Other related themes emerged from the empirical material including a fulfilling life, morality and social responsibility. It was at this point that the EI frameworks and literature were re-examined for meaningful themes e.g. self actualisation, transparency, social responsibility, achievement drive etc.

The next stage involved making notes of emerging themes in the participant interview transcripts focusing on each situation managers used EI to generate meaning at work. These incidents were frequently identified via participants' recollection of the relevant EI skills or themes which had stimulated the scenario. The events were sorted and given preliminary codes then revised and adapted accordingly to slowly generate concepts. At this point themes of 'self' and 'other' started to emerge as well as instances when actions were rooted in more strategic goals. In parallel, the trainer interview transcripts, observation notes and research diary were analysed. At this point, appropriate theoretical frameworks were reviewed. Through an iterative process of data-theory interplay, shaped by theoretical insights produced

by the data, the analysis enabled a taxonomy of the meaningfulness features of EI to emerge which mapped onto Lips-Wiersma and Morris's (2009) framework.

Data quality (validity) was addressed in several ways. Moving from smaller to larger data sets to obtain a larger sample of cases of meaningfulness themes was part of a comprehensive data treatment approach. In this way, all events where managers referred to key EI themes in relation to value, worth, significance were classified, categories were saturated and there was a regularity of uses both within and across each training programme (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Even in deviant cases or variations, respondents did not depart from the analytical themes (Silverman, 2005). They still viewed EI in relation to sources of meaningfulness concepts but chose to interpret them more strategically e.g. self interested achievement drive; calculative empathy. In complement, the theme of meaningfulness was acknowledged and discussed in detail in the trainers' interviews, particularly on the Bar-On course. The findings were also discussed with other EI practitioners in the field to explore their validity. Overall, coherence and integration of the data was achieved by presenting subtleties in the rich qualitative data (Elliott, Fischer and Rennie, 1999) whilst using Lips-Wiersma and Morris's (1999) framework of sources of meaningfulness.

### **How meaningfulness features in EI training**

Across the three training courses there were multiple exercises, discussions and taught topics which explored the theme of meaningfulness. In many instances the core competencies in the EI models were the vehicle for this focus as this section illustrates.

Each training programme aimed to develop participants' emotional awareness through a number of exercises. These exercises explored self awareness and awareness of others' emotions. During these exercises, emotional self awareness was frequently associated with happiness, fulfilment and satisfaction at work. For example, integral to the self-fulfilment message was getting in touch with one's emotions, to better understand, as Angie, one of the trainers expressed on the Hybrid course: 'what makes you tick, are you happy, are you fulfilled?'. In this way, the trainers linked the ability to identify and understanding one's emotions to the ability to pursue work experiences that made them happy and fulfilled.

Fulfilling work was a core theme across all three EI programmes. This was especially evident on the Bar-On course via a discussion of three competencies: 'happiness', 'self actualisation', and 'achievement drive'. 'Self actualisation' was defined by the trainer as 'realising one's potential, striving towards maximum development, pursuits which lead to a rich and meaningful life and having goals and a sense of purpose'. Key to this was an encouragement for participants to better understand who they were, what they wanted to do in life, what they could and enjoyed doing (Bar-On, 2010). For example, managers were asked to identify five things they wanted to achieve in their lifetime then complete a life spreadsheet of goals. Next they were introduced to the Wheel of life which depicted key aspects of one's life (career, family and friends, health, money, personal growth, fun and recreation etc). Participants were asked to rate their satisfaction with each domain and explore how balanced their lives currently were when all domains were taken into consideration. In the introduction to these exercises the trainer explained 'try to avoid too many actions that are meaningless in life'. Training participants were also given several exercises to prioritise their values, focusing on different domains (home, work etc). During the interview, Martin, the trainer, elaborated on this:

“A tremendous number of individuals that go through the [emotional intelligence] programmes I am involved in are looking to ask some fundamental questions about ‘am I in the right job? Am I in the right place? Who am I really?’ to get some other way or some other tools of assessing their talents and capabilities because a lot of people suspect that they’re not having as fulfilling a challenge in their life or perhaps not making as big a contribution to something that identifies who they are.” (Martin, Trainer, Bar-On)

Relatedly, all three courses included a discussion of goal setting and motivation with a focus on achieving significant and valuable work goals and developing one’s career. Influencing skills were also covered which drew on abilities in understanding, anticipating, responding to others’ emotions and fears, recognising what is important to other people, acknowledging individual differences and asserting oneself.

Other key themes on the EI programmes included being one’s true self, personal growth through the practice of virtues and moral development. On the Bar-On course the trainer stressed that leaders ‘need to bring character to work rather than their persona’, and delegates were given a short introduction to authentic leadership. In different ways the Hybrid and Goleman courses emphasised the importance of authenticity, character and genuineness as part of being an emotionally intelligent manager. The Goleman course also addressed being a ‘good person’ via a lengthy coverage of the EI skill ‘transparency’. This was described as ‘maintaining standards of honesty and integrity’. In a similar vein, the Bar-On course made reference to positive psychology strengths (VIA classification of strengths and virtues) including wisdom, transcendence, courage, love and humanity, justice and temperance. The

trainer asked participants to personally reflect on how important these attributes were in management and leadership roles.

On the Bar-On course, the competency ‘social responsibility’ was introduced and participants were asked to think about how they identified with groups at work and co-operated with others. Martin, the trainer, explained that social responsibility was like an inner moral compass and delegates should think about their boundaries of ‘belonging’.. Throughout the Bar-On course many references were made to fostering good social relationships at work through skills in empathy, relationship management, happiness and optimism. Social relationships were addressed on the Goleman and Hybrid course but to a lesser degree and sometimes with a more instrumental tone from the trainers. For example, the Goleman trainer referred to balancing empathy with business goals.

### ***Developing the inner self***

A key thematic strand on all the EI courses was being true to, or being one’s authentic self. In response to this message, twenty five out of the twenty seven managers interviewed believed EI gave them permission to be themselves, framed as a valuable work achievement with undertones of therapeutic value of fulfilment. Here Ron, a senior manager, described this:

“And that was one of the things Martin [trainer] talked about during the course which was to try and be the same person in business as you are at home. And what I’ve learnt is doing the managing director’s role the first six months I was trying to be what I thought a managing director was rather than be myself”. (Ron, Senior Manager, Bar-On).

Several other participants reported that bringing one's 'true self' to work contributed significantly to work because it resonated with their personal values, beliefs and standards.

Here Malcolm, a leadership consultant explained:

“The qualitative thing is more and more the permission to be myself, so as a coach, just be your authentic, genuine self. Don't try and be somebody else, don't put on any airs and graces, don't try to impress, just be grounded with the person and be yourself and be authentic. So the course has given me more confidence and more recognition of my values of being myself when I engage with people and how meaningful that is”  
(Malcolm, consultant, Bar-On).

Equally, Nadia, a Marketing manager (Hybrid course) conveyed a similar interpretation: “I think it's all about being yourself and I think it's a very powerful and humanist message from emotional intelligence.” For Nadia, this meant accepting her 'true' emotions. Overall, many respondents spoke of increased intrinsic satisfaction and reward from an authentic selfhood at work and referred to this varyingly as character, personality, genuineness or individuality. Although, Jim, Head of Benefits Realisation, felt EI represented 'individuality' but this uniqueness of character conflicted with what his organisation wanted. Here he expresses the tensions between the idealised 'inspiration' and organisational 'reality':

“..... I think EI helps us to better appreciate that we are all individuals and whilst the organisation would appear to be wanting people to all behave in a very similar manner I see EI as being the way to bridge the gap [laughs] and accept the fact that you're not going to get everybody exactly the same”. (Jim, Middle Manager, Goleman).

Turning to other themes of inner development, participants spoke of emotional intelligence in moral and ethical terms using phrases such as ‘heart of the matter stuff’ and how EI helped them become ‘a good person’, their ‘higher’ or ‘complete self’. For example, the VIA classification of strengths and virtues introduced on the Bar-On course prompted reflections on ‘goodness’ and morality (e.g. justice, temperance). Referring to themes of wisdom and integrity, Malcolm explained: “I see Emotional Intelligence as aligned more on the moral and ethical way of being”. Much of this was expressed as a journey of ‘becoming’ one’s whole self (full circle) as Ivan, a Process engineering manager, explained: “I think EI can help people to become who they were destined to become. If you took it as a circle, people have different diameters of circle. When you start off you’re like a dot in the middle but as you go through life you grow until you become your full circle.”

Overall, developing the inner self was a strong need amongst participants. The EI teachings justified this as a valuable and worthwhile pursuit through an emphasis on skills and aptitudes of emotional self awareness, authenticity, ‘being yourself’, strengths and virtues, integrity and a message of continual growth.

### ***Expressing full potential***

Expressing one’s potential refers to mastering or completing something, gaining recognition, achieving success, feeling competent and effective or improving standards (achievement). It also refers to getting others on board, inspiring others, improving conditions and offering direction (influencing). Expressing full potential was most keenly reported to bring managers closer to doing activities they valued, whilst doing these activities better. Given the three

courses placed an emphasis on goal setting, motivation and ‘achievement drive’, it is not surprising that many participants reported that they were more focused on what they genuinely wanted to achieve at work, making their job more satisfying and worthwhile. Oftentimes, managers spoke of using their talents more usefully, having more success at work or feeling more competent and effective. Grant, a Highway Services Manager explained this:

“I’m very much happier at work. I think I sat down and said where am I going? I looked at my goals and what is realistic, what are the priorities, what do I need to do to get there and now this year’s development has aligned with how I want to progress my career and that is very rewarding” (Grant, Manager, Hybrid).

However, it was evident that some managers used the achievement theme to pursue their own personal success and singular ambition. For example, Adrian referred to EI skills as ‘tactical tools’ to ‘pull on others’ heart strings’ when trying to influence staff. Some intimated EI could be used for ‘manipulation’ or viewed EI as a bag of magician’s tricks to further their own ambitions.

In contrast, some participants found that greater self acceptance (described in the previous section) led to increased work productivity. For example, Nadia now felt more comfortable with being her ‘true’ self which helped her realise her potential at work: “I’m much more accepting and relaxed within me and I think when I’m more relaxed within myself my equilibrium is correct and I’m more effective at work”. Likewise, Ron also reported that he was securing more business contracts because meetings were more relaxed and consultative as a consequence of ‘being himself’ in his leadership role.

Other training delegates spoke of reaching their potential by using influencing skills from the course. This enabled them to get issues addressed, change another's viewpoint or fight for employee rights at work. Sara, an Administrative manager commented: "The fact that I have a voice and I should be heard and I should be able to have an opinion come from the course". Prior to the EI course she had been unhappy at work and was considering handing in her notice. Now she felt more valued by colleagues because she was able to influence significant business decisions. Other managers also spoke of improved powers to change a viewpoint or decision. Angus, explained that much of his work was about influencing stakeholders which he valued because he could instigate change. He went on to explain how he was more capable of persuading his team: "A lot of emotional intelligence is around influencing people to be honest. I'm taking people with me now and getting them motivated and bought in to what we're doing".

For Stan, a Sales Manager on the Hybrid course, the EI training helped his influencing skills by: "understanding how everybody is different. Everybody is a completely different person so how you deal with each person is different." Managers frequently commented that EI had taught them that everyone has different feelings, values, aspirations and perspectives which helped them better influence and in turn, do 'good things' at work. For example, Nadia was enabling her staff to flourish by not imposing her own career goals and milestones on them. The result was that her team was more relaxed and there were fewer emotionally charged conversations.

For three of the twenty seven managers interviewed, the theme of expressing one's talents and full potential in significant and meaningful ways led to work resignations. For example,

Esther, a Managing Director, had been inspired to change career path as a consequence of attending the Bar-On EI course and was now applying for jobs in a completely different field which met more holistic life goals and aspirations. However, pursuing one's life calling seemed to discriminate against those who did not have equivalent skills and financial resources to change professions or job. Indeed, Claire, a junior Office Manager (Hybrid course) who worked in an environmental government agency, was quick to point out her gratitude for having a manager who was mindful and responsive to providing her with meaningful work, intimating not all managers or organisations are like this.

### ***Unity with others***

In this study, managers spoke of 'unity' in terms of companionship, sharing time, having fun, talking and getting to know others better. From the three EI courses, themes of empathy, building social relations, belongingness and using character strengths (integrity, humanity) enthused managers to be more collegial and 'in contact' with peers and subordinates. A large number of participants reported spending more relaxed, quality time with staff as a consequence of attending the EI training course. This was sometimes described as quiet togetherness, having fun, companionship, getting to know each other and 'being it this together'. For some it was about connecting with others by making them feel important, as Samantha, a leadership adviser (Goleman course) explained: "I see Emotional Intelligence as being how we interact with others, its making individuals feel they are valued and listened to. It's taking time out to get to know people and for them to see that they are valued by you as a colleague". For Samantha an open, honest and 'holistic' approach to her mentoring schemes, underpinned by valuing others and reinforced by the EI course, was deeply valued by her:

“The ability to be genuine and energise and enthuse staff for the schemes is really important to me because I see how these schemes can benefit people.”

For many managers unity meant generating a deeper sense of belonging by ‘hanging out with each other’, supporting and doing favours for each other that translated into acts of meaning at work. Elaine, an Office manager (Hybrid course) now spent time making tea for her team and chit-chatting. Alan also explained: “I’m introducing myself to new staff, putting names to faces, asking how people are doing socially, what’s going on outside the office”. These acts of building unity with others were conveyed as a worthy and valuable departure from previous managerial styles. Similarly, Ron commented: “and that is where emotional intelligence helps because it encourages me to have a bit more dialogue with people and say ‘whats going on at home, hows things, this is what I’m doing’ .... and it just really opens up the environment”. He continued: “I think I genuinely have an interest in people. I have a duty of care for everybody in the business and I see that as a social side first and foremost.” Here Ron fuses together the role of unity and serving others.

What Sally, a Pharamceutical Director (Hybrid course), took from the EI training was a stronger need to build personal relationship with her staff during the three year plant closure which lay ahead. She explained: “What I did was I switched and said ok, it’s more about the emotional relationship and that emotional link from my status to their status and understanding how they may better deal with situations”. This was supported by her removal of structural partitions, ‘walking the shopfloor’ so that it was a collaborative, open process where everyone, including herself could voice their feelings and concerns, thus bringing a degree of openness and trust to the process. She explained: “Its about knowing if so and so went away for Christmas, and how did they get on, or how’s their daughter doing at

university or some of them, there's one young lad had twins over Christmas and its those sort of things I'm doing...[.] I wouldn't have done this if I hadn't gone on the course." Sally explained this approach aligned with both her own and the company's values: "I always tie everything back to my values which are very much aligned with the company values".

Since attending the Bar-On EI course, coming to work every day for Pippa, a Hardware Services manager, was more about a desire to have 'a sense of belonging', as she described it. However, she highlighted the tension between the idealised 'togetherness' of teams and their deprioritisation by management when the pressure is on:

"There's a big emphasis on the people side of things when everything's going smoothly or we have staff opinion surveys and when the results are not good, people worry about the staff. But the priority is the service we provide. So if there's any incident, the people side goes out of the window. And although people would like to think it's a priority, the reality of the environment that we work in its very difficult for that to be a case" (Pippa, Hardware services manager, Bar-On).

Equally, Jim, who attended the Goleman course, explained a similar tension between working together, sharing values in teams and the economic imperative:

"I think there's a culture of delivery here I find it very hard to get people to alter the way they interact so they feel they belong to a community. Because if they are rewarded on short term deliverables then they're not going to think about the longer term picture and I think that's endemic across the whole organisation".

Both of these narratives demonstrate the tensions managers felt from trying to justify the value of ‘unity’ when there are work crises or when the focus is on short-term, profit –related goals. Equally, for others like Esther who attended the Bar-On course, the values exercise centred around meaningfulness prompted a refocusing on being with family and working fewer hours. Several managers reported changes in focus – to spend more time on what gave them meaning outside of work. For them, the impetus to do this was centred around EI’s focus on emotional self awareness, happiness and fulfilling lives.

### ***Serving others***

Many participants were inspired to make meaningful contributions to others’ wellbeing at work or maintain such practices because the EI training reinforced this. The course themes of being aware of others’ emotions, the ‘social responsibility’ competency, human virtues, values and integrity were key skills or attributes to facilitate this. The EI teachings enabled participants to be more empathic in their care of duty at work, to help others grow, support staff during difficult times and challenge ideas that did not benefit their staff. Carol, a Director of a College explained how the Hybrid EI course gave a label to what she was already doing:

As far as I’m concerned, my job is to facilitate the growth and development of everybody. So, all the members of staff that I work with, at whatever level, I look at where they’re at in their development as a whole person and I try and work with that. I think I’ve always done that but it wasn’t until I discovered emotional intelligence that I thought ‘ah that’s what I’m doing’. (Carol, Director of College, Hybrid).

Carol described this as a ‘process of enlightenment’, continuing: “So I think that it [EI] does help people; I think it makes it a better world if you like.” Sally, who was managing her manufacturing plant closure, was more attuned to the emotional impact on her staff for every decision she made during the process. For Karl, a Programme Management Assistant, EI was about “putting people in an environment of being fair and open and transparent to everyone.” For these and other managers practising virtues of ethics, compassion, support and care translated into acts of meaning.

For Pippa, the EI course had made her realise that her priority at work was to make her staff happy by enhancing their wellbeing. She was now using the EI training to make her team ‘feel important and getting them involved’ by giving them more one-to-one time, being more empathic and listening more. She did not care if she was not promoted anymore: “I came away [from the course] thinking I want to manage people, I want to manage people well and if that results in me getting promoted then fine but if not, as long as I’m happy and my staff are happy that’s probably the most important thing”. For Vera, a middle manager attending the Hybrid course, the EI training affirmed her caring managerial style, characterised by frequently going above and beyond the call of duty. This included an ‘open door’ management style to ‘mop up’ subordinates’ daily anxieties and concerns such as when they were going through difficult times.

For several managers, including Esther, and Helen, a Human Resources manager, EI appeared to raise their consciousness of, and concern for, moral dilemmas which may have been unacknowledged in their work before the course. Helen indicated that many of her decisions were moral juggling acts within the confines of economic constraints. She explained how HR decisions are sometimes about ethics of care and doing the correct thing

for employees and ‘not just doing something and paying lip service to it’. Whilst she was using more empathic negotiation skills learnt from the EI training to bring in practices to support the wellbeing of her staff, she acknowledged the tensions between the ‘inspiration’ and ‘reality’. Equally, she was keen to point out her battles at work had jeopardised her own health and she had been forced by her doctor to re-dress the balance between ‘serving me’ and ‘serving others’. These struggles were indicative of other managers’ tightrope walk between serving work colleagues in meaningful ways without sacrificing one’s own wellbeing, given the tough business environment many alluded to.

In sum, EI teachings were used to strengthen or enhance managers’ commitment to serve others and this appeared to have existential significance (e.g. on a mission, making the world a better place, moral acts). These acts resonated with managers’ own values and purpose in life and for many the causes seemed to transcend the daily expectations of organisational life. This is not to discount though, the times managers used EI to build social relationships in a more instrumental capacity or serve others strategically for personal or mutual benefit. For example, Adam, Head of Customer Connections was keen to point out that ‘relationships in the organisation are there for a purpose although that sounds terribly callous’, denoting a cool detachment and a balance between real and fabricated care.

## **Discussion**

In this study, Lips-Wiersma and Morris’s (2009) model provides a framework to understand how meaningfulness was articulated, legitimized and (re)instated on managers’ agendas through UK-based EI training. Trainers explained that it was reasonable and appropriate to have meaningful experiences at work, and managers demonstrated the agency to do this. The

EI training endorsed this through its skill set of emotional awareness, happiness, self actualization, achievement drive, influencing, social responsibility, empathy, human values and virtues, transparency, optimism and authenticity. Similar to Lips-Wiersma and Morris's (2009:503) study, many managers appeared to have 'known this all along' and found this 'reclaimed knowledge' as powerful and satisfying. As Rosso et al (2010:115) point out: 'individuals are the ultimate arbiters of the meaning of their own work, as shaped through the lens of their unique perceptions and experiences'. Highlighting their agency, managers found numerous, idiosyncratic and sometimes creative ways to combine and apply EI skills and aptitudes to develop tasks, duties and relationships of worth and value. Interpreting the data through Lips-Wiersma and Morris's (2009) model enables a clear articulation of managers' independent capacity to shape their work environments to create sources of meaningfulness.

It has been noted that 'other oriented' sources of meaningfulness have been overlooked in the literature (Rosso et al, 2010). However, this study demonstrates that EI provides tools to create and develop four sources of meaning at work including other directed. For example, acts of caring, compassion, challenging practices and supporting the professional and moral development of employees became existentially significant. Unity with others expressed through collegiality, fun, exchanging favours, 'hanging out together', companionship and getting to know others were other meaningful, exchanges enacted at work, encouraged on the EI training courses. It was not uncommon for managers to see these themes as interconnected – combining unity with serving others as core needs as Ron did, seemed to enhance the meaning of his work (Lips-Wiersma and Morris, 2011). Equally though, other aspects of EI enthused managers to develop the inner self and express their potential. In this way, instruction for gratification, self actualisation and identity as core goals located a psychotherapeutic narrative within EI which is heavily bound to an authentic selfhood,

whereby perceived authenticity is tied to notions of the ‘good’ life ( Cederstrom, 2011). What was less expected was an emphasis on authenticity (being one’s true self), moral development and virtues because these were less strongly featured in the popular EI frameworks. As Thory (forthcoming) shows, the interpretive viability of EI management training enables trainers to infuse programmes with their own particular interests and foci. Overall, at the heart of the EI themes, what drove managers’ actions was a deeper layer of need such as community and connection, doing good things, growth, learning, achievement and being the best one could be (Lips-Wiersma and Wright, 2012).

Oftentimes though ‘meaningfulness is a constant process of searching for, articulating, balancing, struggling with, and taking responsibility for the human need for meaning’ (Lips-Wiersma and Wright, 2012: 663). There is no point of arrival but a continual search. One is always toiling towards balance and rarely does one gets it right but the conscious quest itself helped managers recalibrate and identify what was meaningful to them (Lips-Wiersma and Wright, 2012: 661). Examples were evident in those who brought their ‘true self’ to work or were searching for new jobs and alternative careers to express their potential in other organisations.

The findings also demonstrate that being/doing, self/others and ‘inspiration’ towards an ideal and ‘reality’ are all intertwined within the work sphere and outwith. Creating a complex web of influences, these themes were consciously and reflectively juggled by managers. For example, as an HR manager, Helen’s quest to fight practices which were to the detriment of her staff cast her as a ‘moral agitator’. Yet, her focus on others was taking its toll on her own health, and she was aware she was running the risk of being ‘washed away by others’ (Lips-Wiersma and Morris, 2011:86). Bridging the work-life divide, Esther and others wanted to

focus more on family life (unity with others outwith work) rather than relentlessly pursuing work achievements. But at the same time, Esther was seeking more self actualising work elsewhere, demonstrating the interplay between the different sources (unity and expressing one's full potential). Referring to the 'tyranny' of wellness and positivity in contemporary organisations, Warren (2010;318) poses the question - what of the employees who choose to engage these qualities (being self-actualised, driven, engaged, resilient, optimistic) elsewhere to enhance the quality of their lives? To date, it has been overlooked that EI's skills and aptitudes of self-actualisation, happiness and emotional self awareness can lead to a decreased effort and productivity at work. Examining EI through a meaningfulness lens exposes this important oversight in scholarly accounts, given the strong business case made for EI (Bar-On, 2004; Boyatzis and Sala, 2004; Goleman 1998).

Also expressing tensions between the inspiration and reality, Jim highlighted how fulfilling the organisational persona could over-emphasise 'doing' (too much emphasis on achievement) to the detriment of 'being' (neglecting one's own identity) (Lips-Wiersma and Morris, 2011). Arguably, though, even organizations which encourage self expression, permit it to a point (Fleming, 2009). Indeed, Stan, Graham, Ivan, Adrian and Adam were quite focused on expressing their full potential, sometimes with a more instrumental intent. For example, whilst EI kept pulling Adam back to developing social relationships of value ('I've got to know people I wouldn't have otherwise'), there was always an appropriated tone to his story. Other agency-communion tensions were evident between short term deliverables/crisis management and unity and community at work. Frequently it was meaningful itself to discuss the tension between the 'inspiration' and 'reality'. Verbalising the rhetoric grounded managers' discussions and served to enhance meaningfulness. When ideals are not discussed

within a context of material reality, the discussion itself can become meaningless and actions futile (Lips-Wiersma and Morris, 2009).

**Despite these findings, a key limitation of the model is that it has been developed within a western perspective, using empirical data taken from a western sample. This raises interesting questions about its utility in different cultural contexts. Schwartz's (1994) Value Survey identifies universal values which all people hold common, but differ across individuals and nations in how they are prioritized. Of particular interest are the values of universalism, collectivism and individualism first identified by Schwartz as valid for cross-cultural comparisons. When mapped onto Lips-Wiersma and Morris's (2009) sources of work meaningfulness, individualism (personal goals, personal uniqueness and personal control) corresponds to themes of 'self' (inner development and expressing full potential). Whereas, universalism (understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature) and collectivism (subordination of personal goals to those of the in-group) focus on 'others' (unity with others and serving others). Anglo-american cultures are typically high in individualism and lower in collectivism. By contrast, Robertson et al (2001) found that collectivism is strong in the middle east. Whilst acknowledging country to country variations in a sample of middle eastern countries, Ralston et al (2012) found that universalism is high in the UAE and collectivism is higher in Arab Islamic nations. This suggests that sources of work meaningfulness which satisfy deeper needs of 'others' (fitting in, attending to and protecting others, harmonious interdependence) may be broadly preferable in some middle eastern contexts. Whereas cultures such as the UK and the USA which have high individualism scores may favour 'self' based sources of work meaningfulness. This implies there will be challenges for cross-country transfer, for**

**example, in MNCs where adaptations will be required to attend to national business systems and socio-cultural factors.**

**Consideration also needs to be given to the Anglo-American model of EI which favours an enterprising ‘persona’ – emotionally expressive, confident, optimistic, happy, good at influencing, driven, self-sufficient and adept at using informal power derived from social skills rather than hierarchical position. Clearly, the issue of universality and cultural specificity of EI has yet to be fully explored.**

## **Conclusion**

Given the popularity of meaningful work and its organisational gains in management research, Human Resource Development stands as a leading discipline to support and guide organisations in training and development in meaningfulness. Yet, the field has yet to address how opportunities can be harnessed through skill development, training and ongoing learning (Ardichvili and Kuchinke, 2013; Chalofskyu and Cavallaro, 2013). This study provides empirical evidence that sources of meaningfulness are a core ingredient of EI training when popular EI models are used (Bar-On, 2001; 2010; Orme and Bar-On, 2002; Goleman, 1998). It demonstrates how a framework of meaningfulness embedded in EI can provide insights into how it is taught and used at work. Thus, short EI training courses or workshops and other HRD development activities can inspire employees to proactively develop sources of meaningfulness through their tasks, goals and relationships. This can alleviate pressure from leaders to create and carry the burden of meaning making of work and organisation (Lips-Wiersman and Morris, 2009).

Practically, it demonstrates the important role meaning making has for managers' work. It is suggested that training and development in meaningfulness has more utility when: the material reality versus ideals are openly discussed by participants; consideration is given to how much legitimacy someone feels to command worthwhile work given it will vary considerably between a senior manager and low-skilled worker; multiple sources of meaningfulness are covered in training (rather than one dimension) and viewed as working in complement with each other. Equally, though there is a difference between skills (e.g. social skills, influencing, emotional awareness) and character traits and attributes (e.g. integrity, morality, authenticity) when using EI training to promote meaningfulness. Clearly skills can be learnt but attributes may be more inherent or deeply socialised. HRD practitioners must be cognisant of this difference when focused on developing sources of meaningfulness in workshops and training. Moreover, it is vital to remember that not everyone desires work of significance, value and worth. Finally, because the training in this study focused on sources of meaningfulness (denoting fundamental needs), training could extend to exploring feasible and practical antecedents at an organisational level e.g. career development, appraisals, mentoring and coaching, feedback as well as spatial re-designs to promote communal break-out areas and rest spaces.

**Because of the significant difference in values, political and economic systems and religiosity it is suggested that future qualitative research explores sources of work meaning in samples of middle eastern managers (different countries) to ascertain foci of priorities and individual/organisational gains. Following this, the degree to which managers in middle eastern countries feel they have the freedom to shape their work tasks, relationships and roles to satisfy existential needs (if desired) can be examined. In**

addition, tailored training and organisational practices can be investigated to explore their impact on meaning making in middle eastern countries. Most countries in the middle east appear to be emphasising the development of their HR, prioritising development of 'locals' over expatriates whilst recognising the need to further adapt to the global economy (Budhwar and Mellahi, 2007). Given this, innovative management practices such as EI and meaningfulness frameworks could provide useful tools to meet such needs. The ultimate aim is to better understand how EI and work meaningfulness can maximise efficiency, effectiveness and managerial well being and happiness in a global context.

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Table I: Emotional Intelligence Training Courses

	<b>Goleman</b>	<b>Bar-On</b>	<b>Hybrid</b>
<b>Consultancy</b>	Manchester (UK) based, small training consultancy  1 female trainer	Edinburgh (UK) based, executive education centre within a University Business School  1 male trainer	London (UK) based, large training consultancy  1 male trainer, 1 female trainer
<b>Duration and location</b>	1 day, training consultancy premises	3 days, executive education suite on University premises	1 day, London hotel, corporate suite
<b>Content</b>	Emotional awareness Emotional regulation (self) Transparency Optimism Motivation Empathy Social skills e.g. influencing Achievement drive Accepting individual differences	Emotional awareness Understanding, using and regulating emotions (self) Optimism Happiness Self-regard Empathy Assertiveness Independence Stress tolerance Flexibility Goal setting Authenticity Social responsibility Having a meaningful life and work/self actualisation Strengths and virtues	Five key themes: Knowing your world, knowing yourself (mindfulness/present moment awareness), freeing yourself (emotional awareness and regulation), being yourself (finding and accepting your natural state, self actualisation) and creating yourself (motivation and goal setting).
<b>Influences</b>	Taken directly from Goleman's (1998) work with exercises taken from a variety of sources	Course based on Bar-On's (2004) model with exercises taken from a variety of sources	Model developed by trainers.
<b>Trainer Experience</b>	Experienced consultant	20 years in management & leadership development	6 years training experience