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Project Module

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“Designing a coaching model for a South African University”

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research study attempts to develop an implementation framework and model for coaching in a South African university, with specific reference to the coaching of black staff members as part of an organisational project focussed on staff diversification.

The purpose of this research is to study the implementation of coaching in other organisations, to analyse the perceptions of management and staff in the organisation about the implementation of coaching as well as to advise the organization as to an optimal implementation framework and model based on the findings.

Grounded theory was used to inform the data collection and analysis techniques. Semi-structured interviews were used to generate the qualitative data from the research subjects.

The findings suggest that there is a clear need for a combination of coaching and mentoring in the organisation. The findings also suggest that coaching and mentoring should not only be available to black staff members. It is recommended that coaching and mentoring should eventually be available to all staff members, but initially at least for all high potential staff members as well as all newly appointed staff members. It is further recommended that an internal pool of trained coaches and mentors should be created from which coaches/mentees can select. The focus should be mainly on induction and socialization, career development issues as well as developing leadership skills and emotional intelligence competencies.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context

The organisation is a public university in South Africa with a full-time staff component of about 2 300. It is a historically white university and one of its current characteristics is that the composition of the personnel corps is still predominantly white and male. Diversification of its total personnel corps, but especially at senior and mid- manager levels and among academic staff, is one of the key prerequisites that should be satisfied in order to ensure the university's future success as well as 'fit' with the requirements of its contextual environment. This is also in compliance with the South African Employment Equity Act, which aims to promote equal opportunity and fair treatment through the elimination of unfair discrimination; and implementing affirmative action measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups ¹ (*Appendix A*).

The university's Strategic Framework and Vision 2012 statement, both commit the institution to, amongst others, diversity and achieving equity as a major instrument in its efforts to redress its contribution to past injustices. In the university's Employment Equity Plan an intensified focus on accelerating the process of obtaining a more representative staff corps is emphasised, as well as accelerated development for people from the designated groups.

The University Council recently made available a substantial amount to support a "Legacy" project, aimed at diversifying the personnel of the university especially at senior and middle levels. This funding allows for the strategic recruitment, development, remuneration, coaching and mentoring of a cohort of black members of staff in areas of the university in which they are underrepresented.

¹ *The definition of designated groups as defined by the South African Employment Equity Act is provided in Appendix A*

Coaching and mentoring has been identified as a means of supporting their development and socialization and to help these candidates gain successful entry into middle and senior staff levels.

The university is also busy implementing its overarching strategic plan, and “staff success” has been identified as one of the key enablers to support the realization of these strategic objectives. One of the primary building blocks of staff success is to ensure that staff will be continuously developed and supported by means of, amongst others, coaching.

1.2 Relevance of this project

To ensure the success of the Legacy Project as well as to ensure alignment with strategic focus areas, it is important that any coaching intervention should fit the organisational context and needs. I believe that the organisation needs a coaching implementation model which takes into account best practice in other organisations, research findings, perceptions and opinions of staff as well as management, and also the current realities of the organisation (e.g. financial resources, structures, processes, and organisational culture). The current reality is that no formalized coaching or mentoring is available to staff members in the organisation.

Furthermore, limited research has been done regarding the implementation of coaching in an academic institution, with a specific focus on coaching staff from the designated groups (henceforth referred to as “diversity candidates”). The issue of coaching diversity candidates brings up certain moral, ethical and perceptual issues, which has not been the focus of much empirical research. As such this project will also contribute to the knowledge of other coaches and organisations, specifically in South Africa, facing similar challenges.

The main areas of my research cover:

- Research findings relating to coaching diversity candidates

- Research relating to best coaching practices in other organisations
- Perceptions of staff and management about the best implementation model as well as potential obstacles to success

1.3 My role in the organisation

I am employed fulltime by the university in the Human Resources Division and have simultaneously been tasked to spearhead the implementation of the Legacy Project. I have also been practicing as an internal coach over the past 5 years. I have worked as a training and organisational development specialist in the organisation, facilitating diversity management and change management initiatives. I am particularly interested in coaching as a tool to support leadership and personal development and enabling cultural change. I have selected this research in order to support the successful implementation of the Legacy Project, to add value to the organization as well as further develop my skills as a professional coach.

1.4 Levels of support and co-operation

The top management team of the university are interested in my research findings, as coaching for Legacy candidates has been identified as one of the key enablers of these candidates' success and also because of the strategic focus on ensuring staff success. Interest and support has also been expressed by senior management (Deans and Heads of Support Services environments) who have stressed the need to focus on staff success, career development and leadership development supported by formalised coaching and mentoring. The Chief Director: Strategic Initiatives and Human Resources is the main project sponsor.

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CHAPTER TWO: OBJECTIVES AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Aims and objectives

The primary aim of the research study is to develop an implementation framework and model for coaching in the organisation, with specific reference to the Legacy Project.

The objectives are as follows:

- 2.1.1 To gather relevant information on implementing coaching in other organisations – with a focus on coaching of diversity candidates.
- 2.1.2 To analyse the perceptions of management and staff in the organisation about the implementation of coaching - with a specific focus on coaching of Legacy candidates.
- 2.1.3 To advise the organization as to an optimal implementation framework and model based on the findings.

2.2 Research statement and questions

I am of the opinion that coaching will benefit the development of all staff members (and should be available to all staff members at least at middle and senior levels). I expect that there might be resistance to making coaching available only to Legacy candidates and that, in doing so, Legacy candidates might have concerns about possible stigmatization and labelling. I am furthermore of the opinion that coaching should be aligned with organisational strategy, leadership development, performance management as well as cultural change and transformation.

The main research questions asked during data collection will address the following:

- 2.2.1 What are the perceptions of staff and management regarding the offering of coaching to Legacy candidates?
- 2.2.2 What are the opinions regarding the best implementation model of coaching at the university?
- 2.2.3 What lessons can be learnt from literature and other organisations?

2.3 Literature review

The purpose of any literature review is the effective evaluation of selected documents on a research topic as well as a critical synthesis of previous research. I was very aware of the issues and debates relating to the use of a literature review in grounded theory research and have discussed these in Chapter 3.

2.3.1 Coaching defined

My personal view on coaching is informed by Personal Construct Psychology, Systems Theory as well as Self-organised Learning Theory. I view coaching as a series of reflective learning conversations leading to the empowerment of coachees and to them becoming self-organised learners. This is congruent with the definition of self-organised learning as "...the conversational construction, reconstruction and exchange of personally significant, relevant and viable meanings with purposiveness and controlled awareness." (Harri-Augstein & Webb, 1995).

2.3.2 Coaching versus mentoring

In my review of literature I found that coaching is often viewed as one of the subsidiary roles of a mentor (Fowler, 2002). Others, such as Jarvis (2004) argue that, although there can be overlaps between the two roles, the roles of mentor and of coach are distinctly different (*Appendix B*).

From the literature survey it emerged that the mentor is typically a senior experienced person who imparts wisdom and knowledge to the less knowledgeable mentee. Coaching, however, is an equal partnership and a relationship where the coach does not have to have expert knowledge of the job that the client occupies. I view the coach as an experienced and professional thinking partner who can facilitate a process of learning conversations whereby the client becomes a self organised learner. Jarvis (2004) also emphasis that, other than the traditional idea of mentoring, there are now other types of mentoring that have come into existence (e.g. transformational mentoring), many of which bear more similarities to coaching and/or counseling and therefore it is important to make sure that everyone understands what is meant by different terms. This is one aspect which needs to be probed in my interviews, as I believe that there might be a view in the organisation that the two concepts are one and the same thing.

2.3.3 Coaching and diversity

Although some literature is available on the ethical and moral obligation to develop black and female leaders in South Africa, limited empirical research has been done on exactly how coaching should contribute to promoting equal opportunity, employment equity and diversity management in the South African context.

Galvao (2004) recommends that research needs to include understanding the needs of various cultures and races with regards to mentoring and coaching, identifying and understanding barriers to the success of coaching and mentoring across cultural and racial differences as well as trying to gain an understanding of the current perceptions of black and white employees in the marketplace.

Meyer and Fourie (2004) argue that coaching and mentoring can play a vital role in promoting employment equity and diversity management. They believe that the strength lies in an integration of the two processes to help individuals to perform over

the short term and to ensure that employees and managers are continuously developed so that the organisation's performance can be sustained and improved over the long term.

Makhalima (2007) says that in South Africa the advent of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and employment equity has meant that organisations have had to implement infrastructure that will introduce, develop and retain black people and women within predominantly white, male organisations. Coaching has been identified as one of the mechanisms that can be used with some success towards creating capacity for these groups to succeed in organizations. He found that a high percentage of respondents indicated that, while the age, gender, and race of the coach might be important "*connecting*" factors in a coaching relationship, they are less important in the selection of the coach than the coach's credentials. He recommends that, in an organization, clients should have access to a database of a diversity of coaches and that the process of coaching selection should receive serious attention. It will be important for me to also include questions in my interviews relating to the matching process. I am expecting to find that, while the race and gender of the coach might not be an important consideration in the selection of a coach, there might be concerns about having your direct line manager act in a dual role as manager and coach.

Rostron (2006) writes that coaches have unique opportunities to significantly engage and intervene in the ongoing process of transforming the country into a free, open and democratic society. She states that coaching is still viewed as an exclusive privilege of an elite few as many previously disadvantaged people in the organization do not yet qualify for coaching as they are often not employed in sufficiently senior executive positions.

Charoux (1990) argues that the process of Black advancement in South Africa needs managers who play a role in managing the change process, generating a new vision of a just corporate South Africa and changing attitudes of those around them. This can be done by managers becoming coaches. He writes about the polarization in

organisations, where White managers often argue that “Blacks are culturally different” and “have to be constantly trained” to meet standards of performance as well as the argument from some Black employees that the organisational climate is not “supportive of their upward mobility”, which leads to frustration and despondency at their lack of progress and perpetual training status (Charoux, 1990, p19). He is also adamant that any advancement strategy (including coaching and mentoring) and any strategy to facilitate the acceptance of the Black manager by the organisation, should not be for Blacks only but should apply to all employees.

In an interview with British American Tobacco (BAT), it was emphasised that coaching should be available to all managers at the target level, regardless of race or gender. Also, another point that came across strongly was the use of a combination of external and internal coaches, with the further proviso that a manager should not coach a direct report, as it creates problems with issues of trust. This is in conflict with some of the other literature which emphasises the role of the manager as a coach, coaching direct reports (Charoux, 1990, Human and Hofmeyer, 1995). The BAT experience also shows that coaching across racial and gender lines have resulted in breaking down stereotypes and created increased diversity awareness and cultural understanding.

Human and Hofmeyr (1985) warn that institutionalized mentorship schemes between a mentor and a protégé in the context of Black advancement, could have certain drawbacks. If the structurally created relationship is between a White manager and a Black protégé, it could be perceived as paternalistic. Furthermore, those employees attached to mentors might be perceived as “crown princes” with certain consequent expectations and negative attitude. Another drawback could be that those who are not included in the scheme might feel threatened and attempt to sabotage the mentor-protégé relationship. Human and Hofmeyer (1985, p105) warn that another drawback of institutionalized mentoring is that it might draw focus away from the “all-important boss-subordinate (coaching) relationship”. This issue is picked up on by Wöcke and Sutherland (2008) when they write about the phenomenon that white males in South Africa feel threatened by a perceived lack of future opportunities and feelings of being

unvalued, especially when they are expected to mentor and coach new African recruits. These findings are highly relevant to my research where it might be expected of white managers to coach/mentor black candidates who are earmarked to be fast-tracked in order to prepare them for senior positions.

Sundelson (2005) refers to the importance of coaching black professionals on leadership skills, behavioral skills and emotional intelligence as part of the organisation's transformation strategy and in order to create sustainable work relationships, as well as to integrate personal development and organizational needs. He also recommends that coaching not only be given to black candidates, but also to the senior managers or people concerned with policy and decision making in order to ensure the acquisition of certain leadership and behavioral skills but also a shift in mindset due to the integration of different sets of values.

2.3.4 Lessons learnt with regards to implementing successful coaching interventions

From my literature survey the following key elements emerged relating to the successful implementation of coaching interventions in organisations. *(Because this is a grounded theory study and because I wanted to limit my prior assumptions as to the best implementation model and have the theory emerge from my interviews, I chose to do this specific part of my literature review after I had conducted my interviews.)*

Coaching should be linked to the business strategy and cannot exist in isolation. The coaching process needs to be aligned with HR and performance management processes, with leadership development and business strategies as well as with organizational culture and values (Chidiac (2006), McNally & Lukens (2006), Jarvis (2004)). A formal structure must be established to administer the programme (McNally & Lukens (2006)). The support of a senior executive is crucial to champion the intervention. The benefits must first be sold to the top management team and ideally those at the top should be the first to receive coaching – often when they have

discovered the benefits, they will be keen to see it cascade throughout the rest of the organisation. Top management should provide strong, positive role models

Coaching should be voluntary and clients should be able to select their coaches (Chidiac (2006)).

Confidentiality boundaries need to be maintained. At most, aggregate data and anonymous anecdotal feedback can be shared (McNally & Lukens, 2006). At BAT the rule is that no information is shared in order to ensure strict confidentiality and trust in the coaching process.

Coaching should be conducted in the context of other developmental efforts, such as competency development, assessments, mentoring and leadership workshops. The process should be embedded by recognising and rewarding managers who demonstrate good coaching behaviour and commitment to coaching (Jarvis, 2004). Coaching modules should be included in the management induction programme. Once the senior management have honed their coaching skills, they should be encouraged to coach their own teams and in this way, coaching will cascade down through the organisation. Some form of continuing support for coaches is desirable. Measurement and review are important to identify problems with the programme and with individual relationships, and to demonstrate that the programme is delivering results (McNally & Lukens (2006)).

A clear coaching methodology must be decided on and used. Coaching must be able to demonstrate clear outcomes (Jarvis, 2004). Clarity of objectives and role is important. A clear orientation must be provided to participants and stakeholders about what coaching is and what it is not. Expectations and anticipated time commitment for participation must be clearly stated (McNally & Lukens (2006)).

Although the HR function often facilitates the establishment and implementation of mentoring and coaching interventions and has a key role to play in selecting and

managing coaching relationships within an organisation, it is primarily a line management responsibility.

The seventh Annual Coaching and Mentoring Conference held in Johannesburg, South Africa in May 2008 saw the release of the results of the first National Mentoring and Coaching Benchmarking study (HR Highway, 2008). Some of the results which I considered relevant to this study are summarised in *Appendix M*.

My review of literature has helped me to rethink the areas I should cover in my data collection process.

Several conflicting issues were raised by the literature review and I plan to explore these when I conduct my interviews. These include issues such as the difference between a coach and a mentor as well as the combination/separation of these two processes, the use of managers as coaches, the use of internal and external coaches as well as the process of selecting a coach/matching clients with a coach. The other important issue to explore is the possible offering of coaching only to diversity candidates and the ethical and perceptual issues relating to this.

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CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach

My research involves a flexible qualitative design and is exploratory in nature. I used a grounded theory approach – aimed at developing a model for coaching implementation in my organisation based on the data I collect.

The central aim of a grounded theory study is to generate theory from data collected during the study and which relates to a particular situation forming the focus of the study (Robson, 2002). Grounded theory procedures are designed to generate a theory around the central themes that emerge from the data (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2003). It is a particularly useful approach in applied areas of research where the theory is scarce. In this instance, I am attempting to study an area where little work has been done – coaching in an academic institution with a specific focus on coaching diversity candidates. My theory regarding the implementation of coaching at the university will be “grounded” in the data gathered during the study.

I found the following principles of grounded theory relevant to my research and data collection methods:

- a) The theoretical sampling procedure is purposive to ensure additional information can be obtained when determining the conceptual categories (Robson, 2002). Bell (2005, p.18) defines theoretical sampling as “sampling directed by the evolving theory; it is a sampling of incidents, events, activities, populations, etc. It is harnessed to the making of *comparison* between and among those samples of activities, populations, etc.”
- b) Traditional research designs usually rely on a literature review leading to the formation of a hypothesis. This hypothesis is then put to the test by experimentation in the real world. On the other hand, a pure grounded theory

approach does not typically begin with prior assumptions about hypotheses, research questions or what literature should underpin the study. It is, however, almost impossible to start a research study without some pre-existing theoretical ideas and assumptions (Robson, 2002). Moghaddam (2006) also writes that most researchers will have their own disciplinary background which will provide a perspective from which to investigate the problem.

- c) Grounded theory is not a traditional linear research approach where the literature study informs data collection and then analysis. It is a more “common sense” approach when working with complex, unstructured issues where analysis prompts the sampling of new data (Robson, 2002). Inherent to grounded theory research is that it is an iterative process, in other words, a cyclical process where theoretical insights are discovered in the data and then tested to see how they can be used to make sense of other parts of the data, which in turn produce new theoretical insights, which are again tested against the data, and so on (Bell, 2005). One of the strengths of a grounded theory approach is that the research process itself guides the researcher to explore all possible avenues to greater understanding (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

Allan (2003) states that one of the real advantages of using a grounded theory approach is that data analysis can start as soon as data collection begins in the first interview. Corbin & Strauss (1990) also refer to this aspect of grounded theory, namely that data collection and analyses are interrelated processes. This is important because the analyses at the start direct the next interviews and observations and seemingly relevant issues can be incorporated in the next stage of data collection.

I also considered the following approaches, but found them not suitable for the reasons given below:

Action Research

This approach requires research to be applied to practical issues occurring in the everyday social world and the idea is to attempt *change* and monitor results. Action research starts with a problem and aims to take action to improve the situation. It focuses on the researcher as worker seeking to improve aspects of their own and their colleagues' practices. It is a cyclical process involving identifying and clarifying the problem, identifying and implementing the change intended to improve the situation, testing and evaluation to determine the impact of change made on the original problem (Distance Resource Learning Pack, 2006).

I rejected this approach as my research was not aimed at attempting to implement change and monitoring the results of these changes. Ultimately when the organisation does move into implementing a coaching model and programme that draws on the findings of this research, action research could be used to monitor and manage impact.

Soft systems methodology

The aim of Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) is to make changes which are both systematically desirable and culturally feasible. This approach provides a way of subjecting 'soft' human activity to analysis at the level of systems. Insight into the real life situation is gained from discussion of the differences between an ideal model of how things might work and how they appear to work in the real life situation (Distance Resource Learning Pack, 2006). Although very similar to action research, soft systems methodology places more emphasis on analysing the problem and possible solutions before any action is taken. My intended research does not have the implementation of change during the research as its key focus. My intention is not so much to analyse a problem and search for a solution, but to explore perceptions and, for this reason, a soft systems approach was not seen as appropriate.

3.2 Data Collection Methods

In a grounded theory study, interviews are the most common data collection method, but other methods such as analysis of documents can and have been used (Robson, 2002). I will use a combination of interviews and a study of literature and documents in an attempt to gather sufficient data for this study. This combination of techniques ensures data triangulation, which ensures that analysis of the data is reliable and produces valid results.

3.2.1 The interview

Although interviewing can be time consuming, its advantage is its adaptability. A skilful interviewer can probe responses to further investigate the area of interest. This advantage brings with it a disadvantage in that the interviewee's responses may be affected by the interviewer. Interpersonal variables like the gender, ethnicity or personal qualities of the interviewer could affect responses. Although I will attempt to minimize my own bias as far as possible, I do agree with the view that it is virtually impossible for any interviewer to gather a 'pure' truth in people's heads, and that in any interview these biases cause just another construction of any one person's reality (Distance Resource Learning Pack, 2006).

I chose a **semi-structured interview**, which includes set questions or themes with the flexibility of following interesting or useful emerging issues. This is often most appropriate for the work-based researcher because of its inherent flexibility (Distance Resource Learning pack, 2006).

I considered using survey questionnaires as data collection tools, but was aware of the fact that I might have a low response rate and also that it might not yield the qualitative data I was looking for.

3.3 Data Analysis Techniques

Coding is the fundamental analytic process used by the grounded theory researcher. Allan (2003, p.1) describes coding as 'a form of content analysis to find and conceptualise the underlying issues amongst the 'noise' of the data'. Coding is therefore a sense-making process in data analysis, where the researcher queries, seeks and confirms themes or patterns as well as exceptions in the data.

In the grounded theory approach, the disaggregation of data into units is called open coding. This interpretative process involves breaking the data down analytically, looking for similarities and differences and giving data conceptual labels. Similar concepts are then grouped together to form categories and sub-categories (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). These categories become the basis of sampling on theoretical grounds.

Axial coding involves a process of recognizing relationships between categories. Categories are related to subcategories and the relationships tested against the data (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

The integration of categories to produce a theory is called *selective coding* (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2003). This implies that all categories are unified around a core category, or the central phenomenon (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

The analysis of data collected from interviews can be complex, as the data is not cold and has been collected within a certain context or a variety of different ones and must be analysed (Distance Resource Learning Pack, 2006). With that in mind, I therefore had to take care that comments were not lifted or quoted outside the context.

3.4 Insider-worker researcher

According to Workman (2007), the insider/worker researcher has a dual position within the organisation which is inevitably influenced by the organisational context and the

project inquiry process. Worker researchers have practical experience and insider knowledge and have greater awareness of the range of variables that impact on their chosen research problem. She goes on to say that insider research includes a component of self-interpretation in the change of role relationships with other members of the organisation and a relationship of rapport and trust must develop, together with an understanding of the organisational history and culture in order to understand the context fully.

Coglan (2001) highlights three specific challenges that the insider researcher faces. The first challenge is that of pre-understanding, referring to the researcher's knowledge, insights and experience before they engage in a research programme. This holds certain advantages in the sense that the insider-researcher can use their insider knowledge in questioning to obtain richer data. The disadvantage of this pre-understanding is that the researcher might assume they know the answer in advance and thus not probe as deeply.

As a worker-researcher I have a thorough understanding of the organisational system, culture, structures and processes and I have good relationships and networks, which offer me relatively easy access to people and to information. My insider knowledge gives me a good understanding of the research question and the key people I should involve. However, I am also aware that I am part of the system I am about to research, which might put me too close to the problem and this might influence my understanding of it. I am aware of possibly being seen as Human Resources professional and not purely as an impartial researcher. I also hold certain assumptions regarding the need for coaching and the benefits I believe a coaching intervention would offer the organisation. Based on my own knowledge and experience as a coach, I hold certain assumptions and ideas about the positive role that coaching could play in supporting leadership development. Yearout, Miles and Koonce (2000) also emphasise that coaching is a crucial element of leadership development, helping staff to cope with change, achieve sustainable performance as well as empowering them with the ability to self-coach. I agree with Ruch (2000) on the role which coaching could play as part of

attracting and retaining staff that place a high priority on learning and developing new skills. I also believe that coaching could play a role in organisational transformation by transforming corporate culture, paradigms, assumptions, and relationship issues and that it can contribute to building positive and sustainable organisations through its impact on these dimensions. I am, however, concerned that coaching should not be “stigmatized” as being exclusively available to a select few or as a correctional tool to support poor performers. Also, coaching should not be seen as a tool to “socialize” diversity candidates into the prevailing culture and norms. Scharmer’s work on theory U also was also relevant to my reflections on being an insider-researcher. He writes on the importance of ‘presencing’, which he defines as ‘the discipline of bringing one’s full Self into presence and use one’s highest Self as vehicle for sensing and bringing forth new worlds’ (Scharmer, 2000, p40). This partly involves shifting the focus of listening from hearing what I already know and reconfirming my existing mental models and prejudices, to sensing emerging futures. (*Appendix C*).

It is therefore important to bracket these own beliefs and assumptions when I start my interviews. This is in line with phenomenology, which requires of us to realize that our interpretations always remain open to alternative meanings and urges us to set aside (“bracket”) our own biases and prejudices, expectations and assumptions in order to allow us to focus on the immediate data of our experience. This is in a sense the opposite of pre-knowledge – in other words an attempt to move to un-knowing (Spinelli, 2005).

The second challenge Coglán (2001) identifies is that of role duality – this might lead to conflicts of loyalty, behaviour, and identification. I was aware that, as my data was analysed, I was coming up with unexpected answers and that some of these answers were directly opposite to what has been conceived regarding coaching of Legacy candidates. The implication is that the original management plans might have to be reconsidered. The third challenge is that of organisational politics. Coglán (2001) argues that the potentially ‘subversive’ characteristics of insider research (such as examining and questioning) might be perceived as a threat to existing organisational

norms. Robson (2002, p) also warns that, as a “hired hand”, the insider researcher might, overtly or covertly, be serving the agendas of those in positions of power and to seek “sticking plaster solutions to complex and intractable problems.” As indicated in *Appendix L*, during my research I found myself in some situations where I was aware of wanting to defend some of the criticisms raised against the Legacy Project. Upon further reflection I had to acknowledge that I felt a sense of ownership of the project and that the covert serving of agendas that Robson warns about was a very real experience.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Research ethics is primarily about being clear about the nature of the agreement you enter into with your research subjects. I realized that it was important that the participants in my research study should be fully informed about the nature and purpose of my study. I reflected on the questions in this regards as posed by Robson (2002):

- Do individuals have the right not to take part?
- Is their consent fully informed?
- Will the researcher ensure that the reporting of the study maintains confidentiality?
- What responsibility does the researcher have for the knowledge that has been acquired?
- Has the publication of the findings been clarified upfront?

Based on this awareness I used an informed consent form which had to be signed by each participant (*Appendix D*). At the start of each interview I also verbally explained to the interviewee what the research was about, why I wished to interview them and what I would do with the information obtained. My research proposal was submitted to an internal research ethics committee at my organisation and was approved by them. Also see *Appendix E* (Ethics Release Form).

Word count: 2441

CHAPTER FOUR: PROJECT ACTIVITY

4.1 Defining the boundaries of the project

This project was specifically defined as the design of a coaching implementation model for this specific organisation and with a specific focus on the possible coaching of Legacy candidates. I had many discussions with colleagues and with my manager to help define these boundaries and terms of reference. Originally I found that it was hard to define the boundaries, as this project forms part of an institution wide “project” aimed at ensuring staff success and diversification. At the outset I felt overwhelmed, but when I managed to define the exact boundaries and scope it became easier to define the specific product, outcomes and aims which would be achieved by this project.

What also helped was to draw up a project plan in the form of a Gantt chart in which all the project activities were listed and plotted against specific time frames. I did have to make some changes to this as the project got underway, because I was unable to make certain time frames due to reasons such as normal work demands as well as the fact that some activities took longer than I had originally anticipated (See *Appendix F*).

As part of my reflections I learned some of the challenges of having planned the research, and then finding that the organisational landscape changes. This made me very aware of the interdependence between the work-based researcher and the work context. Another key learning was to find a balance between the needs of the work place and my own needs and aspirations as a work based researcher. I had to redefine the boundaries several times to find the balance between my own interests and the business needs and priorities.

4.1 Finalizing the Sample

My sampling strategy was purposive in that I chose a sample which would enable me to satisfy my specific needs in this research project (*Appendix G*). This is also known as

'theoretical sampling', where the researcher would carry out initial sampling, and from analysis of the results extend the sample in ways guided by the emerging theory (Robson, 2002, p. 265).

I selected specific interviewees based on their roles, the unique perspectives I was hoping they could offer, as well as their availability. I had to reflect on who I would need responses from to ensure that I would achieve a range of opinions across various levels in the organization. It was important to me that I had a sample which would be representative of the views of management and existing or potential Legacy candidates. I also wanted to ensure that the sample would be balanced in terms of gender and race, and also in terms of academics versus support staff. Because this study was not about representative findings, the issue of sample size was less important, but it was important to gather data that would reflect the views and opinions of these specific groupings.

I approached the members of the target group via email to ask for their voluntary participation in the interviews. This email outlined the purpose of the research, gave an indication of confidentiality, as well as time demands. (*Appendix H*)

What helped in this process is that I know the structures and different role players in the organization who would be able to offer the necessary and different perspectives I was looking for. It was also helpful that I could approach members of staff directly through email and get immediate replies about their availability and set up the interviews as soon as possible. What hindered this process is that all interviews had to be conducted during normal office hours and that some had to be rescheduled several times because of the interviewees' busy schedules.

4.2 Conducting a Literature Review

I was aware that approaching a literature review in a traditional fashion was not totally appropriate for a grounded theory approach. Some suggest reading beforehand to gain

minimal knowledge in the beginning stage of the research project and increasing literature reading during the data analysis stage because the data itself will lead one to further literature about what one is seeing. I found that, in order for me to design my interviews and to understand the context of my research, it was necessary for me to look at some theory in this regard. As stated earlier, I postponed some parts of my literature review as it relates to implementation models and best practice until after the interviews in a conscious attempt to reduce the risk of bias and prior knowledge and to allow the theory to emerge from the data collected during the interviews.

4.3 Preparing for Data Collection

In preparing for data collection I was guided by relevant literature relating to, amongst others, how to draw up interview schedules, how to take into account ethical considerations when conducting interviews and how to do a pilot interview.

I reflected on the following issues when I prepared for data collection:

- What data would I need to collect to answer my research questions as well as whom would I need to interview and why? What questions would I need to ask?
- Where would be the most appropriate place to hold the interview?
- At what point in the research process would it be best to interview?
- How was I going to record the interviews and how would I access the data from the interviews?
- How I would ensure that I complied with ethical and confidentiality issues?

I designed my interview schedules in a way that would ensure that I optimally answered the main research questions I wanted answered by each of the three key respondent groupings. I wanted to understand their perceptions of and experiences of coaching as well as uncover their views on how coaching could best be implemented. I was entering the interview process with my own views about coaching and what was important for me here was to understand what each respondent thought and believed about coaching.

I soon realized that designing a successful interview is more complex than it seemed. I realized that it was important to try the draft schedule with a pilot and to redraft some questions if necessary. Before I started my data collection I conducted two pilot interviews in order to test the clarity of the questions, the kind of responses I might expect as well as the duration of the interview. The pilot interviews led to the first round of data analysis, as I got an indication of questions I would need to add to ensure the saturation of data and categories (*Appendix I*).

During the pilot interviews I came to an understanding of how difficult it is to write down all the responses while at the same time trying to focus on the interviewee. I decided that I would see this as a developmental process and that I would proceed in the same way with the actual interviews. The information obtained during the pilot interviews also led me to reformulate some questions as well as change the order of the questions.

4.4 Data collection

4.4.1 Primary data: Interviews

When conducting the interviews with each respondent, I used a semi-structured interview schedule. The questions were designed to enable me to optimally answer my research questions and were also informed by my initial literature review. An hour long interview was held in each respondent's office as it offered them more privacy and anonymity than having to come to my office in the Human Resources Division. I started off by explaining the purpose and context of my research, after which each respondent also signed the informed consent form. I did not use a tape-recorder but made detailed notes during the interview, which I would transfer to an electronic spreadsheet immediately after each interview.

When entering the interview with each respondent, I found it quite challenging not to suggest through the method of questioning the answers that I wanted to

hear. It was also a challenge to limit my own air-time and not get drawn into a conversation with the respondent – I had to keep reminding myself that I was a researcher conducting an interview and that the respondent had to do most of the talking. I also had to sharpen my skills at being able to ask, listen, write and observe at the same time. I was aware that in some instances I was consciously focusing on distancing myself from the interviewee in an attempt to make sure that I was seen as separate from the process – an unbiased outsider – but that in these instances there was not necessary rapport with the interviewee. For effective rapport to happen I needed to immerse myself in the process and be deeply interested in them as a person – while still reminding myself of my researcher role.

Although I attempted to minimize my own bias as far as possible, I do agree with the view that it is virtually impossible for any interviewer to be absolutely free of any bias.

Drawing on the concept of presencing, I focused specifically on trying to listen in a way where I would start seeing the world through someone else's eyes, rather than hearing what I already knew or wanted or expected to hear. The key learning was how hard it is to take off my own filters and not project my own mental models on what was being said. I also found it a challenge to not just listen to what was being said, but to start seeing systemic patterns emerge.

Being an insider-researcher presented some challenges. Because I work in Human Resources and am seen as someone who could help them solve issues, some colleagues, welcomed the opportunity to discuss issues around their work and even air some grievances. I had to emphasise that those issues would have to be taken up outside of the interview and that I was now “wearing the researcher hat and not the HR hat.”

Due to time constraints, I was only able to interview a limited number of people. As stated earlier, I came to understand that, in a grounded theory study it is not so much about the representativeness of the sample, but of the concepts. The aim is not so much to generalize the findings but to build a theoretical explanation of certain phenomena.

4.4.2 Secondary data: Study of documentation

My data collection also involved the study of documentation, which included academically based documents (books, journals), organisationally based documents (policies and reports), electronic documents from the internet as well as my own research diary.

This secondary data collection was important to compliment the primary data, and to ensure that my research was not done in isolation from what had already been done before.

4.5 Data Analysis

My data analysis involved:

- Immersing myself in the data collected.
- Identifying themes and categories as well as similarities and contradictions.
- Coding by breaking the data into labeled pieces and clustering the coded material together.
- Integrating all the information into a storyline.
- Interpreting all the integrated information.

All interview data was captured by taking notes during the interview and then transferring these to an electronic spreadsheet. After the first interview I did an initial analysis by looking at emerging concepts, and these led me to change some questions,

add some questions and also deciding which questions had to be probed in greater depth. After the first three interviews I also decided to add other respondents to ensure that I would be able to saturate some of the categories.

By immediately starting the open coding of the data after the first interviews, I was able to determine which questions and additional data I had to focus on every time I went back to data collection. I started by comparing the data for similarities and differences and tried to group conceptually similar responses together. By repeatedly asking the questions I “*What is this piece of text about? What is happening here? What is this telling me about the interviewee's experience of the topic I am investigating? What is interesting / important about that? What does it add to my understanding of the topic I am researching?*” I started to identify initial categories and subcategories. I also started to make use of memo’s (coding notes) to help me make sense of the data. Some of these notes were memos inserted to remind me of how this data related to some of the literature I had studied. The major categories which emerged related to the perceived need for coaching, the way in which a coaching intervention should be structured, the perceived benefits and outcomes of coaching, the nature of the coaching relationship as well as who should receive coaching. Theoretical sampling proceeded by gathering more data relating to specific categories, especially with regards to the structure of a coaching intervention. (See *Appendix J* and *Appendix K* as an illustration of part of the data-analyses process).

I found the second stage of coding, namely axial coding extremely challenging in that I now had to identify causal relationships between categories and test these relationships against the data. I had to try to look at the data to identify patterns and to try and fit everything into a basic paradigm of generic relationships. In a pure grounded theory approach this implied that I had to attempt to understand each piece of data in terms of the current conditions, the context in which it was taking place, the associated actions and interactions as well as the consequences. I believe that in the end my axial coding was not a pure grounded theory approach but that I used a more flexible approach as suggested by Miles and Huberman (quoted in Robson, 2002). They distinguish

between first- and second-level coding, where first-level coding is about attaching labels to groups of words, and second-level coding groups the initial codes into a smaller number of themes or patterns. I used a matrix in the form of a table which helped me in this process. Finally, as part of selective coding I attempted to integrate the data to form a storyline as it emerged from the axial coding.

I found it very challenging not to force links and concepts based on my own biases and assumptions but to allow these to emerge from the data. I literally had to practice to step back from the data and allow it to tell its own story.

The major reflections as I emerged myself in the project activity are indicated in *Appendix L* as part of my Learning Log Extracts.

Word count: 2427

CHAPTER FIVE: PROJECT FINDINGS

This chapter focuses on the analysis and interpretation of the findings.

5.1 The main aim of this research is to develop an implementation framework and model for coaching in the organisation, with specific reference to the Legacy Project. The themes, as they emerged from my research, are clustered under the appropriate research questions:

A. What are the perceptions of staff and management regarding the offering of coaching to Legacy candidates?

A strong sentiment expressed throughout all my interviews was that coaching should not be limited only to Legacy candidates, for various reasons:

- It would discriminate against other staff members.
- It could lead to labelling and stigmatization of and prejudice against Legacy candidates. *“I see it as problematic. You are not talking about people in junior positions. Some of them (Legacy candidates) are A-rated researchers and would in a sense feel insulted by being viewed as needing special development”.*
- It would imply that Legacy candidates are “tokens” and need special attention to “bring them up to scratch with white colleagues.” *“One doesn’t want Legacy candidates to feel that they stand out or that they’re a different breed. They should not feel patronized or ‘less than”.*
- It would create ethical and moral dilemmas in managing other staff members. *“It creates problems with succession planning – if I have several candidates in the succession pool but only some of them will have access to coaching. How do I manage their expectations and give them hope of having a future in the organisation?”*

The issue raised earlier in Chapter Two relating to the phenomenon that white males in South Africa feel threatened by a perceived lack of future opportunities and feelings of being unvalued, especially when they are expected to mentor and coach new African recruits did not come up during my interviews with managers, but was raised as an issue during one of my pilot interviews.

The opinion was expressed that coaching could help Legacy candidates by giving them support with regards to organisational culture and socialization. However, it was also said that the same need existed with regard to white staff members who were newly appointed and struggling to understand the existing institutional culture. *“Given the context of the organization and the aims of the Legacy Project to diversify staff, it is important that these candidates get the necessary support and it should be available to Legacy candidates. However, it should be available to all new staff members as part of the induction process.”*

All of the respondents were of the opinion that coaching should be available to all staff members, but especially for:

- The 30-40 year age group – typically staff members at an entry level of their careers or who are the young stars with potential.
- Newly appointed employees.

The Legacy project provides only for coaching and mentoring of Legacy candidates. The organisation needs to rethink the philosophy and intention behind this as well as the possible unintended consequences. Offering coaching and mentoring to a bigger “pool” also has implications in terms of resources (personnel and financial).

B. What are the opinions regarding the best implementation model of coaching at the university?

B1 Structure and implementation model:

- **A combination of coaching and mentoring**

The majority of respondents were of the opinion that a combination of coaching and mentoring should be available. This was especially emphasized by academics, which are more familiar with mentoring than coaching and see the mentoring role as key to the development of any academic, especially as it relates to mentoring on teaching and research. The view was expressed that coaching may help with developing organizational skills and focus on performance aspects, but not learning the “technical” aspects of the job. This finding relates to the article of Moore and Lewis (2004) regarding the different needs of academics and non-academic staff in higher education institutions. They report that “a growing conflict in the academy during the past few decades has been characterised as a conflict between academics and management” (Moore & Lewis, 2004, p12). They refer to the work of Senge considering the role of academic middle managers. One of their primary goals is to facilitate ongoing reflection and conversation to clarify goals and establish agreed strategies. For many academic heads of departments this is a substantially altered role, which few may yet be ready for and for which capacity and the necessary institutional framework and culture will need to be constructed. This also relates to some of my later findings regarding the role of manager as mentor and coach.

My research findings also indicate that there is limited knowledge about coaching and that coach and mentoring is mostly seen as one and the same role – that “*the coach should be someone who I feel I have a connection with, someone I can trust, who can hold me accountable, who is human and who is willing to share their own knowledge and experience*”, which is a strong description of the mentoring role.

The main differences between coaching and mentoring as identified during my interviews related to:

- Duration: Coaching was seen as more short term whereas mentoring implied a longer term relationship and focus
- The fact that coaching could be one-on-one or on a group basis whereas mentoring was typically a one-on-one relationship
- The nature of the relationship: Coaching was seen by some respondents as being more of an equal relationship of a collaborative nature whereas a mentor was a more senior, knowledgeable other and a role model. *“Mentoring often operates from a deficit model. Coaching operates more from a relationship of equality and both parties bringing skills to the process and is more collaborative.”*
- Coaching was seen to be more specific, more focused and more goal directed than mentoring.

The implication of this for the organization is to consider offering both kinds of helping relationships to staff members. It would be important also to align the two processes in terms of expected outcomes and underlying methodology.

- **Selection of coaches/mentors**

All respondents believed that coachees/mentees should have a choice in selecting their coaches/mentors and that it should not be a top down approach. *“I would like profiles of the coaches from which I was able to select my coach.” “There should ideally be a pool of coaches/mentors to choose from.” “As a newly appointed academic I was assigned to a mentor. No mentoring took place in the sense that this mentor did not stretch me academically or intellectually. In a sense I was more experienced than my mentor. It should never be a top down approach.”* This view correlates with my findings as indicated in the literature review as well as the

statistics as indicated in Appendix M relating to the self-selection of coaches and mentors.

- **Who should be coaches/mentors**

The majority of respondents see coaching as a line function. The opinion was expressed that line managers are primarily responsible for the career development, empowerment and performance management of their team members and that coaching would take part naturally as part of the performance management and career development process. *“Line should actively coach and mentor subordinates. Is an integral part of the line manager’s role.” “The manager has a role to empower others, to act as a mediator and facilitator of knowledge, to help people think and understand the context and rationale.”*

Some fears were expressed that the line manager coaching a direct report could create issues around confidentiality and openness (duality of roles). *“...because line managers are too close to the fire and duality of roles could be problematic. Issues relating to trust would also pop up”*. Some potential coachees indicated that they would feel comfortable with the line manager as coach, but only depending on the nature of the issue they were being coached on. This view confirms the BAT experience as related in Chapter One, where there is a proviso that a manager should not coach a direct report, as it creates problems with issues of trust. However, the majority of respondents I interviewed saw coaching as a direct line function and responsibility and did not have this concern.

All the respondents emphasized the importance of training line managers and equipping them with the necessary coaching/mentoring skills to take on this role effectively. The opinion was also expressed that coaching/mentoring should be one of the key performance areas against which a line manager’s performance should be appraised. The importance of and need for continued support and supervision of coaches was also expressed. When exploring the model as used by BAT, namely

self-sustaining and self-organised coaching circles of diverse groups of managers who meet regularly to reflect on past experiences and coach each other, all respondents indicated that this would be helpful in order to support colleagues and learn from others.

Some sentiments were expressed that requiring the line manager to take up an additional role as coach might be problematic due to line managers already being overloaded. Some respondents believe that people who are passionate about coaching and mentoring and the development of staff should be invited to “apply” to become part of the pool of trained coaches and mentors from which coachees or mentees can select someone who they would like to work with.

A few respondents mentioned the importance of some form of recognition for those line managers who served as coaches/mentors.

- **The role of top management**

The buy-in and support of top management as well as the importance of them serving as role models was emphasised. The organisation will have to reflect on and unpack this in terms of what it means in practice and in terms of expected behaviour.

- **A formalized structure and system**

All respondents believe that a more structured and formalized system is called for. *“Currently no coaching or mentoring is formalised but purely incidental.” “Since I started working here I have always been thrown into the deep side, it is a case of sink or swim.” “It is a huge gap at this organization. There is no recognition/grasp of what challenges black staff and women have to face, and this is where a coach would help.”*

Any coaching intervention should be centrally managed and co-ordinated by HR and there should be a formal policy regarding coaching and mentoring. This will put an additional load on the Human Resources Division, which needs to be considered by the organization in terms of possible additional resources allocated to HR.

Some respondents believed that the budgeting for coaching should be central, while others believed that it should be part of each department's budget for training and developing their staff.

- **Internal vs. external coaches**

The majority were of the opinion that internal coaching would be preferable to using external coaches and that external coaches should only be considered in those instances where no suitable internal coaches were available. *“The internal coach would have the benefit of knowledge of the system.”* This would also be a means of investing in the development of internal staff by equipping them with new skills. Some respondents believed that line managers are not trained to be coaches and that ideally the coach should be a professional. However, if the coaching was done by an external coach or someone other than the line manager, some believed that some feedback should be shared with the line manager (with the consent of the coachee) while others emphasized absolute confidentiality, with no feedback loops back to the line manager or the organisation. These views reflect both the need for a mentoring-orientated form of coaching (the need for coaches who know the system, which implies the guiding, facilitating role of the mentor) and fear based on organizational politics and the tensions that exist in some line relationships.

However, it was stressed that, especially as far as mentorship was concerned, staff should be able to select from the best in the world and have the scope to select the mentors they believe would benefit them most.

This has implications in terms of training internal coaches and mentors as well as providing external coaches and mentors for certain staff members at certain levels of the organization. The alignment of the underlying methodology used by internal and external coaches will be crucial. Once again, this has financial implications as the use of external coaches could be costly.

B2 Nature and essence of the relationship

Those respondents who had previously worked with a coach and/or a mentor found it to be a valuable experience, with the exception of one respondent, whose experience was that he was assigned a mentor who could not stretch him academically or intellectually. Also, he did not have a choice in whether he wanted to work with a mentor but was expected to work with one because of being a black person coming into the organization and it was mandatory to have a mentor.

Those who did find it a positive experience commented that it was especially helpful at an entry level when they were starting off a career. What was helpful was having a role model, a wiser, knowledgeable other, as well as receiving feedback on developmental areas from a coach.

All respondents were of the opinion that the race or gender of the coach would be irrelevant – what would be important is that it would be someone who had certain “qualities” as listed below:

- *“Someone who has a passion for people and their development”*
- *“Someone who is congruent in words and actions”*
- *“A person who shows real interest and concern”*
- *“Someone who sees the potential in others”*
- *“A role model”*
- *“Someone who has achieved success in their own right”*
- *“The focus is very much on building a relationship and on empowering others”*

This confirms the findings of Makhalima (2007) (as referred to on page 10) regarding the role of race and gender in the selection of coaches as well as the information quoted in *Appendix M* regarding the selection criteria coaches/mentees most often use when selecting a coach or mentor.

B3 Focus and potential benefits

From my interviews it emerged that line managers and staff members hope that coaching and mentoring would focus and impact on the following areas:

- Performance and technical skills (Needed to perform in the job)
- Personal mastery /life coaching (A focus on the whole person)
- Career and personal development
- Adult learning (Creating empowered and self-organised learners)
- Accelerated development (For those individuals with potential and who are potential successors)
- Effective socialization and induction (For all new staff members)
- Understanding organizational culture and politics (Especially for new staff members and “Legacy” candidates)
- Effective communication (Open dialogue)
- Improving weaknesses and developing strengths
- Increased self-awareness
- Emotional intelligence
- Creating co-ownership and accountability
- Improved feedback and learning from the feedback (How to give and receive feedback)
- Developing management and leadership skills and competencies (In support of leadership and development programmes)
- Work-life balance (Especially women who have to balance careers with children)
- Stress management

In summary, my most important findings relate to the fact that there is a clearly expressed need for a combination of coaching and mentoring, which should be formalised and integrated into the role of line managers.

The strongly expressed view that coaching and mentoring should not only be available to Legacy candidates should also not be ignored. Black staff members do not want to be singled out for additional support as this leads to stigmatization.

Word count: 2582

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusions

Coaching will be a new initiative within the organisation and it was therefore important to investigate the key issues in order to design an optimal implementation model.

Although my initial research focussed on an implementation model for coaching in the organisation, the research shows that there is a clearly expressed need for a combination of coaching and mentoring in the organisation.

While I set out investigating coaching as a tool to support Legacy Candidates, I conclude, based on the interviews, that there is a clearly expressed need to have coaching and mentoring available as a developmental tool for all staff members. I found that there is a strong resistance to coaching and mentoring only being offered to Legacy candidates and a strong sentiment that ideally all employees should have access to a mentor or a coach. This might mean that the idea of offering coaching and mentoring to Legacy candidates will have to be rethought and that the organisation will have to give serious consideration to making this an organisation wide initiative. This will have budgetary implications.

There was also a strong sense that the organisation should identify and develop internal staff as coaches and mentors, rather than making use of external coaches and mentors and that in doing so internal staff would be equipped with new skills. The findings indicate that the majority of respondents believe that line managers need to take up the role of coaches and mentors and should be trained to do so. Although there were some concerns regarding confidentiality issues when having a line manager coach/mentor a direct report, it was felt that in those instances the coachee/mentee should have the option of selecting from a bigger internal pool of trained coaches and mentors. However, at certain levels and in certain instances, the option of an external coach/mentor should be available. This, however, creates certain financial implications and it was clear that the majority of respondents felt that these costs should be centrally budgeted for.

Some of the main considerations which served as input to my eventual recommendations are indicated in the figure below:



6.2 Reflections on the process and lessons learnt

In addition to my learning about the objectives of this research study, the experience has also deepened my understanding of being a researcher – specifically an insider-researcher. I feel honoured to have had the privilege to have had in-depth discussions with colleagues about the research topic and to hear their views, as well as the time they were willing to make available for the interviews.

Although I set out with a specific focus on coaching and Legacy candidates, the data generated through my grounded theory analysis, brought to the fore the issue of

mentoring as well as the importance of taking a larger systemic perspective that goes wider than the Legacy project.

Kolb's four-stage learning cycle was a helpful reflective tool as my research progressed. Kolb (1984) as indicated in the figure below shows how experience is translated through reflection into concepts, which in turn are used as guides for active experimentation and the choice of new experiences.

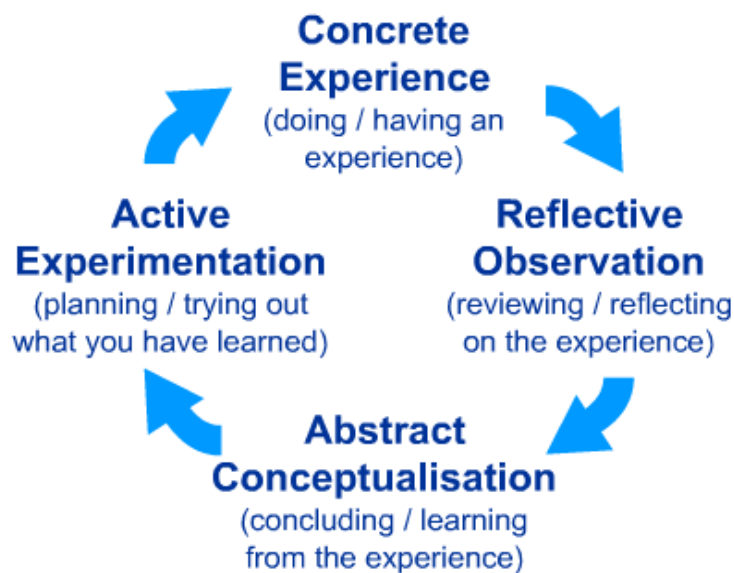


Figure 1: Kolb's experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1984)

I realised, while doing this research project, I was moving through all the stages of the Kolb Learning cycle.

Active experimentation (AE) is where the learner is trying to plan how to test a model or theory or plan for a forthcoming experience. There was first the active experimentation in planning what I was about to do. This culminated in my programme plan (WBS 4811) and in my Research Proposal (WBS 4825).

Concrete experience (CE) is where the learner actively experiences an activity. I had the concrete experience of doing interviews, writing up data, analysing data, doing literature reviews, etc. Another experience was that of being an insider researcher and

all the challenges that offers, as discussed in Chapter 3 as well as in my Learning Diary (*Appendix L*).

Reflective observation (RO) is when the learner consciously reflects back on that experience. Some of my reflections (*Appendix L*) led to adjustments in my research strategy, adjusting questions, having to do more interviews to saturate data categories, etc. One key learning was that it is virtually impossible to conduct grounded theory research in a vacuum free from knowledge of existing literature or my own prior knowledge, but to be aware of this and to attempt to bracket this as far as possible when gathering the interview data. Upon reflection I also wondered whether it might not have been more helpful to tape-record the interviews as this would have allowed me to focus more attention on the interviewees. I also reflected that, in addition to the interviews, it might have been helpful to also add focus groups, as this would have allowed me to gather data from more people at the same time and also would have added the group dynamic dimension, which might have made it easier to assess the extent to which there is a shared view on certain topics.

Abstract conceptualization (AC) is where the learner attempts to conceptualize a theory or model of what is observed. This stage occurred when I was starting to analyse the data and code the different categories to form a storyline of what my research was telling me.

Further reflective insights from my learning are included as *Appendix L*.

6.3 Recommendations

6.3.1 Recommendations to the organisation

Based on my interviews as well as the literature survey, the following issues need to be taken into account as part of the implementation model for this organisation:

- 6.3.1.1** For the purposes of this organisation, a combination of coaching and mentoring should be offered. A clear orientation will have to be provided to participants and stakeholders about the difference between these two helping relationships, given the fact that my findings indicated that the two are regarded as one and the same role by many respondents. Clarity of objectives and role as well as expected outcomes will be crucial. A clear coaching and mentoring methodology will have to be decided on.
- 6.3.1.2** A formal structure must be established to administer the programme, co-ordinate the training of line managers, manage the different coaching and mentoring relationships as well as contract with external providers. An individual should be identified to centrally co-ordinate the whole process and provide support and supervision to coaches and mentors. In this regard the concept of self-sustaining coaching circles where managers from diverse functions meet on a regular basis to reflect on experiences and coach each other (as has been successfully used by BAT) might be worth considering. This would also facilitate self organised learning and empowerment.
- 6.3.1.3** The responsibility for coaching and mentoring is seen as primarily a line function and coaching and mentoring should be incorporated into the performance contracts of the line managers as part of the key performance areas against which they are evaluated and rewarded. Line managers should be primarily responsible for coaching and mentoring with regards to performance and career development.

- 6.3.1.4** Coaching and mentoring should ideally be available to all staff members, but specifically and initially at least for all Legacy candidates, all high potential staff members who are eligible for promotion or have been identified as potential successors as well as all newly appointed staff members. The coaching and mentoring should be voluntary.
- 6.3.1.5** A combination of coaches and mentors assigned by the institution and of clients being able to choose a coach or mentor from an available pool should be provided.
- 6.3.1.6** It is recommended that internal staff (selected line managers and volunteers) should be equipped with the necessary mentoring and coaching skills, based on a clearly defined coaching and mentoring methodology. All line managers from a certain job level upwards should be trained and empowered with basic mentoring and coaching skills. In addition to this, volunteers who comply with certain criteria should be invited to become part of the pool of trained coaches and mentors. Given the concerns expressed in the interviews about managers having to take up a perceived “additional role”, expectations and anticipated time commitment for participation will have to be clearly contracted with participants. It will also be important to understand and consider how managers would feel about spending time on this kind of activity and to consider what incentives may be needed to persuade them to give “developing talent” a higher priority? A big challenge will be to get the buy-in of line managers into the notion that coaching and mentoring of team members are part of a manager’s/leader’s job and one of the competencies of a manager and not an extra role or responsibility.
- 6.3.1.7** Coaching and mentoring should be linked to the business strategy and be aligned with other people management and development processes such as competency development, on-boarding and leadership workshops.
- 6.3.1.8** The focus should be mainly on induction and socialization (understanding organisational processes, structures, culture, politics and networks),

career development issues as well as developing leadership skills and emotional intelligence competencies.

- 6.3.1.9** A comprehensive communication strategy and marketing strategy is needed – with the buy-in and visible support of and mandate from top management.
- 6.3.1.10** Measures and clear contracts should be put in place to ensure confidentiality.
- 6.3.1.11** An intervention like this requires substantial monetary resources, and these will need to be budgeted for centrally by the organisation.

6.3.2 Recommendations to other researchers

Based on my experience it is of critical importance to make sure that any coaching intervention is relevant to specific and unique organisational context.

I started out investigating a model for coaching but my research has shown conclusively that a pure coaching approach will not work in my organisation - that it must be a combined coaching/mentoring programme. This has implications for how coaching is understood and rolled out in South African organisations and is ground for further research.

As far as the coaching of black employees in South African organisations is concerned, it is recommended that more research is done on the sensitivities and paradigms around this.

Word count: 1772

Total word count: 12 495

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