'**Exploring the perceived benefits of the self-development of authentic leadership in organisations through one-to-one coaching**'

An **abridged** version of the project submitted to Middlesex University in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Masters in Work Based Learning Studies (Professional Coaching)

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Summary

The *overall aim* of my research was to provide a case study comprising of a small sample size of participants that would allow me to explore how one-to-one coaching could facilitate the self-development of authentic leaders, and how this could increase their self-perceived leadership effectiveness within their organisations.

The *case study approach* informed my data collection and analysis techniques. There was a quantitative questionnaire that measured the pre- and post coaching self-assessments and shifts, combined with a semi-structured interview that collected mainly qualitative data, both from the coachee's perspective. I also recorded my observations and reflections during the coaching process.

Findings of analysis of data, divided into 3 broad categories, were that: 1) all coachees developed an experiential understanding of Authentic Leadership during the coaching 2) furthermore, the various self-coaching tools, together with exploring selected authentic leadership aspects, all added to the self-development of authentic leadership for each coachee, and finally 3) self-perceived benefits were considerable as coachees felt that their performance towards excellence had increased between 22% and 75%, and furthermore, that they were more influential in developing authentic followers.

Conclusions were that: 1) effective understanding of Authentic Leadership could best be developed experientially and 2) coaching, specifically designed towards facilitating self-development of Authentic Leadership, was very effective in facilitating self-development of authentic leadership and 3) self-perceived benefits of having Authentic Leadership in organisations were considerable.

Main recommendations were that the coaching programme be refined further, and that continued research needed to be done with a bigger sample size, over a longer time, with 360 degree feedback thereafter on the benefits of authentic leadership in organisations. Finally, that these findings be presented to organisations in order to create awareness of the benefits of authentic leadership, and how this leadership can be developed within those organisations.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter creates a context for the project, explains its main themes and why the study area is important.

When problems surfaced at Enron, WorldCom, and others, the extent of the leadership crisis became apparent (George, 2007: Pg xxv and Scharmer, 2008: Pg 68,315-321), creating a widespread erosion of trust in business leaders. My intention with my research findings is to assist me in taking some of the learnings during my one-to-one authentic leadership coaching into organisational group work, towards developing a way of leading that is based on character and substance rather than style of leadership, integrity rather than image or position, in order to equip leaders to rebuild trust, and to create the most compelling future for themselves and their organisations.

I am a transformational coach who coaches 'from-the-inside-out' towards authentic leadership and performance excellence within organisations. My informal field research to-date conducted whilst coaching leaders over the last 5 years corroborated my theory that authentic leadership is a root construct of all effective and empowering leadership.   It is about understanding what is meaningful in terms of what has shaped us to be who we are, and about understanding the values, beliefs, thoughts and feelings that drive our behaviour. It is about exploring and knowing our purpose and vision, and what the legacy is that we wish to leave behind. It is about understanding how to use our inner resources available to us to get to where we need to be.   Finally, it is about being the highest potential true 'Self' we can be, in order to be the role model we desire to be to self and others.

I am fortunate to be doing my research within a leading international energy organisation, Sasol Ltd, in South Africa.   This is an organisation that to some extent is grappling with the issues that I address in my research, and towards this end, they have developed a value-driven leadership model that they encourage their employees to embrace.   This model embraces not only values, but incorporates aspects such as meaning, purpose, legacy, and positive emotional states, which also form part of Authentic Leadership. Sasol believes that it will take 5 – 7 years to change the culture of the organisation to a value-driven culture, and they therefore have a keen interest in the findings of my research.

During the last 12 months I have explored the theoretical perspectives on authentic leadership, and have found there to be a broad agreement on what is meant by this term, which I outline further in my literature review in chapter two.   I also include my research done on the benefits of authentic leadership in organisations, and how this leadership can

be developed. I have chosen to research the self-development through coaching of those authentic leadership aspects that often emerge in my coaching, such as:

- Self-identity
- Meaning, purpose and vision/legacy
- Beliefs about self and others
- Values/Ethics
- And positive emotional states

By researching the self-perceived benefits of facilitating this powerful form of leadership, and how this can be effected through one-to-one coaching, it will allow interested organisations to appreciate not only the benefits of having authentic leadership within, but also how this development can be effectively facilitated.

Chapter 2: Research Project Objectives and Literature Review

This chapter sets out the research project aims, objectives and boundaries, and provides a literature review.

My *project aim* is to provide a case study comprising of a sample size of 7-10 participants that will allow me to explore how one-to-one coaching can facilitate the self-development of authentic leaders, and furthermore how this can increase their self-perceived leadership effectiveness within their organisations

My *specific research objectives* are to:
- Conduct a literature review of the definitions, benefits and development of authentic leaders in organisations.
- Design and facilitate a coaching programme specifically aimed at developing authentic leadership.
- Design a questionnaire to measure their self-assessment of authentic leadership before and after the coaching programme.
- Design a post-coaching semi-structured interview to yield in-depth mostly qualitative data.
- Analyse questionnaire and interview data and check its validity through triangulation with my observations during the coaching.
- Draw conclusions from the analysis and recommend possible future actions.

My *research statement* is: *'Exploring the perceived benefits of facilitating self-development of authentic leadership in organisations through one-to-one coaching'*.

My main *research questions* are:
1. How did the participants' experiential understanding of authentic leadership change as result of the coaching?
2. To what extent was one-to-one coaching, designed to facilitate self-development of authentic leadership, effective?
3. How specifically was the self-development of authentic leadership through one-to-one coaching impacted by exploring and developing following aspects of authentic leadership:
    - Self-identity
    - Meaning, purpose, vision/ legacy
    - Beliefs about self and others
    - Values/Ethics
    - Positive emotional states
4. What were the self-perceived benefits in terms of their increased effectiveness as leaders within their organisations?
5. If 'zero' performance is 0% and performance excellence is 100%, how did the coaching impact specifically on the individual's perceived quality of performance output at work?

Some *research project boundaries*:

- Due to this being a small piece of research, the project explored the benefits and development of authentic leadership as perceived only by the coachee participants themselves.
- The research was completed with a small sample size of 7 participants.
- The coaching programme was run over 5 months.
- I focused my research to the development of certain authentic leadership aspects, as outlined in chapter 1.

Literature Review

I focus on the development of intra-personal and inter-personal skills whilst coaching for alignment of meaning, purpose, identity, values, and emotional states. Experience has shown me that all these, together with vision, drive authentic behaviour. I strongly agree with my literature review on authentic leadership, as summarised below, which I divide into 1) theoretical perspectives 2) development of, and 3) benefits of authentic leadership.

Theoretical perspectives of Authentic Leadership

In his thesis, Being and Nothingness (1943), referred to by Chan et al (2005a, Pg 3), the philosopher Jean Paul Sartre describes authenticity as 'a personal search for meaning, arguing that mankind, having been confronted with the meaningless existence, embarks on a search for the true self. However, authenticity needs to be earned and emerges from its social context, under the guidance of one's own conscience'. Victor Frankl (1959: Pg 124) suggests that at any moment, man must decide, for better or for worse, what will be the monument to his existence, or the legacy that he wishes to leave behind. In my experience, there often comes a time where we start searching who we really are, the purpose of our lives, and the legacy we wish to leave behind. This ties in with how both Jean Paul Sartre, and Victor Frankl relate to humanness and authenticity.

Adrian Chan et al (2005a: Pgs xxii-xxiii) suggest that authentic leadership is a logical extension of the authentic self and a root construct of all true leadership. 'Authentic leaders are leaders who: (a) know who they are, and what they **believe** in; (b) display transparency and consistency between their **values**, ethical reasoning and actions; (c) focus on developing **positive emotional states** such as confidence, optimism, hope, and resilience within themselves; (d) are widely known and **respected** for their **integrity**'.

They continue (2005a: Pg 4) that the leader who is authentic can achieve more than any other leader. The extent that the leader is authentic as a person directly affects the efficacy of his / her leadership style on followers.

The three guiding lights for any true leader are usually **meaning**, **purpose** and **vision** (Klenke, 2005: Pg 171). Authentic leaders and followers strive to find an overarching

meaning and purpose in their lives that connects them with a deeper sense of individual and collective self.

In my experience, once we understand more meaningfully who we are in terms of our self-identity, and what drives us, for instance, in terms of our purpose and vision, our values and beliefs, and our emotional states, then we can consciously decide how to use what we have in terms of internal and external resources in order to become effective and empowering leaders for self and others.

Development of Authentic Leadership

According to Cashman (2008: Pg 24-27) being able to lead self and others with awareness and authenticity often requires a journey of transformation 'where we need to explore the internal identity that drives us, where we need to integrate all of life's experiences into a meaningful context'.   He continues that in order to lead on purpose, we need to understand our values and purpose.

George (2007: Pgs xxiii, 86) agrees that this journey is about getting to know our authentic self. It is about practicing our values and principles, understanding what motivates us, and leading with purpose and passion. Henderson (2003) focuses mainly on the values component of authentic leadership, and how we can align our behaviour with our espoused values. Both George and Henderson have a number of self-help exercises to help the reader achieve this. For me there are two aspects that are overlooked in these self-help books.

1. The development of authentic leadership often requires that we explore what is happening below the emotional waterline, often a very challenging journey near impossible to undertake on our own. It requires the skills of someone that will listen in a way that we feel heard, and ask those questions that ignite our minds and uncover our blind spots; that will challenge us to move outside our comfort zone, whilst supporting us when we do so.
2. New self-awareness does not automatically lead to change. Our existing ways are often habitual, requiring the partnership with an external experienced person to change limiting to empowering habits. A coach can play this role.

Chan (2005b:Pg 231-240) states that the metric of time for development of authentic leadership is typically very long, adding that it usually takes time to emerge the characteristics of authentic leadership. Also, perceptions of authenticity that occur may be instantaneous, whilst the development and execution of actual authentic leadership behaviours may take long.

He shares four working assumptions regarding the requirements of effective authentic leadership development interventions, as follows. They need to be:
1. Targeted and customised.
2. High frequency and micro interventions.
3. Self-reinforcing interventions over time.
4. Multilevel, nested interventions.

Although Chan never mentions coaching as such, in my experience coaching towards authentic leadership, adheres to all four assumptions. Cashman (2008: Pg 168) reminds his readers that awareness without commitment and practice is leadership in adolescence. He continues that the best way to take action towards developing this leadership, is through coaching.

Benefits of Authentic Leadership in Organisations

According to (Chan et al, 2005a: Pgs 25-28), authentic leaders are seen by their followers as true and natural leaders that are have integrity and are trustworthy. They become empowering role-models to followers as they lead in a manner that others recognise as authentic. Because they are more transparent, more open, and self-disclose more, they evoke higher levels of follower trust. Followers then feel more comfortable to be authentic as well, whilst embracing and enacting the positive values of authenticity. This has important implications for resultant outcomes and performance, suggesting that authenticity is a leadership multiplier.

Hannah et al (2005: **Pg 71-72)** state that as an authentic leader's ethical behaviour is infused into the organisational norms and relationships, the trust between the leader and followers increases. This has proven to be an important component in predicting various attitudinal, behavioural and performance outcomes, such as job satisfaction, organisational involvement and commitment. They further suggest that the relational transparency will further lead to operational and organisational transparency. **Paul Varella et al (2005: Pg 108)** corroborates the afore-mentioned theories.

Hughes (2005: Pg 86 - 95) states that authentic leaders recognise their followers' talents and through their relationships, nurture those followers' talents into strengths. One of the positive emotions that he highlights is humour which can be used to help organisation members to create a psychological distance between themselves and difficult issues in order to allow them a release valve that still allows them to work.

Fry and Whittington (2005: pg 186 – 187) state that authentic leadership, underpinned by spiritual leadership, requires that leaders act from a set of internal values that are consistent with their attitudes and behaviour, anchored in a set of universally accepted principles. They continue that the purpose of spiritual leadership is to create **vision** and **value** congruence across the individual, team and organisation levels and, ultimately, foster higher levels of both organisational commitment and productivity.

My research therefore explores not only the self-perceived benefits, but also how coaching as a facilitative intervention can accelerate this transformational journey of the self-development of authentic leadership.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter outlines my research approach and data collection techniques. I consider my role as work based (insider) researcher whilst exploring the advantages / disadvantages of this role. I also reflect on the ethical considerations which includes confidentiality. Finally I outline my considerations around methods of analysing my data using triangulation that will lead to credible research findings.

My research approach

My research approach was mainly qualitative with some quantitative data, involving field and deskwork. My research approach was a case study where I used a small sample group of 10 individuals that entered into a coaching programme with me. I decided on various quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques to allow for a detailed in-depth data analysis. Bell (2005: Pg 7) states that quantitative researchers collect facts in order study the relationship of one set of facts to another. One of my aims was to compare how the research participants assess themselves before and after the coaching project. Bell further continues that qualitative research is more concerned with understanding individual's perceptions of the world, seeking insight rather than statistical facts. I further enriched my quantitative research with a more in-depth qualitative research that explored my research participants' perceptions of the benefits and development of authentic leadership through one-to-one coaching.

I considered **Action Research** and **Soft System Methodology** research approaches as Garnett J. et al (2006/7) state that 'The idea is to attempt change by facilitating group work to develop human systems, and monitor results. It is problem-focused'. I decided against these as my research was individual rather than group-focused, and not necessarily problem-focused.

Rationale for my data collection techniques

I had to grapple with how this could be done in a **valid** way, as authentic leadership, unlike other forms of leadership, cannot easily be measured using a **normative** measurement approach where change is measured against a set of established norms. My research on data collection techniques led me to the work of Adrian Chan (2005b: Pg 227), who suggested that it would be premature to recommend specific ways of measuring authentic leadership without first understanding what authentic leadership was and what aspects of authentic leadership should be measured. He identified four theoretical perspectives, these being intrapersonal, developmental, interpersonal and pragmatic, and their implications for measurement, as summarised in the **table 3.1 below**.

Table 1. Types of Theoretical Perspectives and its Impact.

Perspective	Key Elements	Examples of Articles	Focal Constructs for Development	Level of Analysis	Metric of Time	Nature of Measure	Nature of Sample
Intrapersonal	Authentic leadership as a system of internal processes	Chan, Hannah, and Gardner (2005); Michie and Gooty (2005)	Self-awareness, self-regulation, meta-cognition, values	Individual	Typically very short	Both normative and ipsative	Broad range
Interpersonal	Authentic leadership as a positive relational force	Eagly (2005); Ilies, Morgeson and Nahrgang (2005)[a]	Relational transparency, behavioral consistency, relational orientation	Dyad and above	Varies	Typically normative	Broad range
Developmental	Authentic leadership as a personal journey of growth	Sparrowe (2005); Shamir and Eilam (2005)[a]	Narratives, life-stories, insight, themes, self-reflection	Individual	Typically very long	Typically ipsative	Small, selected sample
Pragmatic	Authentic leadership as a means for veritable outcomes	Luthans and Avolio (2003)[a]; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May and Walumbwa (2005)[a]	Performance beyond expectations, veritable growth	Dyad and above	Varies	Typically normative	Broad range

[a] *Note:* Some articles have a mix of perspectives and may fit into more than one category. In such instances, their membership into a particular category is determined on which perspective is more predominant.

Chan, Adrian (2005b: Pg 231). Table 3.1 'Types of theoretical perspectives and their impacts'

As this project researches the development of authentic leadership as a personal journey of growth, I concentrated mainly on the development perspective as I measured the acquisition of selected positive values (as outlined in **chapter 1)** towards self-development of authentic leadership.

Data Collection Instruments
Pre and post coaching questionnaire
*With regards to the **validity** of data collected,* Bell (**2005: Pg 118**) refers 'to Sapford and Jupp (1996) who take 'validity' to mean 'the design of research to provide credible solutions', and who argue that what has to be established is whether the data: '*Does* measure and characterize what the authors claim, and that the interpretations *do* follow from them. The structure of a piece of research determines the conclusions that can be drawn from it and, most importantly, the conclusions that *should not* be drawn from it'.

My research highlighted that there was currently only one validated questionnaire available on Authentic Leadership (ALQ, designed by Dr Bruce Avolio), and this questionnaire was not valid for my research, as it did not focus on the same Authentic Leadership attributes that I wished to measure. For the purpose of my research I therefore developed a pre- and post-coaching questionnaire that would be valid for my research.

Instead of a **normative measurement** approach where I measure change against a set of established norms, I decided on Chan's suggested *ipsative* measurement *approach* in order to measure the self-development of authentic leadership as a personal journey of

growth. Chan suggests that it is more meaningful to compare within-person change using the person as the yardstick.

My intention was to yield pre- and post coaching snapshot data by means of these pre- and post-coaching questionnaires, in order to explore the coachee's authentic leadership self-development during the coaching intervention. Whilst this was not used as research data, each question also asked for empirical evidence to support the snapshot. The intention with this was to yield more authentic data by bringing the research participants down from a potentially abstract unengaged to a concrete engaged state of mind whilst filling in the questionnaire. In addition, the post-coaching snapshot requested that coachees revise their initial assessments whilst simultaneously indicating their current post-coaching assessment. My intention with this was based on the fact that we do not always know what we do not know, and I wanted to get a sense of the increased self-awareness that I could then further explore in my post-coaching interview.

In my ipsative measurement approach I used the Likert scale (**Bell 2005: Pg 142**) starting with 0 (not at all) to 4 (almost always) to simplify my quantitative analysis and presentation. I used the results from my questionnaire to calculate further statistical results for my report

In order to ensure that the questions were as unambiguous as possible, I piloted the questionnaire beforehand, and refined it, based on the feedback I received, ensuring that the questions were appropriate and clearly understood.

Semi-Structured Interview

Also called a guided or focussed interview, Bell (2005: pg 161) describes this as an interview where certain questions are asked, and respondents have a certain degree of latitude in how they wish to respond with their views. This post-coaching interview suited my research better than a completely structured or unstructured interview as this allowed me to extract from each coachee their narratives, insights, and themes of self-reflection that have contributed to the self-development of authentic leadership. I piloted this as well in order to test the questions and check the time required for the interview. This data would further enrich the data already collected in the questionnaires, and address more specifically the main research questions.

Reflective journaling

Throughout the coaching, I incorporated reflexivity by encouraging all coachee participants to undertake reflective journaling, based on David Kolb's adult experiential learning model. I did reflective journaling along the same lines on the content of these sessions, whilst I also reflected on my own coaching process, so that I could learn and continually refine how I coach towards the self-development of authentic leadership.

It was my initial expectation to incorporate both my coachees and my reflective journaling as data for research purposes, but I subsequently decided to exclude the coachees' journals as I felt that their journaling needed to be for themselves. The themes and reflections that emerged from their journaling were incorporated in our subsequent coaching sessions anyway.

Authentic Leadership Framework

I decided to develop this framework for the coaching aspect of this research, as it created some structure that allowed the coachees to make sense of authentic leadership in terms of what drives us (input), how we use that (throughput), in order to achieve what we wish to achieve (output). Furthermore, it created a focus on the self-development of those aspects of authentic leadership that I wished to explore (**see chapter 1**), and where it was that I believed these fitted in this framework. I did not intend to use this as a direct data collection instrument for my research.

Data Analysis and Triangulation

I considered data *reliability* as this was mostly 'opinion-based' data, derived from the coachees' reflections during the coaching, and thereafter in their post-coaching interviews, and my own observations and reflections. Whilst I bore Bell's (**2005: Pg 116**) comment in mind about the constraints of a research project of this size in terms of data collection and triangulation, I endeavoured to increase both the *validity* and *reliability* of my findings by using the **method** and **person** triangulation wherever possible. I did so by comparing and enriching the coachees' quantitative data derived from the questionnaires with the mostly qualitative data from my own observations of them during the coaching, and my coachees' responses to my semi-structured interviews. For more details on my data analysis see chapter 4.

Ethical considerations throughout the research

As part of my research, I had to consider and fill in an Ethics Release Form and return it to Middlesex University.

My research project was officially sponsored by the manager in charge of leadership development at Sasol Head Office whom I informed of the project details, together with my informed consent form. Sasol moved from initial intent to final commitment by signing my Learning Agreement and their written consent when using their organisational name and the contents of their Value-driven Leadership model whenever presenting my research findings.

I was offered a 'Strategy Implementation Task Team' department with individuals whom were not all necessarily appointed leaders. However, these individuals worked with and needed to influence approximately 670 official leaders in the various business units to

improve performance within those units, in line with the organisational strategy scorecards. This group suited the purpose of my research, as authentic leaders do not necessarily have to be appointed in specific leadership positions in order to be influential leaders.

In order to ensure that all participants made informed decisions as to whether they wished to participate in the research, and more specifically, enter into a coaching relationship with me, I prepared a participant informed consent form for each potential research participant to read and sign. This form outlined the research focus and process, and it framed ethical considerations such as confidentiality and anonymity.

I arranged for an introductory session between each potential participant during which I outlined both the research and coaching aspects of the project, the ethical considerations, and what would be expected from the coachees and me.

Finally, those who wished to continue as coachee participants also had to sign the coaching commitment document, which framed the ethical boundaries of the coaching relationship itself, explained what I understood coaching to be, and to encourage coachees to start thinking about their coaching outcomes.

Once the coaching itself started, it was important for me to bear all of the afore-mentioned ethical considerations in mind, especially as I was coaching various members of the same team. I needed to be very mindful of confidentiality of all information shared in my coaching sessions. I needed to ensure that any of the data used for research purposes that could potentially point to any one individual, was used only after prior permission from them.

With prior verbal permission of each coachee, I used a digital voice recorder (DVR) to record our coaching sessions and my final interview with them, in order to supplement my notes. Following my example, my coachees brought their DVR's along as well. By revisiting our notes and audio recordings, we often discovered nuggets previously missed in the coaching conversation. In my case, I was able to transcribe especially the interviews comprehensively and accurately, which was imperative for my research.

In terms of the ethics release form, when three participants asked to be released from the project, I had to allow them to withdraw. Throughout the project, and at their request, I kept my Sasol sponsors up-to-date with the project progress.

My position as worker-researcher
My worker-researcher position played out as follows; as researcher I introduced the project to my research coachee participants, as coach participant I coached them, followed by critically reflected on my coaching processes as they unfolded.

One of my previous lecturers, Prof Mike van Oudtshoorn, once stated that there is no such thing as objectivity; the closest to that, was collective subjectivity. Breen (2001:Pg 1-6) corroborates this statement in his research with teachers, where he proved that the closest each teacher could get to being objective, was a subjective perception of the truth, coloured by their own constructs.

My challenge was in the role of researcher after having been in a close coaching relationship with my coachees over a period of five months. Whilst I endeavoured to distance myself as much as possible not to let my own constructs get into the way of an objective as possible data interpretation, I believe it is near impossible to be a completely objective observer. In order to counter-act this as much as possible, I audio-recorded each coaching session, and transcribed those recordings before adding my own reflections to them. Where-ever possible, I checked my reflections with my coachees in a collaborative, open and non-threatening way.

At this point is also important for me to mention that my coach training was helpful in that I was trained to come from a 'know-nothing' combined with a 'curiosity' state of mind when I coach. This means that I endeavour never to assume that I understand the worldview of my coachees, but rather that I curiously explore and unpack their responses with them.

Furthermore, I needed to consider that the close coaching relationship that developed could also influence the way my coachee participants responded to my self-assessment questionnaire and my interview with them after the coaching programme, as they might have wished to give me 'positive' rather than true reflections. I had to remind both my coachees and myself that this was an exploratory study, and that all data was good data and that truthful data of events and reflections as they unfolded, was the best quality data I could wish to receive.

Chapter 4: Project Findings

This chapter presents both the quantitative and qualitative data collected and its interpretation. The data is derived from:

- my own observations during the coaching, recorded in my reflective learning journals,
- the coachees' data, derived from the 1) pre- and 2) post-coaching Authentic Leadership Self-Assessment Questionnaires , post-coaching interviews. Due to the word count requirement for this report, I record only a small number of the responses either by myself or participant numbers.

The data findings and analysis are divided into 3 broad categories, those being:

1. The development of an **experiential understanding** of Authentic Leadership.
2. The effectiveness of coaching, specifically designed towards facilitating self-development of Authentic Leadership.
3. The benefits of having Authentic Leadership in organisations.

1. The development of experiential understanding of Authentic Leadership

Research Question 1: How did the participants' experiential understanding of authentic leadership change as result of the coaching?

Data Findings

My findings are compiled from my own observations and from the coachees' responses to questions 1 and 2 in the post-coaching interview.

My Observations

- When I first met with the coachees, I noticed that they had no understanding of Authentic Leadership.   Neither did they see themselves truly as leaders, even those in appointed leadership positions.
- I noticed that it did not matter in which context (e.g. health, family, work) they started to work towards outcomes; ultimately it helped them to frame what authentic leadership in organisations were all about.   I noticed 3 participant learnings across the board:
    1. Authentic leadership is not context-specific, nor does it require an appointed position.
    2. Change starts with self, and the coachees started taking accountability for their own thoughts, feelings, speech and behaviour; therefore authentic leadership develops self-leadership. As soon as the participants realised this, they become positive and more influential role models to others.
    3. Authentic Leadership is about developing a congruent 'being' first, which can then underpin congruent 'doing'.

Interview responses from participant numbers:

Before:

- *1: 'Plan, organise, lead, control, make decisions, be in charge. …Always really worried: trying to fake it; what is this person thinking about that, what are the politics in the company, and I wasn't myself.'*
- *3: 'For me it was 'What in the heck is authentic leadership? You could have explained it to me but it did not make any sense to me unless I experienced it for myself.'*
- *4: 'Previously understood leadership as others' responsibility, not mine. It was about planning, giving instructions, delegating; if people don't achieve, then discipline them.'*
- *5: 'I tended to micro-manage, and believe in 'command-and-control', and what I was actually saying is 'I don't trust your judgment'. I must include myself in the leaders that were not authentic...'*

Now:

- *1:' What you see in me comes from deep within….   I have a **calmness**; …and I know and live my values...'*
- *3: 'Authentic leadership is about being more true to ourselves, more integrity, more honesty. It's about my legacy, what I want to leave behind.'*
- *4: '…helping other people by moving from instructing to helping, not for the sake of spoon-feeding, but showing people what they are capable of.'*
- *5: 'To be an authentic leader, you need to know yourself. This distinguishes it from other leadership. To be able to know yourself, to be able to lower your own waterline and have difficult conversations with yourself….; …to be really open and honest in conversations; to be transparent and not afraid to enter into challenging conversations.'*

Analysis of Findings

- When we started, I experienced the participants as knowing nothing about authentic leadership. This is supported by interview comments 'What in the heck is authentic leadership?' and that authentic leadership needed to be experienced for it to make sense. It was further supported by responses that they did not trust others, leading to micro-management and 'command-and-control'.
- The coachees shared that they started knowing themselves better, being truer to self, that they started knowing and living their values, with more positive emotional states such as calmness, honesty, integrity, and relational transparency.
- My observation was that once they started taking responsibility for that change that starts with self, they became influential and positive role models to others.

2. The effectiveness of coaching, specifically designed towards facilitating self-development of Authentic Leadership. A high level view and then more detailed in terms of exploring specific aspects of Authentic Leadership.

Research question 2: To what extent was one-to-one coaching, designed to facilitate self-development of authentic leadership, effective?

Data Findings

My findings are compiled from my own observations and from the coachee's responses to questions 3 and 4b, 4e, 4f and 8 in the post-coaching interview.

My observations

- I noticed that the Life Chapters exercise was extremely powerful, as it allowed coachees to evaluate themselves over their whole life history, allowing for themes to emerge; allowing celebrations, and opportunities to deal with inner obstacles holding them back.
- Coaching conversations and reflective journaling increased awareness of what was previously hidden below the waterline, helping participants to understand who they were and what they needed to change towards becoming who they wished to be.
- I gradually experienced more and more honesty, caring for self and others, and accountability in terms of their thoughts, feelings, speech and behaviour.
- They started taking ownership for their journey towards reaching their coaching outcomes. They understood the meaning and value of their tasks, and took ownership towards completing them.
- Coachees were strongly aware of their values. However, the coaching helped them to move these from espoused to enacted values.
- Through the introduction of self-coaching tools such as reflective journaling and setting key behavioural indicators, coachees started to self-coach. This started a sustainable learning spiral of internal growth towards Authentic Leadership.

Interview responses from participant numbers:

- *1:* 'Life Chapters exercise helped me to realise how our life chapters influenced us, and to get my future chapters (vision) in place. The reflecting every day and after the coaching session was the most difficult part, and yet it had 80% of influence towards achieving my coaching outcomes.'
- *2:* 'Most important thing was to define a new purpose.'
- *3:* 'Coaching gave me a lot of tools that I could apply to myself to ensure that I experience the right stuff, and behave in a certain way.'
- *4:* 'Coaching played a major part, starting with building self-esteem.'
- *5:* 'The key behavioural indicators gave me focus. It was a good exercise for me to measure my growth. Coaching also played a huge role in removing barriers and

enabling me to really lower my waterline, to put the limiting things in the past behind me and enable me to focus on the future. It enabled me to have a new vision and to open up myself to the team.'

- *6: 'It helped me to understand a lot of things about myself.'*
- *7: 'I was in a depressed state when we started off. I feel much more relaxed and comfortable.'*

Analysis of findings

- Reflecting on themes emerging from Life Chapters was extremely effective in developing authentic leadership, as it distilled the legacy already created. Coachees' responses enriched this view even further by suggesting that it cleared obstacles and created a foundation for a vision of the future.
- A practice of regular structured reflections, even though initially challenging, was very helpful in getting them to know their true selves, and in understanding what needed to be changed in order for them to be whom they needed to be.
- Identifying key-behavioural indicators helped them to understand in behavioural terms what it meant to each individual to be an authentic leader. This was confirmed by one of the coachee's observations that it gave focus and helped him to work purposefully towards a chosen direction.
- Coaching helped to increase positive emotional states such as caring for self and others, more honesty, integrity, accountability, self-esteem, and relational openness.
- Coaching helped coachees to highlight their values, define their purpose and vision, and to align their behaviour to those.

Research Question 3: How specifically was the self-development of authentic leadership through one-to-one coaching impacted by exploring the self-development of following research aspects of authentic leadership?

Data Findings

My findings are compiled from my own observations, and from the coachee's responses to the pre- and post coaching questionnaires and to questions 4ci1-4ci6 in the post-coaching interview.

My observations:

In terms of specifically exploring the aspects of authentic leadership highlighted in my research, I noticed the following:

- Even though they had hardly ever considered their internal self-identity, meaning, purpose, vision/legacy, values/ethics, and their emotional states, it was driving them all the same.
- Only once we had explored and developed these aspects individually **(see charts 1 – 5)**, could we start considering how well these combined into a congruent and authentic self. For instance, one of my coachees had a self-identity of '*self-inhibitor*', yet his purpose was '*to empower others*'. The question that could then be addressed was how possible it was to be true to purpose with a self-identity driver such as this.
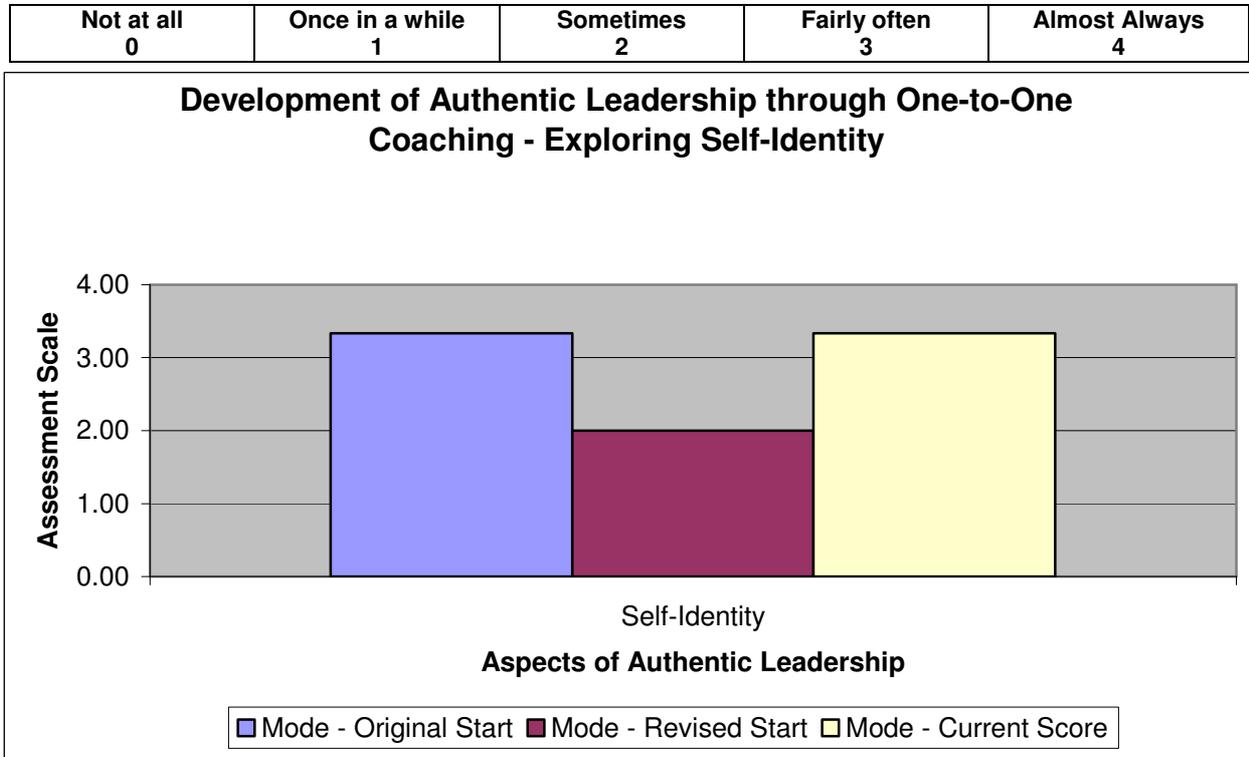
Coachees' questionnaire responses:

Charts 1 – 6 were created by collating and manipulating the pre-and post coaching responses from the individual questionnaires sent to the coachees. I calculated the modes in order to indicate the most frequently given assessments.

In terms of the Likert scale, my coaching taught me that once new behaviours are displayed 'Fairly often' (3) or even 'Almost Always' (4), they become habitual and therefore sustainable. The following findings and analyses will explore this.

Self-identity

Chart 1 indicates that coachees initially mostly over-assessed themselves as being aware of their *self-identity* 'fairly often'.   After the coaching they revised this initial assessment down to 'sometimes'. During their coaching they shifted towards 'almost always'.
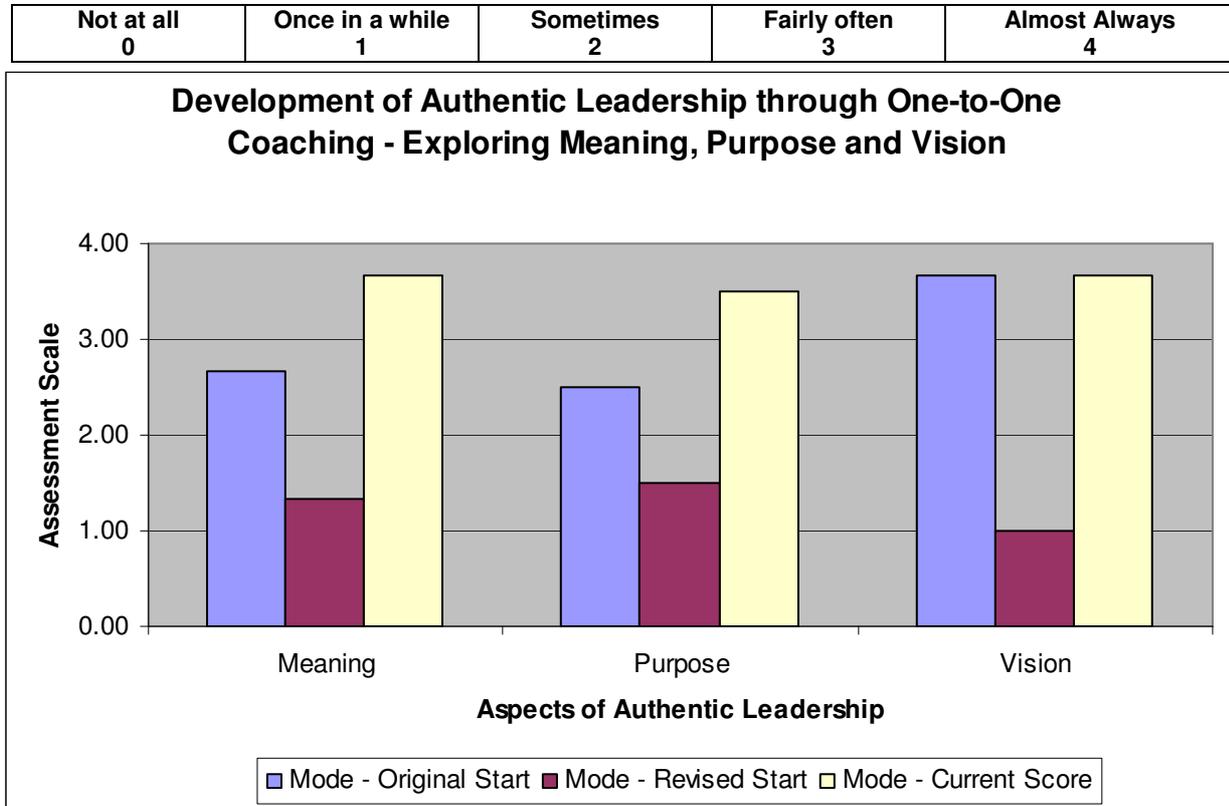
Not at all 0	Once in a while 1	Sometimes 2	Fairly often 3	Almost Always 4

Development of Authentic Leadership through One-to-One Coaching - Exploring Self-Identity

Chart 1 – Questionnaires: Consolidated comparisons and shifts in Self-Identity

Interview responses from participant numbers:

- *1: 'Starting with '**smiling lion'**. I could not live my life because I had that lion in me and I had to smile to the world, whilst I was not authentic about that.   So understanding my internal identity was very important, and linking that to my purpose in life...'*
- *2: 'Moving from '**know-it-all'** to '**unlocker of potential of self and others'….'***
- *4: 'My initial identity was an '**invisible statue'**. Now, everyday I wake up, I say I am going to conquer the challenges that face me. I am a '**conqueror**' now.'*

Meaning, Purpose, Vision and Legacy

Chart 2 indicates coachees initially mostly over-assessed themselves considerably in terms of being aware of their *meaning*, *purpose* and especially *vision*. After the coaching they assessed themselves mostly toward '*almost always'* for all three.

Not at all 0	Once in a while 1	Sometimes 2	Fairly often 3	Almost Always 4

Development of Authentic Leadership through One-to-One Coaching - Exploring Meaning, Purpose and Vision

Chart 2 – Consolidated comparisons and shifts in Meaning, Purpose and Vision

Interview responses from participant numbers:

- **1:** '*Never thought about my legacy or being a role model for my family or peers…. I did not have an authentic vision or legacy or purpose. Thinking about these now helped me to become authentic.'*

- **3:** '*During the coaching, the purpose, vision and the legacy I wished to leave behind became much deeper, it became much more me. It was not I want to be Nelson Mandela, it was much more 'this is who I am'.'*

- **5:** '*That's what has given me direction, to have a vision, to have a specific purpose, and my vision and purpose is to impact people in a positive sense, to assist them to realise their potential, to be what they can be, to make a difference. My purpose and vision are very much aligned with my values. So, it's part of me, and if I live that, then I am an authentic leader. Things are clicking, and the story is adding up. And also my behaviour is aligning with my beliefs, my values, and my attitude.'*

Values and Ethics

Chart 3 indicates that in terms of *values*, coachees initially assessed themselves mostly as being aware of their *values* 'fairly often' and less so for *ethics*. After the coaching they revised these initial assessments downwards, whilst assessing themselves mostly at 'fairly often' after the coaching.
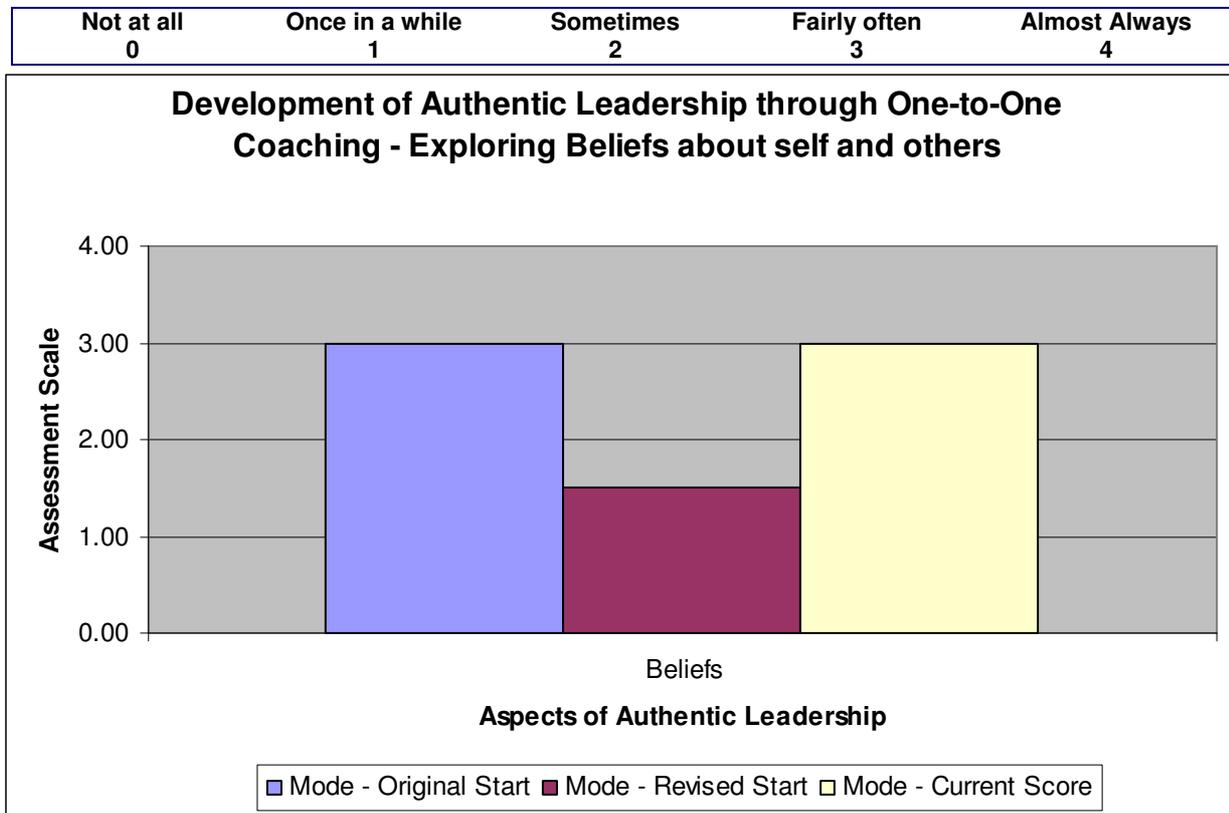
Not at all	Once in a while	Sometimes	Fairly often	Almost Always
0	1	2	3	4

Chart 3 – Consolidated comparisons and shifts in Values and Ethics

Interview responses from participant numbers:

- *3: 'My values have not changed; I am more conscious of them, and more consciously living them. They are now my enacted rather than only espoused values.'*
- *4: 'What I learnt about values was that previously I had no understanding of my values. I had Sasol values, yes, but no personal values. Now I have shown myself that I can have values to take through my entire life. This helps me to understand and live my values instead of compromising them. This makes me who I am.'*
- *6: 'Values have always been there. I have always known what it is that I believe in and I always practised them. What might have helped me further is to know what my internal identity is.'*

Beliefs about self and others

Chart 4 indicates that in terms of *beliefs*, coachees initially assessed themselves mostly as being aware of their *beliefs* 'fairly often'.   After the coaching they revised this initial assessment downwards considerably, whilst assessing themselves as 'fairly often' after the coaching.

Not at all	Once in a while	Sometimes	Fairly often	Almost Always
0	1	2	3	4

Development of Authentic Leadership through One-to-One Coaching - Exploring Beliefs about self and others

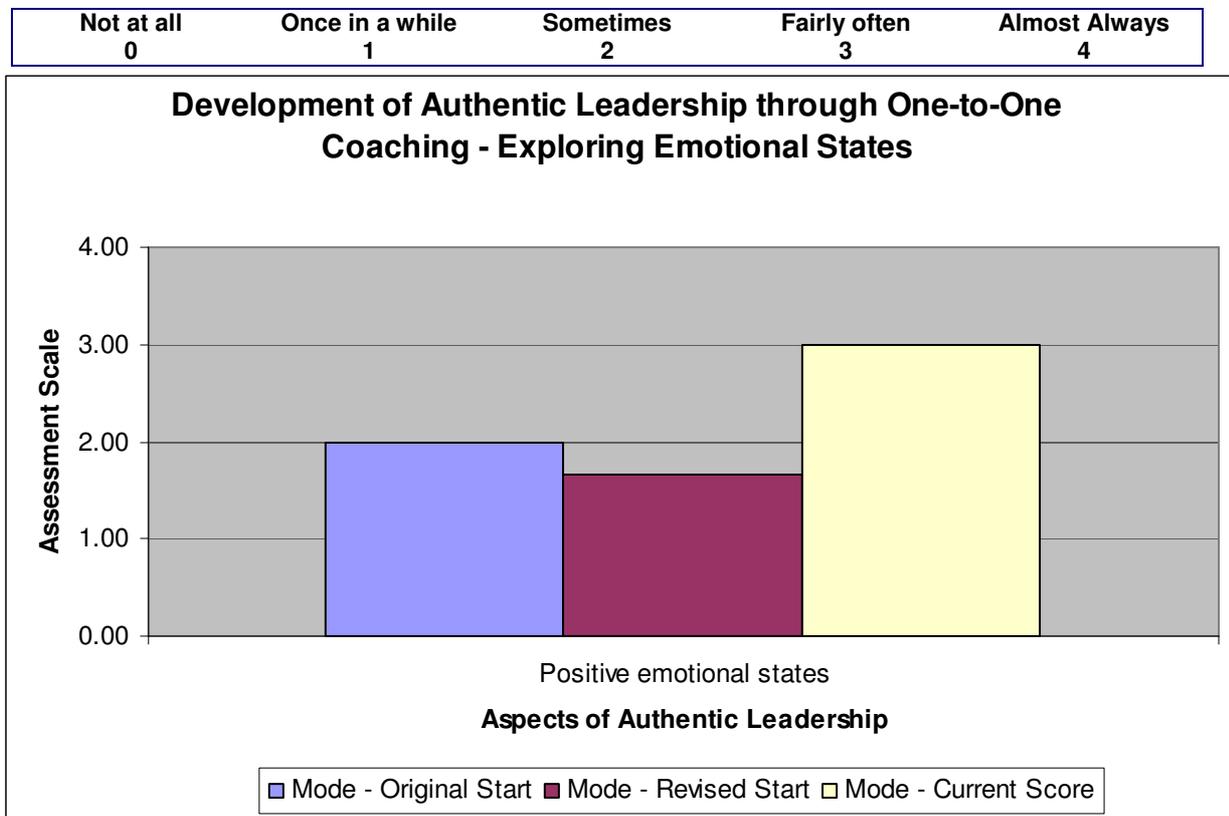□ Mode - Original Start ■ Mode - Revised Start □ Mode - Current Score

Chart 4 – Consolidated comparisons in beliefs about self and others

Interview responses from participant numbers:

- ✚ **3:** *'Previously my belief about others was 'my colleagues are out to get me'. Now I belief that my colleagues are there to help me to grow. Through the coaching the team will be even stronger than before because our team work is so much better. Authentic individuals can lead to authentic teams. In terms of beliefs about myself, before I believed that I did not matter, and now I believe that I truly matter.'*
- ✚ **5:** *'Although I received a different message from outside, I believed within that I wasn't good enough. My self-belief was much stronger than the feedback I received from others. I needed to open myself for feedback from others, in order to enable change.'*
- ✚ **7:** *'I had to rid of my past beliefs about my childhood. I have overcome that, gotten rid of it, and moved on. That gave me a big belief in myself that I can really do things.'*

Positive emotional states

Chart 5 indicates that in terms of *positive emotional states*, coachees initially assessed themselves mostly as being aware of these 'sometimes'.   After the coaching they revised this initial assessment downwards slightly, whilst assessing themselves toward 'fairly often' after the coaching.

Not at all 0	Once in a while 1	Sometimes 2	Fairly often 3	Almost Always 4

Development of Authentic Leadership through One-to-One Coaching - Exploring Emotional States

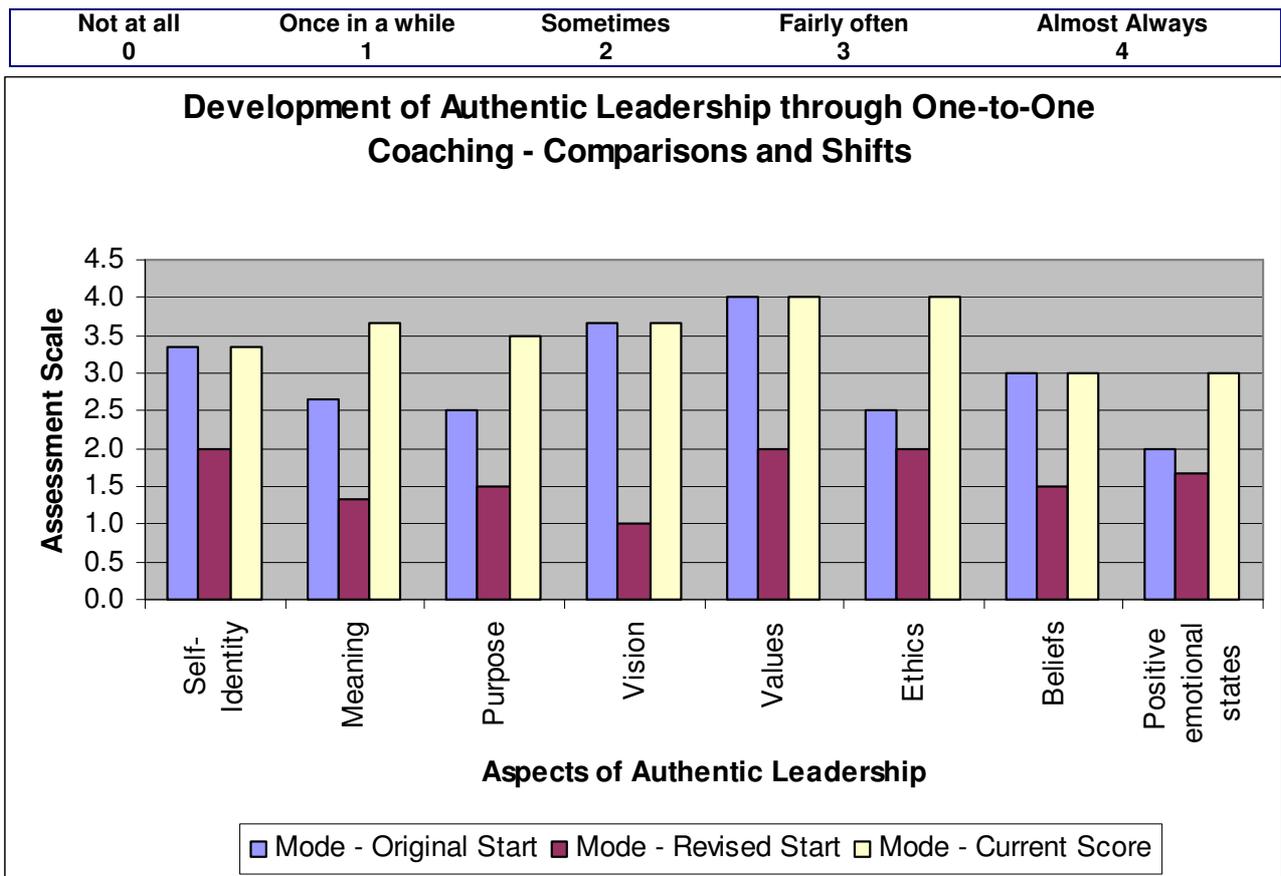**Chart 5** – Consolidated comparisons and shifts in Emotional States

Interview responses from participant numbers:

- *2: 'To move from a state of no hope and no control, that was where I was before. '*
- *5: 'The states that were driving me were depression and states of darkness, not seeing the future, not feeling excitement, and not able to celebrate life…. I could move away from them and really think positive thoughts, see the future, enjoy life, make decisions that allowed me to move on and to grow. In terms of developing authentic leadership, it allowed me to grow as an authentic leader.'*
- *6: 'I had these unstructured emotions which were making me feel I will burst, and now I am just me, calm, satisfied, accepting of self and the world and the way things are.' (Initial identity was 'Silent Volcano').*

Table 5.1 and **Chart 6** summarise the results from charts 1 – 5, and highlight that participants' revised initial score were lowest on *vision,* and highest on *self-identity*, *values and ethics*.   It also indicates that during the coaching participants shifted mostly towards 'almost always' on all the measured authentic leadership aspects.

		Self-Identity	Meaning	Purpose	Vision	Values	Ethics	Beliefs	Positive emotional states
Mode - Original Start		3.33	2.67	2.50	3.67	4.00	2.50	3.00	2.00
Mode - Revised Start		2.00	1.33	1.50	1.00	2.00	2.00	1.50	1.67
Mode - Current Score		3.33	3.67	3.50	3.67	4.00	4.00	3.00	3.00

Table 5.1 – Average Consolidated Comparisons and shifts towards Authentic Leadership

Not at all	Once in a while	Sometimes	Fairly often	Almost Always
0	1	2	3	4

Chart 6 – Consolidated Comparisons and shifts towards Authentic Leadership

Analysis of Findings

- My observation was that exploring all these aspects of authentic leadership was valuable towards developing authentic leadership. This was further strengthened by interview responses that:
  a. Better understanding *self-identity* helped link them to purpose and more positive emotional states and authenticity.
  b. Better understanding what is *meaningful* helped them to become more authentic, and that their understanding of purpose, vision and legacy became much deeper and more authentic. It helped them align themselves with their values.

c. Better understanding *values* and *ethics* helped them to live their values more consciously, and that this made them who they truly were.

d. Better understanding *beliefs about self and* others allowed for more authenticity of individuals and teams.

e. Better understanding *positive emotional states* helped participants to be true to themselves and grow as authentic leaders.

3. The benefits of having Authentic Leadership in organisations.

Research Question 4: What were the self-perceived benefits in terms of their increased effectiveness as leaders within their organisations?

Data Findings

My findings are compiled from my own observations and from the coachee's responses to question 6 in the post-coaching interview.

My observations:

- One of the biggest shifts I had noticed towards 'getting comfortable in their own skin' was reframing feedback from others from criticism, to a 'gift that will help me learn and grow'. This helped them to invite feedback, whilst considering what feedback to take on board and what to let go. This resulted in relational openness, transparency and caring that had never before been part of the team.
- As participants started truly understanding themselves better, they were able to accept, appreciate and esteem themselves, enabling them to do the same with others.
- Finally, I noticed that this had a positive and empowering ripple effect within the various systems they were part of, such as their peers, their client leaders and their families. The more authentic they became the more powerful and influential they became as positive role models.

Interview responses from participant numbers:

- **1:** 'I am now more honest, and if I go to others, I am honest about things.'
- **2:** 'We are working together, we are supporting one another and we know where we are heading.'
- **3:** 'Because I have become more authentic and true to myself, people respect me more.'
- **4:** 'Leaders are starting to rely on me for the job I am doing and the value I am adding.'
- **5:** 'It allows me to have crucial conversations with my leaders, really open and honest. If I am authentic, then it encourages those that I interact with to be more authentic with their people, and then we have the ripple effect. That's what we need in our business, more authenticity and moving away from window-dressing.'
- **6:** 'I have that confidence to talk to my leaders, and I have empowering relationships with them. With my team, I am now being open, and they are learning from me.'
- **7:** 'The people around me feel more empowered to do certain tasks instead of just keeping on relying on me.'

Research Question 5: If 'zero' performance is 0% and the participant's performance excellence is 100%, how did the coaching impact specifically on the individual's perceived quality of performance output at work?

My data findings are compiled from my own observations and from the coachee's responses to question 7 in the post-coaching interview.

My observations:
- I asked this question at the end of the coaching programme, and my sense was that there was more honesty; they were no longer wondering what the answer 'should be', but rather 'what, in their opinion', it was.
- If anything, they did not want to overestimate their current performance towards excellence as they felt there was still a lot more growth in the pipeline.

Interview data:
Chart 7 was created from the interview data in response to question 7 in my post-coaching interview.
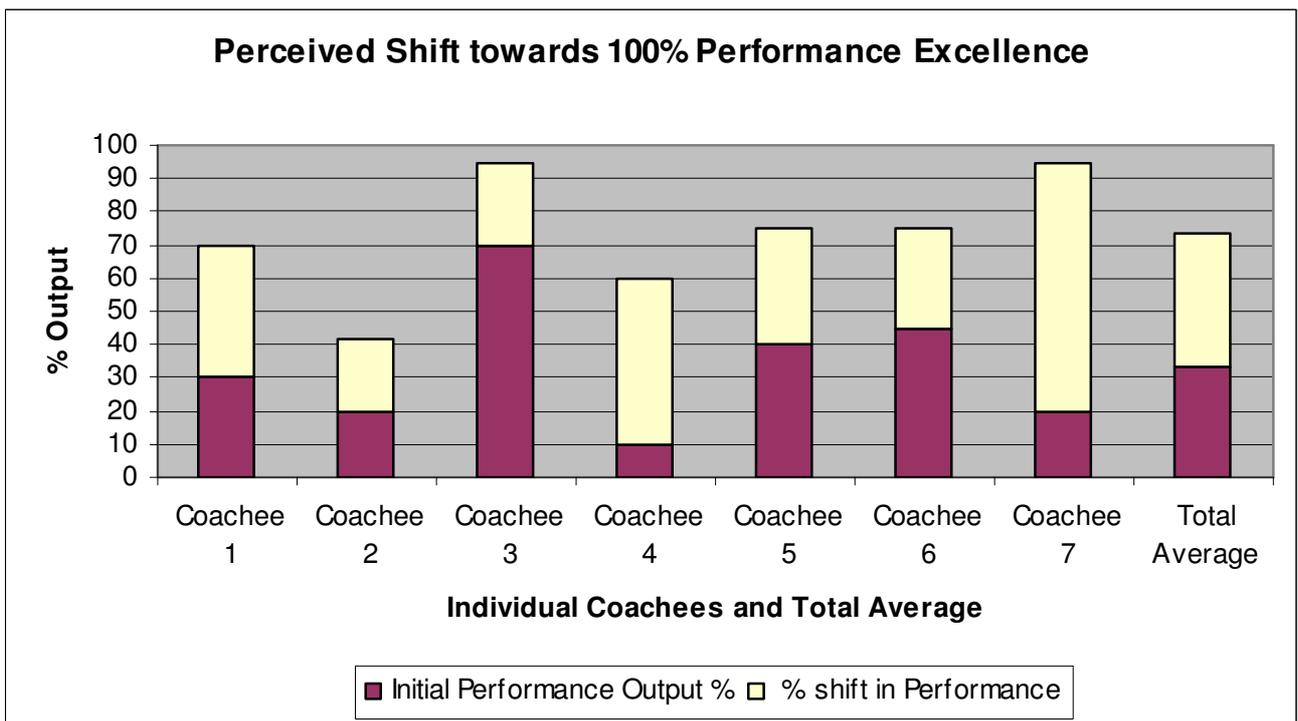
Chart 7 – Perceived percentage shifts towards Performance Excellence

Interview responses from participant numbers:
- **1:** 'From 30 to 70%.'
- **2:** 'From 20% to 42%. I want to be at 60% in 8 months, and 80% in 12 months time. '
- **3:** 'My performance has shifted from 70 – 95%.'
- **4:** 'From less than 10% to 60% and still improving.'

- **5:** *'From 40% because that is how I personally experienced it, to 75%.   There was a huge shift because I am motivated and positive, and … inspirational to the team. But there is still a lot of opportunity for me personally to grow more.   And when I get there, I can grow even more...'*
- **6:** *'I have moved from 45% to 75% towards performance excellence.'*
- **7:** *'…Influence on work environment, I have moved from about 20 to 95% growth.'*

Analysis of Findings

- I noticed that the more authentic and true to themselves the participants became the more positive influence they had on others. This was supported by their interview responses that they felt more respected by those around them, and that they were building their team, being supportive to one another, knowing where they were heading.
- This was further strengthened by the comment that they had more positive emotional states of honesty and openness, allowing them to have crucial conversations with their leaders, and that their authenticity encourages others to be authentic.
- **Chart 7** highlights that participants started with a perceived performance of as low as 10%, and the biggest individual perceived shift was 75%.   As a team, they started off with an average perceived performance of 33.6%, and during the coaching this increased by 39.6% to 73.2%, with comments from participants that they expected to improve their performance even further.
- Finally, some felt that they did not contribute in the past, and that they were now able to empower others around them.

As far as *reliability* and *validity* of the data analysed, I experienced the coachee's questionnaire and interview responses consistent with their responses throughout our coaching programme. Furthermore, I experienced both their questionnaire and interview responses congruent with my own observations of them throughout the coaching.

This concludes my project findings and analysis.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This chapter reflects the conclusions drawn from my findings, and the learning and recommendations that arose from the research undertaken.

Conclusions

1. I conclude that the participants developed experiential understanding of authentic leadership as result of the coaching (**Research Question 1**).

   - When we started, the participants knew hardly anything about authentic leadership.
   - During the coaching they started knowing themselves better, being truer to self and living their values, with more positive emotional states such as calmness, honesty, integrity, and relational transparency.
   - Once they started taking responsibility for that change that starts with self, they became influential and positive role models to others.

2. I conclude that the one-to-one coaching, designed to facilitate self-development of authentic leadership, was highly effective in developing authentic leadership (**Research Question 2**).

   - Reflecting on the themes that emerged from their life chapters was extremely valuable in developing authentic leadership, as it distilled the legacy that had already been created.   It also cleared obstacles and created a foundation for a vision for the future.
   - A practice of regular structured reflections was helpful in getting to know themselves in terms of who they truly were, and in understanding what needed to be changed in order for them to be whom they needed to be.
   - The practice of identifying key-behavioural indicators helped them to understand in behavioural terms what it meant to each individual to be an authentic leader.
   - Coaching helped to increased positive emotional states such as caring for self and others, more honesty, accountability, self-esteem, and relational openness.
   - Coaching helped coachees to highlight their values, define their purpose and vision, and to align their behaviours to those.

3. I conclude that the exploring and developing the aspects of self-identity, meaning, purpose, vision/legacy, beliefs about self and others, values/ethics, and positive emotional states had a positive impact on the self-development of authentic leadership (**Research Question 3**)**:**

   - Exploring *self-identity* helped link them to purpose and more positive emotional states and authenticity.
   - Exploring what was *meaningful*, in terms of *purpose* and *vision* helped them to become more authentic in terms of whom they were; their understanding of

purpose, vision and legacy became much deeper and more authentic, and also helped them align themselves with their values.

- Exploring *values* and *ethics* helped them to be true to and live their values more consciously.
- Exploring *beliefs about self and* others allowed for more authenticity of individuals and teams.
- Exploring *positive emotional states* helped participants to be true to themselves and grow as authentic leaders.

4. I conclude that the coachee participants experienced benefits in terms of their self-perceived increased effectiveness as leaders within their organisations (**Research Questions 4 and 5**):

- The more authentic and true to themselves the participants became the more positive influence they had on others.
- They felt more respected by those around them, as they were building their team, and being supportive to one another, knowing where they were heading.
- They had more positive emotional states of honesty and openness, allowing them to have crucial conversations with their leaders
- Their authenticity encourages others to be authentic as well.
- Participants started with a perceived performance of as low as 10%, and the biggest individual perceived shift was 75%. They started off with a combined average perceived performance of 33.6%, which increase during the coaching by 39.6% to 73.2%. They expected to continue their performance improvement even further.
- Finally, some felt that they did not contribute in the past, and that they were now able to contribute and empower others around them.

What I found interesting was that whilst I did not share much of the theoretical perspectives on authentic leadership with my coachees, their conclusions on authentic leadership, and especially the benefits of authentic leadership, were very much aligned with those theoretical perspectives, as outlined in my literature review in Chapter 2.

Whilst my research highlighted the perceived benefits of authentic leadership organisations, and how one-to-one coaching can facilitate this, further research needs to be done towards speeding up the self-development of authentic leadership in organisations through group or team-coaching.

Finally, the positive impact of authentic leadership in organisations and elsewhere will have an exponential ripple effect in those systems, as authentic leaders develop authentic followers.

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