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Wits Business School
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The use of assessments by executive coaches in South Africa

A research study submitted by

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of

Master of Management of Business Executive Coaching

Wits Business School
Johannesburg February 2017

ABSTRACT

Coaching has been growing in popularity, application and understanding (Passmore, 2014), yet enough is not known about how the use of assessments within the coaching process is structured.

This exploratory study looked at how coaches choose and how coaches use assessments.

The research methodology of this study was qualitative. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken in order to understand the lived experience of the coaches (Ponterotto, 2005)

The key findings of the research was that coaches choose assessments based on three sets of criteria; the first being that they are clear about the outcome they want to achieve, they are clear and intentional about their choice. A second criteria of choice includes choosing assessments based on a particular paradigm or approach. The paradigm can be based on theory it may be based on a belief system, a methodology or a philosophy or personal bias. A third criteria was made up of a group who were unintentional about their choice or, in some instances, the choice was being made for them. Although coaches choose along these three criteria, it was clear that they were not choosing dogmatically, but instead there was an eclectic approach to choosing.

The way coaches use of assessment was overwhelmingly in a practical way for the benefit of the coachee and for the benefit of the coach. The provision of well-crafted and thoughtful feedback and the guarantee of the coach having the required competence were some of the aspects identified as critical in the use of assessments.The success of the assessment process was dependent upon the skillset of the coach. The amount of care dedicated to feedback of the assessment report confirmed its importance in the assessment and coaching process

A further key insight was the complexity of working with assessments in corporate environments, assessments that sometimes boxed people and coachee's negative experiences amongst others meant that this surfaced a number of critiques, cautions and conundrums.

Key message: Coaching and in particular the use of assessments would be more effective if coaches and clients engaged at the contracting stage with the issue of assessment and how they work with it. Coaches becoming more reflective about their practices would enable them to engage more meaningfully about all the elements of their practices.

Key words: assessment process; assessment selection; executive; coaching; language

DECLARATION

I, Birgitte Davy, declare that this research report is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in Executive Business Coaching in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Birgitte Davy

Signed at Johannesburg

On the 28th day of February 2017

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family –

You are the most important ‘thing’ in the world to me

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly I would like to thank all my respondents for giving of their valuable time and sharing their experience with me. Without their inputs, time and narrative, this study would not have happened.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Gail Wrogemann for all her inputs challenging me to think harder, for encouraging me to complete, for being patient and for reading and feedback several versions of this research thesis.

I would like to thank my editor, Jennifer Croll, for editing the thesis.

Finally I would like to thank Justin and Nicole, my son and daughter, who believed in me being able to complete this thesis from day one. For this I am truly grateful.

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1 CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, coaching has been growing in popularity, application and understanding (Passmore, 2014). Meta studies such as Theeboom, Beersma, and van Vianen (2014) are showing that coaching indeed, is a positive tool in personal and leadership development and that it can support sustained behaviour change and business impact in five areas ie. performance/skills, wellbeing/coping, work attributes, goal directedness and self-regulation. The relationship between coaching and sustained individual behaviour change is thus not being disputed. However, with the growth comes the challenge to begin to describe what mastery in coaching looks like (Passmore, 2014). Literature concerning executive coaching consistently points out the need for a better conceptual and practical understanding of the process of coaching (Gregory, Levy, & Jeffers, 2008)

1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to understand more closely the practice of executive coaching and especially, the one element of the coaching process which involves assessments. Dingman (2004) in her study, compiled a literature review comparing a series of different coaching processes and identified six generic stages which were part of the most published models. The stages are:

1. Formal Contracting
2. Relationship Building
3. Assessment
4. Getting feedback and Reflecting
5. Goal setting
6. Implementation

(Dingman, 2004)

This research study intends to investigate the distinct assessment stage as described by Dingman (2004)

The purpose of this study is to explore how coaches select assessment and use assessments in the coaching process, given the specific coaching objectives or outcomes.

1.2 Context of the study

A large and growing body of literature has investigated the development and the professionalisation of coaching. There are currently a couple of coaching professional organisations and accreditation organisations that are South Africa based, Coaches and Mentors of South Africa (COMENSA) has started a credentialing process and the International Coaching Federation (ICF) has a South African Chapter have a staggered membership process based on internal credentialing processes. This demonstrates that there is movement towards creating body that will look at standards, compliance, education and ethical standards for coaches in South Africa,

According to Passmore (2014), in Europe and the United Kingdom, organisations like the Association for Coaching (AC) and the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC), have played a significant role in the development and the professionalising of coaching. However, very little standardisation exists in certain the practices (e.g. assessment tools, scientific or philosophical approaches, activities, goals, and outcome evaluation methods) of executive coaching as identified by Bono, Purvanova, Towler, and Peterson (2009) and Grant, Passmore, Cavanagh, and Parker (2010).

The challenge in South Africa, and in other parts of the world, is therefore, to encourage more longitudinal research that can begin to inform some of the hunches and practitioner observations about the state of play of coaching in this country (Stout-Rostron, 2006). More specifically as coaching has developed, there is a need for a greater insight, as Passmore (2014)(p.35) asserts "… from a search for excellence to an understanding of what mastery looks like".

The Passmore quotation above talks about the next benchmark for coaching being the understanding of mastery. This is indicative of the phenomenal growth that coaching, as a discipline has come through.

It is against this backdrop that this study goes beyond the understanding that there are best practices for the coaching process as outlined by the Dingman (2004) model description of six stages in the coaching process. Although pockets of excellence are seen and as described above, for practitioners, clients and coachees it is the conceptual framework and practical application of assessments that requires greater

inquiry. Various authors (Stern & Stout-Rostron, 2013);(Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011); (Grant et al., 2010) point to the shortcomings in the literature, with regard to assessment. This study contributes to the thinking about the role of assessments in coaching.

1.3 Problem statement

Within the assessment stage the researcher considers these two aspects an important starting point to understanding assessment practices.

1.3.1 *Main problem*

How assessments are applied in the South African context?

1.3.1.1 Sub problems

The sub-problem is to review

1. How coaches choose assessments
2. How coaches use assessments

1.4 Significance of the study

Coaches and organisations in the coaching field need to develop empirical studies that can guide the understanding and practice of assessment in coaching in South Africa.

The article by Stern and Stout-Rostron (2013) looks at the progress that has been made in coaching research globally. The article summarises the 16 areas of coaching research, and was executed between 2008 and 2012. Assessment was one of the 16 topics that were identified and during the said period, a total of eight peer reviewed journal articles were published on the topic of assessments in coaching. Table 1 identifies in which disciplinary fields they were published.

Table 1: The spread of Coaching articles per disciplinary field

Disciplinary field of journal										
Coaching focus area	Coaching	Coaching psychology	Other psychology	Medicine	Business	HR	Education/ Training	Finance/ Economics	Other	Total
Use of assessments in coaching	1	4	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	8

(Stern & Stout-Rostron, 2013)

1.5 Gaps in current research

1.5.1 *Examining practices*

Bono et al. (2009) have highlighted the dire need for uniformity in the practices of assessment in coaching. They also make the point that, despite the widespread use of executive coaches, much of the process and practices of executive coaching remains ‘shrouded in mystery ’ibid. The Bono et al. (2009) study is described as merely a snapshot into what is happening in coaching and so it should be contextually understood as a study from 8 years ago.

Lowman (2005) in Bono et al. (2009) adds to the conversation by lamenting the lack of theory or research in coaching and most accounts of coaching seem to be about the practices in isolation of theory.

The point, though, that Bono et al. (2009) and Lowman (2005) are making is that more theory needs to be developed about how coaches use assessments. There is indeed a gap in the research field relating to the processes and practices of executive coaching, as well as in the understanding of the assessment stage of the coaching process and the assessment tools that coaches choose and use (Passmore, 2012),

1.5.2 *Validity and Reliability of tools used in South Africa*

A gap that exists is the lack of validity and reliability of predominantly European and North American assessment tools. It will be interesting to see whether coaches in South Africa reflect on the European and North American cultural bias that may exist in the assessment tools. One needs to consider the extent to which this lack of validity and reliability in terms of language and culture can be regarded as a problem (Meiring, Van de Vijver, Rothmann, & Barrick, 2005).

1.5.2.1 Current research is from a European and North American base

There is currently more research emanating from North America and Europe. The South African body of research on coaching is still relatively small (Stout-Rostron,

2006). The international literature on coaching often carries a different regulatory framework than South Africa's framework.

The findings of this study can contribute to organisations who are hiring coaches, especially, corporates in South Africa; HR practitioners in organisations who want a better understanding of the use of assessments and to gain a more holistic perspective on what the elements are that make up the coaching process when they are deciding on procuring executive coaching services; Coaches who want to refine their practices and understanding of assessment will also be able to gain deeper insight.

It is the intention that this study contributes to the empirical body of knowledge and provides a deeper understanding of the use of assessments.

1.6 Delimitations of the Study

For the purpose of this study, the research only looked at the assessment stage of the coaching process. The research questions addressed stage three of Dingman's six stages of the coaching process, which is the assessment stage (Dingman, 2004)

Figure 1 illustrates the six stages of Dingman's Coaching process. Stage 1 is about the formal contracting side of the coaching process. Stage 2 is about the relations building. Stage 3 is about the Assessment, Stage 4 is about Getting feedback and reflecting, whereas stage 5 is about goal setting and stage 6 is about implementation. The researcher created and extended the conceptual framework to illustrate how this study reviews the choice and the use of assessment tools in the coaching process.

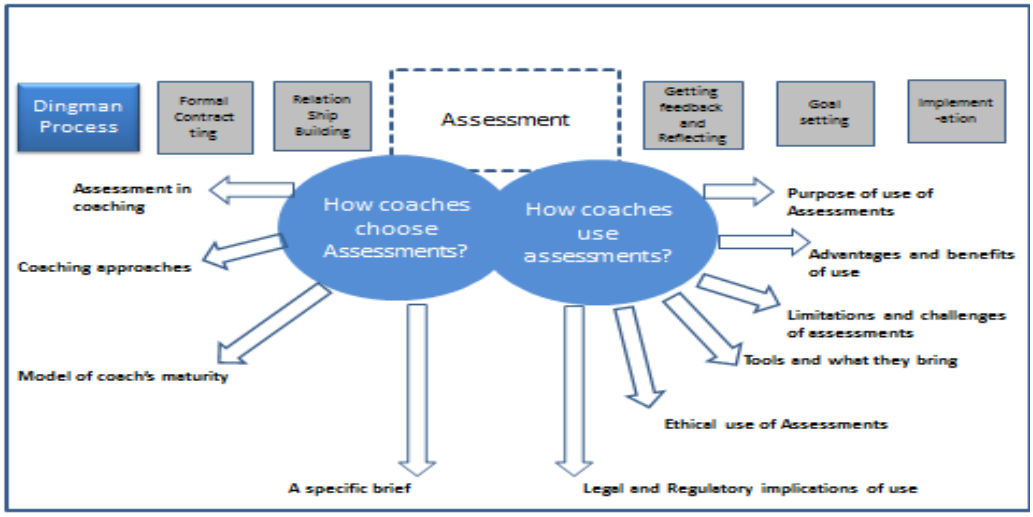


Figure 1: The Coaching Process (Dingman, 2004) (extended by Birgitte Davy 2017)

The study collected qualitative data over a 3-6 month period from South African coaches across demographics of race and gender, who have coached executives in individual processes only. The coaches that were interviewed in this study were from South Africa as the study is looking to isolate the use of assessment tools in coaching in South Africa.

1.7 Definition of terms

Table 2: Definition of Terms

Term	Definition	Source
Assessment	Assessment is the process of documenting, usually in measurable terms, knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs	http://www.self growth.com/arti cles/Definition_ Assessment_T ools.html l
Executive Coaching	A helping relationship formed between a client who has managerial authority and responsibility in an organisation and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioural techniques and methods to help the client to achieve a mutually identified set of goals to improve his or her professional performance and personal satisfaction and consequently to improve the effectiveness of the client's organisation within a formally defined coaching agreement.	((Kilburg, 1996) p.142
Psychometry	It is the ability to know what makes an individual different through the use of measurement tools that quantify abilities, attitudes and personality traits of individuals	(Scoular & Campbell, 2007) p.1
Psychometrics	The science of measuring mental capacities and processes	https://www.go ogle.co.za/web hp?sourceid=c hrome-instant&ion=1& espv=2&ie=UT F-8#q=psychome trics%20definiti on
Organisation Development	A process that applies behavioural science knowledge and practices to help organisations achieve greater effectiveness.	(Waddell, Cummings, & Worley, 2004)

Assessment Tools	Any tool that measures individual behaviour, skill, knowledge, competence or proficiency, It can include the construct of psychometry.	
Executive	A term commonly used for senior management defined by the online Oxford dictionary as a person with senior managerial responsibility in a business	https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/executive

1.8 Assumptions

The following assumptions have been made regarding this study:

a. The sample had the required information, and was willing to share this without overstepping any ethical boundaries in the client–coach relationship
b. If a respondent did not wish to disclose certain confidential information, they informed the interviewer.
c. Coaches are reflective and have a thorough and grounded understanding of their practice.

Chapter 1 has discussed the purpose and context of the research study. Definition of concepts used in this study are clarified. Delimitations and assumptions associated with this research study were identified.
Chapter 2 looks at the literature that is currently available around how coaches choose and use assessments in their coaching.

2 CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of the literature review is to:

- Survey the current state of knowledge in the area of study
- Identify seminal articles, key authors, theories and findings in that area
- Identify gaps in the knowledge in the area of inquiry (Bhattacherjee, 2012)

Coaching has many different contexts and approaches where it can be applied. (Cox, Bachkirova, & Clutterbuck, 2014)

It can range from skills & performance coaching, developmental coaching, transformational coaching, entrepreneurial coaching, life coaching, career coaching, leadership development programme coaching and team coaching to name a few.

Executive Leadership coaching is distinguished from the other types by the following elements according to Stokes and Jolly in (Cox et al., 2014)

The primary client is the organisation rather than simply the individual. At times executive coaching incorporates the alignment of the capabilities of the individual with the ambitions of the organisation. The aim of the coaching will usually be agreed with the individual's line manager to whom some sort of feedback before, during and after is appropriate.

This aligns with the intention of this study to understand the role of the assessment process within this context and approach to executive and leadership coaching. This study deals with executive leadership coaching in a corporate space because this is a growing trend in the South African context. It is also where the researcher currently locates herself as a buyer of executive coaching services for leadership development and for executive coaching.

In this section a literature review will be conducted on the key themes that are pertinent to this study and considers the location of assessment in the broader coaching process. This study is focussed around the choosing and use of assessments for individual executive coaching and does not cover any type of team or group coaching.

Thereafter, the focus is on the choosing of assessment. The following section is about how coaches use assessments. The last section concludes with key learning and insights.

2.2 Background discussion

This study examines the role of assessments in the coaching process. The literature is quite diverse in terms of how coaches think about assessment and coaches appear to approach the selection and the use of assessments very differently.
A number of models are emerging in the coaching literature that places assessments in a key, significant role in the coaching process (Dingman 2004; Saporito 1996; Passmore 2007).

2.3 How Coaches Choose Assessments

2.3.1 *Assessment in Coaching*

A short discussion follows to introduce the various models that have an assessment component and therefore show where some of the models locate the assessment in the coaching process. This discussion is by no means exhaustive. The researcher has made a selection of these particular models to illustrate how different writers and subject experts are thinking about assessment in the coaching process.

2.3.1.1 Three Current Models of Assessment in Coaching

A. Integrative Model (Passmore, 2007)

Passmore (2007) Integrative Coaching Model consists of six streams that all address a different element and progress toward deepening the insights, the learning and the understanding for the coachee.

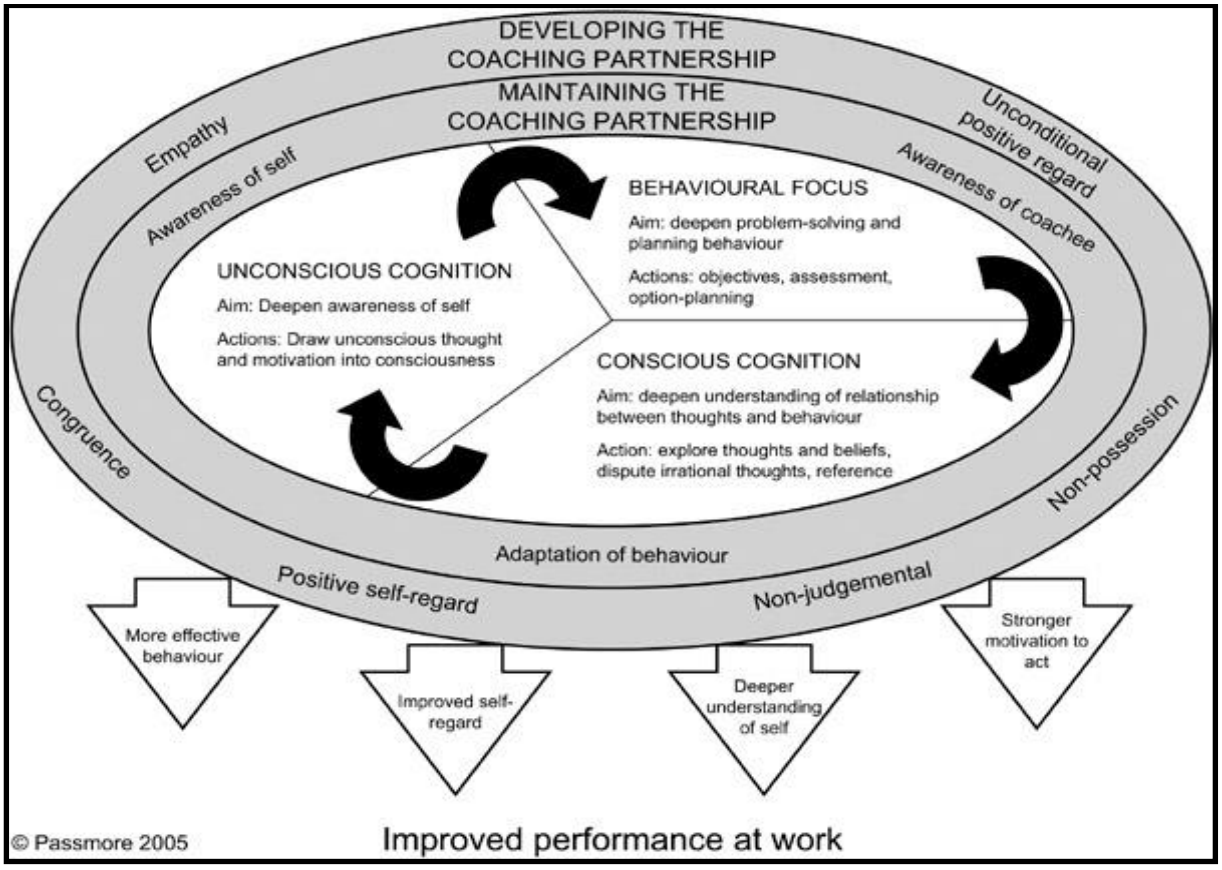


Figure 2: Passmore's Integrative Coaching Model

Source: Passmore (2007), p. 69

Figure 2 is an illustration of Passmore's model which incorporates six streams (Passmore, 2007).

1, The first stream develops the coaching relationship and the relevant behaviours expected between the coach and coachee to maintain the relationship.

2. The second stream is about maintaining the coaching partnership through a deepening of the emotional intelligence of the coach and coachee,

3. The third stream has a greater behavioural focus with the aim of creating and sustaining change; establishing purpose and plans. Assessments is a key part of this stream.

4. The fourth stream focuses on cognitive–behaviour coaching to assist the coachee to understand the link between thoughts and behaviour.

5. The fifth stream is about unconscious cognition to deepen self–awareness.

6. The sixth stream is the environment in which the coachee operates.

The core of Passmore (2007) model is focused on helping the individual to become more effective in the workplace through a deeper understanding of self and a stronger motivation to act. The assessment is used to build purpose and plans for the coachee.

B. Business linked executive coaching (Saporito 1996)

Saporito (1996) in his Executive Coaching Model for senior executives and CEOs incorporates four steps, where assessment is part of the second step.



Figure 3: Saporito's business-linked executive development model

Source: Saporito (1996) p. 98

In this model, the first step is about defining the context in which the organisation is operating. This requires understanding the organisational context, the challenges and opportunities that face the organisation. The second step, Saporito (1996) defines as assessing the executive with a 360 assessment. Step three is to present the executive with the feedback obtained in step 2. Thereafter, the process is to design a development plan that focuses on the strengths, development needs, experience and type of coaching the executive would need. The last step is to implement the plan and that is the executive coaching programme. This demonstrates how central the assessment is. According to the Saporito (1996) model, the 360 assessment feeds into the development planning. This illustrates a focus with gathering data from the environment to inform the development plan.

The feature of this model is the intrinsic link created between transition coaching and assessments .

The core of this model is that the 360 assessment is used to create a development plan for the coachee.

C. Coaching on the Axis model (Kahn, 2014)

M. S. Kahn (2014) has developed a systemic model for coaching. The model goes far beyond the individual and can be characterised as a systems model.

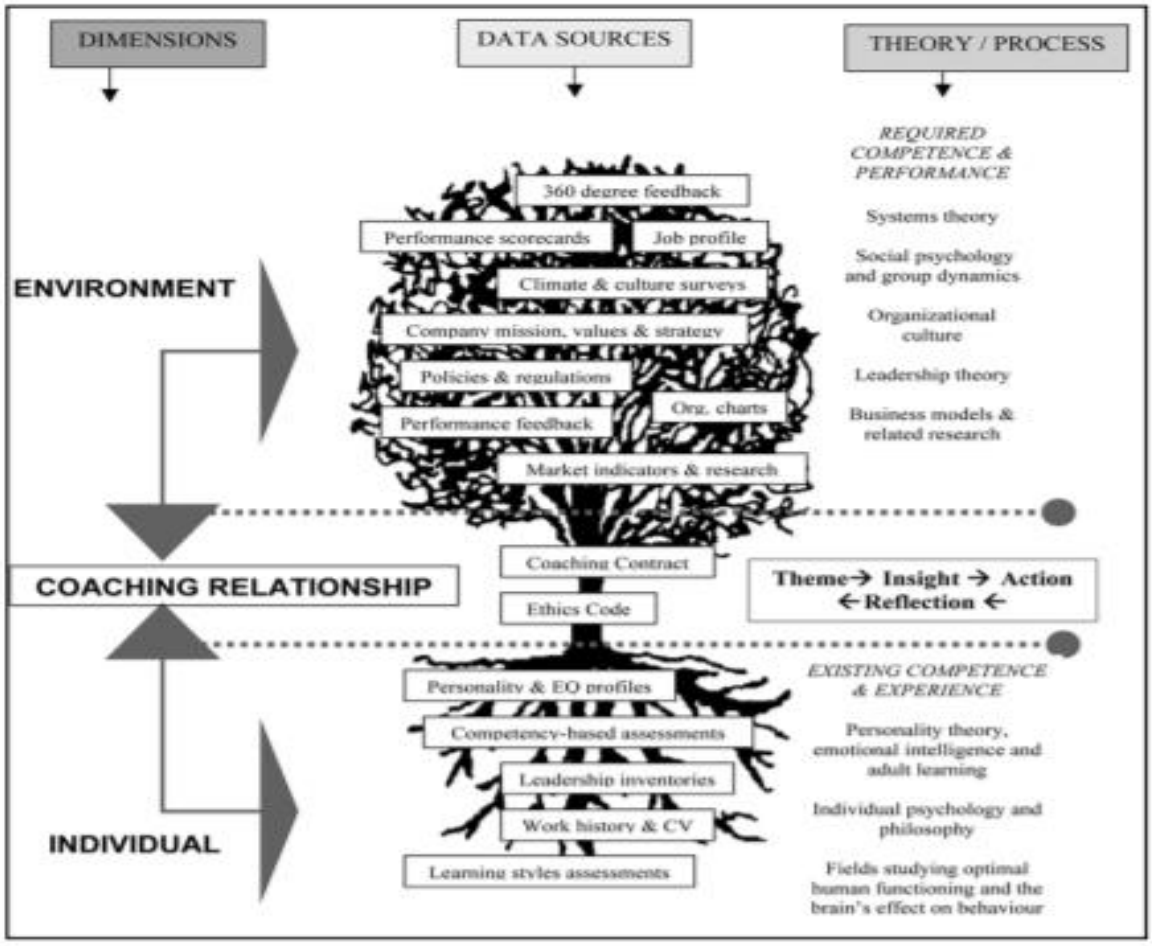


Figure 4: The Coaching on the Axis Tree.

Source: M. S. Kahn (2014) M. Kahn (2011)

M. S. Kahn (2014) model includes psychometrics and competency–based assessments which he clarifies are part of the individual dimension of his model. The metaphor of the tree is simply to assist with understanding the Coaching on the Axis approach. The three dimensions of the approach are as follows: The environment is reflected in the branches and leaves, the individual is reflected in the root system and

the coaching relationship is represented in the trunk. The Environment is understood on many dimensions, including the relational, which locates the individual in relation to key relationships in their ecosystem.

Kahn cautions against the indiscriminate use of psychometrics in coaching. Firstly, because he believes that business coaching is a relational engagement based in dialogue as opposed to an objective evaluation of the individual. He warns that it may give rise to the coach being perceived as an agent of measurement and comparison by the coachee when the coach emphasises assessments. He also cautions that introducing psychometric assessments completely blinds the conversation to the unique relational system the individual, being measured, exists within. When assessments are poorly used, they can distract from the purpose of business coaching. He therefore issues a note of caution to coaches to be careful in their use. Kahn summarises the times when an assessment will be helpful.

1 An assessment is only valuable to the extent that it ignites an insightful dialogue that gives rise to awareness. The tool in itself is not valuable to coaching as a standalone.
2 Any assessment tool is limited by its design, constraints, theoretical model and the underlying cultural assumptions that influence it; it is therefore *a voice,* not *the voice,* among many, and does not hold the primary wisdom.
3 Avoid assessments that just provide scores and graphs and lack descriptive narratives because these force the coach into the role of assessor.
4 From a coaching point of view, qualitative feedback from colleagues is to be regarded as potentially more powerful material than an assessment.
5 Avoid introducing an assessment tool if it does not directly contribute to the purpose of the coaching.

M. S. Kahn (2014) model presents a number of features for the coaching relationship. The model is essentially about the leader in the environment and how to build the relationships to act in this environment. In his (ibid) view, coaches should be cautious about the use of assessments in their practice. The assessment, although it has a place in the coaching on the axis model, needs to be used with a great deal of circumspection. He rates feedback from colleagues as much more powerful in obtaining valuable data about the coachee.

The three examples of models effectively illustrate the different emphasis, placement and prioritisation of assessments within coaching and hence how assessment receives a different priority as well as a different framing from coaches. The priority that assessment receives, depends on a number of factors, eg. the purpose of the coaching, where coaches believe change needs to happen in the business or a belief that the individual executive needs to become the best version of themselves. These are only a few areas of application of assessments in coaching. This in turn, influences how the coach chooses and uses assessments because this depends on the world of the coach, and the restrictions of the coaching project.

The purpose of this study is to gain a greater understanding of the phenomenon of the relationship between assessments and coaching and to hone into how coaches choose and use assessments.

The next part of the literature review presents the theories that outline the way that coaches choose assessments.

2.3.2 *Coaching Approach*

A valuable frame to use to understand the coache's choice is from Barner and Higgins (2007) who claims that each coach operates from a particular frame that shapes the coach's practice, These include coaching assessments and interventions.

Barner and Higgins (2007) claims that as coaches, one has to be able to account for one's background and method and the theory that guides one's practice. The researcher sees the correlation here with the questions of 'How do coaches chose assessments.

According to Barner and Higgins (2007), the coach's choice is based on:

1 underlying beliefs coaches hold about how individuals change within an organisational setting
2 coaches' own professional experience
3 personal comfort level with the assessment and intervention that is an integral part of each approach.

A problem is when coaches lack a clear understanding of the theory base that shapes their practice.

The problem they (ibid) identify is that coaches fail to reflect on what theoretical models inform their practice. And further when coaches lack a clear understanding of the theoretical base that shapes their practice. Knowing and having a good understanding of an holistic ambit of the theory could potentially remedy the issue of how coaches adapt their practices when they face shortcomings and the constraints of certain models (Barner & Higgins, 2007) .

The following table outlines the model and each model's conceptual and practical understanding of how people change and how each model conceptualises assessment in coaching.

Table 3: Theory Models Coaches use

Factor	**Clinical Model**	**Behavioural Model**	**Systems Model**	**Social Constructivist Model**
Where does change come from?	From the inside; changes often extend across the workplace and personal spheres	From changing behaviour; thoughts constitute another form of behaviour; change is most potent when it has a limited target area.	From changing interactions between the client key 'others' and the organisational system	From changing the prevailing narrative, the way in which client "story" themselves and are "storied" by others
The Assessment process	A central question that guides this model is "What is being revealed about the underlying structure of	Coaching goals are defined from a much more limited perspective eg the leadership behaviours that have been	These coaches take on the role of systems modeller, deciphering patterns and feedback loops that characterise the client's	The language that the coach uses in assessment plays a powerful catalytic role in the change process. The

	the client's personality that sheds light on his performance issues? They rely heavily on psychometric instruments such as FIRO & MBTI used to understand the client's overall personality	targeted for change. They are guided by the question, "What changes to behaviour would help the client perform more effectively in their job?	interaction within the system. The coach surfaces invisible interactions to client and stakeholders. They may use 360 feedback and aggregate the reports of multiple organisational leaders. Also use graphic models to illustrate organisational system that frames the client's behaviour.	coach listens to the stories of the client and interviews key stakeholders and looks for alignment. In a sense the language they use becomes a powerful force for change.

(Barner & Higgins, 2007) p,152

According to Barner and Higgins (2007), each model has distinctive advantages and represents a unique perspective on personal and organisational change. It therefore follows that a coach who acknowledges one of the models within a theoretical framework for their work, has a deep experience of it or an affinity for the model, and may consciously or unconsciously choose assessments that are aligned with a specific model. Without reflection on their practice and being conscious of the models that underlie their practice, coaches become unable to articulate their theoretical approaches to clients and to organisations with which they want to work (ibid). Barner and Higgins (2007) claim that although coaches tend to be eclectic in the methods they employ, they tend to centre their 'craft' around one of the four prevailing coaching models.

When coaches are able to articulate their theoretical antecedents and current frames that inform their practice, it raises the transparency of the coaching engagement, enables the conversation about whether there is a match in expectations, goals, approach and methodology and results in greater alignment in the coaching relationship. It is desirable that coaches and clients discuss this at the contracting stage when they are embarking on a coaching engagement.

"Most of executive coaches fly by the seat of their pants when it comes to assessment and may use an informal 360 process" (Peltier, 2011). This assertion although slightly off key, does make one aware that coaches may not be as rigorous in reflecting on the assessments that they use. There may also be other insights that are not taken into account that need to inform their preferred choice of informal 360 processes. Peltier may be making light of a narrative 360 process that some coaches prefer to engage in but to some may look like an informal 360 because it is not an online or paper based assessment

Figure 5 below presents another approach alongside the ones just discussed above. The construct being measured in this instance is leadership. Lashway (1999) proposes that when a coach chooses to use measurement, it could be either from an informal or a more formalised approach.

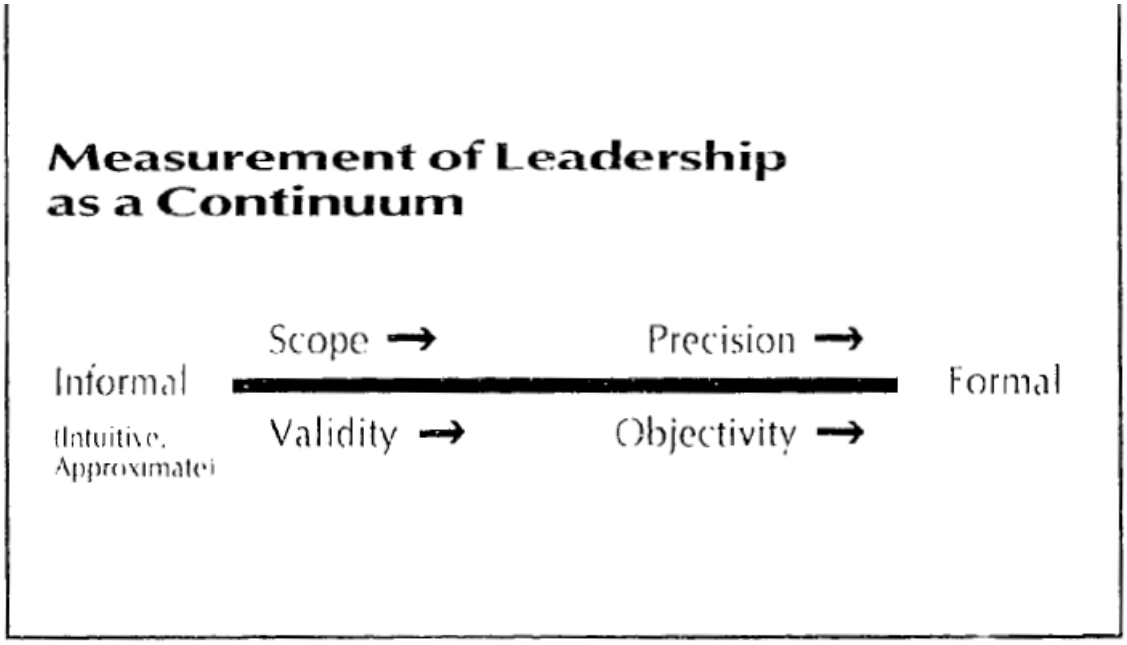


Figure 5: Larry Lashway (1999)p,17

Lashway demonstrates that formal assessments are on a continuum with more informal assessments. He further distinguishes, “Measurement exists on a continuum. At one end measurement is intuitive, impressionistic and inexact. At the other end of the continuum leadership is assessed through systematic data in numerical form. The goal is to render a judgement that is less influenced by surface appearances & human biases.” (Lashway 1999) (p. 17). This demonstrates the point that assessments can be used when a coach wants a numerical, or more accurate measurement of an element of the coachee’s personal or professional life. This is another way in which the coach will make decisions about how s/he chooses assessment.

2.3.3 *Professional Maturity of coach*

Clutterbuck and Megginson (2005), in L. Wildflower and Brennan (2011) however, add a further dimension to what may be the route to coaches understanding themselves and their practices better so as to be able to articulate their theoretical or philosophical stance more

clearly. These authors explain that their model has developed out of the need to reconcile the spontaneity, dynamism and variety of coaching with the need to maintain standards. This need led them to the conclusion that simplistic classifications simply would not work. What they (ibid) felt was needed was a framework that reflects the evolution in complexity in coaches’ way of thinking about themselves and their practice. The four levels of their framework are models based, process based, philosophy or discipline base and systemic eclectic. This framework outlines the internal mindset that would give direction to the coach’s choice of assessment

Table 4: Four mind sets for coaching

Four Mind-Sets for Coaching		
Coaching Approach	**Style**	**Critical Questions**
Models base	Control	How do I take the client where I think he needs to go? How do I adapt my technique or model to this circumstance?

Process based	Contain	How do I give enough control to the client and still retain a purposeful conversation? What's the best way to apply my process in this instance?
Philosophy based	Facilitate	What can I do to help the client do this for herself? How do I contextualise the client's issue within the perspective of my philosophy or discipline?
Systemic eclectic	Enable	Are we both relaxed enough to allow the issue and the solution to emerge in whatever way they will? Do I need to apply any techniques or processes at all? If I do, what does the client context tell me about how to select from the wide choice available to me?

Clutterbuck and Megginson in (L. Wildflower, Brennan, D, 2011)

Key conclusions the authors came to are the following,

- Models based coaches are often new to the field and hold on to a model for guidance and are often quite mechanistic in the conversations that they hold.
- Process based coaches allow more flexibility and link and relate techniques and models, but the toolkit is still relatively limited.
- Philosophy or discipline based mind-sets tend to offer an even wider portfolio of responses to client needs because they operate within a broad set of assumptions about helping and human development. Inherent to their practice is reflexivity and self-awareness.
- The fourth, most liberating mindset, is the systemic eclectic. These coaches have a very wide array of tools and ways of working. They select a broad approach and within that, the appropriate tools for a particular client at a particular time. Reflection is key in how they constantly expand their capacity

and learn. They however, have an outstanding characteristic, which is that they appreciate the present moment and savour it.

Clutterbuck and Megginson in L. Wildflower and Brennan (2011) have reached these insights from observing coaches in assessment centres so although the research is not empirical, it is a contribution to thinking about further research. The researcher found this a helpful description of coaches and by extension, it can become a helpful description to understand how coaches work and choose assessments.

2.3.4 *A Specific Brief from client*

Coaches may choose an assessment tool in the instance where the brief or referral question is specific (Passmore, 2014). For instance, the person is lined up for a new role and the organisation wants to assess whether the person has the requisite skills / attributes / capabilities or to determine development needs or to see whether someone is a fit for a future role for which they are being earmarked.

The concept of the client here is two-fold as in the organisational context the client can be the buyer or sponsor of the executive coaching services and the second client is the individual coachee.

A further differentiation also needs to be drawn between the corporate space as a context for coaching versus the private market where someone will request coaching outside of their work place.

Many coaching engagements also stem from a 'fixing up' approach, while at other times, coaching is a way to assist high-potential individuals or other targeted individuals (according to gender or race) who the company needs to fast track, to develop a requisite set of skills or behaviours (Coutu & Kauffman, 2009)

For example, there may be a need to compare an individual result with others in a relevant sample or norm group. Passmore (2012) draws the distinction between a profiling approach (which measures an individual attribute) and a criterion oriented approach, which is about predicting a certain outcome. In both these instances the assessment, and the choice of tools and the coaching process are to a large extent guided by the coaching (Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011)

Reports such as "Ridler and Co, Trends in the use of Executive Coaching" 2013) and Coutu and Kauffman (2009) Coutu and Kauffman (2009) demonstrate that, especially in the United Kingdom, coaching engagements are originate more from the need to assist high-potential, targeted individuals (according to gender or race) who the company needs to fast track to develop a requisite set of skills or behaviours.

In the South African context of historically disadvantaged individuals (HDI), coaching is identified as a way to develop black executives (Myers, 2013).. An interesting question would be what is true for South Africa at the present moment? Is the shift towards a more developmental need, focused on high potential employees and executives facing or already in some sort of career transition (Myers, 2013)

Palmer and McDowall (2010), who write from a client-centred approach, advocate that the coach upon receiving the brief, needs to reflect on the question, “Is the assessment the right tool at this stage of the coaching process” and “Is the coach themselves the best person to use and interpret the assessment information.”

Their (Ibid) view comes from the understanding of how easy it is to access assessments, so they encourage the coach to be clear why a particular tool is chosen, what impact it may have on the coaching relationship and what the outcomes of the coaching process are and how the assessments will control these outcomes.

The idea of a specific brief for a choice of assessment may come from a coachee and a request that they have; it may come from an HR client who is contracting you to coach within an organisational; or a specific group of staff or level of management, a standardised business programme or, it could be the coaching house with which the coach is associated that prescribes the assessment.

2.4 How coaches use assessments in the Coaching Process

One area of diverse opinion among coaches is the processes and tools they use. Bono et al. (2009) assert that although most coaches agree and acknowledge the need for

individual assessment, they disagree widely on what should be assessed and how assessment should be conducted. They also differ on what they use the results of assessment for. Some believe it is for insight, others to facilitate goal setting or for action-oriented planning (Bono et al., 2009).

2.4.1 *Purpose of Assessment*

The coach needs to be clear about the purpose of an assessment tool (Passmore 2014; Passmore, 2007; Palmer and McDowall (2010). Passmore maintains that a psychological test can be used in two ways, firstly to predict an outcome or to measure an individual attribute. So for example, the criterion oriented approach where the test will be to assess the employees' fit with their current role, whereas the profiling approach measures the coachees' abilities or interests could provide a view of the strengths and abilities and potentially lead to a conversation about what job would best suit the coachee.

2.4.1.1 Data Gathering and Diagnosis:

Pritchard positions the supportive nature and purpose of assessment tools as an instrument to help the coach to understand what is happening for the client (Pritchard, 2009).. In reality therefore, Pritchard sees the use of appropriate assessment as a means to complement the data gathering and diagnosis work of the coach.

2.4.1.2 Agenda setter and planning

Coaches use assessment as a diagnostic tool, a data collection tool or as a tool to facilitate goal setting and action oriented planning (Grant et al., 2010). The assessment tool can also be used as an agenda setter in the coaching process (Coutu & Kauffman, 2009).

2.4.2 *Advantages and Benefits of using assessments*

2.4.2.1 Confirms a hunch

Skilled coaches already have the ability to have a sense of the client and how they view reality in their own subjective ways. Conducting assessments, for many coaches, is a way to confirm this subjective view with the use of more objective tools (Passmore, 2014).

2.4.2.2 Springboard for getting started

Biswas-Diener (2010) describes the assessment as a ‘springboard’ for getting the coaching conversation started.

2.4.2.3 Language in assessments

In using assessments, Biswas-Diener (2010) points to how important it is coming from the school of Positive Psychology, to use the language of the client when using the assessment information. Rogers (2012) points to the benefits of matching the client language as a way to fortify the coaching alliance. Flaherty (2010) approaches the issue of language from yet another perspective by alerting coaches to language used

in the coaching space that already passes a judgement of whatever kind and may serve as an inhibitor to the coaching experience

This points to the sensitivity needed of the use of language in the assessments and in the feedback discussion, as well as the experience or lack of it that the coachee may have of the language constructs that the assessment introduces. These may be completely new to the coachee.

2.4.2.4 Making Meaning

Meaning making is a fundamental need of people that is ‘germane’ to the coaching endeavour (Biswas-Diener, 2010). This infers a practical process of the coaching, using the assessment in a way that makes the discussion practical to what does it mean for the coachee here and now, as well as the coach’s ability to relate the conversation to the coachee’s meaning of life. Again, in this instance the use of a particular assessment is a choice to have a meaningful conversation instead of sidestepping it.

2.4.2.5 Use of Psychometrics

The following model by Passmore (2012) reflects how he believes coaches could use psychometric assessments

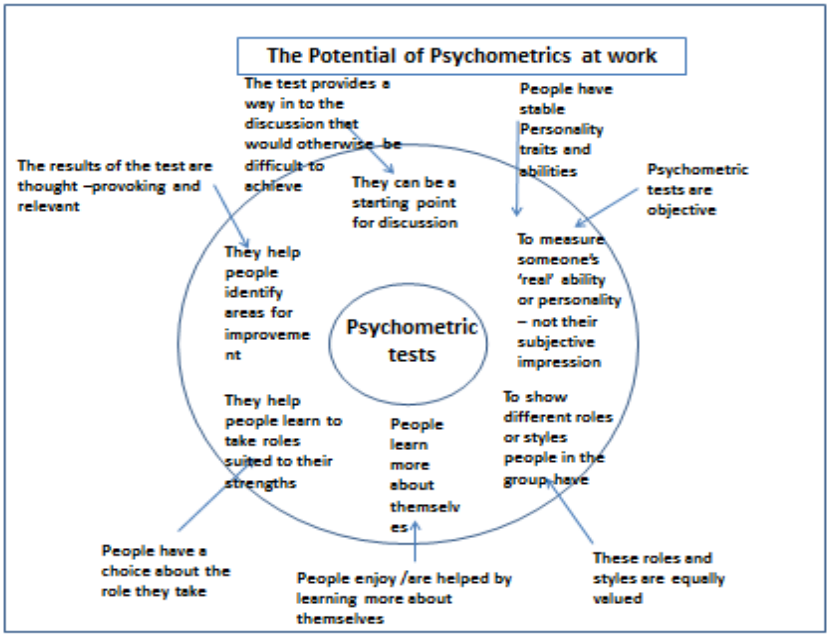


Figure 6: Passmore The use of Psychometrics in coaching (Passmore, 2012)

In this illustration, Passmore (2012) has outlined six areas where psychometrics can be used in coaching in a work setting.

Psychometrics can be a starting point for a coaching discussion, because it provides a way into the discussion which under certain circumstances could be quite difficult. It is also able to measure the coachee's ability or personality because they can be regarded as objective. The other way in which psychometrics can be used is for people to learn about how their team members have different styles. He adds that psychometrics enables people to learn more about themselves and that this is inherently an enjoyable and helpful experience. Passmore (2012) claims that psychometrics helps people learn about their strengths and this can in turn, inform their choice of role/career. And lastly, it helps people identify areas for improvement because results of tests can be thought-provoking and relevant. The value of the Passmore (2012) model is that he discusses these six areas of use and adds the rationale for each.

Some of the advantages of assessments for coaching, as outlined by Scoular and Campbell (2007), includes that the assessments assist the coach in

understanding the coachee and can therefore provide better support, enables the coaching process to proceed faster and can facilitate that there are fewer inaccuracies. Furthermore, the authors advocate that assessments can potentially be the single most powerful take-away from the coaching process and often the client will take feedback on board more quickly if it appears in a 'scientific' report. Coaches need to be aware though, that those psychometric assessments can only be an aid to coaching, according to Scoular and Campbell (2007).. Coaches need to guard against not being overly reliant on the 'scientific' nature of the assessment.

A balance also needs to be managed between the insights the coach holds as intuitive, subjective knowledge and the relative objectivity of assessment tools. As mentioned the coach needs to be aware of not becoming overly reliant on the assessments. Finally, balance also needs to be achieved between the benefit of assessment tools for the coaches' benefit or for the coachee's benefit (Scoular & Campbell, 2007).

The following are listed by Allworth and Passmore (2008) as the benefits of using psychological testing for the coach and coachee:

- It is a valid prediction of job performance and other work related outcome. This is a real value-add where some measures can predict performance in work and training. They also raise the point that, like many other assessments, an assessment can raise awareness of individual style, strengths, preferences.
- The same caution is sounded by the authors that the skillset of the coach is critical.
- A third benefit outlined by the authors raises the point of how assessments are able to open up and explore possibilities that might not otherwise have been considered.
- The next benefit added is that psychological testing can provide the coach with a valid basis for feedback, goalsetting and planning for change and identifying development areas.
- Finally, the authors outline the value of psychological assessments for monitoring and tracking an individual's progress, as well as the effectiveness of an intervention.

2.4.3 *Use tools in combination*

Pritchard also advocates the use of a variety of tools in combination to enable the coach to obtain “a better picture of the individual and their development throughout life.” (Pritchard, 2009)(p41). In this instance, he is referring to a combination of Myers Briggs Type Indicators which is essentially a psychometric tool that focuses on personality type, in combination with a tool that helps to gain perspective on the evolution of the individual’s world-view through life. Using more than one tool helps to see a more multifaceted person (Passmore, 2014). Almuth McDowall and Kurz (2007) warn about practitioners who rely on or are over-reliant on one type of assessment – ‘evangelical test users’. Another challenge is coaches who make too literal an interpretation of individual test scores or reading too much into test scores, without corroborating the scores. The value of the assessment is in the skilful discussion of the profile which should always be a two-way process. It is up to the coach and their professional judgement.

They (ibid) refute the widely held belief that people cheat on these type of tests to present themselves in the best possible light. It must be noted though, that tests do have built-in mechanisms that pick up exaggeration and inconsistencies. That is why the trusting coaching relationship always needs to be there and be established before the topic of assessments is broached.

The coach and the coachee need to be aware of the type of tool being used. A tool has to reflect the complexity of people and jobs. As a coach, one need to distinguish between tools that measure psychological traits on the one hand, and the reporting of derived competency potential scores that translate the specialist terminology into the everyday language of competencies, backed by large scale criterion validation evidence, on the other hand. Many of the challenges that Almuth McDowall and Kurz (2007) highlight are common for all assessments and allude to the competence of the coach. Coaches have a wide spectrum of assessments at their disposal. Scoular and Campbell (2007) (p,7) however caution, “chosen carefully and in conjunction with good coaching techniques, psychometrics are becoming a useful tool for coaches”.

2.5 Competence of the coach

Even the best assessments cannot take the place of deep listening, non-judgemental curiosity, following the client's agenda and correcting an action plan that moves the client forward (L. Wildflower, Brennan, D, 2011)..

A recurring theme in the literature has indeed been the competence, level of experience, the combination of skills and the orientation of the coach (Almuth McDowall & Kurz, 2007)

The competence the coach requires is the skill and capacity to feedback and debrief the psychometric assessment effectively. The coach should also be able to assist the coachee to build action plans that can address the areas of needed change and finally is the coach able to assist with embedding new behaviours for sustained behaviour change (A McDowall & Smewing, 2009).

The above analysis of the impactful use of assessment data and the coach's competence are two elements which are applicable whether the assessment is founded in the psychometric discipline or whether it is founded in the organisation development discipline. The analysis also demonstrates that when an assessment tool is chosen carefully and is used in conjunction with skilful coaching techniques, psychometrics can become a useful further tool for coaches (Scoular & Campbell, 2007). Almuth McDowall and Kurz (2007) writing in the *International Coaching Psychology Review* lists three of the challenges of assessments in coaching.

Firstly, tests relying on the skilled interpretation by practitioners in order to ensure objectivity, is a challenge. It requires a high level of skill on the part of the coach and in some instances, the coach also has to administer the test and debrief the coachee professionally.

Secondly, test users such as coaches tend to stick with tried and tested tests and do not keep abreast of the latest trends. This is positive in that repeated use can improve competence, however, coaches should guard against becoming too comfortable in what they know at the risk of not staying abreast of new trends.

The third challenge is that often too much is read into the test without corroborating it with the coachee. Passmore (2014) emphasises the importance of the fact that any insights that are derived from psychometric tests be discussed and corroborated with the coachee. He warns that this is an essential feature of a skilled coach. Almuth McDowall and Kurz (2007) maintain that despite these limitations, skilful use of psychometrics can add value to any coaching process.Rogers (2012), although not specifically outlining competences that coaches need for assessments, discusses the general competences the coach requires.

- an unbounded curiosity about people;
- self-confident fascination with how people achieve their potential and a wish to go with them on the journey;
- intention into what makes them tick;
- a high degree of self-knowledge;
- the self-discipline to keep self out of the way;
- And the ability to resist giving advice and wanting to be right.

This list does provide the more subtle competences the coach needs to develop and is helpful to understanding the coach's orientation. There are some other discussions in this chapter about the coach's philosophy and theoretical orientation as well as a discussion about the regulatory and ethical competence that guide the use of assessment.

A final pointer is toward the knowledge base and experience of the coach when administering or incorporating an assessment, as assessments are only as effective as the coaching discussion that follows it, the coach 'enlivens' the discussion (L. Wildflower, Brennan, D, 2011).

2.6 Tools and what they bring

2.6.1 *360 Multi-rater*

The coach, before engaging a coachee in a 360 multi-rater feedback process should have equipped themselves to skilfully debrief and use the 360 tool and be aware of the rater biases involved. The coach has the responsibility to understand the theories and taxonomies from leadership to behaviour change and more, and be knowledgeable about the high degree of variation in design features that sit behind the 360 multi-rater tool that they are administering.

The explicit use of a coach, post the 360 multi-rater report is regarded by Hooijberg and Lane (2009);, Bracken and Rose (2011) and Nowack (2009) as a critical success factor in the likelihood of behaviour change in the instance of executive education. As this is not a longitudinal study, this research is not able to verify that executive coaching results in sustained behaviour change.

In considering the benefits and challenges of using the 360 multi-rater assessment tool, it is important to be aware that a poorly administered assessment tool can have a potentially harmful effect on others (Nowack, 2009). These factors may ultimately impact on the ability of the coachee to implement change after multi-rater feedback. Some of these factors include that there is just too much negative feedback contained in a report, or the person who gave the negative feedback, whether the self-rating was higher than other raters and if one can consider the coachee to be a perfectionist (Nowack, 2009).

This discussion casts a spotlight on the limitations and risks associated with 360 multi-rater feedback; it points to the enormity of the task ahead and it signals the responsibility that rests on the coach. The evidence is clear, where the multi-rater feedback and coaching have been used in tandem, performance may improve up to 60% (Thach, 2002). Evidence is also presented by Thach (2002) that demonstrates that 360 feedback and coaching over two months increased productivity over the effects of a managerial programme. At this stage however, practice is far outstripping

the research and theoretical frameworks that need to underpin the profession of executive coaching.

According to Shipper, Hoffman, and Rotondo (2007),caution needs to be exercised in relation to the bias, toward some cultures, inherent in the 360 multi-rater. Their study examined cultural relevance based on Hofstede's four values of work. The findings show that the 360 multi-rater process works best in cultures that have low power distance and with individualistic values. They argue that culture will probably affect the 360 multi-rater process in two ways. The nature of seeking and providing multi-sources of feedback, which is based on values and assumptions not equally shared by all cultures and secondly, the distinctive relationship of how the outcomes of the multi-rater come into play may be less effective in those cultures holding collective values. This immediately raises concerns in the context of South Africa where culture and the idea of a national culture is still very much contested territory. Within the diverse cultural mix that is South Africa, the 360 multi-rater will need to be administered with much circumspection by coaches in South Africa.

The person receiving the feedback via the 360 multi-rater assessment tool may completely reject the feedback as mediated by the coach, the raters, depending on their cultural background may have approached the feedback, as some Asian cultures do, from a perspective of criticism is to be avoided. This is definitely an area that requires research in the South African context. Writing about the constructs of personality tests,Meiring et al. (2005) maintain that none of the available personality tests used in South Africa have been found to provide a reliable and valid picture of personality for all cultural (and language) groups in this country. According to ibid , it has been clearly demonstrated that psychological instruments imported from abroad have a limited suitability for South Africa. This definitely raises a question about the way forward for coaching in South Africa.

2.6.2 ***Strength spotter***

The school of positive psychology from where the Strength spotter originates P. Linley and Minhas (2011), is growing in popularity and part of the popularity is partially a result of the positive psychology movement and partially attributable to the benefits

that people experience when they use their strengths.P. A. Linley, Nielsen, Gillett, and Biswas-Diener (2010) contend that this new discipline represents a paradigm shift in the way we apply our professional attention, moving away from determining 'what is wrong with people', which is a particular Western thinking / mindset and various human sciences paradigms such as Behaviourism, Psychodynamics and Humanism to a mindset of 'what is right with people' and emphasising people's strengths.

When comparing the Strength spotter originating from the school of positive psychology to other psychometric tools, some of the contrasting elements are that with Strength spotter, the outcomes are a result of co-construction, within the social constructivist theoretical framework (A. Linley, 2008). The insights emerge out of a conversation between coach and client and the results are grounded in the clients' experience (P. Linley & Minhas, 2011) Success, is however dependent upon the skills of the coach to listen and make sense for the client (P. Linley & Minhas, 2011).

2.6.3 *MBTI (A psychometric tool)*

The above discussion contrasts markedly with the MBTI which is a well-reviewed psychometric tool with a heavy emphasis on pre-determined indicators. MBTI can be very quickly administered though P. Linley and Minhas (2011). They (ibid) however make the very valid point that it is not about one or the other. We need both types of assessments, both the qualitative and the quantitative. The assessments that present qualitative rich data and the assessments that are advanced mathematical calculations and present data very mathematically

2.6.4 *Narrative Approach*

Coaches may prefer to work with questioning and a more narrative approach in gaining more insight about the coachee, as well as replacing the 360 with a more structured interview.

According to Almuth McDowall and Kurz (2007), it would be more the approach taken by coaches who identify with a Humanistic or Rogerian approach to their practice.

Beyond the more narrative/ interview approach, there are some coaches who may use other techniques such as values card sorting, questioning techniques derived from counselling, over the use of tests and questionnaires (Almuth McDowall & Kurz, 2007).

2.7 Ethical use of assessments

Allworth and Passmore (2008) also sound the warning for coaches using psychological testing without giving consideration to the ethics of testing. They provide a checklist for ethical and best practice psychological testing. The contents of their checklist is captured in Table 5

Table 5 is a checklist for ethical and best-practice psychological testing (Allworth & Passmore, 2008) . The table highlights the best practices to which coaches should adhere when they are using assessments

Table 5: Checklist for ethical and best-practice psychological testing

Define the purpose of the assessment, for example: • to explore future career options; • to explain low job satisfaction, stress or poor performance; • to develop development needs for a target job. • Define the kinds of tests that will best address the purpose of the assessment: • .personality profiling to raise awareness of preferred ways of behaving; • vocational interest assessment to explore career and occupational preferences; • motivation assessment to identify factors that drive the coachee's performance; • values assessment to determine the kind of environment that best suits the coachee; • cognitive ability testing to determine potential for advancement in training. • Select the best test for your purpose: • ensure each test is based on a well-researched model or theory; • check the reliability and validity; • -ensure if offers norms that fit the coachee's demographics and that the sample size is adequate.

- Select only those tests that you are competent and trained to administer and interpret.
- Gather relevant collateral information (such as job description, competency data, coachee's resume) to better understand the context in which the assessment is being conducted.
- Consider who will receive feedback and a report of the assessment and gain informed consent from the coachee.
- Ensure the coachee understands the purpose of the assessment and how the results will be used.
- Make adequate arrangements to ensure standardised administration.
- Take account of any factors that may impact on the coachee's ability to complete the assessment, eg disability, illness, language
- Be aware of your ethical and professional responsibilities, and the rights and responsibilities of the coachees who undertake psychological assessments

The coach needs to be the holder of ethical boundaries when organisations use assessments reports for promotions, performance management, recruitment and selection other than what was agreed and contracted by the coach for development purposes.

This checklist provides a practical set of items that the coach should bear in mind when using assessments in their practice.

The guidelines would be instructive for use in coach education. Organisation and HR Executives who are going to procure executive coaching services could also gain insights that may need to be incorporated at the contracting stage.

2.8 Legal and Regulatory implications of use

2.8.1 *Industry Guidelines*

The International Testing Commission makes no distinction whether assessments are psychometric or Organisation Development tools. The following guidelines for

competencies and test administration were retrieved from their website https://www.intestcom.org/page/17 on 22.01.

The International Testing Commission, of which South Africa is a part, provides the guidelines for test users.

The four competences are reproduced below:

2.8.1.1 General Task Related skills. This includes:

- The performance of relevant activities, such as, test administration reporting and the provision of feedback to test takers and other clients.
- Oral and written communication skills for the proper preparation of test takers and for interaction with relevant others (eg. parents or organisational policy makers), and
- Interpersonal skills sufficient for the proper preparation of the test takers, the administration of test takers and the provision of feedback of test results

2.8.1.2 Contextual knowledge and skills. This includes:

- Knowing when and when not to use the tests
- Knowing how to integrate testing with other less formal concepts of the assessment situation (eg biographical data, unstructured interview and references, etc.)
- Knowledge of current professional, legal, and ethical issues relating to tests and of their practical implication for test use.

2.8.1.3 Task Management skills. This includes:

- Knowledge of codes of conduct and good practice relating to the use of tests, test data, the provision of feedback, the production and storage of reports, the storage of and responsibility for test material, test data, and
- Knowledge of social, cultural and political context in which the test is being used, and the way in which factors may affect the results, their interpretation and the use to which they are put.

2.8.1.4 Contingency Management Skills, This includes:

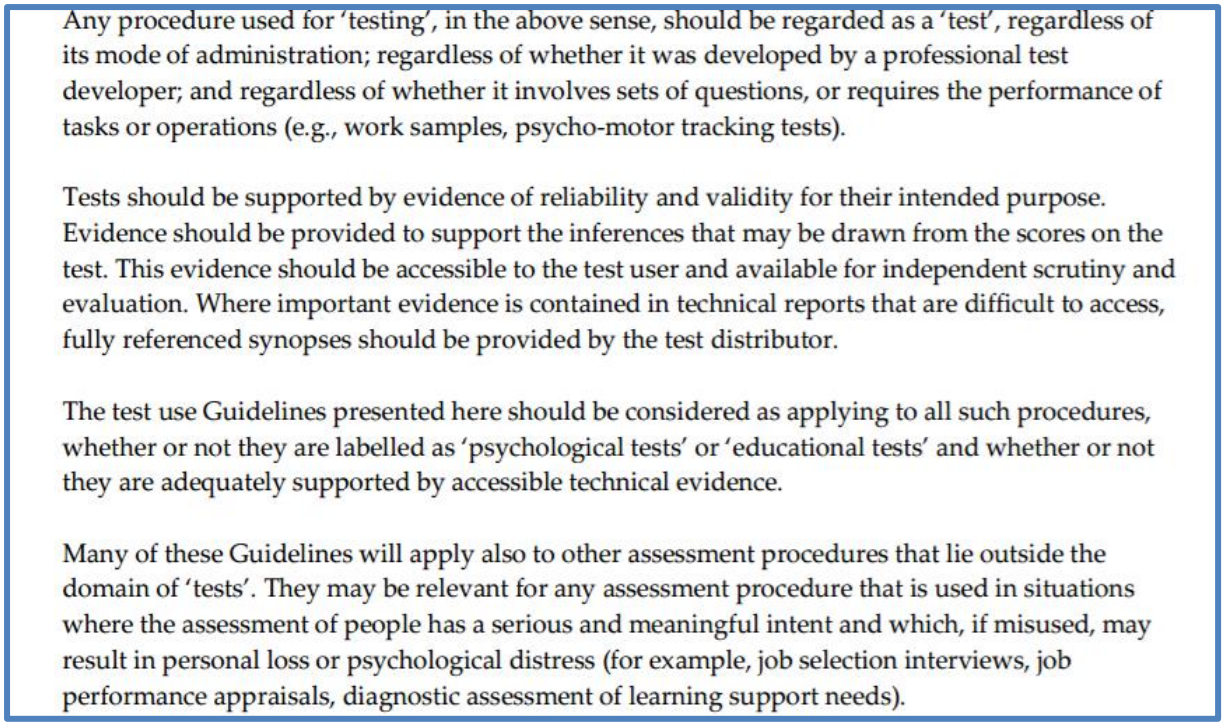
- Knowing how to deal with problems, difficulties and breakdowns in routine
- Knowing how to deal with test takers' questions during test administration, etc., and
- Knowing how to deal with situations in which there is potential for test misuse or for misunderstanding the interpretation of the test scores.

These testing management and administration skills provide a minimum standard for coaches to demonstrate competence before they use and administer assessments. It would be an interesting addition to coach education and can be part of what membership to a professional body accredits the coach with and the professional code of conduct that can be prescribed to members.

Compliance with accreditation and licence requirements

Apart from the coach's competence, certain tools require licencing or accreditation by the test user, This is part of the ethical administration of assessment tests. Important to note is that there are assessments that require strict administration and these are mostly psychometric assessments.

Further guidelines are published about the administration of tests in Figure 7



Any procedure used for 'testing', in the above sense, should be regarded as a 'test', regardless of its mode of administration; regardless of whether it was developed by a professional test developer; and regardless of whether it involves sets of questions, or requires the performance of tasks or operations (e.g., work samples, psycho-motor tracking tests).

Tests should be supported by evidence of reliability and validity for their intended purpose. Evidence should be provided to support the inferences that may be drawn from the scores on the test. This evidence should be accessible to the test user and available for independent scrutiny and evaluation. Where important evidence is contained in technical reports that are difficult to access, fully referenced synopses should be provided by the test distributor.

The test use Guidelines presented here should be considered as applying to all such procedures, whether or not they are labelled as 'psychological tests' or 'educational tests' and whether or not they are adequately supported by accessible technical evidence.

Many of these Guidelines will apply also to other assessment procedures that lie outside the domain of 'tests'. They may be relevant for any assessment procedure that is used in situations where the assessment of people has a serious and meaningful intent and which, if misused, may result in personal loss or psychological distress (for example, job selection interviews, job performance appraisals, diagnostic assessment of learning support needs).

Figure 7: International Testing Commission Website

Source: https://www.intestcom.org/page/17

The guideline from the International Testing Commission (ITC) ("International Testing Commission," 2017) would definitely impact on coaches who use assessments. It has both competence implications and guidelines for use and therefore a compliance element. This does not only apply to psychometric tests, but includes any assessment administered in an occupational or educational setting.

2.8.2 *Credibility of tests*

Central issues highlighted in terms of the use of psychometrics are the four principles of reliability, validity, freedom from bias and standardisation. Although this is critical, it will not be addressed in this study, bar the accreditation of the coach to administer the assessment. This does have a strong link to standardisation because it is important that the tests are administered under standard conditions (Almuth McDowall & Kurz, 2007). Very little South African research has been published about these four principles (Meiring et al., 2005).

2.8.3 *Limitations, opportunities and risks of some assessments*

Coaches need to be vigilant about their use of assessments. Assessments can be unethically applied. For example they can emanate as part of a development initiative but then at a later stage they are used for promotion or recruitment.

Additionally they are part of poor organisations processes where no feedback is arranged for the individuals

2.9 Conclusion of Literature Review

The literature review reveals that assessment tools are part of a growing practice that coaches are adding to their toolkits, and they can serve in a very powerful way for the HR client to gain insight. The client insights range from understanding how coaches choose assessments and the models that this study presented. Sometimes the choice is conscious and intentional, other times the choice is philosophical and sometimes, the choice is informed by the evolutionary development journey that the coach is on. The coach and the HR client have to have a frank and open discussion at the contracting stage about the choice of assessments and the way in which they will be used. The same discussion needs to occur with the executive who is going to be coached.

Without reflection though, the coach may be taking a mechanistic view of using assessments and not evolving and becoming conscious of the practice they're conducting. All the writers agreed that deep reflection assists with the coach developing a richer practice.

Looking at where assessment fits into the coach's process, the literature provided very diverse views. The writers reviewed do not all agree about the place assessment has in the coach-coachee relationship. They do however all give assessment an important place in their models. Some view assessments as a very purposeful part of the coaching process because it provides insights about the coachee that can shape and determine the coaching engagement. In that sense, assessment is key, be it for developmental, transitional or matching for future roles.

Others view assessments as an addition to the process which can offer another view about the coachee.Yet others proceed very cautiously and have prerequisites for the use of assessments if they are to be used at all.The literature about how coaches choose assessments, describes it as based on how coaches are reflecting, to which philosophy or discipline they align themselves.

The intentionality of the choice varies. Sometimes it is intentionally based on how the coach believes change happens, or from their own experience or comfort level with the theoretical frame.
The problem is when coaches do not reflect on what they are doing in their practices as far as theory is concerned. They are then not able to articulate the theoretical model they are using. Secondly the problem may arise that unconscious use of a model may also account for coaches forgoing a certain aspect of a model due to its difficulty or their own discomfort with it. How coaches themselves would define eclectic or systemic approaches to their work would be enlightening. A further reflection may be to consider how these classifications enable coaches to grow through self-awareness, self-learning and supervision.

The literature makes a didactic/ causal link that coaches, when faced with a specific brief choose the assessment based on what is required to be the outcome. This links to coaches who choose the assessment based on the objective that needs to be achieved. Coaches choose assessments differently. When the need is for hard numerical or conceptual measures which are more formal to a more informal view where assessment is more intuitive and based on questioning and extracting a narrative.

The literature also sheds some light on the question of how coaches use assessment. A lot of the literature is an account of the practices of other coaches and their experiences and learning about using assessments.

The literature, in some way, converged around use and the themes that showed high recurrence were about using assessments for data gathering, diagnosis and for creating insights.The view of assessment as a tool for monitoring and tracking the individual or for measurement of the effectiveness of an intervention is not prevalent

in the literature. It is the researcher's view that as coaching becomes more 'corporatised,' it will become more prevalent that the individual and the intervention as well as other metrics will come under scrutiny for measurement.

The literature also maintains a balance between benefits and advantages of use and balanced by cautions, challenges, limitations and risks associated with use. A few tools like the Multi-rater 360, the strengths spotter, the MBTI and a more narrative approach were isolated and placed under the spotlight as practical cases for examining benefits and limitations of use.

Many themes around the coach's competence and the level and types of skill required by the coach made the researcher aware of the pivotal role the coach's competence plays in the successful use of assessments.

The area of compliance was addressed by looking at the minimum competence levels and the guidelines for administering and providing feedback on tests. It is clear that coaches, like other professionals, need to operate within the compliance framework of the International Testing Commission "International Testing Commission" 2017) guidelines for the educational and occupational use of testing. A question would be who would play the role of implementing this in South Africa and what degree of enforcement would be required.

It is also evident that in the current context in South Africa, a fair amount of research is required into the assessment tools to test their reliability and validity in terms of language and culture; however this is outside of the scope of this report.

The literature review also found that there is a need for more empirical studies that demonstrate the impact, benefits and value when coaches use assessment tools and when they do not.

This literature review adds to the body of knowledge of using and choosing assessments in coaching in South Africa. The study provides guidance on conceptualisation, thinking, benefits and limitations to business and executive coaches. It informs their practices with new insights about assessment in coaching

philosophies and processes. Coaching students will also benefit. The study will expand their learning on the topic of assessment, what to be aware of and to what they can be potentially blind. HR leaders in organisations could benefit through being able to understand better what to look for when procuring executive coaching services. Business leaders and executives and their organisations could benefit through taking the insights and acquiring new perspectives on the assessment strategy of organisation or segment-wide roll out of assessments such as the 360 multi-rater or Emotional Intelligence (EQ) without coaching support.

2.10 Research Question 1

How do coaches choose assessments?

2.11 Research Question 2

How do coaches use assessments?

3 CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The fundamental nature of research methodology is to select the closest match research design to the research question. The way the researcher collects data also has to be consistent with the methodology of the research approach and be aligned with the research (Wimpenny & Gass, 2000) (Baker, Wuest, & Stern, 1992) In this section the specific research approach and paradigm is explained and its use motivated. It outlines the research design and methodology. After selecting the methodology it is equally important to ensure that the sample population, data collection and data analysis process delivers outcomes that are pertinent. This chapter deals with the research methodology and analytical process that the researcher undertook.

3.1 Research Ontology

Ontology is concerned with ideas about the existence of and relationship between people, society and the world in general (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015).This study is based on this set of ontological assumptions, understanding that reality is essentially subjective ie. perceptions and experiences that may be different for each person and may change over time and context.

Some authors refer to this as subjectivism but the term can also be replaced by the term constructivism (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). This resonates well with this research study as the researcher seeks to understand the practices that various coaches have about the assessment process in coaching. They are undoubtedly diverse and different.

Epistemology in research is about understanding how knowledge can be produced and the criteria by which knowledge is possible (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015) .This view of knowledge is referred to as interpretivist.

3.2 Research paradigm

This exploratory study is based upon the “interpretivist” paradigm, using the subjective perspectives of the different participants being interviewed (Bhattacherjee (2012). Interpretivism was selected because the paradigm would enable personal interaction with the respondents. This paradigm also enables the researcher and respondents to co-create findings from the interviews. The researcher was uncovering the ‘lived experience’ of the respondents (Ponterotto, 2005) as related to their coaching practice, specifically the way they choose and use assessments.

According to Wahyuni (2012), this research paradigm refers to the fundamental assumptions and beliefs about how the world is perceived, this then serves as a framework that guides the behaviour of the researcher.

The background of interpretivism is in hermeneutics and phenomenology (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015) A phenomenological methodology was identified as the best means for this kind of study. It differs from positivists in the belief that the researcher cannot be detached from her or his own presuppositions and that the researcher should not pretend to be detached (Hammersley, 2000). The intention in this instance is to gather perspectives on the phenomenon of assessments. The phenomenological researcher aims to ‘describe’ as accurately as possible without reframing from any framework, but staying true to the direct experiences of the coaches. According to Welman and Kruger (2001), phenomenologists are concerned with understanding the social and psychological phenomena from the perspective of the people involved. A researcher applying phenomenology is concerned with the lived experiences of the people involved. (Ponterotto, 2005) (Holloway, 1997) (Stones & Kruger, 1988).

The choice of this paradigm is because the interpretivist methodology is commonly used in social science and because it surfaces practical meaning out of the work (Harding, 2009).
Several coaching studies have also used the interpretivist approach (Groenewald, 2004) (Harding, 2009).

There was indeed synergy between the methodology chosen for the research study and the fundamental methodology used by the coaches to unearth the stories and the various realities, the individual perceptions and to co-create the meaning through the assessment. Method should match the research question (Baker et al., 1992; Wimpenny & Gass, 2000) and was deemed to do so by the researcher.

3.3 Research design

Interpretivism is closely coupled with qualitative research and the research design that was used for this study was phenomenology (Sanders, 1982). The point of phenomenology is "to get straight to the pure and unencumbered vision of what an experience essentially is" (Sanders, 1982) (p354). According to Sanders, phenomenology is based on the lived world, the world of what is experienced. He proposed that the researcher describes the phenomenon instead of explaining it. An experience is essentially a phenomenon experienced by a person and that is the phenomenological view of how knowledge is created.

Further, phenomenology is also aligned to qualitative research design that seeks to make the structure and meaning of human experience clear (Atkinson, 1972). Sadala and Adorno (2002) claim that a researcher needs to start with the lived experience of the respondents by collecting their experiences. The challenge then is to reveal and understand the essence of the phenomenon or experience (Baker et al., 1992), (Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano, & Morales, 2007) (Wimpenny & Gass, 2000).
In this study, through the interview process, the researcher has sought to understand the 'lived experiences' (Ponterotto (2005) of the coaches in how they choose and use assessments in their individual coaching practices. Each individual coach had a unique set of experiences to share and this was facilitated by the researcher framing questions in a way that enabled her to obtain the essence of the coach's experience.

Several coaching studies have used the interpretivist and phenomenological paradigm exactly because it enables deep and meaningful work. In the South African context, it is important, that this approach is used as we are still uncovering practices that can

contribute to the South African body of knowledge about coaching and use of assessment in coaching (Meiring et al., 2005).

There are three fundamental components in phenomenological research design, that is, determining the limits of 'what' and 'who' is to be investigated, the collecting of data and finally, the phenomenological analysis of data (Sanders, 1982).

The 'what' component is the reason for the topic and why it is being researched. In this instance, the 'what' component was to understand how coaches in South Africa choose and how they use assessments. The 'who' component were the South African coaches, and they were interviewed. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews with the respondents. The interviews were recorded and transcribed and the transcriptions were analysed through inductive coding. Thereafter, the codes were grouped in categories and themes were derived from the categories. The themes provided insights to the two research questions.

The use of a phenomenological approach enables one to have a single legitimate source of data, i.e. the respondents lived experience.

3.4 Population

This section covers the population selected and the sampling methodology used in identifying and inviting the respondents for this study.

The population was executive coaches; they are independent practitioners and mostly work as associates with coaching organisations / consultancies that have no formal connection to one another.
The coaches all work in Johannesburg, although they may live elsewhere. The requirement was that all coaches should be using assessments in their practice.

3.5 Sample and sampling method

In qualitative research, "the phenomenon dictates the method (not vice versa) including even the type of respondents" (Groenewald, 2004) Hycner, 1999, p.156 in

Groenewald, 2004, p 8). The researcher has to develop a sampling frame that would answer the research questions, identify the people who will act as respondents and ensure their participation.

Merriam (1998) claims that non-probability sampling is the method of choice for most qualitative research and thus was also applied to this research study. One of the sampling methods of non-probability sampling is purposive sampling. Also for phenomenology the most appropriate and robust sampling method is purposive.

Purposive sampling is based on the assumption that the researcher would like to discover, understand and gain insight and therefore must focus on selecting a sample from those which the most can be learned (Merriam (1998). Patton, in (Merriam, 1998), argues that the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases. In this case, the selection criteria for purposive sampling involve coaches that use assessments as part of their coaching practice, (Groenewald, 2004) (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006) within the population as defined above.

Purposive sampling strategies are also designed to enhance the understanding of the selected respondents' experiences as a means for developing theories and concepts(Devers & Frankel, 2000). This research study was conducted with sixteen respondents who all use assessments in their coaching practice. The paradigm of qualitative research requires that the data collected be rich in description of people and place (Patton (1990). Interviews were requested via telephone and an email was sent to the selected respondents. Two interviews were conducted by telephone, due to the respondents not travelling to Johannesburg during the specified timeline.

Table 6: Confirmed Respondents

Location	Sample number	Proposed Respondents
Johannesburg	2	A &B
Johannesburg	2	C & D
Johannesburg	2	E & F
Johannesburg	1	G
Johannesburg	1	H
Pretoria	1	I
Cape Town	1	J
California US	1	K
Johannesburg	2	L & M
Johannesburg	2	N & O
Johannesburg	1	P
	16 Coaches	

The majority were associates of organisations that regularly tendered for business contracts in corporate South Africa.

3.6 Research Instrument

The foundation of data collection for this study was semi-structured interviews with the selected respondents. The research tool was to hold face-to-face interviews which is a qualitative research methodology. This links with the research paradigm of Interpretivism which requires close interaction between the researcher and the respondent (Ponterotto, 2005).

The research instrument is set out in Appendix B; this was the Interview Guide used by the researcher. The interview guide was developed based on the literature review conclusion and findings and was designed to achieve consensus and reliability in the data through the interviewing process. During the interview, the Interview Guide was helpful as it ensured efficiency. In the event of respondents going off topic or not answering the question, the researcher would ask more direct questions.

3.7 Procedure for data collection

In qualitative research the data consists of well-documented field notes, audio tapes, memos and transcripts of interviews conducted (Devers & Frankel, 2000). The data were collected from purposefully-selected respondents who use assessments in their practice, in other words, they have experience of the phenomenon. This enabled the researcher to collect a rich description of their experience. Appointments were scheduled by telephone. In some instances, the respondents changed their time slots because of personal scheduling challenges. This required flexibility and agility. All the interviews, bar two, were conducted face-to-face. Two interviews were conducted by telephone.

3.7.1 *Interview process*

In qualitative research, the interview is the most widely-used method of collecting data as it is the most efficient way to collect data about an individuals' experiences who has experienced the phenomenon under discussion. The interview provides the respondent with the opportunity to tell their own story Nankoosing (2005). The interview gives the respondent a chance to think about and reflect on their experiences and to make meaning during the process.

In-depth interviewing was designed to ask respondents to reconstruct their experiences and to construct their meanings (Seidman, 2013). The interview is seen as a conversation but with an underlying purpose, where questions were asked to stimulate reflection and responses that answered the researcher's question (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995).

This was achieved through the coaches telling their stories. The information was obtained and extracted by the researcher asking deeper questions. The respondents were at ease and shared information and responded to questions easily. The more relaxed they felt, the fewer answers were in the exemplary or 'perfect' mode. It was as if masks were being removed and people were speaking from the heart and the

interview then became less focused on the Interview Guide. This was as a result ofe reliability increasing. The interviewees became more trusting of the researcher.

A draft interview letter, Appendix C, was emailed to the sample respondents requesting to be interviewed, face-to-face, for the research study. In the consent letter, they were also asked to grant permission for the interview to be audio recorded.

3.7.2 *Ensuring quality data collection process*

Quality data collection is a key factor for the success of the research study in qualitative research. The data obtained from the interview process is critical and this directly relates to the quality of the respondents. Key dependencies were the ability of the researcher to instil confidentially, trust and rapport with the respondents. This enabled the respondents to feel comfortable and to share their true experiences on the research topic.

“Rapport is tantamount to trust, and trust is the foundation for acquiring the fullest, most accurate disclosure a respondent is able to make” (Duncombe & Jessop, 2002) p.6). This was achieved by finding a quiet, conducive space, The researcher ensured that the interview kicked off with some standard biographical questions to settle the respondents. The researcher also created the context of the reason for the research study and sharing why it was personally meaningful for the researcher.

The interviews were all recorded to ensure their safekeeping. The interviews were saved in digital format to ensure that no damage would be caused to them. The interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriber, and each transcription was checked against the audio recording of the interview to ensure that the transcription represented the actual interview. Confidentiality of fieldnotes and trnascriptions were managed by allocating a code for every name. The fieldnotes also had all names removed and replaced with codes. The audio files were sent to the transcriber with code names, An index was created for names and codes which are in safekeeping in the researcher’s personal safe.

The purposeful sampling process ensured that all interviewees were experienced executive coaches who use assessments in their practice. The guarantee of confidentiality, the building of rapport and the access that the researcher had to a selection of coaches, contributed to the success of this research study.

3.8 Field notes

Field notes are written accounts, made during the interview or shortly thereafter and are a supportive source of data (Merriam (1998). The researcher captured her field notes immediately after interviews as well as make notes during the data analysis process to capture reflections and insights.

3.9 Procedure for data collection

All interviews were pre-arranged by email or telephone. Time constraints dictated that the interviews were tightly run and did not overrun the allocated time. Two interviews had to be conducted by telephone, notes for one interview had to be handwritten due to recording failure.

3.9.1 *Data analysis and interpretation*

Content analysis is defined by Hsieh and Shannon (2005) p 1278 , "as a research method for the subjective interpretation of content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes and patterns". This analytical method is used when existing theory or research literature on a phenomenon is limited. Content analysis tries to determine the importance of what has not been said as well as what has been said in the interview. (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) ,(Merton & Kendall, 1946). This was the strategy whereby the transcription were analysed for this research study:

3.9.2 *Data Collection to data analysis 'coding'*

The interview transcripts were read a number of times in order to derive codes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The first round of coding was done on paper to allow the novice researcher an experience of dipping their toes in the water. Saldaña (2015) makes an important point that codes are in essence capturing essential elements of the research story. In addition, the success of content analysis depends very much on the coding process (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

After the first cycle of coding the transcripts were loaded in rich text format onto the Atlasti platform. The success in the content analysis was achieved through inductive coding of the interview transcripts using the computer software programme Atlasti. Each interview transcript was aligned to previous interviews coded to ensure alignment between both the coding process and the content of the data. A second cycle of coding was done to ensure that coding was being done accurately and in an aligned and standardised manner. The researcher also found that some codes were drilling to a minute level of detail while other codes were expressing conceptual ideas. This was remediated to ensure that all codes were being pitched at the same level.

3.9.3 *Coding for categorising*

Codes were then sorted into categories based on the relationship between them. (Hsieh & Shannon 2005). This process leaves the researcher with the challenge to choose based on a set of criteria. Through a process of refining and streamlining of clustering some categories began to emerge. Coding was done a number of times to develop the categories. According to Saldana, this process is known as codifying * (Saldana 2009). The result of the codifying and categorising process is provided in Appendix C.

3.9.4 *From codes and categories to themes*

The emerging categories were organised and grouped into meaningful clusters (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The researcher did further adjustments to the codes. Definitions for each category, subcategory and code were developed. The process of

classifying the data created a conceptual framework through which the coded data was brought together in an analytically useful way (Dey, 2003).

3.9.5 *From Themes to theory*

This is the process of how the researcher used the themes and concepts and how the data led to the development of a framework (Saldaña, 2015). The data reflects the hypothesis of the research study and it is influenced by the research objectives (Dey, 2003).

The benefits of using the conventional approach of content analysis is that the researcher could work with the direct responses of the respondents without imposing the literature or other categories (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Another benefit was that one could continue to work with the data and build the connection between theory and the data. Checking that the correct conclusion was being reached (Dey, 2003).

The outcome of the coding process into the categories and themes is provided in appendix D.

The researcher constantly reflected and reviewed whether the data that was being collected was valuable and whether the data was going to make sense. As is the practice in qualitative research, the researcher checked to see whether new information was needed and whether new ideas were emerging. This meant that that the researcher had an analytical mind-set toward the data as it was being collected.

3.9.6 *Data analysis after collection*

The researcher became very familiar with the data through reading and re-reading the data and journaling about the data, also examining the data in depth for details in the descriptions and being sure not to miss anything or to generalise, to such an extent that the data becomes diluted. During this time, the researcher also started coding and categorising and then grouping the data into themes. The electronic tool that was used is Atlas.ti to assist with managing the data analysis process. It was key during this stage to keep referring to the field notes taken by the researcher.

3.9.7 *Data analysis strategies*

It was important for the researcher to develop themes as they emerged, relating to the bigger research question. The researcher observed that there were certain key words, phrases and constructs that kept repeating themselves. The researcher was alert to not having predetermined categories versus emerging categories. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) assert that the success of content analysis depends very much on the inductive coding process. The challenge is about organising large quantities of text into fewer content categories. Categories are themes that are directly expressed in the text or are derived from them through analysis. The next stage is to identify the relationship among categories. According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), the researcher doing data analysis should create a coding scheme to guide them about decisions in the analysis of content.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher used conventional content analysis approaches (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This means that codes are defined during data analysis and the source of the codes is directly from the data.

3.10 Limitations of the study

The phenomenologist has only one authentic source of data; the words and the experiences as told by the respondents themselves (Wimpenny & Gass, 2000). The potential exists that coaches may respond as they want to be perceived or as they would like their coaching practice to be perceived and not necessarily about what they do in reality; Influencing this may be because of my role as possible client to the same coaches in the corporate organisation in which the researcher works. The sample population consisted of coaches who use assessments in their practice. From a standpoint of experience and probable competence, this ensured that the respondents had credibility and that they were able to speak about their experiences.

Not all coaches choose assessments in their practices. In some instance assessments are chosen by the client organisation. This is a challenge to which the researcher needs to be alert. This was an insight during the interview process which was not planned for. The researcher should also carefully note which coaches are

psychologists as the assessment process will be quite different depending on the paradigm and categorisation of their work. Psychologist coaches choose to do assessments that enable them to obtain a view of the underlying personality constructs impacting on the person's performance (Barner & Higgins, 2007). This was true for the population interviewed.

A further limitation is that although this is a South African research study, literature specific to South African coaching was fairly sparse and therefore the literature on which this study was based was mainly from North America, the UK and Europe. The implication is that the South African coaches' experiences with assessments are not explained and grounded in assessments that are valid and reliable for the South African population (Meiring et al., 2005).

3.11 Validity and reliability

In quantitative research, validity refers to the truthfulness of the findings as is evidenced in the experience of the respondents (Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001).

In addition, the researcher needs to validate the findings through the data analysis process. The researcher can verify the process by checking that the data procedures used during the research were valid and reliable, which according to Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, and Spiers (2002) translates into the rigour of the study.

The verification strategies proposed by Morse et al. (2002) were applied to the research study as follows:

Methodological Coherence – this ensures congruence. In this case research questions matched the method, which in turn, matched the data and the analytical procedures. This was achieved through the understanding by the researcher of knowledge production and ontology, the use of interpretive inquiry, qualitative research methodology, interviewing and inductive coding procedures of data analysis to avoid researcher bias.

Sampling The sample needs to be be appropriate and careful consideration needs to be given to identify respondents who have knowledge of the research topic. Sampling adequacy is also achieved by saturation and replication. The greatest contributor for success in this criteria was the fact the respondents were purposefully selected.

Collecting and analysing data concurrently – the researcher followed the data analysis methodology as set out in this chapter. No pre-determined codes were identified, codes emerged from the interview transcripts and the iterative process of reviewing and redoing the coding of data.

Thinking Theoretically – the aim here is to see that ideas emerging from the data are re-confirmed in new data, giving rise to new ideas. These new ideas have to be verified again in existing data. It means the researcher moves forward inch by inch instead of making huge leaps that in the end, make the data lose credibility.

Theory development – this means that the data is being carefully coded and categorised to develop data. It is seeing patterns and connections in the data.

3.11.1 *External validity*

External validity refers to transferability (Seale, 1999) (Whittemore et al., 2001) or applicability (Sandelowski, 1986). This is linked to the sample size and who is in the sample. The threats to external validity in qualitative research are few because the research involves a research sample that was purposefully selected for the experience they bring to the particular research topic**.**

3.11.2 *Internal validity*

Internal validity refers to credibility (Whittemore et al. (2001) or truth value. A good indicator for this would be the lived experience of the respondents (Sandelowski (1986). Credibility is the main criterion against which truth-value in qualitative research can be measured (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). A qualitative research becomes credible when the descriptions and interpretations of the lived experience are so sound that the respondents or any other person are able to recognise it. Internal validity would therefore be measured on the credibility of the respondents, the accuracy of the

interpretation, analysis and presentation of the data by the researcher. This should result in a well-integrated report that is also linked to the literature reviews. In this study, interviews were transcribed and inductive coding used to the analysis of the data. This further enhances the validity of the data.

The strength of qualitative research is its internal validity or credibility since the aim of the research is to explore a problem and describe a setting, process or group (De Vos, 2005). This study ensured internal validity through the replication of the interview process and structure with each interview; although there is space for refinements the research ensured internal validity was not compromised.

3.11.2.1 Reflexivity

According to Guillemin and Gillam (2004), reflexivity is an active and on-going process that saturates the entire research process. A reflexive researcher should constantly take stock of their actions and their role in the research process; they should subject themselves to the same critical scrutiny as the rest of their data. The reflexive researcher does not merely report the “facts” of the research, but actively constructs and understands their own interpretation of the facts and poses a deeper level of questioning how the interpretations came about.
As can be seen in the previous paragraph, reflexivity involves critical reflection of how the researcher constructs knowledge from the research process (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).

The factors that influence the researcher could be in the planning, conducting and writing up the research. The researcher kept a reflective journal during the entire research process where she reflected constantly on the insights reached to be sure that she was clear on where those interpretations came from. Engagement with research supervisor where she would ask critical questions about the analysis was also a part of the research process.
This has contributed to improving the quality and validity of the research.

3.11.3 *Reliability*

In qualitative research reliability equals repeatability (Sandelowski, 1986).

This is about the degree to which another researcher would come to the same conclusions, thus the researcher needs to guard against too much subjectivity. It entails that for auditing purposes, a clear process and decision trail is documented from beginning to end regarding this study.

Trustworthiness of the data can be achieved through data saturation and triangulation (Bowen, 2008). Data saturation is achieved through firstly having sufficient number of respondents to ensure you are getting complete data through replication where no new findings emanate from the interviews. To determine whether saturation was obtained is to check whether new codes emerge. A diminishing number of new codes means that no new data is emerging and therefore that saturation is being achieved.

Below, in Table 7, the saturation process is illustrated. From the first interview transcript coded to the last interview transcript that was coded.

Table 7: Saturation process

Coach Respondents	Number of new codes created
P16	27
P15	11
P14	12
P13	8
P12	1
P11	4
P10	3
P9	11
P8	3
P7	6
P6	1
P5	5
P4	3
P3	1
P2	1

P1	0

3.11.4 *Dependability*

This is a focus on the stability of the data over time and in different contexts and conditions (Scudder;, 2009). The researcher has been meticulous to outline the sample, the purposive sampling method and the limitations.

3.11.5 *Confirmability*

This deals with objectivity which is two or more people reviewing the findings for accuracy and meaning (Scudder;, 2009). The researcher shared with three of the respondents the findings and asked them to reflect on the data for accuracy and meaningfullness.

3.11.6 *Authenticity*

This is about the researcher faithfully and fairly having described the participant's experiences (Scudder;, 2009). The researcher ensured this through the awareness of her own subjectivity and checking herself; the role of the supervisor also contributed to authenticity by constantly asking critical questions where the researcher may have been lazy in simply making assumptions around the data.

3.12 Ethical Considerations

Ethics is an important consideration when people reveal personal information and the way in which their confidentiality is protected so that it does not all end up in the public domain.

According to Babbie (1989), there are guiding principles to ensure that social research ethics is maintained. The first guiding principle is that participation in the research study should be voluntary. The researcher achieved this principle by providing a brief outline to potential interviewees the purpose of the research.

Secondly, the writer prescribes that anonymity and confidentiality needs to be protected. Anonymity is difficult in that the researcher interviews the respondents.

However, as far as possible, the researcher has attempted to keep the remarks anonymous in an effort to protect the respondents' confidentiality. This was achieved through the researcher committing to confidentiality in the consent letter in Appendix C and by ensuring that the names of respondents were not disclosed in the research findings.

The third guiding principle is to ensure that analysis and reporting of the data in the research study is objective and has integrity. This means disclosing any limitations and shortcomings of the research study. In this study, the researcher ensured objectivity through distancing herself from the respondents and their experience. It also meant not influencing the interview process. The analysis and reporting of the data was the words and thinking of the respondents. Besides the data collection procedure, all literature used in this research study was referenced to the authors and publications. Plagiarism was assessed through submitting this report on Turnitin.

The University of Witwatersrand also has a Code of Ethics for Research on Human Subjects was adhered to by the researcher. Wits Business School Ethics Committee approved the proposal and the title was approved on 6 January 2017 in Appendix.

This chapter has set out the ontology, epistemology of this study. The research paradigm is interpretivist. The research design is phenomenology. The sample population and sample methods have been explained. The research instrument, the procedure for data collection, data analysis and interpretation has been discussed. The limitations have been set out. The chapter discussed reliability and validity and ethics regarding the research study.

In terms of confidentiality and anonymity, although interview respondents are not anonymous, confidentiality is guaranteed. None of the responses provided by respondents was however linked to individuals as all names, organisational names and addresses were removed from interview notes and were replaced by an identification number. The researcher only embarked on interviews once the ethical clearance has been granted for this study. Every effort has been made to consider the ethical considerations and possible side effects of this project.

4 CHAPTER 4. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the results of the research study are presented. Exemplars from the interview process have been grouped by themes and are here presented.

Sixteen coaches were interviewed, after transcription a total of 894 codes were created. 150 individual codes were derived. There were 11 themes. 48 Sub-themes.

The most frequently recurring codes in descending order were

Coach paradigm

Self-insight

Business Perspective

Feedback.

The first research question is to look at how coaches choose assessments.

The aim of this question was to determine what factors inform the coach when making decisions about selection.

Interviewees were asked to reflect what paradigm they work from. Table 8 captures the paradigms

Table 8: What paradigms inform my work.

Rank	Factors	Frequency
1	Systems	5
2	Psychology	5
3	Eclectic	3
4	Systems Psycho-dynamic	2
4	Existential	2
4	Leadership Development	2
4	Person-centred	2
4	Neuro-Science	2
4	Meaning and Purpose	2
4	Results Focused	2

An inspection of Table 8 shows that the most frequently chosen paradigms are Systems, Psychology and Eclectic (9). Eclectic, although not a paradigm, shows it was the choice of coaches who were saying that they do not stick to any particular paradigm. All interviewees gave more than one response, which indirectly shows an eclectic approach. The responses to the question about paradigm included methodologies and tools and disciplines. The table shows the rank order.

The following table (Table 9) is a summary of the interview themes that emerged. In the discussion that follows headings were created for each category and theme.

Table 9: Interview themes

Numbering	Theme
4.2	**How coaches chooses assessment**
4.2.1	**Assessments chosen intentionally** 4.2.1.1 Clear outcomes to be achieved 4.2.1.2 Validation of a hunch 4.2.1.3 A source of external feedback 4.2.1.4 Kick starting the coaching conversation 4.2.1.5 A common language 4.2.1.6 Measurement 4.2.1.7 To gauge where the coachee is at
4.2.2	**Coach's paradigm** 4.2.2.1 Psychology paradigm 4.2.2.2 Determine the process needs paradigm 4.2.2.3 Directive paradigm 4.2.2.5 Measurement paradigm 4.2.2.6 Business paradigm 4.2.2.7 Scientific paradigm
4.2.3	**Unplanned/ Unreflective ways of choosing assessment** 4.2.3.1 No assessment strategy
4.3	**How coaches use assessments**
4.3.1	**Timing in the use of assessment**

	4.3.1.1 Assessments first 4.3.1.2 Time is valuable
4.3.2	**Feedback process in the use of assessment** 4.3.2.1 Feedback preparation 4.3.2.2 Feedback landing 4.3.2.3 Co-creating feedback 4.3.2.4 Contextualisation 4.3.2.5 Making meaning 4.3.2.6 Leave what does not fit 4.3.2.7 Create a reflective space 4.3.2.8 Skillful feedback
4.3.3	**Benefits of the use of assessments** 4.3.3.1 Self-insight 4.3.3.2 It's an 'Aha' experience 4.3.3.3 Blind spot identification 4.3.3.4 Affirms and identifies strengths 4.3.3.5 Developing action steps 4.3.3.6 Understanding of others 4.3.3.7 Shift happens 4.3.3.8 Insights for Coach 4.3.3.9 Credibility for Coach
4.3.4	**Assessments for learning and change**

4.3.5	**Coach's competence in the use of assessments** 4.3.5.1 Connecting info and finding patterns 4.3.5.2 Giving feedback 4.3.5.3 Building trust and rapport 4.3.5.4 Accreditation in the use of assessments
4.3.6	**Assessment used as diagnostic**
4.3.7	**Dialogue vs using assessment** 4.3.7.1 Narrative 360 4.3.7.3 Relational Narrative 360
4.3.8	Critique of Assessment: cautions, critiques and conundrums 4.3.8.1 360 Multi-rater 4.3.8.2 Extract meaning for the coachee 4.3.8.3 Coachee's negative experience of assessment 4.3.8.4 Coach's ambivalence 4.3.8.5 Not in isolation 4.3.8.6 Poor organisation processes 4.3.8.7 Dealing with resistance 4.3.8.8 Tools that box

4.2 How Coaches Choose Assessments

4.2.1 *Assessments Chosen Intentionally*

There are coaches who chose assessments with clear intention and rationale.

This discussion highlights some of those objectives and intentions. The following discussion includes the subthemes to better understand what was meant.

4.2.1.1 Clear outcomes to be achieved

The coaches shared the way they choose certain assessments. They believed that the assessment was a way to achieve a certain outcome. For instance the coach would choose an assessment because it raised self- awareness. The outcome of the interview process is that self-awareness was a very saturated code that many coaches referred to in terms of the purpose and reason for choosing. Another outcome was that the assessment was able to measure progress so if they applied it pre and post there would be an opportunity to measure.

The coach in this particular exemplar also referred to the assessment presenting the coachee with the opportunity to gain awareness of others and to give the language for the coaching conversation and provide measurement opportunity.

(P11) Increased self-awareness – I think that is one. Measure progress – so if I benchmark myself in terms of 'I am here' then I know if a particular construct has shifted or changed, so that helps. From a measurement perspective. Awareness of others(?) … And I think the other one is about giving people language, to be able to speak about themselves and their own issues.

The next exemplar provides speaks to the assessment being an opportunity to measure progress and growth.

(P13) And that might mean that there is re-assessment at some point, especially if people have gone a journey and they feel they have achieved something, then maybe they want to do an assessment again or maybe a different assessment and a new sort of process cycle because of things that have come up. And once there is a point where both, well the coachee feels that they have reached what they set out to do

4.2.1.2 Confirmation of an idea

Another reason for choosing to do an assessment was that sometimes the coach felt that they had a deeper feeling or intuition or that they were sensing something. The purpose of the assessment would then be to confirm or refute/ disprove that hunch with the assistance of the assessment. It could also lead to greater self-insight for the

coachee or even confirm a hunch for the coachee. One of the coaches also mentioned that a paper format assessment report carried greater credibility.

P1) So normally I use it as a validation tool.

(P5) …what one could do is just to use it to perhaps just confirm maybe some assumptions that people might have.

(P6) often what is in a profile people know- whether they articulate it or whether it is knowledge, but getting a profile in paper format always gives credibility to their thinking and that is also an interesting piece for me.

(P8) *it can offer some self-insight. And sometimes can confirm hunches that the coachee has had.*

4.2.1.3 A source of external feedback

The coaches mentioned that they choose assessments because it brings a source of external feedback into the coaching conversation. It brings the opportunity to discuss things from a different angle, in this instance the personality / psychological angle.

(P13) any sort of personality assessment, and there are a lot of options that one can use there… Insights Discovery, MBTI, and there are a couple of others like 16 PF but they are not so commonly used, because it is a little bit more psychological.

4.2.1.4 A way to commence the coaching conversation

Many coach respondents spoke about how they choose assessments because it 'kickstarts' the conversation and that information can become the basis for starting the coaching conversation or to add new dimensions.

(*P14) So you also just pull of the web, online stuff?*
Ja, and again not because it is going to describe you accurately but to create some kind of conversation

(P9) *the assessment is a way of finding or generating new information and understanding or new insights*

4.2.1.5 Providing a language for the coaching conversation

Assessments may also be chosen because they introduce a new language for the coachee. It may be that the language enables new constructs to be named or behaviours that previously did not have a description to be named. The coaches saw that if was beneficial for both the individual both also for the process.

The next data set provides evidence of how coaches viewed the way choosing assessments brought language that could contribute to the coaching conversation.

Assessment language could play the role to provides words for something until now had no words for

(P8) *The assessment also presents the coachee with a language that they can now use to describe areas that maybe up until now they did not have the words for*.

Assessments can be a description of something that aptly describes the coachee and often becomes a hook for the coachee to talk to.

(P9) I think they do - not so much for me but for the coachee… they will have a sense that they are … I don't know, good at something or another. But when you then start going through an assessment there is a word or term they can hook on to and they are like 'ah! That is absolutely it!' And it almost gives them comfort that something has been identified.

An assessment can sometimes very accurately name something that may have taken a long process to work through.

(P13) they don't even have the words for it and the tools, especially things like those live story exercises and values, give them ways to express that otherwise might have been quite a long process to get to.

The eloquence of assessments enables quite complex constructs about people to be identified and named and then worked with toward solving the problem.

(P16) the fact that you have trouble building relationships with people…. It it becomes quite relevant when you can look at the profile and say your boss is very technical but you are quite conceptual.

4.2.1.6 Measurement of the coaching intervention

The coach may be quite intentional about measurement or measurement and impact may be an expectation from the client and hence the coach chooses an assessment that will enable the shift to be measured.

(P2) Sometimes we do it at the end of the coaching program because we can then show the shift.

(P2) check in at each session 'where are you in terms of what the assessment measures' so it is very simplistic. .

(P8) The second assessment I like to use is HFM Talent index. It is a competence assessment which measure the individual's strengths and gaps. It is a useful tool and I find that it is excellent to measure at the start of the coaching engagement and then again 3-6 months later. What is good about it is that it also has a 360 component

(P13) What works quite nicely if one can do it, say you have a coaching process over six months, have a 360 at the beginning and use that to make changes, complete the coaching at six months but then wait another three because they are still in process, they are still getting used to trying out new behaviours. So it can be three to six months and then do a post.

Assessment chosen for measurement is very common practice and gives the coach, the coachee and the client an insight to progress. It also gives others, the raters in the 360, an opportunity to feedback their perceptions and to see whether the coaching process is resulting in behaviour change.

4.2.1.7 An indicator of the coachee's level of development

Other reasons for choosing an assessment as outlined by the coaches was to gauge how the coachee is doing in relation to the coaching process.

(*P4) – and it is not like a psychometric assessment, but it is an assessment tool that helps to understand the area we are going to work with. So we are going to look at branding, assess how they are coming across at the moment, and that tool is then integrated with the process of developing what they would want –*

(P5) - *Why don't we use this information to get some sort of sense of the extent to which there is parity to your thinking, and what this environment actually demands?*'

4.2.1.8 Conclusion

The majority of the sample reported that they are intentional about assessments in their practice. Being intentional about choosing assessments means knowing the assessment tools at one's disposal and the coaching outcomes you want to achieve. Validating a hunch using an assessment is especially true for coaches who know what the outcome for each tool is. It is common practice that a coach may suggest the completion of an assessment in an effort to confirm a hunch that the coach has about the coachee.

The external feedback that coaches hope to obtain is feedback from the eco-system or sometimes this feedback can be based on a behavioural or personality set of constructs. It is a form of triangulation. There are also coaches who intentionally set out to measure the coachee's progress and therefore they select certain assessments. Other coaches again, use assessments as a way of gauging directionally where to go next in the coaching engagement.

4.2.2 *Coach's Paradigm*

The biggest determinant of choices made about assessment it seems, is the coach's paradigm. This paradigm includes the distinction of whether coach's qualifications are based in psychology, management, leadership, health sciences, and business. It can be summarised as the coach's approach.

4.2.2.1 Psychology paradigm

The next set of exemplars are how coaches respond to how they choose assessments. The grouping reflects those coaches who spoke about the choice being based in a discipline or philosophy.

One of the coaches spoke about choosing assessment based on one of the psychological paradigms for example

(P5) And I am saying that because my natural inclination, you asked me earlier 'am I a psychologist/coach?' I am very definitely

There were definitely coaches who wanted to be known as having a particular paradigm to their work which informed the assessment choice and methodology. Two coaches in the sample group described themselves as working systems psychodynamically.

(P12) then do a typically system psychodynamic assessment, it is called Role Analysis,

One of the coaches, when talking about her practice and how she chooses assessments, also wanted to be sure that she kept her assessments within one paradigm and not mixing up paradigms.

(P11) *I suppose it is because of my background, I don't like mixing it up,*

4.2.2.2 A needs paradigm

Another set of responses that I heard was a paradigm that was about choosing assessments based on what is needed, so decisions about what assessment to select was based on what was required by the situation.

(P5))*. It is always asking the question what are you actually trying to do, what insights could be provided that we are not going to be able to find by any other means*

The following three examples demonstrate how the client informs the coaching process. The methodology being described is the process of understanding the problem from the client's point of view and that then informs the choice of assessment.

(*P4) your first point is an engagement with the person and the discussion around what the needs of the client are*.

(P16) *understand the problem or the challenge, or the issue or opportunity the person or individual faces – what that is all about and what the real challenge is.*

(P9) I will only do assessments if they are necessary, I don't do them automatically. And I very seldom start off doing them. So they will generally emerge during the coaching process based on something that arises, and if there is a need for it I will then make a recommendation that we look at an assessment.

4.2.2.3 A Directive Paradigm

There are also coaches who have a directive paradigm. They pre-define which assessments are part of their practice and how many assessments the coachee needs to take. These choices are irrespective of any circumstance that the coachee may be presenting.

Some of the coaches referred to themselves as having an 'anchor' assessment,

(P7) I have come to use the DISC as well, so both of those can be kind of anchors. I think it is important to do some sort of personality assessment. Now often times

organizations will use Insights or a number of other different ones, but my personal preference would be either MBTI or DISC.

And then the other kind of anchor on that, personality piece, even though it is not necessarily personality, is emotional intelligence.

Anchor assessment in this sense refers to an assessment which defines the coach or their practice. It is also in some instances an assessment they have a substanstial amount of experience in. Anchor could also refer to a set of anchor assessments that provide a holistic view of the individual.

(P2) Almost they can express it better than I can express it myself'. So an experienced coach with the right assessments can actually tell you what this might be what you are feeling already. And you are going 'okay, he really understands. I can trust you, nobody understands me like this'.

This exemplar shows the extent to which the coach directs. The coach knows the tool well, and can therefore, from the report, provide you with insights about yourself. Additionally, this coach adds the sense that this assists in building trust.

The next example was a response about the coach always choosing two assessments. This exemplar speaks of the coach's practice which is defined and directive and defines the choice of assessment.

(P3) So I always use at least one or two assessments.

The next exemplar is of coaches who put the issue the coachee has brought to the coaching engagement as central. That then became the criteria for choosing the assessment.

(*P8) Depending on the issue that the coachee is presenting with if it is EQ related I will suggest that the person takes an EQi assessment.*

4.2.2.4 A Measurement Paradigm

A measurement paradigm in this instance was manifesting in the way that the coach's practice was choosing assessments because they wanted to measure certain constructs.

(P13) a 360 is useful to do, you can actually do it and do it again six months later.

In the following exemplar the coach was demonstrating that it is quite straightforward to measure and that the tools he has at his disposal can also measure physiological constructs which he explained can be linked to understand behaviour.

(P2*Yes, it is quite easy to measure, even for someone to get an idea of what it would look like, without taking the assessments, …, they can even measure the difference in chemistry, body chemistry, like blood and adrenalin levels and that kind of thing.*

4.2.2.5 A Business Paradigm

There are coaches who make their choice of assessment based on a business paradigm. The next exemplar simplifies and makes the choice seem quite straightforward.

(P1) *So the reason why assessments was brought into my coaching journey, was because of the type of client I attracted, that is part of the business coaching, so it is business like to get an assessment. Although I call it an informal assessment, for no reason I tell them 'go with your first answer, do it first thing in the morning when you are at your best, and this is not right or wrong, it is what it is, and it might or might not give us some answers into your palace of possibility'*

This coach explains that it is business-like to have assessments.

4.2.2.6 A Scientific Paradigm

Similar to some of the previous paradigms, the coach who works from a scientific paradigm is backing the 'superiority' of science.

(P2) I mean the assessment has been scientifically tested so your scores, even if you didn't do the bloods, we can pretty much say based on your scores 'this is probably chemically what would be happening in your body right now' – not like 'this is what your cholesterol would be' – but in terms of high, low and that kind of thing.

The second exemplar, although speaking of science in a more mathematical way is also promoting assessments and choosing assessments for the reason that data are presented in a particular way. Supposedly, it appeals to the coach or the coachee in a particular way.

(P14) Having said that, I know that some of my coaching colleagues prefer one with the graph and things, they find that supposedly more scientific.

The final exemplar shows the coach speaking about assessments and their scientific paradigm, but asking whether the appropriateness question has been addressed.

(P13) exactly, it is sexy and interesting and scientific, but is it really appropriate.

4.2.2.7 Conclusion

The Coach's paradigms are based on a number of different approaches/ constructs/ references and not exclusively limited to whether you are a psychologist or not. It included a world view, philosophy, biases for action or reflection, and coaching process model.

4.2.3 *Unplanned / Non-reflective ways of choosing assessments*

Some of the coach respondents were not intentional or working from a particular paradigm in choosing assessments.

4.2.3.1 No assessment strategy

In fact, it seems that some coaches did not have a strategy for assessments although they did use assessments.

This exemplar gives one a view of the coach not having a clear strategy for using assessment.

(P7) *I think I will probably, these are really good questions you are asking me because sometimes I just do them but now I have to work back through the logic path!*

The next example too demonstrates that the coach does not have a particular strategy. The laughing may indicate the discomfort of the admission. It is indeed a juxtaposition. A quote by Studs Terkel is very telling " A laugh can be a cry of pain, and a silence can be a shout" (Parker, 1996, p.165). in (Seidman, 2013)

(P13) *That's an interesting question because you have made me think now, that I don't actually maybe have a specific strategy (laughs) for the use of assessments,*

A number of the coaches shared how one could be unintentional about using assessments if one had not thought through a strategy of using assessments in your practice.

4.2.3.2 Conclusion

It emerged from the interviews that one could categorise the choice of assessments along three sets of criteria. The first group are intentional and choose assessments purposefully and ensure that the coachee gets the outcomes that are sought.

The second group, it emerged, were intentional about the choice of assessment, but were basing their decision on different criteria. One that was associated with the paradigm or life philosophy that they ascribed to, either professionally as a coach or as a philosophy or belief system. The second group differed from the first one in that they decided on the choice of assessment before they were even engaged with the coachee.

The third group responded during the interviews that they do use assessments, but were not able to describe the approach or strategy they were using to choose which assessment. It was not something they were intentional about. In fact, they were often thinking about the choice of assessment for the first time when the interviewer posed the question.

4.3 How Coaches use Assessments

The next part of the discussion focuses on the second question in the research study. The question of how coaches use assessments.

4.3.1 *Timing in the use of Assessments*

Many coaches spoke about the timing of assessments in response to the question about use. Timing of assessments was approached differently across the spectrum of coaches interviewed.

4.3.1.1 The sequence of the assessment process

This exemplar shows that the coaches have a very specific idea about the timing of the assessment. The coach plans to the detail. The assessment in this process is scheduled before session one. The second quote the leader also explains that he find that she is not influenced by preconceived framing about the person.

(P2) *the clients would complete the assessments online before they come in for their first coaching session… they would do the assessment before session 1 – and session 1 is normally feedback on certain points of the assessment.*

(P5) I prefer not looking at the psychometrics before I have met the person. You don't have a preconceived idea or expectation around the person, so when we look at those results I think perhaps it is with a slightly different hat on, or a different perspective

The next exemplar too the coach speaks about the timing of assessments and that it ideally should be done during the first three coaching sessions.

(*P15) whatever assessments they have done in the organization, or the team has done, I want to look at those. And then we evaluate whether more assessments are needed and then I tend to do those really within the first quarter, the first three sessions, so that we can get any kind of learning that we need to get, or any kind of perspective on the issues that they want to work on.*

The early use of assessments was juxtaposed with another view which was that assessments were dependant on the readiness of the coachee and the level of trust and rapport that has been established. A list was compiled from all the coaches interviewed to summarise the list of prerequisites. *Prerequisites before assessments are introduced, mentioned by various respondents*

1. *Trust was being built.*
2. *Rapport already existed between the coach and coachee*
3. *The concept of assessments was explained*
4. *Any reservations on the part of the coachee was addressed*
5. *There was agreement on the use of assessment*
6. *A clear purpose for the assessment existed.*

Interestingly two coaches, who work in the same consultancy choosing and using exactly the same two assessment tools in combination had a perspective on timing. Their approach was to do the assessment before the first face-to-face meeting with the coachee.

The coach's choice of particular assessments used in combination enabled her to gather data before session 1. During session 1 they were already providing feedback and insights (awarenesses) for the client/coachee.

*(*The choice of assessment and the choice to do the assessment before session 1 are perceived to be beneficial for the coach as it immediately gives insight on the client's communication style and the language that they prefer.

4.3.1.2 Time is valuable

It was also the very same coaches who were also focused on time in relation to duration. For both of them they believe that the assessment enables them to nearly halve the number of sessions. The coach also considers that executives who are often pressed for time, appreciate the shortened timeframes and that this approach was a huge value add.

The question of timing was asked in the other interviews as well. Coaches responded with a variety of responses. Most of the responses were an illustration and confirmation that the assessment could not be the first interaction between the coach and the coachee. The common approach that emerged was that there needed to be a number of prerequisites in place before the coach could move to raising the idea of assessments.

This is a summary of responses collected. The idea of preparation and prerequisites was not articulated in a uniform manner, however interviewees described what was needed before coaches launched assessments. Responses in terms of timing therefore coalesce around it being after the 2nd or 3rd session in the coaching process. The interviewees differed significantly on the choice of timing of introducing assessments.

4.3.2 *Feedback process in the use of assessments*

Feedback on its own was one of the topics that was highly ‘saturated’ and received prominence as an important element to bear in mind when working with and using assessments. The processes that coaches build around the feedback and the level of attention to feedback, makes it one of the most important elements of the assessment process.

Many coaches expressed the belief that if the feedback was not executed well then the assessment and the intention or purpose of the assessment would not land.

4.3.2.1 Feedback preparation

The first exemplar is about the preparation for receiving the feedback. The coach expressed the view that the 360 assessment should not be shared as the ‘single story’

(P11*) I don't take it as this is a 360 and this the truth and that is how it ends; it is more like 'here is feedback of the people that work with you, where do you think it comes from?' When you now look at your personality, when you now look at your values, your journey, your background – where do you think that comes from?' Instead of saying 'this is the truth'*

The next exemplar is about the coach's preparation when sharing a 360 report. It should be viewed as simply sharing someone's perspective of you.

P13) *With the 360 stuff it is a little bit more tricky, and when I even start the de-brief I will talk a lot about perceptions and that it is not a psychometric and that we have to look for patterns so what is an outlier…*

The next exemplar is a little different, although not feedback on the 360, the coach is also describing the amount of care that need to be taken in preparation, by explaining the constructs and the type of tool and its purpose. The coach also refers to the fact that the assessment gives the coachee the language to talk about it.

(P11) Ja, look it is not particularly structured but broadly the first piece is about people understanding what their assessment tool is. So if we are talking MBTI, if we are talking Insights, if we are talking Values – what is that – that is part of giving them the language to talk about .

4.3.2.2 Creating ownership of the feedback

Coaches also describe the importance of the feedback landing. In the following examples, the coaches describe the different elements required in landing the assessment. The coach needs to find out which parts of the assessment resonate with the coachee and is there ownership of the different elements of the report. It is also an opportunity for integration of the new insights

(P11) *When we talk about values. When we talk about attitude, negative attitude towards this and a positive attitude towards that. It is not wrong or right, the question is - do you understand this in terms of your own behaviour? Have you seen this, has it worked for you, has it not worked? So that is now the depth of connecting with it. Because people will go 'oh now I understand why it irritates me so much!' (P8) As the*

coach I have to ensure that there is agreement with the report. how the different raters are sharing their perceptions of you and it could be based on once offe interactions and not necessarily that you are like that. It is also an opportunity to go back to the raters to ask why they have rated you in a particular way.

(*P1) 'wow, your way of explaining this to me has now helped me to understand all of these other thick documents' because it is packaged in a very friendly way, I am helping them to integrate it from a heart perspective. You know so it is not another report. Although the initial thing is it is an intellectual thing, based on the trust and time and conversations we have and the level and the depth and quality of that, it is as if I have an option to land it differently.*

(P3) It is also up to you to really take a look at this and say 'does this feel like me or not' – I am really going to ask you to do that because it is only an instrument, an instrument we can use to help us maybe gain insight and at the same time take it or leave it.' So that is how I position instruments.

4.3.2.3 Co-creation of the Feedback

The co-creation of assessments is when the coach seeks out what resonates with the coachee and which parts do not. The coach also helps the coachee to make meaning and build understanding. According to the coaches, different tools require a different approach as a competency based tool feedback will be much more factual and static and a preference tool is different too in that once the person has awareness they are still able to flex to other styles if the situation requires. A personality assessment is a given and if one wants to change it will take about 12-18 months to learn a new way

(P6) if it is a preference based assessment that is not competency based, then it is co-created – very much. If it is a quantitative one for example, like the 16 PF, you can't coach that, I mean it is pretty much 'this is what it says'; the data is what it is, but how the coachee makes sense of that – the actual sense making is being co-created.

(P8) So the coach would frame the session – not as a coaching session but as a feedback session, and would literally take the coachee in detail through both of those diagnostics. What would emerge through the process was that the coach and the coachee would co-create outcomes based on what we were seeing on the profile.

4.3.2.4 Contextualisation of the feedback

The coaches also explained in detail how they contextualise the assessment. The following exemplar provides the details.

(P3) *it is important to explain how the report is generated, what it means, the graphs and what they mean, what the whole thing means. So I spend quite a lot of time in the second session.*
(P11) *And either I am not ready for feedback or I am in a culture that has caused me to be defensive. And that is fine. So the first piece for that is understand the response, work with the response. So what is happening here? What is this feeling?*
(P4) It is always in conjunction with what is happening around them, the stage and understanding they are at in conjunction with other assessments and taking those together and getting a whole view. I don't believe in mechanistically saying we have got to do this and this is not working so now we have got to do this and that step; it is really understanding the person as a whole.

Coaches spent a lot of the time doing the contextualisation. The time spent is about the commitment that coaches have for the feedback process and doing it well.

4.3.2.5 The coach assists with making meaning

Coaches also spoke about the process of making meaning. The process of making meaning involves the coach joining the dots and making explicit links between different datasets that have been shared in the coaching engagement. The following example is a description of what making meaning entails for this coach.

(P9) *I mean one of the things I am good at as a coach is I like to create links*
(P14) *But as a coach you keep that at the back of your own mind anyway, and it might be later in the coaching process and then you pick up on it.*
(P7) *So I think it is using the data in compilation*

4.3.2.6 Unacceptable feedback for the individual

The coaches described things that sometimes the coachee could not agree with or that did not resonate with. Sometimes it is an ego-defence for something that the person is not ready to hear. The coaches all had a response that the best strategy was to leave it. Sometimes, further opportunities arose when the same issue could be raised again and then the coachee was in some instances, more open or more receptive,

(*P1) I have had people that would mention I can't identify with this, but it is the ego defence response. So normally they take time, and I would also encourage, to say 'you know what I don't try and label you by no means is this a labelling exercise, so show me which of these things you agree with and which you don't.*
(P2) Because there might be something specific that they mismatch and therefore can't relate to. If they say it in their own words then you can explore further. If there is complete denial, then if that is the case then it is either not relevant to the person, so it might not be denial, but that doesn't happen very often, it is very accurate the assessments
(P14) Some people disagree with some of the things that come out and it is their prerogative to believe it or not but there is a pattern identified, and again it is their prerogative to say 'I agree with that completely' or 'can we probe a bit more, can we focus on that'. I would love to focus on ABC because it is different to what is coming out of the PI.
(P13) And that just changes it already because if people see two or three things that they don't agree with, they often go 'no, I don't agree with this thing' but then they go 'okay..' – and I would say it is not always exactly right and remember that you are influenced by a whole lot of stuff on that day when you complete it, but generally are there things that help you understand or get insights. And it would. With the 360 stuff it is a little bit more tricky, and when I even start the de-brief I will talk a lot about perceptions and that it is not a psychometric and that we have to look for patterns so what is an outlier,

These exemplars demonstrate that coaches place a lot of emphasis and are rigorous in the feedback of the assessment.

4.3.2.7 Assessment feedback as a reflective space

The coach saw the feedback process as a valuable reflective space provided the coachee with time to think and reflect and for new insights to emerge. There definitely was the sense that coaches provided a space and time for sense making.

(P14) *it provides also food for reflection on their own behaviour, the impact that I have on people. I wasn't aware, or I am not communicating well enough, or my leadership style should be a lot more assertive, I come across as .. some people see me as ineffective,*
(P14) it allows me to reflect upon it and say 'oh, so that is what is happening there, I didn't know that people thought I was good at ABC'
(P16) the whole thinking process, to get people to think and be aware. I think reflection, both in the session and to get people to reflect outside the session is very important, to take time to think about what is going on around them as opposed to just kind of acting and being in the moment without really reflecting on what has happened.

4.3.2.8 The skill of feedback

The final piece around feedback was the skilful use of feedback by the coach. This was a recurring theme where coaches referred to the skillset required, be it around feedback or around diagnosis.

(P3) I often encourage client and say 'let's not look at the numbers necessarily, let's rather look at where the big patterns are, so let's look at the big patterns and then the qualitative information'. So most 360s provide the opportunity for qualitative information and I think that is more important.

The coach has the challenge of not simply feeding the whole report back, but finding the relevant and quality data in the report.

4.3.2.9 Conclusion

Respondent X was very emphatic about contextualisation in South Africa. He was also the only black African respondent. He also cautioned against the use of 360, as his experience was that corporate culture in South Africa was still quite toxic. The contextualisation on the part of the coach would also include all the necessary context about a certain tool, its origins, meaning and purpose, its reliability and its verifiability.

This highlighted that the coach needed to approach the conversation as one where he was checking with the coachee if it resonated or if it was true for them.

Most coaches described a lengthy process of contextualisation of both the organisation context, culture especially when a 360 multi-rater was being fed back.

The feedback was also an opportunity for the coach to make meaning for the coachee. For example, by identifying patterns that exist between the assessment data and other data collected during the coaching process, or even how two reports converge with regard to the data. The feedback process also enables the integration of the assessment report data into the conversation

It also was noted how the feedback process enabled the joining of the dots. Sometimes this was a process and insights that the coachee came to on their own and other time this was a process that was facilitated by the coach.

A key insight that I recognise is that in terms of assessment, the coach adopted an attitude of leave what does not fit. This connects to a non-directive stance taken by the coach, it also connects to the idea that the coaching process is co-created.

The intention of the coach in the feedback session, mostly was to create a reflective space when feeding back the assessment report.

For some coaches, the way the data was fed back determined whether the assessment would land or if there would be resistance to the result of the assessment tool.

4.3.3 *Benefits of the use of assessment*

The biggest and most pervasive response that one can garner from this study is that the coaches choose the assessments for its benefits to the coachee. There are a multitude of benefits that the researcher isolates and discusses in this section.

4.3.3.1 Self-Insight aided by assessment tool

A benefit that outstripped all others and that was named by the majority of interviewees was the benefit of self-insight and self-awareness.

The following exemplar is about how coaches see the benefits of assessments in providing self–insight for the coachee. This particular coach spoke about helping people to find what is personally meaningful for themselves.

(P2) changing the mindset to 'what do I find purposeful, meaningful, and what matters to me.' So things can matter for others, but the question is a subjective question, it is what matters to me. So it actually starts making people aware of what is it that they actually find meaningful, and we find that most executives aren't trained to think like that.

The theme of self-insight is quite relevant in the following exemplar but depending on the assessment being used, as in this instance the coachee may also get insight from the organisation and the eco-system around them.

(P9) *Yeah, so it would be self-insight primarily, self-awareness, understanding of where their passions are, what they really want to be, what they are good at, where they experience difficulty, what do we need to focus on growing, what can we develop to the point that it is not an obstacle, how do they fit into the organizational structure and the system that we are working in, is there a place for that, what can the organization tolerate and accept and what won't it.*

Coaches also shared very easily what the tools are that can provide self-insight.

(P4) I try to always use the enneagram, just because it is something to help that person gain better understanding of themselves and to start managing their own dynamics better.

4.3.3.2 Deriving value from the 'aha' experience

Coaches also spoke about the benefits of assessments being that people had 'Aha' experiences.

(P9), there is always an aha – always – they will go 'oh, that makes sense

The assessment enables blind spot identification. The way people described this was that the assessment was always a moment of lighting things up and then getting the connection.

4.3.3.3 Identifying blind spots

The benefit of having blind spots identified was also described as a benefit of using assessments. The blind spot identification was like a revelation of something the the individual had not previously known about like for instance, finding out that something is a strength.

(P4) *it has not been the business skills or the other things that have limited people, it has been their own understanding of their own dynamic, and the blindness to it, and the way that their dynamic actually impacts on the work that they do.*
(P15) At another level where it is feedback from others, and also for our self-reporting, it can emerge blind spots, which is very important. And it also helps to identify how people experience them and what they want more of and what they want less of. The feedback from others is always a great source of feedback because it tells one how other people experience us.

Coaches spoke about various tool as well as the 360 being an enabler for blind spot identification.

4.3.3.4 Affirms and identifies strengths

The next exemplar is about assessments is that it affirms people and helps them to identify their strengths. Coaches did not speak about this exclusively in the context of using strength spotter assessment types. The point articulated was that there was very little in organisational culture being done to affirm and acknowledge people.

(P14) I didn't know that people thought I was good at ABC because people don't communicate. So this is an opportunity to affirm the person as well. I

Certain assessments have methodologies and constructs that help the person to understand their strengths and who are then able to leverage them. In an earlier discussion, we spoke about blind spot identification being a benefit of assessments.

(P7) So the corner stones that that information provide in terms of being able to help that person leverage their strengths and also work on their blind spots,
This example does not directly link to the value of using strengthspotter assessments.

4.3.3.5 Development of Action steps

The coaches also spoke about the benefit of the assessment which provides clear goals for development or an action plan or a clear indication of the next steps the individual should be taking.

(P13) And then so going through that process with that end in mind, will hopefully get one to set some clear goals and action steps.

4.3.3.6 Understanding of others

Coaches identified the 'understanding of others' is a big part of the benefit of assessments for the following reasons, the first one being that often it is easier and safer for people to hear the feedback for someone else and then to apply that same insights to oneself and learn from it. When we receive feedback about the impact our behaviour has, we learn something about ourselves, It is also the idea that once I know what others' preferences are I can flex to meet their expectations, eg, my main stakeholder likes detail so in order to convince him I need to delve into the detail. The following exemplars illustrate this point well.

(P1) And it is more often than not, that the others feel safer initially. So there is an acknowledgement – I hear these things about myself – but it is initially easier to see it in others.

(P3) Another one would be 'what is the impact of what I do' because the report also talks about that, it talks about connecting with other people and so on.

(P4) it is a hugely empowering experience to understand yourself and others. And how to engage with others. So it is huge in terms of developing that emotional intelligence of understanding self, understanding other, moderating my own behaviour, influencing the behaviour of other. So I just find that a really powerful tool in terms of that.

One last exemplar, provided by one of the coaches speaks about the assessment report being a way to understand what the other needs and then to act on that from your own centre of authenticity.

It gives leaders uncluttered insights into the personality, preference, values, emotional intelligence and other constructs that help one to see who this person is in their essence. Often in our day-to-day interactions, we do not see the essence of others and thus we see the ego and respond with ego responses and miss the big part of who the person is and what makes them tick.

A further benefit that can be derived by using assessments is that it enables learning and shifts to happen for individuals. The assessment tools can, according to the coaches, enable people to shift their understanding. Another coach spoke about the cognitive behavioural theory which he attributes to the assessments and change then happens because the person has new awareness, knowledge and understanding as a result of interacting with the assessment.

(P4) and the reason why I value it so much and use it as much as I do is that I have seen it as one of the most, if not the most, powerful instruments for change that I see in people.

(P11) And I know, and this is where my cognitive behavioural stuff comes in, once you are aware… you can't say you didn't know. You can decide whether to shift or not. Interacting with the assessment alone is a powerful catalyst for change.

4.3.3.7 Additional data for the Coach

More benefits highlighted by the coaches was that they also derive benefits through the use of assessments for themselves. The following exemplars show what coaches regard as the benefits they derive.

It provides the coach with additional data as described below.

(P7) *And I think the other reason is that it also then gives me I think further data about what is driving this person.*

Further benefits include that the coach will have information that he can kick off the relationship. It also gives the coach insight into how best to communicate with the person and the most effective language to use.

(P10) it gives the coach kind of a jump start into the relationship. It gives the coach a quick insight into how best to communicate with this person, how best to language with this person.

For another coach the assessment builds trust, and confidence in the coach's ability and finally it also provides a baseline of data that the coach can speak from.

(P10) *So I think it builds trust, it builds a level of confidence for the coachee, and it gives the coach a platform to speak from.*

The coaches in the interview articulated numerous benefits that they experienced in using assessments.

4.3.3.8 Credibility for Coach

The following exemplar was an outlier view in that the coach believed that assessments and the one used in his practice allowed the coach to show-off and builds credibility for the coach.

(P10)– it gives the coachee a level of confidence in the coach, because the coachee gets to see that the …. The coach gets to show off that they have insight into these kind of things. Coaching at core is questioning driven, so there is not a lot of opportunity in pure coaching for the coach to give language to their insight and capability, and profiling does allow a coach to do that.

The notion of the coach needing to 'show off' was not articulated by any other coaches as a benefit of using assessments.

4.3.4 ***Conclusion***

The coaches' decision about how to use assessments is overwhelmingly to facilitate the self-insight for the coachee, as can be seen from the data sets.

Together with self-insight was a very closely referenced term of self-awareness. These codes were mostly created in vivo and therefore we are able to count the number of times it was used, but other terms referenced were also coded with the same code.

These terms included, self-discovery, greater self-understanding, gaining more perspective one oneself, and so on.

Coaches also report that assessments are very helpful in developing action steps. Often the feedback report already offers some recommendations that are insightful and useful.

The coachee reportedly appreciates assessments when they are an affirmation of who they are or their behaviour or a 360 multi-rater that shows that other stakeholders in the organisation believe that they are doing the things right and there is acknowledgement for that.

Leading on from the data about self-insight and affirmation is the point that was made by interviewees about assessment can be an ‘aha’ experience. It could be an exercise of deep meaning making and gaining understanding. It can be a situation of providing the learning scaffolding to which previously the coachee did not have access.

Nearly all coaches referred to one of the benefits being ‘blind spot’ identification.

The data also demonstrated that a further use of assessments was the benefit for the coachees around the way assessment also provides insights about others. This is especially around when coachees begin to understand the assessment feedback about themselves, they also have insight about how other stakeholder in their eco-system behave, need to be engaged, or how other people like to receive information, depending on the assessment framework or the construct being reported on.

For the coaches interviewed, there was no doubt that assessments were key in creating the shifts and growth that can be attributed to coaching

Finally, coaches also spoke about how the use of assessments was beneficial to them.

For coaches, using assessments sometimes provided a quick insight about the coachee

Although not articulated in the same way, there was a respondent who spoke about the assessment as providing credibility for the coach.

4.3.5 ***Assessments are about learning and change***

Coaches see assessments as a great contributor to the learning and change that occurs during the coaching process. Some of the coaches referenced the assessment as an important trigger for new thinking.

The following exemplar where the coach is referring to the 360 assessment report and describing how the assessments assist thinking and therefore the learning and change that follows.

(P9) So I then take it from there to look at the system and say well please start thinking where could you fit, where could you play that out to the best of your ability. Okay, well is there scope for that, what are the obstacles, what could really make it happen – that sort of thing. But it really is to develop and trigger another level of their thinking first.

The constructs in the 360 offers feedback from different parts of the eco-system and the coaching is referencing the learning that happens at another level, having been triggered by the assessment.

The next data piece is also about learning, the assessment tool in this instance is showing a different perspective. The coach is making reference to how the assessment can offer a different lens on reality so that the coachee is learning something new.

(P4) multiple ways of showing them the way that they see reality. So it is about the way they see reality, understanding the drivers they have, and the reasons why they operate in a certain way and then helping them to develop strategies to use those in a positive way and to sometimes change their lens when they are required to.

The following exemplar speaks to the process of the coachee learning a new construct from the assessment too, and then doing some deliberate practice and application, then being able to apply it to a different problem. The coaching process enables the change to become embedded.

(P4) Absolutely, and then they will work on and solve this problem using that methodology. And then they will go and apply it to a few different problems they are

sitting with and they will come back and say 'this is what happens' and then part of their practice is then to literally diarise times that they are going to sit and they are going to do that. So that it starts becoming part of the way they do things.

The coach describes, in the above data piece, how the assessments opens up the thinking of the coachee to accept new constructs that previously were not considered as well as being open to new ways of thinking about yourself, your co-workers and the organisation, essentially a process of letting go of previously held beliefs and in that way changing.

Some of the coaches linked this learning to the idea that the assessment feedback leads to action and growth.

4.3.6 *Coach's Competence in the use of assessments*

The coach's competence was repeatedly mentioned in the interviews as critical to the question 'how do coaches use assessments question'; it is included here because so much of the use is dependent on the coach's competence.

4.3.6.1 Competence: Connecting information and finding patterns

The first data piece relates to the coach's ability to connect information from different data sets to enable the coachee to integrate them.

(P7) *No. 1 is that again that is why it is in the instance where they are saying 'that's not me' is there some other data that we have gathered that says 'but that is you' – so that is why the importance of more than just one assessment, and then if there is anything that you can get that provides feedback from others*

4.3.6.2 Competence: Giving Feedback

The next data set is about the skill of giving feedback. The skill is critical to ensure that feedback is accepted. A lot of emphasis is about preparation for the feedback report.

(P11) So that is how I work with it. I don't take it as this is a 360 and this the truth and that is how it ends; it is more like 'here is feedback of the people that work with you, where do you think it comes from?' When you now look at your personality, when you

now look at your values, your journey, your background – where do you think that comes from?' Instead of saying 'this is the truth'.

4.3.6.3 Competence: Building trust and rapport

The next exemplar refers to the skill of building rapport. The coach links good feedback skills to rapport by saying the without rapport, the feedback would not land.

(P10) I think that the most important thing for me in the coaching relationship is to build rapport you know? If there isn't a level of rapport and you go straight into profiling, I think you have got to be quite skilled at giving that feedback well. If not, it actually can become a detractor to rapport. So I think it depends on the coach. I think if the coach has a high ability to build rapport and is quite experienced, they can go straight into that first session, frame it well and relay the feedback in a way that isn't confrontational

The following exemplar shows that the coach regards not having built sufficient rapport as a problem.

(P2) And normally a rapport then comes into the picture, that it might also be from not having sufficient rapport yet with the person so they feel that they can open up and trust. But most of the time, so I mean a big part of our job as a coach is to build rapport as quickly as possible. So normally rapport isn't too much of a problem in session 1.

4.3.6.4 Accreditation in the use of assessments

Included in this discussion is how coaches deal with the accreditation requirements for each individual tool. Coaches had quite diverse views.
The first exemplar demonstrates how the coach views accreditation. She has accreditations for a number of assessments. She states that the organisation she is an associate with, requires that she only has accreditation for the Insights Assessment tool

P6) *Um, shoo, yes, but from a point of view of Organisation X and because I am an associate of Organisation X we only use insights. I am accredited with Enneagram and the TCP and MBTI and 16PS but the list goes on and on,*

It is clear that some coaches have accreditation for numerous assessments.

The next exemplar highlights that there is a perceived difference between psychologist–coaches who she perceives have it easier. The assumption is that psychologists have automatic accreditation for the various tools may be flawed. (check this)

(P9) My frustration is the limitations that coaches who are not psychologists experience; it really drives me nuts because it means doubling work and a whole lot of logistics to get a psychologist in to do it. But that is what it is, so..

The next datum from a coach who did not have accreditation for certain tools so she obtains feedback from someone who has the accreditation and then based on the feedback creates goals and an action plan.

(P4) I am not accredited for those but I am familiar with them. What I would do is say to them 'I would like to have a conversation with the person who administered them, if that is not possible then I will have a conversation with the person and I will say 'what emerges here for you that is meaningful' – so we take the NBTI, and maybe you are a P at the end, you really struggle with closure, with finishing tasks – so that comes up as an issue for you – great, how are we going to work, what are we going to do, what do you think you can do differently that will help you to start finishing things, to not procrastinate.

The coach's response in the next datum is also one of deferring to someone who has the accreditation. Many of the coaches are contracted into programmes like leadership development or organisation interventions where the assessments are pre-determined and coaches are asked to do the coaching. This is where this phenomenon arises that coaches then need to bring in or consult a third party who is accredited in the assessment.

(P15) Oh, if I don't have accreditation for it then I would either get trained in it or I would get the person who gets someone, well maybe they are involved in the whole

coaching intervention and they are trained to give feedback – get them to give feedback but then I am there with the client.

A final response from one of the senior coaches interviewed was that coaches who use assessment should be trained in those assessments as she regards it as a competence required.

(P15) Well I think they should be trained in it, is what I think. They should be competent.

4.3.6.5 Conclusion

The first competence relates to how coaches are able to integrate data from assessments into the overall coaching experience. It was emphasised how critical it is that the connection to other assessments, to stories/ narratives that were shared and the process of co-creation and meaning making were critical.

The second competence relates to the ability of the coach to provide quality feedback in a skilled, coherent and meaningful manner.

Third, a key competence was described as the building of trust and rapport. Without those the assessment process will be derailed.

As mentioned earlier, accreditation to administer and debrief a particular assessment was a crucial competence needed.

A strict code around legal and ethical requirements for use of assessments exist. The cost of assessments are prohibitively expensive, so it seems that coaches are designing their own sets of questions, sometimes, directly modelled on an existing assessment or use free assessments online to collect data regarding the coachee.

4.3.7 *Assessment used as diagnostic*

The following exemplars are about the assessment being used as a diagnostic. There were different perspectives on this issue. Some would however agree that they would use the assessment to provide a prescription for ‘what needs to be fixed’. In these instances the assessment exercise was mostly for the benefit of the coach. (expand this point)

The coach in the datum below speaks about using the assessment to be able to do a whole range of diagnosis

(P2) . *I can identify if there is a sense of entrapment or hopeless/helplessness, if there is low energy, low confidence, low self-esteem, not being deserving of success. I can identify that.*

This example is an inhouse coach talking of her process where the assessment surfaces some behaviours or other data then inevitably leads to coaching

(P9) Exactly. I mean the other way it works is where we are aware that a staff member has experienced difficulties, and we may suggest one or two assessments as a trigger to assist in helping them. And that often will then lead to coaching, because I will then give them the feedback and I say 'I want to discuss this and that' and it will then progress from that.

This datum is an example of diagnosis and seems to be using coaching like a medical model.

The following response from the coach points to his difficulty with the term diagnosis and instead he chooses to look at the concept of measurement instead.

(P11) *I don't like the concept of diagnosis because it actually creates a different impression that says there is something going wrong there – but then that is probably me just putting it out there – I don't like it as a diagnosis, I like it as a measurement. We are measuring where you are now, we are not diagnosing anything, there is nothing wrong with you, that need to be diagnosed; we are just measuring who are you, in terms of your personality, in terms of your attitude, in terms of your skill? Can you do this or not? It is not a diagnosis because a diagnosis means we are measuring something to correct.*

The construct of diagnosis has a medical connotation for the coach of something that needs to be corrected or fixed.

The next datum speaks to assessment as a diagnostic with the coach expressing the wish to use the results as a prescription.

(P7) I think it certainly can serve as a diagnostic, and very often that is one of the ways that I use it, but I want it to also then to help serve as a prescription for going forward; so I don't want it to be something that we just do for the sake of doing, I want the person to actually utilise and internalise the information so that the next time a particular situation occurs for them, I want them to think back to the insights and what they learned about themselves, that they either want to replicate or look at as a strength or say 'this lands me in trouble when I do this, how can I handle this differently?' So I want people to use it as a 'think about this before just marching forward in the way that I always have'.

The final exemplar is a response that completely negates the diagnosis and places its relevance as a kick-start for the coaching conversation

(P9) No, I don't think to diagnose. Maybe just to kick-start the coaching – which is not normally..

The idea of assessment as diagnosis with connotation of medical models of healing are completely juxtaposed with coaches who regard assessments as a kick starter for a coaching conversation.

4.3.8 ***Dialogue as an assessment***

A number of coaches that were interviewed described at length that they preferred a narrative approach to a paper-based or online assessment. There were different examples that they were describing.

4.3.8.1 Narrative 360

One example was a 360 multi-rater that was done in an interview style with the coach collecting relevant data against a set of questions, the researcher coined the name of Narrative 360. The coaches spoke about how impactful and impactful.

(P6) *But once you bring in these feedback pieces, especially when it is more than enough feedback from the environment, to work with. So for whatever reason it is then often not necessary for another assessment. Ja, but you also can introduce the tool later on in coaching, if a person asks for it, but it is very seldom people ask for it because they have got a lot to work with once you start to get the feedback from*

people. That is the first piece. The other piece is that qualitative feedback from colleagues is usually potentially far more powerful material than from an assessment.

This exemplar was about how the coach thought that the qualitative feedback that was collected was more powerful than any other format of assessment.

The next exemplar explains the value the coach derives from doing face-to-face 360. The coach explains the value as being able to ask clarifying questions whereas with the online tool one cannot ask for clarification.

(P8) I do 360 assessments too. However I prefer the face to face structured interview 360. I have found over time that when there is anything that you want to clarify with the respondents/ interviewees it is extremely difficult and nearly impossible to do it with the online version.

(P14) But I feel when I do the face to face interview, I might not catch everything because people are talking, talking, talking, but I get a better sense of the environment, a better sense, almost at a deeper level, of what the issues are. It is less academic and more I can feel it, hear it and all my senses are involved in understanding the situation

4.3.8.2 Relational Narrative 360

A third methodology emerged where the coach claims it is not an assessment. This was a process based on Marc Kahn Relational Map (M. S. Kahn, 2014)

(P6) *Okay, so we have a set of questions based on perceptions around does this person bring, what strengths does this person see, what must they do differently – it is verbal based questions but it is obviously also linked to the role of the person that they need to fulfil in the organization, and also the questions are then checked by the coachee and also the line manager, and so some of the conversation will be here is a set of questions but sometimes some of the questions get answered prematurely you know, as the person talks! So often, to answer your question, yes we do have a pre set of questions but it evolves in a conversation*

4.3.9 ***Challenges encountered by coaches in the use of Assessments***

The coaches interviewed pointed out the problems that exist with assessments that need to be noted in a study on how coaches use and how coaches select assessments.

4.3.9.1 360 Multi-rater

The following exemplar is a caution about the 360 multi-rater and using it alone. The coach is of the view that the danger of using only a 360 is that it is inference. To make the assessment more holistic a 360 should be supported with another tool.

(P11) people see your actions, people hear your words, and that is what they are feeding back to you. Everything else is inference, and that lies in the thinking and being parts of who you are. So the 360 assessment I use from that perspective. So remember that is a mirror of what people see, this is a mirror of what people hear, and it has nothing most of the time to do with you as to what lies below the water line but that is what you are giving out: do you want to change or do you want to be the same? If you want to be the same in the context of what people are seeing, cool. Let's work with how. That is why I never use the 360 alone, because the 360 is just one piece of the picture, it is the behaviour element. And then I want to support it with either a personality assessment, a values assessment – so something much deeper that can talk to for example an EQ, an EQI assessment or a values assessment, because then they can understand their 360 feedback in line with the assessment itself.

4.3.9.2 Extract meaning for the coachee

The next data set is about how the coach thoughtfully assists the coachee to extract maximum value and meaning from the assessment process.

The first exemplar deals with the coach expressing the caution that feedback should be matched to the understanding of the coachee. The coach should not be applying the same level of intricate understanding that they themselves have grasped.

(P1) *I think the more important thing for me there Birgitte is to really understand from your own perspective that you must every time, when you talk about results from assessments, go back to the level of understanding of the participant, and not from your level of growth in terms of how much more you can see coming from the assessment. It is landing it on that level which is an entry level.*

The coach therefore has the responsibility to ensure that he lands the assessment.

The next exemplar speaks to the coach being circumspect about choosing to use an assessment. The coach needs to be clear about the purpose of the assessment.

(P4) Yes, they are useful tools, but you don't do assessment for the sake of assessment, it is done with a purpose. So what do you want to catch with that, what is that you want to uncover here, that is going to be meaningful, useful, practical, and a person can take away and use. Not just 'do all of this stuff' and then 'okay'.

The coach's critique is to avoid doing assessments that are not meaningful and that does not have a clear take-away for the coachee.

In the following datum, the coach shares a practice of maximising the assessment by continually keeping it as a reference point in the conversation.

(P4)It does a lot because whatever we are discussing, we can go back to 'So how did that impact on you - how does this way that you do this impact on it'. So because of this that you know, can you do it differently?

Meaning-making and insights are built continuously and they are the way people come to a new understanding in order to change.

The next exemplar is a juxtaposition to the earlier one which cautioned the coach to keep the feedback at the level of the coachee. This quotation advocates for uncovering a deeper level of understanding while holding an awareness of how ready and receptive the coachee is. Essentially the coach in this instance needs to be able to make a judgement call about the layers that can be uncovered.

(P8) I also find that the coach can start off with debriefing the coachee at a high level but the report has layers of depth that can be uncovered as the conversation deepens and depending on how ready the coachee is.

The caution therefore is to be mindful of the readiness of the individual.

4.3.9.3 Coachee's negative experience of assessment

The next data set speaks about coaches being cautious about assessments since people may have previous negative experiences.

The next datum highlights a number of experiences that have not been positive. In other words, the assessment is not bringing new insight. The fatigue issue when someone has done a lot of assessments in the past and is no longer sure that they will derive value. Assessments that have mismatched the person or boxed the person, and only classifies one as a type and does not consider context. The critique of assessments are what the coach wants to build awareness of.

(P2) Ja, maybe just quickly, I think people aren't always positive about assessments, they have done a lot of them and I don't know the value they always get from doing more than one you know? So there is a lot of pattern and they say 'ja, I knew this, this is what the previous assessment said'. So that is what they come in with and a lot of assessments it is easy for them to mismatch with it, because it boxes them in too much – like 'this is the type of person you are' and it doesn't always speak to context.

The next datum focuses on the coach and the awareness not to go into an expert role in relation to the coachee.

(P8) The coach who tries to be in the expert role around the assessment tool instead of checking with the coachee can be perceived as telling the person that they are in a box for instance without allowing them to feel empowered and they can end up feeling at the mercy of the report. This mostly happens if the coaching relationship is an unequal one and the coach lacks the necessary sensitivity to debrief the report well
The advice being offered to avoid becoming an expert is that the coach should ensure an equal relationship or partnership. The coach should avoid creating a context that makes the coachee feel boxed and the aim should be to empower the coachee.

The next exemplar links to the previous one in that it cautions the coach to use the assessment tool to instill confidence and to empower the person.

(P5) But again not taking away, because ultimately you could – I think where the danger lies with some of the psychometrics, that it is almost as though the coachee then starts second guessing themselves and they say 'right well I feel this but what did the assessment say?'

4.3.9.4 Coach's Ambivalence

The next data set is about the coach during the interviews having expressed their own ambivalence and conundrums they experience in relation to using assessments.

The first datum expresses the coach's hesitation and detachment in saying that he uses the assessment as a tool but that it is not central to his coaching process. The same coach responded at the end of the interview to change the emphasis

(P3) Haven't thought about that actually. I think for me and maybe I am going to answer your question indirectly, is assessments for me are just tools, they don't drive my process.

(Researcher) I am through, thank you so much for your time, I appreciate that. Is there anything you want to ask, something you want to add about coaching that you think could be valuable to me – about the assessments in coaching?

*(P3) I think although I said that they are not the centre of my coaching, they are … I am going to contradict myself – they are not the centre, but they are essential. ***example of respondent changing the emphasis at the end of the interview*

The next exemplar continues with the theme of the coach's ambivalence. The coach is expressing that whatever perception she created earlier in the interview, she wants to set the record straight that she is not mad about assessments used in isolation.

(P4) the stage and understanding they are at in conjunction with other assessments and taking those together and getting a whole view. I don't believe in mechanistically saying we have got to do this and this is not working so now we have got to do this and that step; it is really understanding the person as a whole. Personally it sounds quite contradictory to what we have been on, sort of saying that I am not really mad about assessments as in A,B, C and D that are done in isolation and used like that because I don't think they have a lot of meat. But that's me.

The coach wants to register a different response to what she shared earlier.

The next exemplar is about the coach sharing her view that assessments have limitations but that they simultaneously have huge value.

(*P5) No, I just think that whilst they do, I think what is extremely important is whilst there is a lot of value to be derived from psychometric tests, I think the value in a psychometric assessment – and in fact let's go beyond just psychometric because there could be interviews, there could be surveys, whatever the case may be – I think the value of it also lies in understanding and making other people understand what it does and what it can't do. So as long as you understand it has its' limitations.*

The following exemplar is an example of the coach critiquing the assessment and the role that the coach ends up playing, ie. Interpreting scores

(P6) *The challenge I find – and it is not a criticism – but for example when you get these endless scores that is only a quantitative assessment but there is a lack of descriptive notice. And where does it put the coach? Sometimes the coach, together with the coachee, is sifting through this and unpacking patterns and 'what does it mean and oh here is some correlation' but temporarily it puts you in the role of assessor or interpreter of scores, together with the thinker.*

The coach is essentially critical of assessments that do not provide qualitative descriptions.

4.3.9.5 Poor Organisational processes

The next dataset deals with the organisational context as a critique. Often organisationally assessments are used without the recipients getting feedback or a debriefing. The other reason cited by the coach is the fact that people have become jaded by the over-use of assessments.

(P8) *I want to make you aware however that assessments are not a standard in my practice. I have found that people have become extremely jaded by assessments*

because they have done too many that often the organisation does not ensure that good feedback or debriefing happens.

The coach is drawing attention to the fact that assessments are not standard practice for him in his coaching practice.

The next exemplar focuses us on the fact that sometimes incorrect use of assessments lead people to focus on what their scores are in relation to their colleagues if an assessment was launched in an organisation

(P1) *And often people would want to ask competitive questions around that. You know 'so how am I doing'*

The next exemplar relates to organisations sometimes using a coach and the assessments to build a case for someone who is a problem.

(P8) Or to get someone who is a problem and the organisation does not know what to do with him and therefore they employ a coach to do the fixing

The next exemplar is about the organisational mind sets that exist about coaching that it is for 'problem' staff. Often organisations do not communicate the reason you are selected for a coaching programme.

(P6) And what are the assumptions being made to coaching: so many clients see coaching as a punitive, rehabilitative intervention for poor performance or you know, and if that understanding is there as a key element, to answer the question or to reframe it. So coaching must be understood holistically in a whole organization at all levels. And that is really it. Also a key element is that people need to know why and with what intention they were selected for the program, and that needs to be communicated by the business, not the coaching.

The last datum is about coaches who perceive that sometimes the organisation does not address an issue systemically but selects a coach for a particular leader. The coach in this instance reports that he refuses to coach further when he discovers this.

(P12) I have given feedback to coaching clients, to organisations, that this is not an issue of the individual. You are really trying to dump non-performance on this individual and it is not an individual issue, it is a systems issue. And I am very sorry but I am not prepared to coach this person in isolation any further, because you are setting us both up for failure.

The coach identifies this misdiagnosis and being a set up for failure for the coach and coachee as an organisational problem.

4.3.9.6 Dealing with resistance

The next data set is about the conundrum the coach faces of coachees not always accepting or resonating with everything in an assessment.

The coach draws the distinction of a preference-based assessment which may be co-created and a competency based assessment that is a snapshot of the person's competence.

(P6*) Is it co-created or is it this is what the assessment says, we better work with what it says?*

It depends what surfaces, if it is a preference based assessment that is not competency based, then it is co-created – very much. If it is a quantitative one for example, like the 16 PF, you can't coach that, I mean it is pretty much 'this is what it says'; the data is what it is, but how the coachee makes sense of that – the actual sense making is being co-created.

The coach explains that the sense-making process is co-created.

(P3) *I am really going to ask you to do that because it is only an instrument, an instrument we can use to help us maybe gain insight and at the same time take it or leave it.' So that is how I position instruments.*

The next datum is about when a coachee completely denies the assessment content from an ego defence response.

(P1) So I have had people that would mention I can't identify with this, but it is the ego defence response. So normally they take time, and I would also encourage, to say 'you know what I don't try and label you by no means is this a labelling exercise, so show me which of these things you agree with and which you don't.

The coach describes her strategy as being one that allows the coachee to describe those points that she agrees with and those she disagrees with.
In the next datum the coach describes her way of dealing with a coachee who does not accept the assessment. The coach's strategy is simply to not push the coachee overtly to accepting the information.

(P13) *And when the client says 'I am not interested'.*

I am not going to push it.

4.3.9.7 Tools that box

The next data set demonstrates how coaches perceive some tools that have limitations as well as people who allow the tool to box themselves.

The exemplar below is a about how the coach deals with coachees who tend to be too hard on themselves. The aim is to realise that some behaviours are influenced by personality preferences and that they need to learn to access other parts of their personality.

(P13) *I work mostly with Insights Discovery, MBTI, and there are a couple of others like 16 PF but they are not so commonly used, because it is a little bit more psychological. And it is tricky because sometimes you have to work really hard with people to not box themselves too much, but it provides a lot of useful information. It helps sometimes for people to be a little bit more compassionate with themselves, because they realise some of their behaviours are influenced by their personality preferences. But that doesn't mean it can't change; that that access to other parts of their personality that they have just never explored – potentially*

The next exemplar demonstrated that the coach also has to find a way to work with the coachee who adopts the assessment report and then loses the sense of who they are and allows the assessment report to define them.

(P5) But again not taking away, because ultimately you could – I think where the danger lies with some of the psychometrics, that it is almost as though the coachee then starts second guessing themselves and they say 'right well I feel this but what did the assessment say?'

4.3.9.8 Conclusion

A fair number of coaches pointed out the shortcomings of 360 multi-raters and this resulted in them either not using 360 assessments or they find other ways to obtain information from the eco-system. The main criticism of 360 multi-raters was that it was highly subjective and that often questions that were asked of certain stakeholders have no relevance to the interactions you have with them.

Another critique noted was that in many corporate organisations, employees already suffer from assessment fatigue and poor execution of assessment processes This is either through over-use of assessments without quality feedback and debriefing or ill-informed Human Resource practitioners who order a battery of assessments from service providers without thought of how constructs are being duplicated. Often the planning of the assessment roll-out in corporate organisations does not include thinking the process through from end to end. Little consideration is then given to the employee who will be taking all the assessments.

Even less consideration is given to the debriefing process and the completion of an PDP emanating from the assessments. This, according to coaches, has resulted in a negatively perception of assessments.

Furthermore, coaches report on the unintended consequence of taking assessments and that they found this quite worrisome. Coachees would be quite interested in the results of colleagues or the norm of the assessment. They commented on how this led to quite a competitive bent on the assessment process, which was never intended.

Earlier, I discussed the positive outcome of coaches approach, of ‘leave what does not fit’ in terms of the feedback report. The opposite is also true for coaches that the assessment becomes a cherry-picking exercise of simply choosing the feedback you wanted from the assessment report. Coaches felt that this weakened the case for using assessments.

Resistance to the completion of assessments was often indicative of a previous bad experience or a conflict with a belief system. There could potentially be a million reasons for the resistance.

All the coaches interviewed reported on the ways they worked with the resistance and surfacing the source of the problem later in the coaching process. Coaches, skilfully used this as input data and behavioural information for the coaching process to talk about the resistance.

Finally, critique also derived from the content of the tools. Coaches raised criticism about the tools and the underlying constructs that were limiting in that they could not accommodate the diversity of the behaviour spectrum of the coachees. Coaches reported that in some instance, and with some tools, the coachee felt that the tool / model was inadequate or limiting. The opposite was also cautioned where coachees might cling to the assessment data and refuse to see other possibilities. In that way the data limits their thinking.

4.4 Summary of the Results

The results in relation to the first research question show that coaches choose assessments based on a number of criteria, the first being that they choose them intentionally. The second set of criteria found that coaches choose the assessments based on a paradigm to which they subscribe and thirdly, coaches choose assessments in a very undefined way and are very unreflective about their choice. The following chapter attempts to attach such meaning to the different criteria used by coaches.

In response to the first research question, the majority of interviewees indicated that they were intentional by their choice of assessments in their coaching practice. The majority of the sample reported that they are intentional about assessments in their practice because they were clear on the outcomes they hoped to achieve. For some coaches it was about validating a hunch.

Some coaches also found that they needed external feedback from the eco-system or sometimes this feedback can be based on a behavioural or personality set of constructs. It is a form of triangulation. Measurement of the coachee's progress was also important to certain coaches and therefore they select certain assessments. Choosing assessments was a way of gauging directionally where to go next in the coaching engagement.

Those coaches who worked from a particular paradigm were doing so mostly intentionally because they subscribed to a particular discipline. The psychological paradigm meant that the coach was trained in psychology. Often the coach had practiced in one of the psychology disciplines as a professional. It was the researcher's sense that the coaches held their psychological training as a trophy which they believed informed their coaching.

The coaches who were directive about the type of assessment and the number of assessments seemed to do that as a personality construct. The researcher had the sense that the coach owned their practice in the sense that a professional believes they are the best qualified to decide how to proceed.

A number of the coaches had declared that client-centredness was a paradigm to which they subscribed. It was therefore no surprise to see coaches who spoke about the centrality of the coachee's question in their practice.

What was named the 'measurement paradigm' was a reference to coaches who chose assessments for the reason that they wanted to measure progress or impact before the coaching kicked off and then again afterward in some instances, coaches also wanted to measure during coaching.

Often coaches that were working from a measurement paradigm were doing it because of their business paradigm. It was interesting to note that in a lot of instances, practices of measurement or of business focus were what corporate organisations are demanding of coaches.

There were two coaches specifically, who were using an assessment which had an optional blood test as part of the process. The coaches believed that the 'scientific' nature and the report that included elements of physiology and chemical imbalances (bio-feedback) provided advanced, innovative reports that for the coachee and the coach went way beyond any of the more well-known assessments.

There were also coaches who believed that some coachees were better convinced by the mathematical and statistical information offered and that was the reason they chose certain assessments.

The researcher was quite surprised by a small number of the coaches who were not able to enunciate how they chose assessments. It seemed as if the interview process was a prompt for them to reflect on why they have introduced certain assessments into their practice.

The coachs' paradigms are based on a number of different approaches/ constructs/ references and not exclusively limited to whether you are a psychologist or not. It included world view, philosophy, biases for action or reflection, and coaching process model.

The second question shows how coaches use assessments.

The data collected about how coaches use assessments was rich and diverse. The first theme was about timing of assessments. Essentially, two positions emerged.

Those who wanted to do assessments before the first session and those coaches who believe it comes later after a number of prerequisites were met.

Another big theme that emerged from the interview data was the amount of care that was taken with feedback of the assessment report. Coaches reported in the interviews the preparation for feedback. They spoke about the steps they took to ensure the feedback landed and hence especially with the 360 multi-rater, they co-created the insights that were reached. Coaches also spoke about how much contextualisation time they invested. This included providing context about the tool, the constructs, the raters, the organisational context. According to the coaches these were important consciousness-raising items and prepared the coachee effectively.

After the report was shared, the meaning-making by the coach enabled the understanding to grow. Many coaches, in different ways, articulated the idea of leaving information of constructs that did not fit. A recurring theme was the importance of the skillset the coach has to deliver the feedback well.

The coaches identified numerous benefits for the assessments for both the coach and the coachee. Gaining self-insight and self-awareness was the most saturated.

The interviews also identified that the importance of assessments for learning and change and as a trigger for new and different thinking was highly sought after.

The use of assessments was not commonly regarded as a diagnostic tool but some coaches did subscribe to looking at the assessment as a way to find out what is ‘wrong’ and then to work towards ‘fixing’ it.

Further investigation needs to be done into understanding when an assessment is regarded as an assessment. A number of coaches regard the narrative 360 and relational map as assessments.

Also there were some critiques, cautions and conundrums that coaches were emphatic about in the interviews about the use of assessments.

The interview findings also show that assessments undoubtedly have a place in coaching and can be instrumental in adding value. From self-insight and language for the coachee to being a means of improving the process for the coach to understand where the process needs to move towards. For organisations, assessments can often

act as a point of leverage as it offers feedback from the system (360) on what needs to change. When organisations are the client in the coaching relationship it also brings a dimension of accountability, measurement and, I imagine, can contribute to talent management. It is clear though, that assessments are not used for remediation and that the stigma is no longer attached to assessments or coaching.

5 CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This section is a synthesis of the findings in chapter 4. The literature review is used as a framework for the study's findings. An analysis of the findings in Chapter 4 reveals that the themes identified, emerged from the data, rather than pre-defined themes being imposed on the interviews and the data. Chapter 5 is a comparison of the emerged themes and the data to the literature to determine whether the study's findings are consistent with, contradictory to, or enhancing what the literature currently states with regard to the research topic. It lifts the data into higher level implications and discusses the potential meaning attached to the findings.

The research study was an exploratory study to understand two central questions about assessments in the coaching process. The researcher's hypothesis was that although theory does exist about the key stages of coaching, within these stages of coaching described, all of the research articulated some type of assessment activity or stage, but did not provide a coherent description of the way that coaches use assessments or an assessment process. The study then placed a spotlight on the assessment element of the coach's practice in order to understand the practice of assessment better.

As outlined in the Chapter 2, the Literature Review, the research data around assessments in coaching is not very extensive nor is there enough research being done to document and analyse current trends (A McDowall & Smewing, 2009). The expression of the gap in the literature is further amplified by several authors (Stern & Stout-Rostron 2013; Passmore & Fillery-Travis 2011; Grant et al 2010).

5.2 The gap between theory and practice

An introductory question in the interview asked the interviewees to describe a good coaching process. As a baseline, 90 % of the respondents included assessment as a component of good coaching. The insight this provides is that the practice far outweighs the amount of research being conducted (Sunny Stout-Rostron, 2006).

The gaps in current research as articulated by Bono (2009) and Lowman in Bono (2009) are in articulating processes and practices of assessment in coaching.

Passmore (2012) expresses the gap as not describing what mastery looks like.

Meiring et al. (2005) expresses the gap as there has not been enough research in South Africa about the use of assessments. Most of the assessment use as well as the research about the use of assessments, emanate from North America and Europe.

In summary therefore, the gap can be expressed on many different levels.

- The global shortage of research about the use of assessments in coaching.
- The practices are far outstripping the research.
- The creation of theory is not keeping up with the practices.
- The expression of what mastery in the use of assessment looks like.
- In South Africa, assessments are used that do not carry an accepted level of validity and reliability for the South African population.
- In South Africa, and specific to the South African context, very little research about the use of assessments has been done.

The implication for the gaps is that theory and practice do not always match up, in some cases theory is not consistent with practices and have not yet appeared in the literature. In South Africa, there is a need to develop a body of knowledge and standards of practice that reflects mastery in the use of assessments. .

This research study has surfaced beliefs paradigms and behaviours on assessment use that has not been covered comprehensively in previous research. The reason for this, I believe, is that coaching is a relatively new discipline, and the inclusion of assessments into the coaching is still more recent. Over time, as more rigour is brought into practices and as more research is undertaken, especially longitudinal studies, more discipline will begin to emerge.

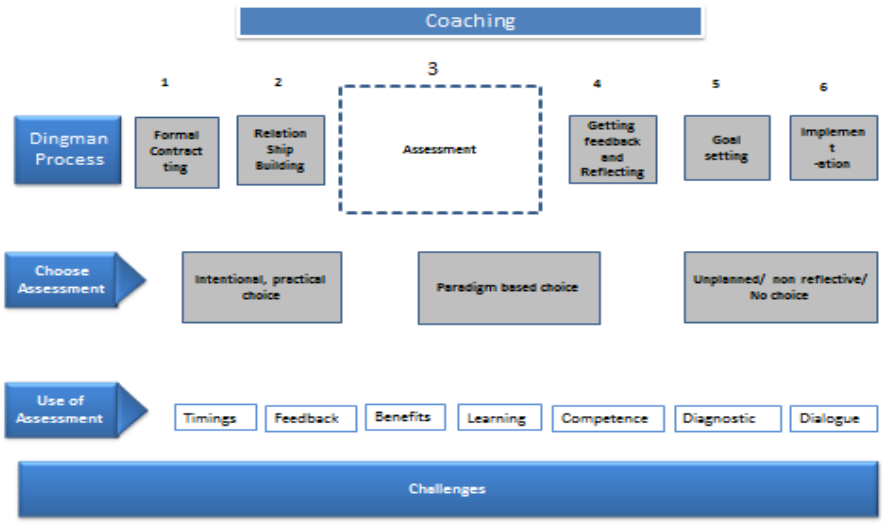


Figure 8: Conceptual Framework (Dingman 2004) extended

Figure 8 demonstrates the conceptual framework of the study as it has been conducted and the findings against the two critical questions. This conceptual framework is also the structure used for this chapter.

5.2.1 *Demographic Profile of respondents*

The key criterion was that all the coaches included in the sample needed to use assessments as part of their coaching practice.

Barner and Higgins (2007) presented a model (Literature Review, P xxx section xxx) that categorises coaches into four categories by the theoretical approaches that informs their practice. This is a framework that looks at a number of coaching practices, including change and assessment, to categorise the individual coaches. The model falls short as table xxxx (paradigm/ education/ coaching qualification) demonstrates. The Barner and Higgins model, however, does not capture the range of paradigms that coaches say they work from. The interview data has demonstrated that coaches draw on multiple paradigms.

5.2.1.1 By Title

In collecting upfront biographical data, each coach was asked to indicate by title how they regarded themselves professionally . In table 10, I have captured the spread of responses.

Table 10: By Title

Coach's title	Frequency	Percentage
Psychologist/coach	2	12,5%
Executive Business Coach	8	50 %
Coach	4	25%
Management Consultant	2	12.5%
Total	16	100%

This data provided me with an opportunity to see whether coaches who regarded themselves as psychologists choose assessments in a different way. This was definitely the case. One of the biggest constraints I heard was that without a psychology background, coaches felt that they could not debrief certain assessments, and are not trained to do so. The non-psychologist coaches needed to be more 'careful' to choose to debrief only the assessments inn which they were accredited. Coaches who have a psychology background, had distinct advantages as per their training. They reported that they could understand the underlying structure of many assessment tools. They were able to easily speak about the similarities between tools and they would choose a 'battery' of assessments, with a particular rationale in mind, knowing what purpose/benefit each assessment served.

5.2.1.2 By number of years Coaching

The researcher also asked coaches to indicate for how many years they have been working as a coach. Table 11 captures the responses.

Table 11: Years as a coach

Coach	Years as a coach
C-1	4 years
C-2	15 years
C-3	13 years
C-4	12 years
C-5	15 years
C-6	3,5 years
C-7	10 years
C-8	13 years
C-9	20 years
C-10	5 years
C-11	19 years
C-12	24 years
C-13	12 years
C-14	9 years
C-15	12 years
C-16	10 years

The data showed that there is a correlation on use of assessments for coaches who are newer and less experienced in coaching. Although this is not definitive, the two 'youngest' coaches I interviewed, demonstrated a high reliance on using assessments

in their practice. This means that they more frequently than other coaches use assessments in their practice

5.2.1.3 By Coach's Maturity

Cutterbuck and Megginson in L. Wildflower, Brennan, D (2011) also have a categorisation (Chapter 2, p.22) of this study as well. Although the correlation is not with age or years as a coach, they do correlate coaches' maturity to the reliance on models and assessments. The continuum of styles they propose is from a models based approach which is undergirded by a control style at the less mature end of the continuum to a more systemic eclectic approach which is a more enabling style at the other end which implies a more mature coach.

Another coach, who had been working for a considerable period as a management consultant and has a Masters degree in Coaching that is very recent, commented on how he observed newly qualified Masters in Coaching graduates being heavily reliant upon assessments in their practice and how it provided shape and form and content for the coaching process (Clutterbuck & Megginson in L. Wildflower and Brennan (2011). In contrast, one of the coaches who is the longest practicing, the most qualified in psychometrics, does not use assessments per se in his practice, he believes in a more narrative approach to finding out about the coachee. I observed that the narrative approach has a framework of assessment behind it which the respondent referred to as 'Role Analysis'

This aligns with the framework proposed by Clutterbuck and Megginson in L. Wildflower, Brennan, D (2011) about coach maturity. On the four mind-sets for coaching continuum, they name the systemic eclectic approach which implies a more mature coach. This describes the more mature coach as having a personal philosophy of coaching, who understands the business context, has freed themselves from the need to ask 'smart' questions, and have undertaken a personal development journey. This relates directly to the coach under discussion who demonstrates a freedom from models and smart questions and is content to be a coach who listens holds a conversation space.

5.2.1.4 By Paradigm

Table 12

Table 12: Paradigm each coach subscribes to

Responses to question: **What paradigm do you work from?**			
Listening Reflecting Strategic thinking	Meta-coaching Neuro Science Constructivist Theory Developmental Psychology	Eclectic Inspire Model Results Focus Person-centred	Eclectic Existential Psychology Person-centred Jungian Depth Psychology
Systems Psycho-Dynamic	*Neuro-science* *Meaning* *Purpose*	Systemic	*Behavioural* *Psychology* *Cognitive Psychology* *Business*
Eclectic *GROW* *Intuitive*	*Clinical Psychology* *Systemic* *Leadership Development*	*Systemic* *Leadership* *Development* *Meaning and Purpose*	*Anthropology* *Humanist* *Inter-personal* *Characterisation*
Positive Psychology *Solution Focussed*	*Results Focussed* *Setting Goals* *Context*	*System Psycho Dynamic* *Cognitive Behaviour Psychology*	*Experiential* *Existential* *Phenomenological*

In Table 12 The paradigms are listed as the coaches responded to the question out of what paradigm do you work. Their responses are quite pragmatic and does not have

the academic approach outlined in the taxonomy by Odendaal (2014) to have precise descriptions for what constitutes an approach, a theory, a model, a construct, a technique and a skill for what they do.

The researcher found a correlation amongst those coaches who declared that they take a systems psycho-dynamic approach and the choice to work in a distinct way with assessments. These coaches tended to use 360 degree assessments only when they were expected as part of a pre-determined coaching intervention where the assessments were chosen by the organisational client. The one system psycho-dynamic coach in particular, told the researcher although he has all this experience, he seldom uses assessments but has a role clarification conversation with the coachee and the team and the larger eco-system if needed instead of using a formal assessment.

Earlier in the discussion the constraints and shortcomings of the Barner and Higgins (2007) model were highlighted in relation to categorising coaches too narrowly. In the table 12 above, it demonstrates that coaches do not conceptualise their practices as subscribing to one theoretical model or working from one approach only. As the table above demonstrates, coaches draw from a range of approaches, theories, models constructs, techniques and skills which means that they cross theoretical boundaries.

There was also a correlation between those who choose a systemic approach and an have organisation psychology education. They work in a more systemic way – for example working with the coachee and the eco-system surrounding them or working with a team as a whole. In terms of assessment choice, they would use assessments that provided 360 information or relational maps that gathered data for the coachee about specific relational elements of the ecosystem (M. S. Kahn, 2014). It is no coincidence that those coaches who preferred narrative 360 assessments were also the ones who preferred to work systemically with the wider eco-system and not only the individual. For those who worked with a narrative 360, they were emphatic about the importance of gathering data about the coachee from the system. They were quite meticulous in how that was an important step. This demonstrates the belief that these coaches believe that change needs to happen at a systemic level. This relates to the Coaching on the axis model by M. Kahn (2011) (Chapter 4, p15) that proposes that the coach assists the coachee to identify the important relationships that need to be

optimised and managed. There is also strong resonance with the Clutterbuck and Megginson in L. Wildflower, Brennan, D (2011) model that also describe a systems paradigm.

5.2.1.5 By Programme

Coaches who work with assessments on leadership development programmes contracts mostly fall into the category of not being strategic or intentional because the choice was largely taken away from them. This seemed to spill over into their private practices where they were then not intentional about their choices either. It seems that these coaches were the least 'precious' about choosing assessments. This third category was definitely also defined by coaches who did not take a strategic view in the choices they made around the choice of assessments.

It was evident that although some coaches aligned themselves with a particular paradigm, their corporate clients required something else to which they had to conform. This is perhaps an example of the commercial side of coaching where coaches do not necessarily choose the assessments in which they believe. This may result in skewed coaching interventions as the coach enters the coaching process after the choice of assessments has been made, and perhaps without being in agreement about the assessments being used.

This phenomenon can be explained as coaches doing what it takes to win a contract, to generate an income and earn a living. It may also point to coaches wearing their eclectic label well and that they are not so perturbed by not being in a position to choose the assessment they want to use.

5.2.1.6 Conclusion to Biographic details

The point about how coaches choose assessment should be raised at industry level as commercialisation impacts on a profession that is growing and establishing credible practices. The key question is about the practice of contracting coaches into contracts after key decisions eg. which assessments to use, are already made.

The range of approaches, theories and paradigms coaches use which has resulted in this report concluding that coaches work in an eclectic way, needs to be raised at industry level too. The eclectic label requires unpacking as currently 'eclectic' can have a negative connotation which is ' anything goes' or it could refer in a positive

connotation that speaks to a higher order of thinking that can accommodate multiple and diverse thoughts.

The maturity model by Clutterbuck and Megginson in L. Wildflower and Brennan (2011) does not relate to number of years coaching, but is an attempt to explain a coach's growth toward greater maturity, starting from a very mechanistic use of tools and frameworks toward a greater ease of working with the system and working in an eclectic way which included greater complexity and ambiguity. This does describe the growth trajectory that people experience in other careers as well, it is not exclusive to coaching.

5.3 How Coaches Choose assessments

In this section, I look at the first research question of how coaches choose assessments. The data collected from the interviews presented a picture that the way coaches choose could be classified into three categories.

5.3.1 *Assessments chosen intentionally*

There are coaches who select an assessment or a battery of assessments in a very intentional, yet pragmatic way. Their choice is about the tool, the purpose of the assessment, the coachee's question, the coaching model and more. In this category, the choices seemed to be guided by a set of pragmatic intentions and actions.

The models presented in the Literature Review in chapter 2 are examples of how a coach may choose to work according to a particular model, eg., the integrative Coaching Model Passmore (2007)(Passmore 2007) has as its outcomes more effective behaviour, improved self-regard, deeper understanding of self and stronger motivation to act while it also has an explicit assessment component.

Saporito's business linked executive development model Saporito (1996) is an approach that coaches who are facilitating transitions for executives may use as their frame of reference. This model is especially powerful as it does assist the coachee to gain an holistic understanding of the context and then to follow that up with 360, then offers the feedback to the executive and draws up a development plan for implementation.

Especially coaches who work in a systemic paradigm were doing part of the Kahn model (Kahn 2014); coaches were doing the actual relational map exercise or a derivative of it. In the interview sample, there were coaches who coach in a systemic way. The Literature Review has three distinctive references (Kahn 2014; Barner and Higgins (2007); Clutterbuck & Megginson (2011) in L. Wildflower and Brennan (2011)).

5.3.2 *Clear Outcomes to be achieved*

Often the coach knows their assessments well and knows what needs to be achieved so then they match the assessment with the outcome needing to be achieved. For instance, the coach would choose an assessment because it raises self-awareness.

The data gathered showed that there are coaches who are quite intentional and directed in the way that they select assessments. They select on the basis of a particular outcome they wish to achieve, they select based on the value of a particular tool and they select based on a particular purpose that the coaching or assessment needs to serve (Passmore, 2012); Saporito (1996) ; Kahn 2014). This is a pragmatic approach which says you want details about X use assessment Y. The literature on choice is very sparse and the researcher did not find any previous research that described the selection of assessments.

5.3.2.1 Confirmation of an idea

Other coaches in the study see choosing the assessment as a way to intentionally test an assumption or a hunch or to get confirmation of something that they are sensing (Passmore, 2014). The coach is quite purposeful and believes the assessment delivers on the purpose for which it is being used. There was a view amongst some interviewees that some assessments were powerful as a way to confirm something, they referred to the fact that when something is in black and white on paper, it carried a whole lot more weight to confirm a hunch than when something is just expressed in words. Similarly to the first discussion, this is a quite pragmatic and purposeful approach to assessments.

5.3.2.2 A source of external feedback

There are coaches who, in the process of meaning making for the coachee, aim to bring another perspective/ data source (Pritchard, 2009). This can be a 360 tool that

brings data from the eco-system in which the individual operates. It could be a psychometric assessment or a self-scored assessment. The purpose here is a form of data checking by introducing another data source. Depending on the assessment being used, the assessment can be introducing data relating to psychometrics, competence, preference, behaviour or any number of other constructs.

5.3.2.3 A way to commence the Coaching Conversation

This is the idea of using the assessment as a means to starting the coaching conversation Biswas-Diener (2010). This view was not very pervasive; one coach seemed to say that he merely chose an assessment (not a specific one) off the internet for kick starting the conversation. It brings another dimension to the conversation, instead of asking the dreaded 'so how is it going? Or what would you like to talk about today?"

The assessment offers a way into the conversation. It may also be a way to ignite a coaching engagement that is losing momentum or impetus.

Biswas-Diener (2010) concurs. He however, uses the concept of 'springboard'. – he continues: "use the results from the assessment as a springboard to a discussion about your client's strengths" He is writing about a strength-based approach to coaching (P. Linley & Minhas, 2011); (Biswas-Diener, 2010). The example is however still relevant, regardless of the type of assessment.

Palmer and McDowall (2010) also speak about how some assessments may not be validated in a psychological sense but they provide a starting point for a coaching conversation and are simply a choice made by the coach

The concept of assessment is significant here. It builds the argument of how coaches choose assessment, that it could be a practical approach to getting the conversation started.

5.3.2.4 Providing a language for the Coaching conversation

Assessments providing a common or shared language, was referred to often during the interview process. It occurred 21 times as a code in the analysis. The coaches did not have a common purpose even though they did see that an assessment was capable of introducing a language.

Assessments are able to introduce a common language for the coaching engagement.

In the second instance, the assessment introduced a discourse that made the coach and coachee understand one another more easily. In the third instance, assessment introduced new constructs or provided words for construct that had previously not even been languaged. The concepts are not necessarily foreign, but they sometimes bring the language that up until then had eluded the coachee. Often it is the language of a sophisticated tool like Meyers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) which has a language describing eight different constructs strengths of preferences and personality traits. The Insights tool describes the person with having certain traits like workstyle, interpersonal preferences, then associated with colours. Enneagram describes the person with concepts and numbers a typology of nine interconnected personality traits associated with a number.

These all offer the coach and the coachee a way to talk about who they are in an simplified, land accessible language. When the coachee is ready the tool also enable deeper layers of understanding to be uncovered.

Language, coaches related in their interviews, was a very empowering part of assessments because of the power of language and its ability to bring significant meaning in a conversation with the possibility to lifting the meaning in the conversation.

Biswas-Diener (2010) writing about positive psychology coaching, raises the power of an approach and use of language as “matching client language can help to fortify the coaching alliance,” This is a powerful part of rapport building and the whole concept of matching as described by Rogers (2012). This introduces another layer of meaning to the use of language in the coaching space. This phenomenon was not named during the interviews in relation to use.

Flaherty (2010) writes about the power of language in the coaching space. His hypothesis is that the moment we construct language, we are already judging the client. He uses this to create heightened awareness with coaches of how much judging is happening. During the interviews for this research study, matching client language was not the meaning attached to language by the coaches interviewed as the focus was language in the use of assessment and creating and naming new constructs and

creating a common language. It is worth noting though, Flaherty's caution that the minute coaches speak, they are already judging., during this study coaches did not talk about the ability of language to judge the client.

5.3.2.5 Measurement of the coaching intervention

Lashway's 1999 model of measurement that is a continuum of leadership development behaviour is an example of the thinking behind a measurement mind set. At the one end of the continuum, the measures are intuitive and as you move along the continuum, the measure becomes more objective. This model does not name specific assessments, but supports the measurement of change which can be 360 multi-rater or self-rater assessments.

Coaches also choose to measure other constructs or behaviours by using an assessment. They choose assessments that will enable them to do this measurement. They measure sometimes for reporting to the client, sometimes for their own knowledge or for the coachee to understand where the change and growth is happening. The measurement would then have a 'before and after' application so that the impact of the coaching intervention or the shift that has taken place can be captured. Either the shift is measured quantitatively or it may be measured qualitatively, eg. I no longer do it like that, I now do it like this.

What I heard coaches say, is that often the measurement is part of leadership development programs for corporates or when the client is paying and wants to be able to demonstrate Return on Investment (ROI).

Typically, this process happens with a pre- and post- measure in the coachee of the same assessment tool, the results that are then shared with the coachee and finally with a report to the client. Note that competence assessments and 360 can be used for the pre- and post-assessments but personality assessments, preference assessments and psychometrics are not going to shift in a period of 6 – 12 months.

5.3.2.6 An indicator of the coachee's level of development

An assessment may also be chosen when a coachee is being coached around a readiness or promotion or career development context. It may also be within a

particular coaching engagement to know directionally how to proceed. Then typically, a coach chooses an appropriate assessment that can cast some perspective on the issue that is on the table (Passmore, 2014); Passmore (2007) Palmer and McDowall (2010).

5.3.2.7 Conclusion to Coaching with clear intentions

The above discussion provides some context to how the coach chooses an assessment. It demonstrates that the coach is quite intentional and purposeful in choosing these. From observation, as the researcher, is that the intentional selection becomes a pragmatic solution focused approach. The coach is intentional about what needs to be achieved.

5.3.3 *Coach's Paradigm*

It is interesting that the coach seldom chooses an intention or a paradigm permanently. The biggest determinant of choice about assessment, it emerged from the interview data, is the coach's paradigm. The distinction, within this broad framework of 'paradigms' includes the disciplines of psychology, psychometry, management, leadership, health sciences and business. Furthermore, paradigm also can be based on a life philosophy or belief system, or an influencing style, scientific approach, or even just plain personal bias.

There are other coaches who choose assessments based on a paradigm to which they subscribe. According to www.Vocabulary.com's definition of a paradigm, this is : "A standard perspective or set of ideas. A paradigm is a way of looking at something".

These paradigms were sometimes a discipline in which they studied or were trained, other times the paradigm was a life philosophy or life orientation. It could also be a choice based on a coaching approach of, for example, being directive. Then some paradigms were determined by own biases. Yet other choices were based on a belief system which informs the coaching practice/process. In a way, this second category of coaches were those where the choice of assessment was pre- determined by the paradigm. The choice came before the coachee did. In the earlier discussion, choice was based on the coaching engagement and the needs coming from the system, the

organisation, the coachee or the coach themselves. The choice and decision about which assessment thus came as a response to the need being expressed.

Barner and Higgins (2007) have proposed a framework of four different categorisations for the theoretical classification of the coach's choices. (See Literature Review p,18-19 Table 3). Barner and Higgins (2007) aligns with the Psychology paradigm of this research report. The systems model relates to the practices of coaches and the Social Constructivist Model (Barner & Higgins, 2007)

5.3.3.1 Psychology paradigm

Two of the coaches interviewed spoke about a Systems Psycho-Dynamic paradigm that informs their work. It means that they also worked with the assessments, especially psychometrics and assessment processes that are rooted in that discipline. The aim of people working within the clinical model according to Barner and Higgins (2007) is finding answers to the question "What is being revealed about the underlying structure of the client's personality that sheds light on his performance issues?" The key here is that the coach uses his extensive psychological knowledge to gain understanding of the personality. Often in the clinical model, coaches will want to do a personality assessment such as MBTI, or other tests approved by the Health Professionals Council of South Africa (HPCSA)

The one coach chose to work much more qualitatively and gathered data in a narrative way instead of using an assessment tool which involved the coachee to do the assessment on their own. The paradigm that he followed was not purely the Clinical model but a mixture between the Clinical model and the Systems Model (Barner & Higgins, 2007), and the systems eclectic model of Clutterbuck and Megginson in L. Wildflower and Brennan (2011).

The other coach who described himself as a systems psycho-dynamic coach described his choice of assessments in the coaching process as wanting to bring about self-discovery. He wanted the assessments (completed on paper or online) quite early in the coaching engagement so that the new insights could be incorporated into the coaching. Interestingly they are firstly psychologists. According to Barner and Higgins (2007), with the Clinical model, the assessment process is guided by what is

being revealed about the underlying structure of the coachee's personality that sheds light on the issue that is being explored in the coaching engagement. For the coach, working from the clinical model, it is important to understand the coachee's overall personality. That may also be the reason the psychology paradigm coach respondents always spoke about having a personality assessment in combination with another one or two other assessments.

The coaches that were interviewed were a split. Ten of the 16 interviewees were trained in psychology. It was significant that those coaches with either a psychology education, previously practiced as psychologists or currently working as a psychologist coach, seemed to have a small advantage over the other coaches in the following areas. They claimed that they understood the underlying constructs of assessment tools by virtue of their psychology training. They also answered when asked would you work with assessments you are not accredited for. They indicated that they would do it while non-psychologists were clear that they would only use and do follow-up reports and feedback of tools in which they do carry an accreditation.

5.3.3.2 A needs paradigm

Most of the definitions of coaching reference this client-centred paradigm which means that the coachee's question is the central focus of a coaching engagement and as a result, that would also be the focus on whether to choose assessments or not. Once an agreement is reached about using an assessment, the choice of assessment sits with the coach who acts in the best interest of the coachee. In the book, *The Coaching Relationship: Putting people first,* Palmer and McDowall (2010) encourage a client centred approach and encourage the coach to ask "Is an assessment the right tool to use for this coachee, at this stage in the coaching process? Further self-reflective questions are, "What assessments can the coach use given their expertise and training?" and furthermore, "Is the coach the best person to use and interpret this assessment information?"

This discussion points to how seriously the coach is willing to take the belief that the coachee is the most important person in this relationship. It points to the self-reflection the coach needs to do, firstly, when they are at the contracting phase. Secondly, the coach needs to reflect on the appropriateness of the tool.

Respondents also spoke about the fundamental core belief around coaching being clear on what is needed and then following that route.

The core belief that drives this paradigm is a client-centred approach which comes from the humanist, Carl Rogers (Rogers 1960). Rogers took issue with the psychoanalytic and behaviourist approaches for being too negative and problem focused and solutions always seemed to fragment the individual. He proposed that people have the capacity to solve their own problems. The Rogerian approach in coaching shows up as a collaborative and emphathetic relationship which is deeply respectful of the client Whybrow & Wildflower, in L. Wildflower and Brennan (2011)

The approach could be articulated as one that is focused on the needs of the process. The coach demonstrates a responsiveness and flexibility to the needs of the client.

5.3.3.3 A Directive Paradigm

There were coaches who also advocated for a directive approach to assessments while others were clearly further along at the other end of the continuum to negotiate with the coachee whether they wanted to use an assessment. Mostly, this was informed by a “I am the professional here” mind-set and therefore the coach thought it her duty to make the professional decisions.

The theoretical paradigm of Behaviourism does resonate with this model in that it does emphasise a learning component where clear goals are set for what needs to change. The coach knows more than the coachee and therefore feels compelled to guide the learning. (L. Wildflower & Brennan, 2011) (Barner & Higgins 2005). There is also a resonance with the Model based frame that Clutterbuck and Megginson use to describe coaches who think about their role as being one of taking the coachee where the coach thinks he should go.

5.3.3.4 A Measurement Paradigm

This is a paradigm that focuses on measurement of the behaviour change that happens, hence the coach carefully identifies the assessment tool that will do this most credibly. Coaches highlighted very clearly also that some constructs should not be measured like personality which takes a longer time for shifts to take place.

The 360 multi-rater which is about behavioural feedback is possible to do as a measure with a six-month time lapse between the two applications of the tools.

The Measurement paradigm sits in the Behaviourist Model (Barner & Higgins 2005; Wildflower in L. Wildflower and Brennan (2011) because of the preoccupation with measurement. Clutterbuck and Megginson in (L. Wildflower & Brennan, 2011) have also categorised the paradigm within the Model based frame where there is a need for control.

5.3.3.5 Business Paradigm

A number of coaches chose to work with a bias toward the business, the system or the organisation, often citing that they choose to deliver results that the (paying) client is seeking. The choice of assessments would be based on what the business requires.

The way that coach respondents reference this in their interviews was that there was a need for a more business-centred approach such as assessment, practices of meeting the line manager, or doing 360 with people in the coachee's eco-system. The way this paradigm was identified was coaches who were prioritising the business requirements/ demands over everything else. I think some of the coaches in this grouping were aligned to the Systems Model (Barner & Higgins, 2007) with their being highly responsive to the system and the way it influenced the success of the coaching process.

5.3.3.6 Scientific Paradigm

A respondent highlighted that he preferred the credibility of assessments in general in the coaching process because of the scientific nature of an assessment. He felt that the report with the graphs and numbers was supposedly a scientific representation, which by implication carried more weight.

Another respondent referred to the science that sits behind the assessment as making the assessment more credible. Another observation was that assessments were sexy and scientific. Here the assumption is that the assessment brings something 'interesting' and 'scientific' to the coaching process.

The bias of the coach or coachee for a 'scientific' tool is a value judgement and therefore judges the assessment, whether it is the appropriate one or not as more valuable than not doing an assessment at all.

The bias towards the scientific measures of behaviour also connects back to the Behaviourist Model (Barner & Higgins, 2007); Wildflower in (L. Wildflower & Brennan, 2011).

5.3.4 *Conclusion of Coach Paradigm*

The complexity of the idea of a coach paradigm is that the coach does not necessarily stick to one paradigm. The coach moves across boundaries selecting techniques, processes, tools and approaches from different paradigms. The challenge for the researcher in this study is how to express the paradigm mix which in reality is different approaches, different frameworks and models and different theories.

There are one or two coaches for whom crossing over paradigms is like mixing up things too much. The majority are comfortable with it.. One needs to understand how coaches themselves experience their own eclecticism. Is it something they are conscious of and it contributes to make their craft unique. What are the client's expectations of coaches?

5.3.5 *Unplanned and non-reflective ways of choosing assessments*

The third way that coaches chose revealed an unreflective and unplanned choice. This is discussed in further detail below.

Palmer and McDowall (2010) in discussing choice of assessment, suggest the approach chosen needs to be determined by the assessment instrument used, but also by the nature and purpose of the coaching session. This resonates with the first category of responses.

The researcher found that the construct of 'choice' and 'use' were not that clearly distinguishable in the research literature. Most used was the construct to cover both.

This section surfaced during the interview process and responses to questions some of the interviewees answered very candidly. This left a lingering thought with the researcher that seemed to suggest some of the coaches are quite unreflective about their assessment practices.

They were honest in saying that the questions about their assessment practice were catching them off-guard, and that they needed time to think about it some more. Others spoke about the value of the interview process in getting them to examine and reflect on what they do on a daily basis.

Still others were candid in that they, during the conversation, felt that they contradicted themselves. The sense is that the coaches had not thought through their choices of using assessment in their coaching practice.

Peltier (2011) writing about the choosing of assessment says “Most of the executive coaches fly by the seat of their pants when it comes to assessments and may use an informal 360 process.” This quotation implies that there is not a thought out plan that coaches follow in choosing assessment. This was quite a surprise to the researcher to find that coaches were not strategic about their choice of assessments. The use of assessments for a few of the coach respondents seemed unreflective and it seemed to be prompted by the interview questions; it was the first time reflecting on their practice. The lingering question for the researcher though, is the underlying question why some coaches are so unreflective. I do not think it is sloppiness, nor do I think it is ‘couldn’t be botheredness’. It is probably an non-reflective mindset. A further reflection for the research raises the question whether it is where intuition overrides rational thinking and science. Intuition is a highly rated attribute for coaches (Passmore, 2006). Is it the phenomenon of flow where you are so immersed that you forget? It included loss of awareness of oneself as a social actor, intense and focused attention on what one is doing in the moment; loss of reflective consciousness (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014).

For some, it may even be that the choice and use of assessments are completely out of their hands since they were contracted into a coaching programme where those decisions had already been made by the sponsoring client. The researcher observed that in some instances, the same coaches who were irresolute / hesitant about how

they choose and use assessments were also the ones who sometimes struggled to make a distinction between whether what they were relating was coaching within a leadership development programme space, or whether it was from a private client space. These coaches were also the ones who felt like they were contradicting themselves. It is a pity that within the confines of the interview the researcher did not explore more around that contradiction they were feeling. It definitely should be an area for further research, the lack of autonomous decision making for coaches when they contract for large corporate contracts.

5.3.6 *Conclusion of unintentional use*

It was mostly found that coaches who were unintentional were that way because in their work in programmes or roll-outs or standardised implementation, they mostly were not expected to make any decisions by choice of assessments. It would be a worthwhile exercise to gain deeper insights about the non-reflective or unplanned stance in the choosing of assessments for some coaches.

5.3.6.1 Conclusion

Bono et al. (2009) in the Literature review when describing the selection of assessments, asserts that coaches differ widely on what should be assessed, and therefore it follows that the way in which they choose assessments would differ, it is difficult to describe. In this study, the question of how coaches choose assessments emerged with three groupings. Those coaches who use assessments intentionally and purposefully constitute the first group. They were able to describe what they wanted to assess or to describe the purpose of why they choose a particular assessment. The second group base their selection on a paradigm or life philosophy which was typical of their practice and not necessarily based on the needs of the coachee. The third category of respondents were uncertain about the approach or strategy they were using to choose an assessment.

This third group is furthermore not a homogenous group, but upon reflection, the researcher has been able to see further distinctions within this group.

5.3.7 *How coaches use assessments*

The next section deals with how respondents answered the questions about how they use assessments in the coaching practice. The caution from Palmer and McDowall

(2010) p. 5 is a great way to reflect on the concept of use. They report on a survey about the circumstances when assessment instruments should or should not be used in *The Coaching Relationship: Putting people first*. They continue with the caution to coaches.

“The wide range & easy availability of assessment instruments can make them very tempting to use. Coaches and psychologist who coach need to be clear as to why a particular instrument is being used, what impact it might have on the coaching relationship and what the outcomes are. (P 93).

The interview data produced approximately 24 different ways in which coaches use assessment. The use for self–insight and self–awareness was the top reason for use. This is accurate, because even if it is tiny there would be an element of self-insight take-away for the assessment taker from just about any assessment. Scoular and Campbell (2007) have confirmed the value of an assessment being a powerful take-away from the coaching session.

In the Literature Review the researcher indicated coaches differ in what they use assessments for and Bono et al. (2009) outlined three specific uses and it does include insight 1) Insight; 2) goal setting; 3) action oriented planning.

5.3.8 *Timing in the assessment process*

Timing had two distinctions that could be drawn. The first connotation was about the timing of assessments in the assessment process that there are coaches who use assessments very early, before the first coaching session.

5.3.8.1 Assessments First

Some coaches use assessments before the first session. This was really an outlier view from two coaches who work under the umbrella of the same consultancy and their experiences were around the same two assessment tools.

The other interviewees expressed similar opinions that it was critical for the assessment to be somewhere around the second or third session. In the findings, I have recorded the list of responses that constitute the prerequisites that need to be in place before the assessments are launched.

The prerequisites as outlined by the majority of respondents included that: trust was being built; that rapport already existed; that assessment was explained; reservations were addressed; agreement on the assessment; clear purpose for choice of assessment existed. Although coaches did not articulate these prerequisites in a uniform manner, when summarised like this, they present an alternative view point to the timing of doing assessments. These prerequisites outline a lot more preparation time.

Peltier (2011) asserts, “careful assessment allows a coach to determine the stage of readiness of the client and respond appropriately” This assertion points to the perspective that the timing needs to be determined by the readiness of the coachee. Any other criteria used to determine the sequence of the assessment can be construed as working to the coach’s agenda. Peltier does not outline what readiness entails; there is convergence between the view of Peltier and the coach respondents. The list of prerequisites outlined by the respondents in the data captured in the findings chapter could be one way to do the preparation for the coachee to be ready.

5.3.8.2 Time is valuable

The second construct around time was the notion of time being precious for executives. The same two coaches under discussion also advocated for the exclusive and specific use of two assessments. It enabled the coach to halve the amount of time it would normally take with a client. I would regard this view as an outlier position again as the majority of other coaches interviewed spoke about the value of using the assessment feedback as reflection time.

The idea of slowing down time as opposed to speeding up is what C-suite executives report as one of the biggest benefits of coaching

5.3.9 *Feedback process in the use of assessments*

Feedback on its own was one of the topics that was highly saturated. The code entitled feedback was used 42 times.

Providing quality feedback is clearly one of the most important topics in understanding how coaches use assessments. It is one of the crucial elements of a successful assessment process within the coaching process.

Coaches who were interviewed, advocated for a number of elements that contribute to quality feedback of the assessment report.

As a coach you have to become an expert in the art of giving feedback (Rogers, 2012) This summarises the centrality of good feedback and knowing when to give the feedback and when not to give feedback and when to let it go.

The coaches interviewed in this research study articulated this in various ways and demonstrated this with their reflective and thoughtful responses and at times feeling that they were deeply contradictory. This ambiguity is summed up in the following quote:

“Coaching well means managing a constant state of ambiguity” (Rogers, 2012). From this quote from Rogers we can deduce the heightened sense of ambiguity that coaches sit with.

Even the best assessment cannot take the place of deep listening, non-judgemental curiosity, following the client’s agenda, and correcting an action plan that moves the client forward (L. Wildflower, Brennan, D (2011). This too confirms that without the appropriate skills, the coach cannot effectively use assessments.

5.3.9.1 Feedback preparation

Not all coaches take the time to do feedback preparation, according to this study. Doing the preparation aligns to a client-centred approach.

The coachee needs to understand the tool the coach is choosing to use. It is also appropriate to allay any fears and to talk about the theory constructs behind assessments. This is important at a base level because then the coach is taking the coachee along and building a partnership.

5.3.9.2 Creating ownership of the feedback

After the feedback preparation, the respondents described the next stage of assessment feedback that ensures that the feedback does land. It means taking time to talk through the constructs being measured in the tool. It means the coach is aware of what will be a hot button for the coachee and anticipates that. The coach enables the coachee to make meaning of the feedback.

The coach has the singular responsibility of landing the assessment so that whatever is relevant and important for the coachee is taken up, understood and leads to the changes that the person sought. This speaks to the skillset and orientation of the coach.

Some executives value the structured framework provided by the feedback and the defined goals for their coaching and were happy with this arrangement. Others, however, seemed content for their coaching direction to have little reference to the feedback data and no explicit goal for the process (Hill, 2010). This demonstrates that the coachees are not having the same expectations. The coach therefore has to be adept at reading the expectations and needs of the coachee and testing those so that she can adapt the feedback and coaching process.

5.3.9.3 Co-creation of the feedback

The next part of viewing feedback holistically is to consider co-creation of feedback. According to interviewees, a preference based assessment is co-created, a competency-based assessment is a given snapshot and a 360 assessment is someone's perception of you. Co-creation involves testing the report with the coachee to see where there is agreement: Checking in with the coachee how they feel about the report. Co-creation was also in the "how do you intend to work with it. How do you intend to change?"

Upon the researchers' reflection of this co-creation, it can be said that essentially the coach is working from a social constructivist paradigm (Barner & Higgins, 2007) when they design the feedback process as being co-created. A. Linley (2008) refers to the power of the co-creating conversation when he discusses the process, "Insights emerge out of a conversation between coach and coachee and the results are grounded in the coachee's experience (P. Linley & Minhas, 2011)

5.3.9.4 Contextualisation of the feedback

Contextualisation was also mentioned by the coaches as an important part of the feedback process. It gives the coachee some of the context that sits around the assessment, for example, in a 360 who were the raters, what is the organisation culture and climate like at the moment. In the South African context where cultural diversity in the workplace has not been reached, Myers (2013), 360 data can be

skewed by the raters. This was a very strong caution from one of the respondents speaking from multiple experiences. The coach's skill to interrogate the data sufficiently so that the report does not cause damage and leave negative perceptions is important. It is the role of the coach to know the organisational contexts such as, is there a major restructure on the go, are people feeling vulnerable, how are the team dynamics.

From the researcher's own experience, many corporates in South Africa are doing 360 assessments without of a coaching programme. The potential damage to organisational trust and values and the breakdown of relationships is so destructive. With focused and supportive feedback and coaching, the 360 has the potential to be transformative. The greatest opportunity for behaviour change is if the 360 is used in conjunction with coaching (Hooijberg & Lane, 2009); (Bracken & Rose, 2011); (Nowack, 2009).

5.3.9.5 The coach assists with making meaning

In pulling together the feedback and the themes that have surfaced in the coaching conversation, the process of meaning-making is probably the most critical part of the assessment feedback. The coach is able to make connections and see patterns that the coachee often is unable to see. This role of integration and connecting is a critical part of using assessments.

Biswas-Diener (2010) refers to the meaning-making as a "fundamental need of people and that it is germane to the coaching endeavour". The practical result of the meaning-making process, both of what does this mean for me here and now, as well as the coaches ability to elevate the conversation to the meaning of life is when the assessment is a choice to have the conversation instead of sidestepping it.

In describing the value add of assessments, a research study conducted by Hill (2010) found that it was the coach's skill at utilising the assessment and feedback as the foundation for a 'living discovery process' that is the contributor to effective coaching.

Two aspects that become key in this discussion around feedback is the skill of the coach in assisting the coachee to make meaning and that the assessment feedback is meant to be a discovery process for the coachee. The criticality of the coach's skills

was repeatedly highlighted by the interviewees as can be garnered from the examples in chapter 4 Section 4.3.6.

5.3.9.6 Unacceptable feedback for the individual

A further insight from this study is that coaches adopt a view of leave what does not fit when it come to the feedback report of assessments. This connects to both a non-directive stance on the part of the coach as well as the point made earlier about co-creating meaning from the assessment, contrary to what ones first reading of this paragraph may imply. The majority of interviewees spoke about an approach of incorporating the data into the coaching later on or noting the resistance and finding ways to incorporate that into the coaching process. This speaks again of wisdom on the part of the coach to understand when to let go of an issue and trusting the process that there will be another opportunity to deal with it.

The concept of resistance to feedback was not dealt with as a construct in the literature. It highlights two elements that become central for the coach: How to deal with resistance to assessment feedback. Is the coachee potentially not ready yet to hear what is being said? Are they reacting from ego defence, and does the coach make a call to pursue and dig deeper or is there wisdom in letting it go. The call needs to be made by the coach to decide the appropriate course of action. The majority of coaches in the interview spoke about the wisdom of letting it go in the moment but that it would present itself again in the coaching process and this was then an opportunity to work with the construct.

5.3.9.7 Assessment as a reflective tool

Assessment as a reflective tool has been a strong theme in this study. Coaches regard the assessment feedback as a valuable reflective space. This is confirmed in various ways, by the data collected in Chapter 4. For example, coaches were emphatic in describing the time that is needed to be spent on the assessment report. The data in section 6 of the Findings, describes the usefulness of the assessment in creating self-insight, blind spot identification and AHAs. All of these are a result of more reflective thought processes on the part of the coachee.

There are two coaches who were part of the sample interviewed who advocated that their assessment tools taken before the first coaching session together with the

specific tools they use, enabled them to halve the time that executives spend in coaching. The process, although very time efficient, may not allow for reflection during the one-on-one coaching sessions. The researcher did not inquire deeper to understand whether there is a reflective element. These two coaches work from a Neuro-Science, Constructivist and Meta-Coaching paradigm which may be charting a course that is new and different.

5.3.9.8 The skill of feedback

It was clearly articulated by the interviewees that the level of skill the coach had in delivering the feedback, was central to the success of the assessment process. Some of this skill was around the ability to position the tool, read the coachee and the context, have an open conversation with the coachee, sensing what fits and what can be discarded and what needs to be let go of with a view to picking it up again later. In this discussion the skillset is not clearly articulated, that is discussed later. However it is an imprecise skillset, but used in unison, it would be quite powerful in ensuring the success of the assessment process.

5.3.10 *Benefits of the use of assessments*

The most common reason for the use of assessments by coaches was that it had the most benefits for the coachee. In the following section, I will make sense of these benefits.

5.3.10.1 Self-insight aided by the assessment tool

As mentioned before, the construct of self-insight was the construct cited by every respondent for the reason they used assessments as well as in the literature review where it was mentioned by Bono et al. (2009) and Scoular and Campbell (2007) as a major benefit and take-away from the coaching engagement. In the interview process, the construct of self-insight is achieved in many different ways. It was prompted by a particular segment of the feedback, it was prompted by the wisdom and language of a particular tool and the constructs it was defining. Some self-insights came from the discussion and feedback and some self-insights were made explicit by the coach. It was also possible that people got their self-insights while having a discussion about the results or feedback of someone else.

5.3.10.2 Deriving value from the 'aha' experience

Nearly every respondent spoke about the 'aha' experience that coachees experienced. This related to seeing something for the first time, or a feeling like they have just joined the dots and made connections between disparate pieces of information or that they have been able to pinpoint something that until then had been too vague. It is facilitated by the simplicity of some assessments that reduce or characterise preference traits to a colour or a number that results in a dramatic 'Aha'.

The concept of an 'Aha' was not captured in the literature. It is the researcher's contention that it may be incorporated into the self-insight category of the literature and 'aha' may be a local South Africanism.

5.3.10.3 Identification of blind spots

A benefit identified by the coach respondents is that the assessment tool assists in identifying blind spots. It was interesting that coaches expressed the benefit as blind spot identification and drew a distinction from self-insight. There are a host of reasons why something has been a blind spot but with skilful coaching and the right assessment tool, the coachee gains some awareness to those blind spots. The blind spots can sometimes relate to identifying strengths or areas of development. It could be that they, for the first time, acknowledge a behaviour, it could also be that they feel empowered to take ownership of something that they have up until now denied.

As a construct, this was not identified in the literature. It is the researcher's contention that it may be incorporated into the self-insight category of the literature and 'blind spot' may be a local South Africanism.

5.3.10.4 Affirms and identifies strengths

This applies in the South African culture where giving positive feedback and affirmation of behaviour is not very prevalent. The coaches did feel that the assessment sometimes was the first time the coachee received feedback that made them feel appreciated or affirmed. Similarly, in the positive psychology sphere, there are some assessments that simply are focused on identifying and highlighting strengths. This was perceived as a huge benefit in the way coaches used assessments.

The strength spotter referenced in the Literature Review is an example of a tool that seeks to provide an individual with a view of what they are good at. P. A. Linley et al. (2010). The potential also exists for 360 to do provide affirmative feedback, but as discussed earlier, this is dependent upon organisational culture and other variables.

5.3.10.5 Development of Action Steps

For the coach respondents, there seemed to be a natural outflow from the assessments towards developing action steps. Sometimes the action steps were to go and try something out, coming back to the coaching session next time and reflecting on it and then looking at how to embed the new behaviour in a sustainable way. Other coaches reported the value of some reports already having a section of action steps included in the report, for others, the action steps emerged as the coach and the conversation began to join the dots between the assessments and the narrative under discussion, it became self-evident what actions now had to be taken by the coachee. This is already outlined in the literature review by Bono et al. (2009) and mentioned earlier in this discussion.

5.3.10.6 Understanding of others

A widely held response was that the assessment provided understanding of others. This was articulated by the respondents in different ways. For some, the understanding of others facilitated self-understanding. This was made possible through the constructs of various tools, eg. the 360 outlined what the manager, or subordinate were not happy with in terms of the leader's behaviour. Also preference profiles enabled the coach to prompt a question about how they impact others. The constructs of the assessment often provided the clues on to how to act differently, like for example, if my manager is a detailed oriented person, I need to bear this in mind when communicating with him or when I write reports for her.

This was one of the big benefits identified as a result of doing assessments.

The construct of understanding others as a benefit of assessment was not captured in the literature. From behaviourist theory, Bandura (1969); Barner and Higgins (2007), it is understood that behaviour change can occur by observing the other or understanding what a significant stakeholder requires. It is the researcher's contention

that it may be a relic of a South African culture which was hierarchical and compliant and which still operates in corporate culture.

5.3.10.7 Additional data for the Coach

The interviewees reported that they gained insights about the coachee which enabled them to use the information in the coaching process. In some instances, the assessment provided guidance on where the conversation needed to go or be as part of a career coaching intervention or as a transition coaching. It also gave the coach insight into how best to communicate, structure the intervention when the preferences from an assessment were made clear. This point resonates with what Scoular and Campbell (2007) claim in the literature review in relation to the benefits to the coach of using psychometrics.

5.3.10.8 Credibility for the coach

Not many respondents spoke to this point but it is worth mentioning that some coaches perceived that using assessments helped the coachee to feel confident about the coach in the way he demonstrates his mastery of a particular assessment tool. Either coaches were too modest or they do not subscribe to a similar belief system about the coach's showing credibility.

The concept of 'coach's credibility' was not captured in the literature. It is the researcher's contention that being modest and not focusing on your own smartness is a South African trait.

5.3.11 *Assessments are about learning and change*

Assessments are regarded as a key part of facilitating learning and change in the coaching engagement mostly because they highlight and trigger a different way of thinking. It may be challenging their traditional way of thinking or it helps them to see things differently and therefore becoming open to a different way of thinking. (L. Wildflower, Brennan, D, 2011). Respondents were unambiguous in their outlining the power of an assessment to bring about a shift. It was sometimes in creating awareness and then behaviourally the person was able to change, and sometimes the shift happens as a result of simply interacting with the tool. One of the coach respondents

described this theory of cognitive behaviour where new knowledge and insights lead to new behaviour; this is corroborated by Wildflower who places cognitive behavioural therapy theories as readily usable and pragmatic approaches to facilitating change in coaching (L. Wildflower, Brennan, D, 2011).

This does resonate with the behavioural model as illustrated in the literature review (Barner & Higgins, 2007).

5.3.12 *Coaches' competence in the use of Assessments*

In the section on feedback, there is a reference to the skillset the coach needs when using assessments. The skills are a mixture of highly evolved skills and attitudes, knowledge and experience

P. Linley and Minhas (2011) have asserted that: "success is grounded in the coach's skill to listen and make sense for the client". This was confirmed by the majority of the respondents.

Although Rogers (2012) in her book *Coaching skills* does not have a section dedicated to skills for using assessment. She outlines that a coach needs a self-confident fascination with how people achieve their potential and a wish to go with them on that journey; unbounded curiosity about people; intuition into what makes them tick; a high degree of self-knowledge; the self-discipline to keep yourself out of the way; and the ability to resist giving advice or wanting to be right.

These are skills the coach requires to be a coach but one can safely say they are also the skills for doing and debriefing assessments and are central to the success of the assessment process

5.3.12.1 Competence:Connecting information and finding patterns

Although this question was never asked explicitly, coaches spoke in their interviews about the ability to integrate and connect assessment data with existing narratives, for the coachee.

5.3.12.2 Competence: Giving Feedback

This point probably is a summary of all the discussion under the theme of feedback. It is about not giving feedback in isolation without context. It is about ensuring that you are co-creating with the coachee and not talking down to them. It is about ensuring that feedback is integrated and meaningful. It is about igniting the thinking of the coachee themselves.

Assessment and feedback is typical for many coaching programs and considered a critical part of the executive coaching process by many scholars, particularly those with a psychology background (Judge & Cowell, 1997); Kampa-Kokesch and Anderson 2001; his quotation reinforces that assessments are a key part of the coaching process. However,Hill (2010) adds that the existing studies do not discuss the contribution of this (assessment and feedback) to coaching effectiveness.

This points to the lack of research on assessment in coaching, therefore no claims can be made about its contribution to the effectiveness of coaching, but does confirm its use.

The interviewees referred to the skills of listening and building trust as being critical, however the skills associated with feedback encapsulated a skillset of sophisticated engagement, of a wisdom to know when to push forward and when to let go, an ability to perceive readiness differently for each individual, and an ability to leave models in favour of having a real heartfelt conversation.

5.3.12.3 Competence: Building trust and rapport

The third competence expressed was the ability to build trust and build rapport. These are confirmed competences for coaching as well (Rogers, 2012).

Numerous references were made during the interviews to the importance of building trust.

5.3.12.4 Accreditation

In the field of psychometrics and assessments, much of the area is governed by policy and laws relating to the Health Professionals Council of South Africa. This means that administration of assessments are mostly governed with policies for the person who administers and debriefs assessments to have to have an academic qualification and

or accreditation. Most of the coaches interviewed do adhere to this requirement quite closely.

What was interesting was that the psychologists held a view about themselves understanding the constructs that underlie the assessment, so they were less bothered to keep within the accreditation rules.

One of the coaches highlighted how it needed to be lobbied for that coaches who did not have a psychology qualification, but met other agreed criteria, are able to work with assessments as they needed. The point needs to be considered and implications looked at..

5.3.12.5 Assessment as diagnostic

Many of the interviewees struggled to own the idea of their assessments being diagnostic. Some were open to it and accepting of the label, others were adamant that they do not use their assessments to diagnose the coachee, and that this could result in a medical model approach to working with a coachee in 'trying to fix him'. One of the coaches when asked about diagnosis, responded that he prefers to view an assessment as a measurement.

The concept of diagnosis was not discussed in the literature. It was however, how a number of coaches expressed how they used assessment in their practice.

5.3.12.6 Dialogue as an assessment

Coaches differentiated between different approaches. They pointed out that coaches do not perceive assessments to always be done on paper or online. Some of the coaches preferred to do the 360 process as a narrative conversation with a live interview. The methodology differed in some instances.

5.3.12.7 Narrative 360

Coaches felt that they were collecting more authentic data through the narrative process. The researcher, in trying to understand this process, probed the coaches about the process and found that mostly the coach would conduct this process against a set of questions not dissimilar to the paper version except the coach was recording responses. The researcher coined the phrase narrative 360.

5.3.12.8 Relational Narrative 360

This was a third methodology that some coaches used. The coach who used it claimed it was not an assessment. It was obtaining data from the eco-system around the person in terms of relational aspects. The coach claimed that the process was based on Kahn's Relational Map (M. Kahn, 2011).

The three versions of the narrative approach left the researcher with the feeling that these were assessments being applied as there was an overarching set of constructs that the coach was choosing to frame the discussion. The narrative version enabled the coach to seek clarification of responses and to record data where a level of ambiguity was already removed.

5.3.13 *Challenges faced by coaches in the use of assessments*

The theme emerged and was created by the researcher to hold a space for all the coach's ambivalence and their cautions that emerged during the interview and as a result of the interview questions that probed their thinking. These responses, although at first jarring, pointed to the authenticity of the interviewees. It highlighted that they have unfinished insights and new thoughts emerging. Although some of these thoughts were shared vociferously, others were more quiet and tentative.

The literature on assessments (Almuth McDowall & Kurz, 2007) in coaching has cautions for the choice and use of assessments. During the interviews, the respondents shared these freely, sometimes from a best practice view and other times because they themselves lived with the dilemmas and misalignment in their practices.

5.3.13.1 360 Multi-rater

Literature warned about the subjectivity of the 360 assessment. Within the South African context, writers have warned that the diversity and low trust culture in many corporations could really skew the results of the 360. The researcher's own experience in her current work context in a large corporation has highlighted that due to issues of power and trust, the data gathered from 360 is heavily skewed as raters feel they cannot criticise their managers or they feel that they would receive the wrath of the manager if they were to give candid feedback. Some interviewees expressed similar reservations and had also experienced the debriefing report to be a witch hunt to find

who the negative raters are. All these factors leave quite a negative experience of the 360 multi-rater.

5.3.13.2 Extract meaning for the Coachee

This was expressed in the interviews as a cautionary note for the coach. Firstly, to be very careful to extract meaning from the assessment report, by not overwhelming the coachee with unnecessary information and secondly, always ensuring that the data are shared at the readiness level and cognitive level of the coachee and not as a way to demonstrate the expertise of the coach. The misuse of assessment, especially when coaches lack the necessary skill, or from sticking to tried and tested assessment or playing the expert role without corroborating the results with the coachee, are all listed as challenges that coaches need to guard against (Almuth McDowall & Kurz, 2007).

5.3.13.3 Coachee negative experience of assessments

The interviewees also pointed out elements if poor use of assessments by the coach and coaches who use assessments just for the sake of it and not obtaining buy-in from the coachee.

The coaches also spoke about indiscriminate use of assessments also leading to assessment fatigue.

The literature did not deal with the negative experience of assessments as a construct but instead dealt with challenges that needed to be remediated.

5.3.13.4 Coach's ambivalence

The majority of the respondents definitely felt that although they used assessments, they were not advocates of assessments. They struggled to articulate where it fitted into their practice. They articulated very circumspect cautions and conditions that needed to be in place when using assessments.

The literature does not discuss this or related constructs.

5.3.13.5 Poor organisational processes

It was also noted that organisational processes were responsible for the jadedness some coachees felt when asked to complete assessments. Coaches blamed poor

feedback or no feedback at all after completion of assessments. They also identified little or no 360 multi-rater context setting and explaining the constructs of what is being measured. This contributed to a feeling of despondency and fatigue instead of being energised and empowered by assessments.

Organisationally, people often want to make assessments competitive and want to know how they are doing in relation to others. Assessments are often used as an organisational strategy to get rid of someone or because the assessment says 'you are not a job fit' and so the coach is called in to debrief the assessment and to do the exiting or fixing. There is still a stigma attached to coaching of it being a remedial intervention and organisations are not working to consciously communicate a different reality when launching a coaching intervention. Organisations do not want to think systemically about a challenging situation so they believe sending one executive for coaching can fix the problem. Often this sets the person up badly for failure.

The literature did not discuss the construct of poor organisational processes that potentially make assessments a negative experience.

5.3.13.6 Dealing with Resistance

Most of the respondents had an opinion about this question which could be summarised as coaches understand that resistance was a manifestation of something else. In some instances they would find another way of addressing the issue at a later, more opportune time or finding out what the resistance was about.

The literature does not cover the issue of resistance to assessments.

5.3.13.7 Tools that box

Respondents also alerted the interviewer to the limitations of some assessments in the constructs and the way they are used by coaches. Some constructs had the potential to become a box that was limiting in its description. They warned about unequal relationships between the coach and coachee and incompetence of the coach that can make the coachee feel less empowered and more boxed by the assessment.

Coaches also noted that sometimes the coachees themselves tended to box themselves with the tool and the work of the coach was then to offer another

perspective and to deepen the discussion and to help the coachee to access all of who they are or have the potential to become.

5.3.13.8 Conclusion on how coaches use assessments

In summary, the discussion about how coaches use assessments has provided diverse and rich data. It has demonstrated the contribution it makes to a coaching engagement. The spectrum of how coaches use assessments remains diverse. The interview data does show convergence with the literature on the benefit of being self-insight. This term was used by interviewees as well as the concept of self-awareness, self-understanding and was one of the most saturated codes.

The concepts of 'blind spot identification and 'Aha' although less saturated was also very frequently cited. These constructs are close 'relatives' of self-insight but offer some granularity as to the kind of new information being offered or discovered via the assessment process. The researcher is of the view that these constructs may not be in the literature because they firstly may be categorised as self-insight or self-awareness in the literature. The second reason may be that they are South African colloquialisms and therefore not appearing in the literature from Europe and the United States.

It was as though coaches wanted to register their cautions, critiques and conundrums to the researcher and wanted to quietly have them noted. This is the reason that they are incorporated under the research question of 'how coaches use assessments.' As the researcher listening to this indirect response to the question of use it brought me to deepen my insight and to add texture to the understanding of how coaches use assessments.

Most of the subtle constructs under the challenges are not referenced or discussed in the literature. It may be that these are more practice based challenges that are not being elevated to deserve a place as realistic challenges. The literature tends to look at challenges mostly on the level of the skills and competence of the coach.

Qualitative research is meant to bring the subjective narratives of individuals under the spotlight. This has been exactly the experience of the researcher with this study. Brilliant diverse and individualised approaches have emerged. Attempts to standardise the use of assessment may results in thwarting the creativity and

innovation space and transformative nature which is some of the essence of the coaching space.

5.4 Conclusion

5.4.1 *Preliminary Remarks*

As stated above, the qualitative nature of this study has enabled a rich and very diverse story of how coaches choose and of how they use assessments, to emerge.

The purpose of the study was to explore the terrain and to gather the responses and to make sense of the data. In writing chapter 2, the literature review had already prepared the researcher for a couple of things. The first insight is that the literature on assessments in coaching is sparse (Stern & Stout-Rostron, 2013). The second insight derived from the literature review was that coaches follow their own subjective views when they proceed with using assessments and the coaching process

What the research found that was quite unexpected/ unanticipated was that coaches struggled to articulate in any clear way, their practices. It is my understanding that coaches mostly work from an eclectic paradigm, which can be described as more than one theoretical model informs their work. Eclectic is not meant to describe their work as a-theoretical. However, they struggle to articulate it in any theoretical terms. I asked coaches upfront to tell me what paradigm they work from. Responses included identification of approaches, theories, models constructs techniques and skills and often there was misalignment between the espoused approachat the beginning and the practice described during the interview.

It was also completely unexpected to find that some coaches are non-reflective about their practice. This was evident from their 'long winded' responses to the interview questions. They often repeated the interview question, started a response with 'Soooo (used more than 900 times in the interviews) Which seemed to suggest they were buying themselves time to think and formulating their thoughts. Rich insights in some instances only really emerged in the second half and towards the end of the interview as their thinking started to clarify and deepen.

Although articulated differently, many, by the end of the conversation would say, 'I'm going to contradict myself now' and in the conversation sometimes during the interview or once the microphones were turned off would say ' wow that really made me think

about my practice, ‘ ‘ I don’t think this deeply about my practice, this made me think’ . This suggests that the coaches either are not reflecting on their practice, are not making sense of their practice..

The researcher observed how the interview itself became a reflective learning process for the coaches where they were able to consider the questions being posed. This was either articulated directly or a deduction made through observation by the researcher.

It was observed by the researcher how nearly all the respondents asked for either the transcription, or a copy of my thesis or if I would write an article on the findings. Those in more influential positions asked if I would submit the research to a journal or if I would be a guest speaker on the topic of assessments at their communities of practice or coaching association. This was an indication of the interest and newness of the topic. Just recently the International Coaching Federation (ICF) had a thread on their website about assessments in coaching and the respondents expressed that there is such a need for this conversation. One of the respondents, when asking about my sharing the findings, indicated that understanding about assessment use is sorely needed as coaches just ‘rolled with it, without really knowing what they are doing’

It was a surprise to see the level of circumspection coaches described in feeding back reports, especially 360. I was struck by the amount of care that coaches put in to the feedback process. Each one described elements of context setting, emotional support and co-creation which enabled the report to land. This was a true representation of a social constructivist process or conversation. This was interesting as I was not anticipating the amount of time and level of care. Upon reflection, the researcher wondered whether this is a uniquely South African phenomenon having previously worked in Europe where assessments were fed back much more ‘matter of factly’. My sense is that it sits in the South African culture of diversity and in the culture of not wanting to offend or alienate people.

5.4.2 *What was expected, especially from the Literature Review*

The researcher did anticipate that there are coaches who prefer a narrative or dialogue through questions to excavate the stories of the coachee (Bono et al., 2009). For the researcher, there was a level of inquiry because some of the coaches who advocated for the narrative approach shared the underlying framework that they used to guide

them through the narrative approach. This left a question of when is an assessment an assessment. There was a continuum of approaches to sending the questionnaire beforehand and then having a face-to-face conversation, while at the other end of the spectrum, questions around a life story and turning points provided the coach with a sense of understanding the person in the business context they operate in presently. Although still unresolved for the researcher, it was a privilege to observe the vociferous stance taking about what kind of assessments various coaches practice.

The assessment tool is based on the referral brief. Either that brief comes from the paying client or from the coachee themselves. The literature on coaching places this as a part of the practice of client-centredness, therefore it was not surprising at all.

The coach needs to be clear about the purpose of the assessment tool (Passmore, 2014)

Coaches find benefit in Assessment, mostly in the self-insight realm for the coachee. This can be either as a take-away or as an input into the coaching conversation (Bono et al., 2009) and (Scoular & Campbell, 2007).

Coaching has become an investment in high potential individuals as opposed to a few years ago when coaching was regarded as a remedial activity (Coutu & Kauffman, 2009).

Previous research also showed that coaches use the assessments for deciding on the action plan, to set goals (Bono et al., 2009). The assessment can also become the agenda setter, as described, as coaches use the assessment to gauge where the coachee is at (Coutu & Kauffman, 2009).

The assessment helps to coach to understand the coachee better (Scoular & Campbell, 2007).

The coach enlivens the assessment through the discussion that follows afterwards (L. Wildflower, Brennan, D, 2011).

The literature review also had numerous references to the criticality of the coach, the level and combination of skill (Almuth McDowall & Kurz, 2007).

Linked to the point above about competence was that a poorly administered assessment tool can have a potentially negative effect (Nowack, 2009) and success was dependant on the skills of the coach to listen and make sense for the client (P. Linley & Minhas, 2011).

Coaches use assessments mostly in combination to give them a more multi-faceted view of the coachee (Passmore, 2014).

The study looked at how coaches select and how they use assessments. An interesting point that emerged during the data collection and analysis was that coaches were quite ambivalent about assessments, although they had convincingly spoken about its use. They felt contradictory and slightly conflicted. Sometimes they spoke and were highly committed to assessments. Other times, they felt like they would prefer not to use them. I think it is worth exploring this ambivalence and understanding where it comes from.

5.4.3 ***Conclusion***

The literature and findings from this study support that the way coaches choose assessments is not an exact science and the theory of four distinct models of clinical, behavioural, systems and social constructivist models that informs their practices is not the way it is in the lived experience of coaches. The actual process of choosing is based on a number of elements that are at play and result in a choice of assessment. It is also erroneous to think of coaches as working from one paradigm only.

Coaches move deftly between theoretical models and paradigms. Sometimes their choice is based on the client's question, sometimes the choice is based on the best assessment that they know for the job at hand and still other reasons are cited.

Coaches also use a choice of assessments that are chosen for them and they make the best of it.

Psychologist who coaches seem to be a little bit more particular and like to use a combination of personality and another assessment.

Only one coach in the entire sample spoke about not wanting to 'mix things up' when it comes to assessments.

Another way coaches choose assessments was totally subjective and based on a favourite or anchor assessment they have in their practice.

The insight that I came to was that eclecticism was one way to describe the coaches making their choice of assessment. It was not an arbitrary choice when the coaches choose. But the criterion shifted from what is theoretically, the best things to do, what is practically the best things to do? What is commercially the best thing to do? What is the best tool to bring about an 'aha' for the client? What too, will bring self-insight?

The reason behind the choice was never static. Like a photographer with a camera, the coach choose assessments as if they were different lenses and each lense would be chosen because of what could be achieved with it.

How coaches use assessments did provide at least 24 different uses that the coaches identified. The uses were never predictable nor were they like a prescribed menu. The coach does however know that the assessment can bring a particular outcome. Coaches use assessments in a most practical way for the benefits that the coachee

will derive. Coaches use assessments in a highly cicumspect way; this was evident with the care and high empathy they described around all the feedback elements. In a sense, the feedback methodology encapsulates the way the coaches work with assessment.

5.5 Limitations of this study

This research study only interviewed coaches, adding the voice of the coachee would have been a great way to triangulate the data. This would be an effective way to improve validity of the study.

Having another coaching expert assist to refine data is a way to ensure more collaborative work..Include team or group coaching as this study looked at one dimension of coaching only.

Separate data from leadership development programmes and related assessments from executive individual coaching data.

6 Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This section summarises key findings from the research regarding, how coaches choose and how coaches use assessments. The main criteria that account for how coaches choose assessments are highlighted and this is followed by a description of how coaches use assessments.

6.2 Conclusion of the Study

The study found few standardised practices amongst coaches in the way that coaches choose and use assessments.

6.2.1 *How coaches choose assessments*

There was a level of consistency about how coaches choose assessments. The findings centred around three categories. The first category was where choices were made very intentionally about a tool and what could be achieved and certain outcomes that needed to be achieved. The second category was where the coach had made the choice before meeting the coachee. The choice usually was based on a paradigm, a belief system or a life philosophy to which the coach subscribed. The third category was unplanned use of assessment which seemed to originate from not having a strategy for using assessments or could have been as a result of the assessments being decided before the coach is contracted. This is a feature of coaching within corporate leadership programmes and other corporate coaching interventions.

6.2.2 *How coaches use assessments*

The data gathered pointed toward high usage of assessments in the coaching space. The purpose of the use was also very varied as has already been demonstrated in the findings chapter. The literature has outlined a limited number of incidences of use of assessments.

The following uses for assessments were identified Timing in the use of assessment; feedback; benefits of the use of assessment; learning and change; a diagnostic; dialogue as an assessment; competence of the coach in the use of assessment and challenges in the use of assessment.

Two unexpected surprises were that the respondents were emphatic about the skills the coach requires to effectively provide feedback and debrief the assessment tool; also the care that the coaches take as they explained how much time is proportionally spent on contextualising before the results are shared with the coachee. This indicates professionalism on the part of coaches.

The researcher also deemed it necessary to include a section under the question of use that was titled ‘Challenges faced by coaches in the use of assessments - this was included to outline the complexity of the narrative that was emerging during the interviews. Coaches need to be able to take responsibility for the use of assessments, yet the broader system works against this. They voiced their concern to the researcher. Business seems to be driving the assessments instead of the professionalism of the coaches

6.2.3 *Insights about the process of collecting the data*

It was interesting that in general, in this research, coaches were using the interview space as the opportunity to reflect on their use of assessments. As a result, respondents were giving long–winded responses as can be seen in chapter 4. Also respondents would begin nearly every response with drawn out ‘so’. The researcher was struck by the frequency of this.

There may be a reason for coaches being unreflective.They may be feeling obligated to follow the assessment trends. They may feel undermined in the choice of assessments and use of the assessment process.

6.3 Recommendations

6.3.1 *For Coaches*

The results of the research are important for coaches. Coaches do not share the details of their practices. These results reveal some of the practices that other coaches follow. Some of the information is not recorded in the literature but are examples of good practices of how coaches choose and how coaches use assessments. It could also prompt more self-reflection on the part of coaches about their choice and use of

assessments. It could also open a space for coaches to talk about their current experiences with assessment.

6.3.1.1 Implications for the choosing of assessments

As discussed earlier, there were coaches in the sample group who struggled with expressing the rationale, strategy or purpose of choosing assessments. On some levels, this raises concern. This is beyond the professionalism of coaches who should be operating as independent professionals making choices about their practice. Ultimately though, there should be a code of ethics holding coaches to account for their actions ethically. I am advocating for greater transparency with coaches for when they choose to work with assessments.

6.3.1.2 Implications for using assessments

Similarly, coaches need to be transparent with the coachee about the assessments they use in their practice during the contracting phase. When the coach senses that it would be appropriate to use an assessment, it should be a consultative process where the coachee is fully informed about all elements of the assessment. When the organisation is part of the contracting, again the organisational representative becomes part of the discussion. It should be avoided that the coachee feels the assessment is thrust upon them. This was also discussed in the previous chapter about the perceived power dynamic and the coaching relationship.

The issue of coach's competence remains pivotal in the use of assessments. This again refers to some level of qualification as a coach, to the coach having hours of practical demonstration of competence and that coaches need to be accredited in the assessment tools that they use.

6.3.2 *For HR Professionals*

I think there is great benefit for HR professional to explore the use of assessments in coaching. The most challenges were experienced by coaches based on the HR and sponsor relationship with the coach and coachee. HR professional as the selectors of assessments take on an extra burden to remain vigilant and cause no harm on

personal, professional and ethical fronts. The International Testing Commission's guidelines could become a day to day operating guideline.

6.3.2.1 Implications for choosing assessments

To begin to remedy the challenges, a lot more communication needs to be established at the contracting phase to agree which assessments tools will be used. The HR professional and the coach can also re-contract if during the coaching engagement, a need arises for further assessments. The HR function in the study was held responsible for poor processes relating to administering of assessments. The interview data provided evidence of often the HR professionals are not thinking through the implications and impacts for assessments and for the different kinds of assessments. They plan up to the assessments being completed. Once the person receives the assessment, it is the important phase to ensure that the person is supported through the feedback and action planning stages. This needs more careful consideration.

Many of the coaches reported coming across coachees who had assessment reports launched inside the organisation as an initiative, that were never debriefed. These kinds of incidents can have a potentially negative effect on the coachee and should be avoided where possible.

HR professionals often when contracting coaching, have already done the 'choosing' part of this study, therefore I think it is valuable that they understand the perspectives shared around 'choosing' and be reflecting on the purpose of the choice.

The conceptual framework (Fig 8) of this study can be a useful map for HR professionals to understand the assessment element within the coaching process. This can assist with the initial engagement with the coach to understand their practice with regard to assessment. It can also guide how contracting for assessments are done.

6.3.3 *For Line Managers*

Line Managers can benefit from the research study to gain insight on the various stages of the coaching process, as well as the nuances of introducing assessments. The own the development processes for theor staff, so they should remain vigilant and ensure the ellbeing of the coachee.

6.3.3.1 Implications on the choosing of assessments

Line Managers can understand that the coach cannot be called to fix the coachee, this was one of the phenomena shared during interviews that assessments are used to identify gaps and then to fix or fire the employee who either does not fit the job or who is having performance problems with the help of a supposedly independent or objective assessment tool. It takes away the integrity of the coach and the assessment process and is an abdication on the part of the Line Manager.

Similarly, there were incidents that coaches referred to in the interview of line managers requesting pre- and post-measurement to hold the coachee accountable. One can understand that an organisation is looking at an ROI for a coaching intervention is looking at measurement. The coach and the organisation should be vigilant to prevent this situation getting out of hand.

6.3.3.2 Implications for use of assessments

By all means, the Line Manager can be involved in the planning of a coaching intervention, but It is key that confidentiality is maintained around assessments. Boundaries need to be discussed and maintained in this three-way relationship to respect the coaching process and to ensure that the ethical code is adhered to.

Unless it is contracted upfront organisationally, the results of an assessment from a coaching intervention, cannot be pulled into a performance management, recruitment or selection process.

6.3.4 *For Coachees*

The coachee will be more informed and able to engage the coach before agreeing to make assessments part of their coaching engagement.

6.3.4.1 Implications for the choosing of assessments

The respondents offered lots of data to say that the coachee and the coach agree on the use of assessments in the coaching engagement through the contracting phase. The coach provides information of the assessment tool, the constructs and the purpose of choosing the assessment. The conversation allows the coachee to address any reservations and to gain clarity about what they want.

6.3.4.2 Implications for the use of assessments

Similarly, the feedback and the debriefing of the assessment needs to be a co-created by the coach and the coachee. This was a best practice articulated by the coaches and it involves the approach and skillset of the coach to be able to have this conversation.

Many coaches also spoke about the benefits for the coachee of using assessments. The coachee may even decide to request assessments as part of their coaching engagement in order to gain self-insight or insights about one or other of the benefits of using assessments.

There are further benefits of use for the coachee in certain tools relating to career transitions or preference profiles, EQ or a 360 which can provide valuable feedback on how you are perceived by the eco-system.

6.4 Suggestions for further study

Coaching and assessments in coaching are relatively new disciplines and therefore further study is critical.

One of the question I would suggest is to do a study that involves both the coach and the coachee and how assessments are chosen and how they are used and how beneficial assessments are. The critical elements about selection would be the role of the coachee in selection of assessments. In looking at use, it would be informative to understand how coachees understand their use.

A research study into the question of measurement and pre- and post-assessment with all the complexity of what happens to the feedback; when the business, who is the paying client, requests the pre- and post-assessment. What are the implications for the coach and the coachee?

The area of accreditation for certain assessments also is important. A future study could be looking at this. It seems that psychologist coaches have an advantage here.

An exploration about the standardisation of assessment practice would be a great follow-up study to understand what the implication will be.

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APPENDIX A

Letter to Respondents

Dear Respondent,

I am completing a Masters in Management Business and Executive Coaching (MMBEC) at The University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (Wits). My MMBEC thesis is on the role of assessments in the coaching process. Towards gathering data on this subject, I would be grateful if I could arrange a 1 hour interview with you to understand the process that you follow when you coach and also the use of assessments in your coaching practice.

I understand you are extremely busy and your agreement to contribute to my research is greatly appreciated.

The interview will involve questions on you, the individual coach and your practice, you will not be required to share any details of individual clients and their specific details. Confidentiality will be observed throughout the thesis process and the final report will be for academic purposes only.

I will be available to meet with you at a location and time of your convenience.
Thank you for your kind assistance.

Birgitte Davy
Student Researcher

APPENDIX B

Actual Research Instrument

Demographic information

Name of Participant:	
Date, Location and Time:	
Title:	
Number of years you have worked as an executive coach**:**	
Academic qualification	
Coaching qualification	
Paradigm which you work from	
Coaching Consultancy engagement methodology wrt assessment	
Psychologist Coach Yes/No	

Interview Questions

Interviewer will need to establish rapport and trust before engaging on specific topics. Interviewer can re-emphasise purpose of interviews and data-gathering is for academic study only and that confidentiality is guaranteed.

Question 1:

A. What elements constitute great coaching engagements?

B. What factors enable good coaching?

Question 2:

In your own practice, describe what you do when you are contracted for a coaching engagement?

Question 3:

A. In your practice, how do you choose assessment?

B. In your practice, how do you use assessment? Formally with assessment tools or informally?

C. Which assessment tools do you use?

D. How does each tool assist the coaching process?

E. Tell me about how it worked with assessments with a particular client without disclosing the name and company where the client works?

APPENDIX C

The Graduate School of Business Administration

2 St David's Place, Parktown,
Johannesburg, 2193,
South Africa
PO Box 98, WITS, 2050
Website: www.wbs.ac.za

MMBEC RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

The use of assessments in coaching Research Study

INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM

Who I am
Hello, I am Birgitte Davy. I am conducting research for the purpose of completing my MMBEC at Wits Business School

What I am doing
I am are conducting research on The use of assessments by executive coaches . I am conducting a qualitative study with (16) informants to establish *How coaches choose assessments and how coaches use assessments.*

Your participation
I am asking you whether you will allow me to conduct one interview with you. If you agree, I will ask you to participate in one interview for approximately one hour. I am also asking you to give us permission to tape record the interview. I tape record interviews so that I can accurately record what is said.

Please understand that **your participation is voluntary** and you are not being forced to take part in this study. The choice of whether to participate or not, is yours alone. If you choose not take part, you will not be affected in any way whatsoever. If you agree to participate, you may stop participating in the research at any time and tell me that you don't want to go continue. If you do this there will also be no penalties and you will NOT be prejudiced in ANY way.

Confidentiality
Any study records that identify you will be kept confidential to the extent possible by law. The records from your participation may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including my academic supervisor/s. (All of these people are required to keep your identity confidential.)

All study records will be destroyed after the completion and marking of my thesis. I will refer to you by a code number or pseudonym (another name) in the thesis and any further publication.

Risks/discomforts
At the present time, I do not see any risks in your participation. The risks associated with participation in this study are no greater than those encountered in daily life.

Benefits
There are no immediate benefits to you from participating in this study. However, this study will be extremely helpful to us in understanding how coaches choose and how they use assessments.

If you would like to received feedback on the study, I can send you the results of the study when it is completed sometime after April 2017.

Who to contact if you have been harmed or have any concerns
This research has been approved by the Wits Business School. If you have any complaints about ethical aspects of the research or feel that you have been harmed in any way by participating in this study, please contact the Research Office Manager at the Wits Business School, Mmabatho Leeuw. Mmabatho.leeuw@wits.ac.za

If you have concerns or questions about the research you may call my academic research supervisor Kerrin Myres 083 2634175 / 011 4853055.

CONSENT

I hereby agree to participate in research on the use of assessments by executive coaches in South Africa. I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop participating at any point should I not want to continue and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively.

I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally in the immediate or short term.

I understand that my participation will remain confidential.

……..
Signature of participant **Date**:……..

I hereby agree to the tape-recording of my participation in the study.

……..
Signature of participant **Date**:……..

How Coaches Choose Assessment

Code		Category	Theme
Importance of Assessment	6	A good coaching process	A good coaching process
Includes Assessment	5	A good coaching process	A good coaching process
360 tool	28	Measurement	Assessment chosen Intentionally
Benefit of 360	2	Source of External Feedback	Assessment chosen Intentionally
Career insights for Coach	2	Clear outcomes to be achieved	Assessment chosen Intentionally
Clarification	2	Validation of a hunch	Assessment chosen Intentionally
Coach's Approach	91	Assessment used intentionally	Assessment chosen Intentionally
Confirms/ Clarifies	7	Validation of a hunch	Assessment chosen Intentionally
Constructs	10	Language of assessment	Assessment chosen Intentionally
Kick start conversation	3	Kickstarting the coaching conversation	Assessment chosen Intentionally
Landing the assessment on their level		Language of assessment	Assessment chosen Intentionally
Language	21	A common language	Assessment chosen Intentionally
Pre-Post	8	Measurement	Assessment chosen Intentionally
Superstars	2	To gauge where the coachee is at	Assessment chosen Intentionally
Timing	40	Assessment first	Assessment chosen Intentionally
Validation Tool	8	Validation of a hunch	Assessment chosen Intentionally
Words that box you	2	Previous baggage	Assessment chosen Intentionally
360 tool		Business Paradigm	Coach's Paradigm
Anchor Assessment	12	Directive Paradigm	Coach's Paradigm
Blindspot	8	Coachee's question drives the process	Coach's Paradigm
Business Perspective	35	Business Paradigm	Coach's Paradigm
Career insight	2	Coachee's question drives the process	Coach's Paradigm
Career insight		Focus on benefit to the organisation	Coach's Paradigm
Coachee's question	24	Coachee's question drives the process	Coach's Paradigm
Insight about others	29	Coachee's question drives the process	Coach's Paradigm
Integration back to work	9	Business Paradigm	Coach's Paradigm
Line Manager involvement	18	Business Paradigm	Coach's Paradigm
Negotiation	11	Coachee's question drives the process	Coach's Paradigm
Organisational understanding	4	Business Paradigm	Coach's Paradigm
Prescribe assessments	5	Directive Coaching	Coach's Paradigm
Psychometric tool	4	Psychology paradigm	Coach's Paradigm
Scientific Perspective	20	Scientific Paradigm	Coach's Paradigm
Selling point	4	Scientific Paradigm	Coach's Paradigm

Code		Category	Theme
Strengthspotter		Coachee's question drives the process	Coach's Paradigm
System Perspective	21	Business Paradigm	Coach's Paradigm
Team Benefits	13	Business Paradigm	Coach's Paradigm
Type of assessment	4	Psychology paradigm	Coach's Paradigm
What drives Coachee	2	Coachee's question drives the process	Coach's Paradigm
Client chooses assessments	5	No Assessment strategy	Unplanned /unreflective
Previously completed assessment	5	No Assessment strategy	Unplanned /unreflective
Third party debrief	2	No Assessment strategy	Unplanned /unreflective
Coach/Coachee relationship	3	The sequence of the assessment process	Timing in the use of assessments
Executive time	2	Time is valuable	Timing in the use of assessments
Prerequisite	11	The sequence of the assessment process	Timing in the use of assessments
Rapport	8	The sequence of the assessment process	Timing in the use of assessments
Sequence of assessments		The sequence of the assessment process	Timing in the use of assessments
Speedy Resolution	2	Time is valuable	Timing in the use of assessments
Trust		The sequence of the assessment process	Timing in the use of assessments
Validity	4	The sequence of the assessment process	Timing in the use of assessments
Coach as connector		Making Meaning	Feedback process in the use of assessment
Co-creating	23	Co-creating feedback	Feedback process in the use of assessment
Feedback		Feedback preparation	Feedback process in the use of assessment
Feedback		Assessment as reflective space	Feedback process in the use of assessment
Identifies patterns	2	Making Meaning	Feedback process in the use of assessment
Landing the assessment on their level	6	Feedback landing	Feedback process in the use of assessment
Leave what does not fit		Skillful feedback	Feedback process in the use of assessment
Leave what does not fit		Leave what does not fit	Feedback process in the use of assessment
No resonance	4	Leave what does not fit	Feedback process in the use of assessment

Code		Category	Theme
Reality check	4	Making Meaning	Feedback process in the use of assessment
Reflective space	5	Assessment as reflective space	Feedback process in the use of assessment
Report		Feedback preparation	Feedback process in the use of assessment
Resistance		Leave what does not fit	Feedback process in the use of assessment
Setting the context	2	Contextualising	Feedback process in the use of assessment
Accreditation	15	Accreditation in the use of assessments	Benefit of the use of assessments
Action steps	2	Developing action steps	Benefit of the use of assessments
Affirmation	1	Affirms and identifies strengths	Benefit of the use of assessments
Benefit of 360		Understanding of others	Benefit of the use of assessments
Benefit of 360		Affirms and identifies strengths	Benefit of the use of assessments
Blindspot		Blind spot identification	Benefit of the use of assessments
Career insights for Coach		Coach's benefit	Benefit of the use of assessments
Coach benefit	14	Insights for the coach	Benefit of the use of assessments
Coach's Approach		Coach's benefit	Benefit of the use of assessments
Coach's Approach		Insights for the coach	Benefit of the use of assessments
Confirms/ Clarifies		Coach's benefit	Benefit of the use of assessments
Insights about others		Understanding of others	Benefit of the use of assessments
Integration of data	24	Blind spot identification	Benefit of the use of assessments
Integration of data		Developing action steps	Benefit of the use of assessments
Language		Blind spot identification	Benefit of the use of assessments
PDP	4	Developing action steps	Benefit of the use of assessments
Prescribe assessments		Coach's benefit	Benefit of the use of assessments
Self-awareness	9	Self-Insight	Benefit of the use of assessments
Self-insight	68	Self-Insight	Benefit of the use of assessments
Smart goals	2	Developing action steps	Benefit of the use of assessments
Snapshot	4	Self-Insight	Benefit of the use of assessments
Strengthspotter	2	Affirms and identifies strengths	Benefit of the use of assessments
Useful	3	Self-Insight	Benefit of the use of assessments
Useful		Insights for the coach	Benefit of the use of assessments
Shift/Change	19	Learning within the coaching process	Assessments for learning and change
Assessment as a trigger for thinking	6	Learning within the coaching process	Assessments for learning and change
Insights for action	3	Learning within the coaching process	Assessments for learning and change

Code		Category	Theme
Measure Progress	11	Learning within the coaching process	Assessments for learning and change
Coach as connector		Connecting information and finding patterns	Coach's Competence in the use of assessments
Coach reflections	6	Building trust and rapport	Coach's Competence in the use of assessments
Coach understands own preference	1	Building trust and rapport	Coach's Competence in the use of assessments
Coach's skill	6	Building trust and rapport	Coach's Competence in the use of assessments
Feedback		Giving feedback	Coach's Competence in the use of assessments
Integration of data		Connecting information and finding patterns	Coach's Competence in the use of assessments
Trust	9	Building trust and rapport	Coach's Competence in the use of assessments
Diagnosis	14	Diagnostic	Assessment used as Diagnostic
Dialogue vs Assessment	1	Narrative 360	Dialogue as an Assessment
No assessments		Narrative 360	Dialogue as an Assessment
Relational map instead of 360	6	Relational Narrative 360	Dialogue as an Assessment
Relational map process	5	Relational Narrative 360	Dialogue as an Assessment
Sequence of assessments	3	Narrative 360	Dialogue as an Assessment
360 is inference	1	360 Multi-rater	Cautions, critiques and conundrums
360 tool		360 Mult-rater	Cautions, critiques and conundrums
Accreditation		Assessments completed before	Cautions, critiques and conundrums
Action steps		Not in isolations	Cautions, critiques and conundrums
Affirmation		Not in isolations	Cautions, critiques and conundrums
Aha's'	3	Extract meaning for the coachee	Cautions, critiques and conundrums
Anchor Assessment		Not in isolations	Cautions, critiques and conundrums
Assessment fatigue	2	Tools that box	Cautions, critiques and conundrums
Assessment fatigue		Poor organisation processes	Cautions, critiques and conundrums

Code		Category	Theme
Attitude toward assessment	2	Coachee's negative experience of assessment	Cautions, critiques and conundrums
Attitude toward assessment		Poor organisation processes	Cautions, critiques and conundrums
Challenges coaches face	7	360 Multirater	Cautions, critiques and conundrums
Challenges coaches face		Coach's ambivalence	Cautions, critiques and conundrums
Challenges coaches face		Not in isolations	Cautions, critiques and conundrums
Coach as connector	8	Extract meaning for the coachee	Cautions, critiques and conundrums
Comparitive perspective	1	Not in isolations	Cautions, critiques and conundrums
Competitive	1	Extract meaning for the coachee	Cautions, critiques and conundrums
Experience with assessment	1	Caochee's negative experienceof assessment	Cautions, critiques and conundrums
Feedback	43	Dealing with resistance	Cautions, critiques and conundrums
Insight about others	29	360 Multi-rater	Cautions, critiques and conundrums
Leave what does not fit	9	Extract meaning for the coachee	Cautions, critiques and conundrums
No assessments	2	Coach's ambivalence	Cautions, critiques and conundrums
Perception tool - 360	7	360 Multi-rater	Cautions, critiques and conundrums
Report	2	Words that box you	Cautions, critiques and conundrums
Resistance	20	Extract meaning for the coachee	Cautions, critiques and conundrums
Resistance		Dealing with resistance	Cautions, critiques and conundrums
Tools that box	5	Tools that box	Cautions, critiques and conundrums
Tools that box		Poor organisation processes	Cautions, critiques and conundrums
Words that box you	2	Tools that box	Cautions, critiques and conundrums
Coach/Coachee relationship	3	The sequence of the assessment process	Timing in the use of assessments
Executive time	2	Time is valuable	Timing in the use of assessments
Prerequisite	11	The sequence of the assessment process	Timing in the use of assessments

Code		Category	Theme
Rapport	8	The sequence of the assessment process	Timing in the use of assessments
Sequence of assessments		The sequence of the assessment process	Timing in the use of assessments
Speedy Resolution	2	Time is valuable	Timing in the use of assessments
Trust		The sequence of the assessment process	Timing in the use of assessments
Validity	4	The sequence of the assessment process	Timing in the use of assessments
360 tool	1	Name of tool	Type of Assessment
Enneagram	4	Name of tool	Type of Assessment
Insights tool	3	Name of tool	Type of Assessment
Level of Work	1	Name of tool	Type of Assessment
MBTI	9	Name of tool	Type of Assessment
Narrative 360	11	Name of tool	Type of Assessment
Preference tool	7	Name of tool	Type of Assessment
Strengthspotter		Name of tool	Type of Assessment