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Factors Influencing Implementation of Executive Peer Coaching

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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 requirements for the degree of Master of Management Business Executive Coaching (MM BEC)

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ABSTRACT

Peer coaching within the South African context is not widely promoted or implemented. In the field of coaching, peer coaching is slowly entering the marketplace with a focus on career learning and self-driven leadership development. It is one of the options available to organisations in which to assist leaders with addressing development needs.

This research set out to establish the factors behind the rationale to implement a peer coaching program at executive level. The research followed a qualitative design methodology making use of semi-structured interviews to gather data. The richness of the data lay in the semi-structured approach which allowed for the participants to air their views, yet for the researcher to remain true to the purpose of the study.

The findings suggest that within the current South African context, there are more constraining factors present which may inhibit the decision to implement a peer coaching program than enabling factors. These include the perceived limited choice of peer coaches available; the challenges of setting up a coach-coachee relationship, which includes trust and confidentiality; the presence of dominant leaders; power dimensions within organisations; environments of mistrust, gossip and competitiveness and the presence of diversity discrimination. It further posits that the leaders of the organisations play a pivotal role in determining the rationale behind the decision to implement a peer coaching program.

DECLARATION

I, **Allison van Emmenis (student number 590522)**, 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 Business Executive Coaching (MM BEC) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Allison van Emmenis

Signed at ……

On the …….. day of …… 2013

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the study

This study aims to contribute to the literature on factors influencing the rationale behind the implementation of executive peer coaching in the South African context. Individual coaching or one-on-one coaching is a well-known leadership development tool and a topic of discussion amongst executives today (McKenna & Davis, 2009). Coaching has become fashionable in the last decade and has grown exponentially to be a billion dollar industry (Berglas, 2002; McKenna & Davis, 2009).

The purpose of this research is to explore factors which may enable or constrain the implementation of an executive peer coaching program in South African organisations. To this end, the research will show that individual, team, organisational, leadership and management dynamics and characteristics have an impact on the outcome of the study. It will also explore the role power plays within the executive of organisations. This study positions peer coaching as an additional tool for the executive coach together with team and individual coaching and poses a different approach to leadership development in particular organisational contexts.

Enabling factors will show that peer coaching has a role in leadership development programs as well as in Organisational Development interventions. Reasons for organisations embarking on executive peer coaching have been identified as opportunities for further research (Hackman, 2005) and the value of this research lies in the ability to accurately define different approaches coaches can take in designing appropriate interventions and programs. Constraining factors will highlight possible areas of resistance to coaches and business leaders when implementing a peer coaching program which could affect the success of such an intervention. It will also contribute to the decision making process by the stakeholders of what alternatives could be more effective in these circumstances.

The results of this research is based on information gathered through interviews with individuals working at executive level with coaching experience, without coaching experience and literature reviews.

1.2 Context of the study

Executive coaching is primarily a leadership development tool. Traditional leadership development programs of between two and five days no longer answer the needs of business (Feldman & Lankau, 2005).

As employees climb the leadership ladder, be that as team leader, supervisor, manager or senior manager, significant investments are made in their managerial and leadership development (Day, 2000) in order to fine-tune the skills needed to get the job done through other people. Amongst the skills taught at these training sessions are skills such as the giving and/or receiving of feedback.

Yet, as employees enter the executive level, feedback on their performance rarely continues (Longenecker & Neubert, 2005). Executives reach the top without stopping to think about or address their own limitations (Sherman, 2004). It is easy for executives to ask for feedback about new products or ventures, however, when it comes to their own performance on leading the organisation or their divisions, they often do not take this feedback opportunity to heart (Charan, Drotter, & Noel, 2011).

In this instance, coaching can be beneficial by getting them to realise the impact that they have on others. Although external coaching has its benefits such as continued individual attention, expanded thinking, increased self-awareness, just-in-time learning and increased personal accountability for development (Turner, 2006), it also has challenges. It is often seen as a “quick fix” for change through self help manuals or it is seen as acceptable to rather get help from a coach rather than a therapist (Berglas, 2002). Often, organisations do not consider the effect unqualified coaches can have (Berglas, 2002), not only on the operations of the organisation, but also on the individuals being coached.

Individual coaching is a leadership development tool delivered through one-on-one interactions. Its focus is on building the leaders' capacity to achieve short and long-term organizational goals. It can be facilitated by either an external or internal coach. This relationship is based on mutual trust and respect (Stern, 2004).

Team coaching is a process facilitated by an external coach where team members have the opportunity to address team specific deliverables by fostering team effectiveness, ensuring the right people are on the team, strengthening individual contributions and working together to reach the team's goal (Hackman, 2005). The success of this type of intervention depends largely on the commitment of the team members to the process as well as the guidance of a highly skilled facilitator.

The facilitator must have a clear understanding of facilitation processes and extensive experience with high performance teams (such as those found in psychological or clinical realms) to fully understand team dynamics and deal with dysfunctional teams (de Vries, 2005) when the situation arises. Over and above the aforementioned factors, cost and external confidentiality issues are areas of real concern to organisations and individuals (Berglas, 2002; Judge & Cowell, 1997; Sherman, 2004).

This research posits that executive peer coaching is different to individual and team coaching (Kutzhanova, Lyons, & Lichtenstein, 2009; P. Parker, D.T. Hall, & K.E. Kram, 2008) in that:

- It takes place between equal status partners which removes the dimension of power found in individual and team coaching;
- It is initiated by the individual who requires the coaching, meaning that the willingness to learn is already evident and not part of a need identified by somebody else;
- It utilises internal resources which address the concern that organisations might have with confidentiality;
- It reduces the cost of external facilitator fees;
- It cultivates a climate of support, fosters trust, and strengthens the team

cohesiveness, and

- It allows for long term growth rather than short term intervention.

Because it is based on an equal relationship, peers are likely to make leadership development a priority, equal in importance to technical knowledge (P. Parker, et al., 2008).

1.3 Problem statement

Although the term “peer coaching” is widely used in the educational sector (Asghar, 2010; Showers, 1985; Showers & Joyce, 1996), very few empirical studies have been done in the application of peer coaching in the business world (Cox, Bachkirova, & Clutterbuck, 2009; Ladyshewsky, 2006; P. Parker, et al., 2008; Parker, Kram, & Hall, 2012). Furthermore, peer to peer networks have international reach in connecting business people with like-minded individuals; however, these organisations often have membership limitations which may impact entry for a new member. There is also no guarantee that the individual member takes the process to his/her workplace.

1.3.1. Main problem

This study is an exploration of the factors influencing the implementation of executive peer coaching.

1.3.2. Sub-problems

The ***first sub-problem*** is to explore the enabling factors influencing the implementation of executive peer coaching.

The ***second sub-problem*** is to explore the constraining factors influencing the implementation of executive peer coaching program.

1.4 Significance of the study

Even though peer coaching is well researched in the development of teachers

(Showers & Joyce, 1996), students (Ladyshewsky, 2006; Sue-Chan & Latham, 2004) nurses and clinical staff (Waddell & Dunn, 2005), peer coaching in the business world is largely concentrated around the developing of skills and performance within the organisation (Cox, et al., 2009). This study takes a closer look at the perceived enabling factors required, and constraining factors present in an organisation, with specific regard to the possibilities for the implementation of an executive peer coaching program.

As very few qualified peer coaches exist within organisations at executive level (Cox, et al., 2009), the findings of this study may provide some insight into the perceived reluctance of entering into a peer coaching relationships at executive level. On the other hand, it will strive to identify the perceived enabling factors which may allow for a peer coaching relationship to develop.

The significance of these finding may influence the professional interventions qualified coaches offer their clients addressing the dimensions of cost, power relationships (Polly Parker, Douglas T. Hall, & Kathy E. Kram, 2008) and confidentiality issues (de Vries, 2005) in coaching programs.

The study will endeavour to provide a better understanding for human resource practitioners tasked with leadership development and change management in the understanding of the importance of selecting appropriate interventions within the organisations' current leadership environment. Furthermore, it will allow for creating an awareness of possible red flags which may affect the success of such intervention. It is envisioned that the study will further assist in providing a workable definition of business peer coaching and by doing so, will enable coaching professionals as well as business leaders to maximise their return on investment in leadership development(Feldman & Lankau, 2005).

The focus of this study is to add to the body of knowledge regarding the possibilities for the implementation of an executive peer coaching program in the South African context specifically, taking cognisance of the fact that many South African organisations have international links.

1.5 Delimitations of the study

A general deductive analysis process is followed to evaluate all raw data and to establish links to the research question(s) through coding and themes as well as the identification of themes which emerge from this interpretation (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The study makes use of semi-structured interviews to collect data and select participants who adhere to the following criteria:

- Limited to executive employees - both with and without previous experience of either individual- or peer coaching;
- Individuals holding executive positions in South African organisations;
- All participants work within the South African context of the marketplace; and
- Concerned with the field of executive business coaching only.

All data was empirically obtained through twelve interviews of business executives. Of these participants, eight executives have been coached and four executives have had no prior experience of coaching in any form. Due to the high level of participants, no limits have been put on the market sector or the organisation type.

Over and above the aforementioned criteria, participants who were selected volunteered to participate of their own accord. The method of snowball or referral sampling (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981) was also used and care was taken to ensure criteria were upheld and that a sufficient number of interviews were conducted.

1.6 Definition of terms

Coaching has become popular amongst business leaders across economic sectors as a tool for the development of staff at various levels (Cox, et al., 2009). Many different genres of coaching exist, such as skills/performance-, developmental-, transformational-, career-, life-, leadership- and cross cultural coaching to name a few (Cox, et al., 2009). Yet, as we continue to live in a

changing business world, these genres will develop and morph even more in future. For the purpose of this research however, attention will be given to specifically individual-, team- and peer coaching at executive level. The following definitions apply:

- ***Individual coaching***: Although "individual" coaching per se does not have a clear definition, other definitions of one-on-one coaching such as developmental-, executive and leadership coaching is well recorded (Cox, et al., 2009; L. Hall & Duval, 2004). However, the definition most applicable to this study is taken from practical applications of the International Coaching Federation. Their definition of coaching states that it is an ongoing professional relationship which helps people produce extraordinary results in their lives, careers, businesses or organisations. Through the process of coaching, clients deepen their learning, improve their performance and enhance their quality of life (ICF 2003 – International Coaching Federation).
- ***Team coaching***: Although evidence based research on team coaching is still in its infancy, researchers had begun to formally define team coaching in the early 2000's such as Stern (Stern, 2004) and Hackman (Hackman, 2005). According to Stern, coaches specializing in team dynamics and effectiveness enter into an ongoing 'helping' relationship with both the team leader and the team members (Stern, 2004). On the other hand, Hackman posits that team coaching is a direct intervention with a team to facilitate the achievement of team objectives through collectively applying team members' individual resources (Hackman, 2005). More recently still, David Clutterbuck defined team coaching as "a learning intervention designed to increase collective capability and performance of a group or a team, though application of the coaching principles of assisted reflection, analysis and motivation for change" (Cox, et al., 2009) page 271.
- ***Peer coaching***: Peer networking and peer coaching have their early roots in the educational sector (Showers, 1985; Showers & Joyce, 1996; Skinner & Welch, 1996). This coaching principle also finds itself applied with the health professional industry with the aim of providing strategic

and professional support (Ladyshewsky, 2007; Peters, 1996; Skinner & Welch, 1996). More recently, peer coaching is described as a coaching process where parties of equal standing have a mutual desire to learn from and help each other to address individual and organisational needs (P. Parker, et al., 2008). This process is coachee driven and critical success factors include environments of trust and confidentiality (Cox, et al., 2009). The application of peer coaching in the business environment is on the rise and could create positive learning experiences for parties involved, however, critical risk factors such as personality differences, skills and cultural differences may influence the success a peer coaching relationship (Parker, et al., 2012).

- ***Executive***: For the purposes of this study, the term executive will include individual employees at senior management, top management and executive level in both South African and multi-national organisations. These individuals are concerned with the management, leadership, control and administrations of the organisations. Often, these individuals have the power to control and influence decisions which may directly or indirectly influence the operations of the organisation (Barnard, 1968).

1.7 Assumptions

The following assumptions were identified at the onset of the research project:

- All executives interviewed for primary data will provide honest answers; Due to the possibility of sensitive answers and given the fact that the research focused on the perceived factors which are linked to the experiences of the participants, great care was taken to ensure confidentiality of both the individuals and their organisations.
- All participants have an understanding of the topic of individual-; team- and/or peer coaching.

1.8 Structure of the report

Chapter 1 of this report centres round the purpose and context of the study. It identifies the research question and the sub questions relating to the significance of this study to the field of peer coaching. The limits and boundaries of the research are highlighted and a definition of terms is provided for the purposes of this report. Assumptions regarding the participants are recorded and a structure of the report is discussed.

Chapter 2 focuses on the existing literature in the field and critically reviews this literature to provide an objective overview of the topic and what has been researched in the past. The logic of this chapter follows the history of peer coaching before drawing the differences between individual, team and peer coaching relevant to this report. It explores research in areas which may both enable and constrain the implementation of peer coaching.

Chapter 3 is an explanation of the research methodology the researcher followed in order to obtain the data required for this research and the way it was interpreted. It discusses the design, paradigm and methods used by the researcher as well as provide an overview of the demographic profile of the participants. Furthermore it explains the procedure for data collection, analysis and interpretation. Lastly, this chapter identifies the limitations of the research, the researcher bias as well as the validity and reliability of the data used.

In chapter 4 the results of the research is relayed. This chapter captures the responses to the semi-structured interviews, allowing the researcher to code and theme the responses. This is done at the hand of themes identified during the analysis process of the data. It is supported by verbatim quotes from participants, illustrating the themes.

Chapter 5 discusses the results at the hand of six themes identified. Here the researcher attempts to critically evaluate results in context to what existing literature is saying. Results are compared to either supporting or contradictory evidence found in peer reviewed literature and seminal works.

In the final chapter, chapter 6, the report draws conclusions to the results and

discussions. The researcher answers the research question and the sub questions through the results and discusses the implications this research may have on stakeholders namely, top management teams, human resource practitioners and business executive coaches. The report suggests recommendations for future research.

A list of references is included as well as appendices detailing the research instruments used and ethics protocol followed.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Peer coaching within the educational sector has been researched since the early 80's (Showers, 1985) however, evidence based research available on the topic of business peer coaching or executive peer coaching is still in its infancy (Parker, et al., 2012). Therefore this study also drew heavily on research of top management team development, leadership development and executive coaching. It further linked into research of trust and team dynamics, all of which have been researched extensively (Child, 2001; Simons & Peterson, 2000). The research focussed on organisations operational within the South African business environment with particular interest on the executive management of these organisations. It concentrated around identifying the enabling and constraining factors which influence the rationale behind the implementation of an executive peer coaching program.

2.2 Individual-, Team-, and Peer Coaching

Individual business coaching has become the method of choice for executive leadership development programmes. Although it may be deemed expensive, it is a flexible, tailor-made approach addressing the specific needs of the individual within his/her work environment that includes ongoing feedback (Longenecker & Neubert, 2005). Limited out-of-office time is an added advantage and coaching is less disruptive than conventional leadership development programmes in the daily routine of executives.

However, organisations often limit the number of executives nominated for such interventions because of the absence of formalised selection criteria in the organisation (Sherman, 2004) and the lack of insight into the relevance of the coach-coachee relationship (Bluckert, 2005a). It is one matter to find the 'right' coach for the coachee, but organisations are also faced with the conundrum of whether to use internal or external coaches. In a study on the emerging role of

the internal coach (Frisch, 2001) two constraints to external coaches are highlighted, one being cost and the other confidentiality.

Team coaching is seen as an alternative to individual coaching, but is more prevalent in middle- and senior management levels. In a study done on the theory of coaching, it was found that under 'ideal conditions, a skilful coach may facilitate "substantial and enduring improvements in team effectiveness" (Frisch, 2001; Hackman, 2005 : # 283). These 'ideal conditions' were:

- Effort, knowledge, skill and strategy are not directly affected by task or organisational requirements;
- Teams are well formed and organisational context supports the team process;
- Coaching focuses on task performance rather than interpersonal relationships; and
- Interventions take place when the team is ready for it.

These conditions though, are not necessarily commonly found in organisations. Therefore it is questionable whether or not team coaching can play a meaningful role in an organisation. Hackman (2005) suggested that for further research, the question be adjusted not only to look at whether team coaching is effective, but also under which circumstances team coaching can be effective. Team coaching is more cost effective and less time consuming with team conversations taking place more often, but for shorter time periods.

Both individual and team coaching have their challenges such as: finding the right coach for the coachee (Berglas, 2002), financial constraints (Garmston, 1987) and power driven relationships between coach and coachee (P. Parker, et al., 2008). These challenges are largely addressed in executive peer coaching where coachees drive the process, and where learning is perceived to be a relationship builder (Kutzhanova, et al., 2009).

This study will briefly look at both individual coaching and team coaching before exploring the implementation rationale for executive peer coaching and the possible factors that enable and constrain the implementation of such programs.

2.2.1. Individual Coaching

This approach is characterized by confidential one-on-one conversations between coach and coachee (Sherman, 2004). Contractually, there are three parties to this agreement with the organisation having a vested interest in the outcome of the intervention. The term 'individual' relates to the original application where coaching was used for chief executive officers (CEOs) and vice presidents (VPs) of organisations (Baron, 2009) and although coaching is no longer limited to hierarchical executives, the term 'individual coaching' remains. Learning and development of the individual is at the centre of this intervention and the process will not only address performance issues, but also the perceptions, attitudes and behaviour of the coachee (Bluckert, 2005b). Some of the reasons organisations implement individual coaching interventions are:

- For executives who have performed exceptionally in the past, but whose behaviour might impact on, or whose skills are not sufficient for the current positions they hold (Feldman & Lankau, 2005);
- For managers identified for more senior positions who need to be groomed into the role (Feldman & Lankau, 2005) and/or
- When feedback about the individuals' performance is lacking or non-existent, be that through lack of skill or processes, (Goldberg, 2005) then the assistance of a coach is required to 'fix' the problem for the organisation (Sherman, 2004).

Challenges facing individual coaching have been widely noted in research (Berglas, 2002; Goldberg, 2005; Sherman, 2004). They include the selection process of a suitably qualified coach and the cost and the sustainability of the

intervention. We also have to take cognisance of the fact that in individual coaching, a power dimension (P. Parker, et al., 2008) may also be present. These are all challenges which are largely addressed in the executive peer coaching approach (Kutzhanova, et al., 2009). Executives may choose to embark on coaching as part of their development program or alternatively may be nominated to receive coaching as part of their performance development plan identified through organisational structures. It needs to be remembered that executives nominated for individual coaching need to be motivated and committed to the process (Sherman, 2004), whereas with executive peer coaching, they already have an eagerness to learn as this process is initiated by the individual requesting the peer coaching relationship. Learning from each other has its benefits because the individuals are all part of the same organisation and at the same level (P. Parker, et al., 2008).

2.2.2. Team Coaching

Teams are groups of people who get together (or are put together by organisations) for a common purpose, having one or more group objectives to achieve and work within a social system context such as the larger organisation (Hackman, 2005). Team coaching is a process which allows group members to learn, develop and share collective experiences, and this process can be facilitated by internal or external facilitators (Morgeson, 2005).

This is a more cost effective way of introducing coaching to a larger group of individuals in an organisation. Team coaching is seen as a confidential process with team members contracting with each other and their supervisor to reach certain business goals. Organisations will normally embark on team coaching in the following circumstances:

- As an alternative to group training this process allows for just-in-time learning (Turner, 2006) where skills acquired can be applied in the shortest possible time with feedback from the team;
- As a facilitation process to ‘fix’ an underperforming or problematic team (Sherman, 2004).

With team coaching, it is always better to start with the leaders at the top of an organisation and cascade the process down (Sherman, 2004). Depending on the size of the organisation, this can prove to be a lengthy and costly intervention.

2.2.3. Executive Peer Coaching

Executive peer coaching is not a well known term in the organisational context (Sue-Chan & Latham, 2004). However, the international education sector has, since the late 1950s (Joyce, 1996), acknowledged that continuous training for educators needs to improve. During the early years, conventional training programs were conducted at the end of school terms but it was evident that little knowledge was transferred into the classrooms. This trend continued for more than 25 years before any significant changes took place.

The earliest reference of successful peer coaching is found in educational leadership articles where this practice had become popular during the late 1980s (Showers & Joyce, 1996). During this period, the notion of coaching developed where inexperienced teachers were paired with more knowledgeable teachers to share skills and facilitate a transfer of knowledge into the classroom. This process evolved to include technical-, collegial- and challenge coaching, all of which form part of peer coaching.

In the context of the education system, technical coaching involves a process whereby feedback is given on classroom performance after a training intervention. It assumes that this feedback is objective and facilitates professional dialogue and shared understanding of professional vocabulary thus deepening collegiality (Garmston, 1987).

The benefits include teachers receiving technical coaching, increasing their skills through practicing new strategies, implementing strategies more correctly, retaining knowledge for longer periods, transferring the knowledge to their students and understanding technical coaching uses and purposes more clearly (Showers, 1985). The downside of this approach is not only the time and cost involved, but because this process is based on the evaluation of observed

behaviour, peers would slip into the habit of giving advice or constructive criticism (Garmston, 1987). Feedback is limited to helping the evaluated teacher analyze and understand the impact of the observation (Garmston, 1987).

With collegial coaching, the teacher who wished to improve his/her skill would invite feedback from peers on the specific skill or skills he/she wanted to improve on. Collegial coaching also took place between pairs of teachers. This process involved the peer coach assisting the teacher to evaluate his/her own observed behaviour and the possible impact it could have on the students (Garmston, 1987). The downfall of this process was the length of time it took to affect change and the actual costs of the training of the coaches (Garmston, 1987).

Challenge coaching differs from technical and collegial coaching in that it is facilitated in groups or teams and focuses on problem solving of observed practices and/or behaviours identified by the group/team. Because a clear goal for challenge coaching exists, judgement and evaluation of peers are largely eliminated, paving the way for a more professional dialogue with its purpose to improve the current status quo (Garmston, 1987; Showers, 1985).

Literature on business peer coaching is still in its infancy. In an article describing a case study for business peer coaching, Helen Peters writes about her uncertainty and feelings of inadequacy about the process when first asked to enter into a peer coaching relationship with a colleague (Peters, 1996). One of the principles the relationship was built on was that it was the coachee who initiated the process and drove the setting of outcomes as well as his/her own measures of success. She mentions three critical factors for choosing a peer coach:

- Trust,
- Respect and
- Commitment.

Furthermore, it poses as a vehicle of giving and receiving feedback which is an important factor to learning (Polly Parker, et al., 2008). These writers concur

that indeed for any peer coaching relationship to work, it must take place in an environment of trust and support. It further argues that the coachee displays high emotional intelligence as he/she needs to be willing to ask for help, reflect on ways to change, actively seek and interpret feedback in context and be open rather than defensive in listening (Peters, 1996).

It is of critical importance that a peer coaching program is implemented for the right reasons. It cannot be used for evaluation purposes as this undermines the purpose of collaborative learning. It will also affect the trust relationship between coach and coachee (Slater & Simmons, 2001). One of the more general definitions on peer coaching is that it is a confidential process between two or more professional colleagues, where they choose to reflect and learn together (Robbins, 1991).Therefore the choice of coach is important to the coachee.

Credentials of the coach include graduate training in psychology, experience in business as well as a solid reputation as coach (Wasylyshyn, 2003). The writer further classifies the top characteristics as the ability to build rapport or a connection with the coachee, professionalism and the use of a clear coaching methodology.

The characteristics for a peer coach are similar, yet different. These also include rapport, professionalism and the use of a methodology, but important to note is the huge emphasis placed on trust, respect, empowerment and the role of effective feedback (Waddell & Dunn, 2005). According to these authors, trust is built as a direct result of giving and receiving effective feedback. An external consultant is limited in the feedback he/she can give because there could be a limit to the understanding of the business context he/she is exposed to as part of the coaching intervention. With a peer coach, this feedback is more holistic in approach due to the fact that the peer is internal and fundamentally understands the business and all its influences and the feedback can therefore be more effective.

Furthermore, peer coaching also lends itself to building trust and commitment because of the equality of the coach and coachee, none of which hold power over the other. Because the coachee drives the development, the nature of the

discussions is non-evaluative, therefore in the absence of a power dimension, learning can take place more freely (Ladyshewsky, 2006). Benefits for the implementation of a peer coaching program have been identified as:

- Equal status in the relationship, makes the conversations less threatening;
- Peers are more likely to understand each other's conversations as it is set in the same real-life scenarios;
- Peers most certainly will learn more from each other than from superior figures such as managers, supervisors or instructors and they can potentially share a greater volume of information in real-time from their own experiences (Ladyshewsky, 2006);
- Peers form companionships and lasting relationships (Peters, 1996);
- This companionship improves reflection and effective feedback when required and
- Coach and coachee learn at the same time and both increasing their self-confidence and autonomy, therefore it is experienced as empowering (Waddell & Dunn, 2005).

However, there are some concerns about the effectiveness of peer coaching in the business context as put by Sue-Chan and Latham (2004). They concluded that because the effectiveness of coaching outcomes depended on the effectiveness of the coach, peer coaching may be seen as less credible than external individual coaching because the peer coaches are perceived as less expert than the external coach (Sue-Chan & Latham, 2004). These concerns were confirmed by Spence and Grant (2004). In their research, they focussed on the commitment to attend coaching sessions, the post coaching goal progression and the goal commitment (Spence & Grant, 2007). It was established that the peer coach was perceived to be less credible than the external professional coach. These studies, conducted within organisations, further differed from studies conducted with a group of entrepreneurs (Kutzhanova, et al., 2009). Here research found that peer coaches were extremely valuable to the individual development of the entrepreneur as they were on equal standing and were eager to learn from each other as they often

shared similar experiences. They therefore value each other's experiences form a trust relationship, readily accepting advice and suggestions.

2.2.4. Summary

To highlight the major distinctions between individual, team and peer coaching, the researcher has developed the following table to summarise.

Table 1: Distinctions between Individual-, Team- and Peer coaching

Dimension	**Individual**	**Team**	**Peer**
Power	Coach	Coach	Individual
Facilitation	External	External/Internal	Internal
Relationship ratio	1 : 1	1 : Many	Many : Many
Development Emphasis	Individual	Team	Individual/Team
Duration	6-12 months	3-6 months	Continuous

In both individual and team coaching, a power dimension is often present with the coach leading the process (P. Parker, et al., 2008). Finkelstein defines power as:

> *"Power is defined here as the capacity of individual actors to exert their will."(Finkelstein, 1992).*

Where this dimension is present, the coach needs to be aware of his/her ability to influence the outcome of the coaching intervention and be sure to have contracted up-front to clarify the expected outcomes (Sherman, 2004).

One of the benefits of peer coaching is that it is an internal process where more than one individual benefits from the process. It focuses on individual or team goals on a continuous basis. If implemented correctly, peer coaching as a leadership development tool, can have equal importance to that of technical

knowhow in the organisation. Furthermore, peer coaching as an internal event has the added benefit of addressing the confidentiality concerns that organisations have when dealing with external coaches at executive level (de Vries, 2005).

Furthermore, it could be argued that the success of a peer coaching program depends not only on the equal relationships, but also on the coach's expertise, the operational environment coach and coachee operates in, an environment of trust and feedback as well as commitment from both parties (Peters, 1996; Slater & Simmons, 2001; Sue-Chan & Latham, 2004; Waddell & Dunn, 2005).

2.3 Possible other factors influencing the implementation of executive peer coaching

It is envisioned that this research will uncover a few factors influencing the rationale behind implementing a peer coaching program.

2.3.1. What is feedback and why is it important in the coaching relationship

Feedback happens as a result of something, it does not exist in a vacuum. It is when one receives information from someone else about your performance or understandings (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Feedback orientation refers to the mindset of the individual receiving feedback and his/her willingness to accept and/or act on the information received. On the other hand, feedback culture refers to the organisations' value it places on feedback. Further to this, support in a non-threatening environment as well as coaching practice to facilitate feedback integration forms part of a feedback culture (London & Smither, 2002)

Feedback can happen in different ways, such as upward feedback where individuals feed back to a higher level with the organisation, multisource feedback where feedback is received from various sources such as peers, questionnaires and customer feedback. Lastly and most commonly used in business, is the downward feedback where the senior manager will give

feedback to the junior employee (Walker & Smither, 2006).

In a peer coaching relationship however, multisource feedback is more applicable as the coachee actively seeks feedback from various sources in order to get a balanced view of his/her performance. Actively seeking feedback shows an individual who has a positive feedback orientation allowing him/her to analyse the feedback, reflect and act on it in the best possible way (London & Smither, 2002).

Without feedback, there is no learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007) and without the willingness to learn, the peer coaching relationship is set to fail. The authors further argue that feedback needs to be clear and meaningful to the individual. It must have purpose or facilitate growth and have meaning for the recipient in order for it to be integrated and useful.

The role of feedback in peer coaching is critical and plays a pivotal role in the nature of the coaching relationship. In essence, feedback is non-evaluative in a peer relationship (Showers, 1985). The danger for the peer coach is to ask "why" questions instead of "how, where, what and who" questions. Starting to ask "why" questions may be perceived as being judgemental and at that instance, the relationship starts to falter and becomes evaluative and it introduces the power dimension. This could negatively affect the relationship as the coachee might feel that he/she has to defend his/her actions, rather than to reflect and learn from the situation (Cox, et al., 2009).

2.3.2. Relationship between coach and coachee and the issue of trust

Not many sport athletes or teams with the hope of reaching the highest level, appoint a coach without having scrutinised the coach's credibility, track record or his/her qualifications for the job vigorously (Liu, Srivastava, & Woo, 1998). Once they have satisfied themselves that the coach ticks all the boxes, a chemistry meeting is held before asking the shortlisted candidates to do a presentation on his/her vision for the athlete/team, the methods he/she is planning to apply and what he/she believes is achievable in the time frame of

the contract. Only then, once they are satisfied and have validated all the information, will they make the decision.

Interestingly enough when it comes to appointing a business/peer coach, evidence shows that the decision is often made on a brief curriculum vitae and an hour chemistry meeting. In other words, if the coach is liked and there is rapport, he/she gets the job, although human resources would have followed some protocol, but by the time the executive gets to make a choice, he/she has limited information to base their decision on. The choice of the peer coach however, rests with the coachee (Peters, 1996). By the time the coachee makes the decision to ask a peer to be his/her coach, the coachee can tick a few boxes. Credibility, for having worked with the peer; trust, for having experience of it; expertise, for having displayed it, rapport, for there is already a relationship; equal status, for the coach and coachee have already removed the power dimension.

Peer coaching differs from external coaching in that normally, the peer is a colleague of equal status in the organisation, whereas an external coach brings a specialized expertise in coaching and can offer a safe environment with confidentiality (D. T. Hall, Otazo, & Hollenbeck, 1999). On the other hand, external coaches do not have the insider perspective on culture, politics and current important issues such as internal or peer coaches have.

The relationship between coach and coachee is pivotal to the success of the coaching intervention. Even in a peer coaching relationship, driven by the coachee, there are more than two role players to the dynamic. As with the use of external coaches, the role players will include the coach, coachee and the client/sponsor (Sherman, 2004). However, with peer coaching, this relationship will function within an existing working relationship where the coach happens to be internal. The role of trust, confidentiality and mutual respect is thus placed under a magnifying glass (Cox, et al., 2009). Furthermore, the relationship should reflect equal status and neutral power to claim to be “peer” coaching.

With trust being one of the cornerstones of a coaching relationship (Bluckert, 2005a) it creates a safe environment for the coachee. Therefore it can be

deduced that for a peer coaching program to be introduced within an organisation, there should be a tangible presence of trust. In a peer coaching program, just as in an external coaching relationship, the presence of trust allows for honest reflection and open discussion.

Because of the coach's role, he/she may find him/herself in a situation where sensitive information about the coachee is in the coaching domain. Trust will then rely heavily on the integrity of the coach, for if a loose remark is made, it can undermine trust and damage the relationship beyond repair (Bluckert, 2005a). Not only is trust the responsibility of the coach, but breach of trust can be triggered by any party to the relationship, the coach, coachee and the client/sponsor (Sherman, 2004). This can be challenging in a peer coaching situation where the organisation fosters an environment of mistrust.

2.3.3. Leadership and the role of power

> *"In the traditional organisation – the organisation of the last one hundred years – the skeleton or internal structure was a combination of rank and power. In the emerging organisation, it has to be mutual understanding and responsibility."(Drucker, 2009)*

According to the Leadership pipeline (Charan, et al., 2011) one has to manage oneself before managing others. This is confirmed by Drucker (Drucker, 1999) when he writes about fundamentally getting to know yourself, your strengths and weaknesses, your personality traits and your values to be able to manage yourself. As manager, this does not only hold true for the manager but also for the people he/she manages. Drucker (1999) argues that this form of self knowledge and self reflection is a habit not many individuals embrace, hence the rarity of great leaders in history.

The implication of this on the Top Management Team is that, by the time they reach the top level of the Leadership pipeline (Charan, et al., 2011), they need to have already mastered these habits. Drucker (1999) maintains that the only way to truly embark on this reflection is through the use of feedback analysis. This process entails reflecting on your own achievement after a period of time

based on what you set out to do vis-a-vis what you have achieved. Feedback, as seen in the previous section (number 2.3.1.), is an integral part of learning and development.

Evidence in literature shows that in order for leaders to be successful, they need to possess the following traits:

- Drive;
- Leadership motivation;
- Honesty and Integrity;
- Self-confidence;
- Cognitive ability;
- Knowledge of the business and
- Other traits such as charisma, creativity, flexibility (Kirkpatick & Locke, 1991).

Often, leaders are noticed as a result of their display of these traits and are promoted because of displaying them. It can therefore be deduced that in an executive team with the MD or CEO in charge of a team, they may display all or some of these traits. This has the potential to be a highly competitive environment to operate in.

Further research posits that leadership behaviours influence the teams' development, learning processes and outputs. It highlights the strategic importance of understanding leadership behaviours' influence in the organisation (Bucic, Robinson, & Ramburuth, 2010).

Leadership behaviour can sometimes also have a dark side. Their behaviours closely resembles what Sigmund Freud termed "narcissism" (Freud, 1957). Freud identified that these individuals have larger than life personalities and are often suited to the role of leaders. Indeed they have been visible throughout the history of mankind as leaders and visionaries (Maccoby, 2000). The dark side, however, is that these individuals tend to be emotionally isolated and distrustful. When they feel threatened in any way, it can lead to rage and they do not take criticism very well. This is relevant to this study as many leaders are drawn to this type of leadership (de Vries & Miller, 1985). Often the presence of these

traits is the driving force behind becoming a leader.

This type of behaviour plays straight into the power dimensions present in organisations. According to studies relating to the power dimension in top management teams, there seem to be four major types of power dimensions at play, namely structural power which is based on hierarchical position of the executive; ownership power which management hold in their capacity as agents acting on shareholders' accounts; expert power which emanates from the knowledge management hold of the operational environment and prestige power also known as status where the individual hold power to influence due to others looking to them for direction (Finkelstein, 1992). Because power has a direct influence on strategic decision making it was important to establish whether or not leadership power will play a role in the decision of implementing coaching programs.

2.4 Establish the enabling factors influencing the implementation of executive peer coaching

Peer coaching has been described as a process where all participants are equal learners. This leads to a non-evaluative, unconditionally positive relationship based on mutual trust with a clear purpose of supporting each other in reaching their goals (Holbeche, 1996; P. Parker, et al., 2008).

The literature on peer coaching, as for literature on individual and team coaching, has identified a fair number of reasons for organisations to select executive peer coaching as a viable option. Because organisations have to constantly re-evaluate the way they conduct their business in a changing world, a greater emphasis has been put on individual learning.

Employees can no longer work and gather experience over years, they have to maintain a continuous learning attitude which goes beyond a formal education qualification (P. Parker, et al., 2008). The pace of change in the twenty-first century is fast and this prompts organisations to re-examine the way they conduct business in a changing world (P. Parker, et al., 2008). As mentioned before, coaching is also employed by organisations to assist with relationship

issues, personality and personal conflict in leadership as well as with improving performance (Kutzhanova, et al., 2009).

Reasons for entrepreneurs, who are equated to executives as they are in charge of their own companies, embarking on peer coaching ranges from, being isolated, spending all available time on solving business issues, wanting to learn from others and wanting to be successful (Kutzhanova, et al., 2009). These reasons correlate directly with a finding from Parker et al. (2008) who explored how peer coaching facilitates accelerated career learning.

Continuous learning also depends on open, honest, ongoing and timely feedback. Often it is expected that middle managers become coaches to junior managers, therefore providing feedback, setting of clear outcomes, understanding strengths and weaknesses, providing expert advice and creating a working relationship based on mutual benefit and trust. Yet, they lack that same benefit when they move up the organisational ladder (Longenecker & Neubert, 2005).

Proposition 1: There are clear enabling rationales for initiating executive peer coaching programs

2.5 Establish the constraining factors influencing the implementation of executive peer coaching

It is widely recognised that the coach-coachee relationship is of utmost importance for the coaching process. The professional coaching relationship acts as a mediating factor and a pre-requisite for coaching effectiveness (Baron, 2009). Furthermore, much has been written about the competencies and characteristics of the coach. It is not so much the ‘understanding’ of the coachees’ thoughts and feelings, but rather the ability to communicate the coach’s empathy in a non-judgemental and meaningful way (Bluckert, 2005a).

When comparing the differences between individual and team coaching, it becomes clear that in team coaching other factors come into play such as: interpersonal relationships; knowledge, skill and effort of the team members;

team context within the organisation and the timing of the interventions (Hackman, 2005). Where it is important in individual coaching to match the coachee with the right coach (Bluckert, 2005a), the same does not hold true for executive peer coaching. Because the relationship is driven by the individual, other factors such as being equal peers whom can learn from one another (P. Parker, et al., 2008) are more important.

Parker et al (2008) identified five characteristics underpinning peer coaching:

- Parties are of equal status, removing the power dimension in the relationship and allowing them to work towards a shared goal, giving the other a different view on decisions, tasks or problems to be addressed;
- Development of all parties is at the centre of this relationship. They enter into this relationship to learn as much as possible from the others' experiences and the process allows them to critically evaluate their own perceptions, beliefs and assumptions that influence their attitudes and behaviours;
- Deep self-understanding is necessary for growth and is reached through open and honest personal reflection on the individuals own practice and behaviour;
- Attention to the process creates a safe, non-judgemental environment where self-learning and understanding is not measured on someone else's understanding of the 'truth', but rather data from other individuals' realities may give deeper understanding and
- In a business environment where new challenges are created daily, there is a greater emphasis on learning at a fast pace, and peer coaching is all about accelerated development/learning.

However, executive peer coaching does not take place in isolation from the normal business environment. There are critical factors which can shape the experience for participants and organisations alike such as: process, structure and behaviour (P. Parker, et al., 2008) as well as risk factors influencing the relationship (Parker, et al., 2012).

Although some researchers will argue that the most successful environment in which to roll out coaching interventions, is when the external coach has the buy-in of the CEO (Sherman, 2004), others argue that coaching is at its most dangerous when the external coach has the ear of the CEO. The coach's advice does not always consider the long-term effect on the business. Even if some executives do not agree with the process, or the intervention as a whole, they may not want to double-cross the CEO by disagreeing with his 'trusted' advisor (Berglas, 2002).

However, research seems to suggest that where proper project management of a coaching process is in place, coaching interventions will be more successful than where such a process is absent (Olivero, Bane, & Kopelman, 1997). According to these researchers, specific actions such as goal-setting, collaborative problem solving, practice, supervisory involvement, evaluation of results and public presentation plays a role in the success of a coaching intervention.

In executive peer coaching, the process is driven by the individuals in the team (Garmston, 1987). When we consider the research that has been done in the educational sector, it is clear that the peer relationship is collaborative, concentrating on refinement of skills and sharing of knowledge (Robbins, 1991), and not as being judgemental.

The boundaries of a peer coaching relationship must be set out at the onset. Individuals must have a working agreement which is flexible so it may grow with the individuals as well as a directive in terms of what is expected from one another. This creates the climate of support needed to have open and honest discussions where difficult issues can be discussed and feedback given and accepted (P. Parker, et al., 2008). Not only will this climate enhance the trust relationship between team members, but it will also increase their listening and questioning skills as well as constructive feedback skills.

The reaching of a trust-based business relationship enables parties to be

honest when raising concerns and issues to be discussed and analyzed. Because emotional elements are always present, genuine empathy, displayed through words and actions, contribute positively to the trust relationship (P. Parker, et al., 2008).

Proposition 2: The implementation of an executive peer coaching program is influenced by certain critical constraining factors.

2.8 Conclusion of Literature Review

Business coaching is a relatively new term compared to counselling and psychotherapy and indeed it shows with the depth of available literature in these professions. Individual coaching has grown exponentially over the past decades. It seems every time a paper is published, the figures earned by coaches doubles, so too does the number of coaches entering the market (Baron, 2009; Boyce, Jackson, & Neal, 2010; McKenna & Davis, 2009). With financial costs rising, team coaching entered the fray as we can see from the research published over the past few years (Grant, 2004) to bring coaching the a broader audience at a relatively cheaper price. Executive peer coaching though, has its origins in the educational sector (Showers & Joyce, 1996) and is slowly gaining a foothold in the business environment (P. Parker, et al., 2008). Not a lot of empirically tested data are available in the literature as mainly it is concentrated around its application in higher education and with masters degree students.

An interesting case study is that of National semiconductor (Peters, 1996) of a successful peer coaching intervention at senior level. Accordingly, the process seems to have been rolled out to over 400 of its employees. Unfortunately, there is no follow up research on the effectiveness and the impact of the study on the organisation. There is also no cost analysis, nor feedback from individuals who have been part of the process in order to evaluate the program.

Therefore, the research relied on existing literature in the fields of top management and leadership development (Cox, et al., 2009; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; London & Smither, 2002; Showers & Joyce, 1996; Walker &

Smither, 2006) as well as the research conducted in terms of power dimensions (Charan, et al., 2011; Drucker, 1999; Kirkpatick & Locke, 1991) within organisations.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This research is based on the results of semi-structured interviews of participants with coaching experience as well as participants without coaching experience. A further distinction was drawn between human resource executives and operational executives. For the purposes of this research, operational executives represent the Information Technology, Finance, Marketing, Recreation, Import/Export and Hospitality fields. The semi-structured interviews allowed for comparable responses to similar questions, yet at the same time enabled a flowing conversation between interviewer and interviewee. This resulted in rich detail specific to each respondent's experience (Wisker, 2007).

All interviews were transcribed and checked against the recordings to ensure validity and integrity of the data. These transcriptions were coded by means of a codebook with the assistance of ATLAS Ti 7 software package specifically designed for the qualitative data analysis process. This process together with the researchers' reflection and identification of patterns, allowed for the identification of categories. Furthermore, data was collected through field notes, organisation information packs and observations from the interviewer.

Twelve participants were interviewed representing seven different organisations. The organisations included human resources, manufacturing, hospitality, insurance, import and export, pharmaceutical, information technology and housing industries. The organisations furthermore covered the education, private and public sectors of the economic landscape in South Africa. All companies were operational within the boundaries of South Africa. Of the sample only two companies did not have international shareholding.

Participants who were interviewed did so voluntarily. Interviews were scheduled telephonically, followed up by electronic mail and the completion of interview protocols and confidentiality agreements. All meetings took place on the

premises of the respective organisations at the times agreed to by the interviewee. Interviews ranged from 60-90 minutes and were recorded and transcribed by an independent scribe.

The flow of the interview was semi-structured in that it had an interview sheet for the interviewer to refer back to during the interview. It did however allow for the interviewer to probe further should the responses be of interest to the answering of the research question. The themes selected confirmed themselves and/or presented themselves through the data obtained.

It was important to keep the research question in mind throughout and not get side-tracked by content not related to it. The researcher arrived early for all interviews and made field notes about the organisations which included notes on access, surroundings, professionalism and general atmosphere. It must be noted that these field notes were gathered subjectively for use of understanding the environment the participants worked, rather than to be tested against answering the research question.

3.2 Research Design

Much has been written about quantitative, qualitative and mixed method designs. They all have distinct characteristics (Creswell, 2009) and can be seen as being representative of a continuum (Newman & Benz, 1998) as cited in Creswell (2009) where quantitative is at one end and qualitative at the other, with mixed methods somewhere in-between.

This study followed the qualitative design methodology making use of semi-structured interviews to gather data. As the interviews took place at the premises of the participants, any impressions or observations on the environment that were made before or after the interview were noted, however they did not form part of the formal interview (Remenyi, 2011).

It was envisioned that new questions would arise as the study developed, prompting future research. Although these were noted, care was taken to remain focussed on the main research question and its sub questions. It must

be noted that although there are a number of advantages to this approach, such as increased interviewing and field note skills, care was taken during the research to rigorously apply the interview protocol and not let bias and personal experience hamper the process of gathering and interpreting the data (Creswell, 2009).

This approach has resulted in the final report on this study having a flexible structure (Creswell, 2009) incorporating literature reviews, primary data analysis gathered through empirical methods as well as personal experience.

3.3 Research paradigm

As this research was exploratory in nature and dependent on the experiences of individuals in a business context, an interpretivist approach was followed. Interpretivism is about what type of phenomena we experience and how we experience those phenomena in our daily lives (Angen, 2000). This paradigm accepts that full objectivity is not possible, however it was endeavoured that personal experience would not negatively influence the research process (Creswell, 2009). The challenges of the qualitative approach were:

- The identification of participants who could contribute meaningfully to the answering of the research question (Creswell, 2009);
- The understanding of the limitations of objectivity (Angen, 2000) such as socio economic background, gender, bias, experiences and history (Creswell, 2009) and
- Managing the volume of data created by the data collection process.

Through open-ended questions, primary data was gathered which were interpreted. This data was influenced by the participants' experience and the business context in which the study was done.

3.4 Research methods

Thorough literature reviews as well as interviews (primary data) relating to executive coaching and the implementation of peer coaching programs, formed

the basis of this study. This took place by means of in-depth interviews with individuals at executive level as well as with human resource practitioners at executive level.

The interviews were semi-structured allowing executives and human resource practitioners the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences and thoughts. Interviews took between 60 and 90 minutes per interview. This study limited itself to the rationale behind the decision to implement an executive peer coaching program and determining the enabling and constraining factors influencing the implementation thereof.

3.5 Population and sample

3.5.1. Population

At first, it was decided to focus on South African organisations only, however it was decided to expand this study to any business operating within the South African business environment, inclusive of those who have international shareholding.

3.5.2. Sample and sampling method

Convenience and purposeful (judgement) sampling methods (Marshall, 1996) were used. Coaching colleagues have made available their clients for the purpose of completing this research. This assisted in protecting the integrity of the research and minimized researcher bias.

Purposeful sampling technique was applied in the selection of participants who could provide the most productive information enabling the answering of the research question (Marshall, 1996). Interviews were conducted with twelve executives including four human resource practitioners. Of the twelve participants, four have not had experience in any form of coaching program whereas eight have been coached before. A total of twelve possible participants were identified and contacted telephonically. Interview were set up and

conducted over the past few months. Executives and human resource practitioners have been selected based on the following criteria:

- They were working at executive level at the time of interview;
- They have received no coaching or
- They have received individual coaching or
- They have been part of a team coaching program or
- They have been part of an executive peer coaching program and
- They have been involved in the decision-making process for the implementation of an executive coaching program.

3.6 Demographic profile of participants

The research set out firstly to ensure the answering of the research question and secondly to find a demographically representative sample within the South African business landscape. Care was taken to find a representative sample and through proper selection the statistics exceeded the expectation. The following table gives an overview of the demographic profile of the participants.

Table 2: Summary of participant demographic information

Gender	Age group	Highest Qualification	Field	Size	Coaching Yes/No
Male	30-39	B Com	Finance	National	No
Female	40-49	CA	Manufacturing	International	Yes
Male	30-39	MBA	IT	International	Yes
Male	50-59	MBA	Hospitality	National	Yes
Male	50-59	B Com	Finance	National	Yes
Female	40-49	B Com	HR	National	No
Female	30-39	M Com	HR	National	Yes
Male	50-59	MBA	Recreation	National	No
Female	40-49	Honours	HR	International	No
Male	40-49	MBA	Import/Export	International	Yes
Female	50-59	MBA	HR	International	Yes
Male	30-39	Honours	Recreation	National	Yes

This sample group is representative of seven different organisations. These organisations are representative of both National and International organisations and include the Medical Diagnostics-; Information Technology-; Hospitality & Recreation-; Financial Services-; Manufacturing-; Government- and Import & Export industries.

Of the twelve participants, seven were white and five were black therefore equating to a 58% white vs. a 42% black participant group. Also, there were five female and seven male participants equating to 58% male vs. 42% female representation. Four of the participants were human resources executives, all of whom were female, and eight participants were executives within the

organisation but not from the human resource field, of whom seven were male and one was female.

Four participants were between the ages of 30 – 39 of which three have received coaching and one of them has not been coached. Of the participants between the ages of 40 – 49, two were coached and two have not been coached. Of the remaining four participants between the ages of 50 – 59, three were coached and one had not been coached.

The research did not necessarily set out to find only female human resource executives, however it found that in almost all the organisations identified to participate in this study, the human resources executive was female. Furthermore, the researcher expected to find more male executive than female executives willing to participate in the research, which was indeed the case. The equal age distribution of the participants was not anticipated.

3.7 Interview protocol

Semi-structured interviews gathered data from the participants in this study. This process was based on open and closed questions, as well as fact-finding enquiries. All interviews were recorded and transcribed (with permission) to ensure that no data would be lost; and was conducted at the offices of the participants. The interview structure included (Creswell, 2009):

- Heading (date, place, names of interviewer and interviewee);
- Standard instructions for the interviewer to apply in all interviews – ensuring consistency and validity;
- Questions;
- Probes to the questions;
- Space for writing responses if not recorded and
- Close and thank you notes.

The research protocol and research questionnaire were based on examples from Professor Dan Remenyi and are attached in Annexure A (Remenyi, 2011). In all cases, confidentiality was guaranteed and only information agreed to by

the interviewee was used in the analysis.

All data was triangulated by means of interview data of executives with exposure to coaching and those with no exposure. Further consideration was given to the input from both executives and human resource practitioners. Triangulation not only allowed for the validating of data but contributed to the deepening of our understanding as new significances of the data emerged leading to enriched explanations of the research problem (Jick, 1979).

3.8 Procedure for data collection

Participants were purposefully selected (Creswell, 2009) based on the above criteria. Interviews were set up telephonically in advance and confirmed the day before. Letters of introduction and consent forms were mailed beforehand and collected before any interviews took place. Permission to record the interview was requested in the consent form.

The interviews took place in the participants' environment, which allowed the observation of the organisation to gain insight into the specific business environment. Qualitative data was gathered during the interviews (Creswell, 2009) via note-taking and recording of the interview. This allowed the exploration of the unsaid as well as the spoken word; the restriction of personal bias to steer the interview in a specific direction as well as encouraging the free flow of information from the participant.

Once the above had been completed, the information was interpreted and analyzed.

3.9 Data analysis and interpretation

Data for this research were gathered through personal interviews using a combination of closed and open ended questions. Interviews were semi-structured allowing for a free flowing interview with checks and balances to ensure researcher bias was kept to a minimum. Data was analysed against a code book from which the major themes emerged. The research followed a

deductive directed content analysis method (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The code book was used to code data and further allowed new codes to be created which did not previously exist. This method allowed for both the coding of answers as well as deductive reasoning and interpretation (Thorne, 2000). Interviews yielded rich and detailed data which allowed for the identification of themes for the interpretation of results (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The existing categories were not necessarily final, but the creation of new categories were possible during analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). With the existing literature on peer coaching being limited and fragmented (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008), deductive directive content analysis assisted in the organising of the data for interpretation.

3.10 Limitations of the study

- Few organisations are known to have embarked on an executive peer coaching intervention world-wide with even fewer organisations in South Africa;
- Interviewer bias needed to be kept in-check and limited through semi-structured interviews;
- The co-ordination of time schedules with executives proved to be challenging and in some cases new participants conforming to the set criteria had to be found;
- There is limited existing literature on executive peer coaching.

The above proved difficult to manage but care was taken to remain true to the research question and subsequent sub questions in order to complete this study in time.

3.11 Validity and reliability

In qualitative research, the researchers' creativity, skill, flexibility and sensitivity are largely responsible for the reliability and validity of the study (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2008). The information and data gathered may require

a re-examination of standpoints should new evidence make this necessary (Morse, et al., 2008).

Reliability and validity of the research was tested against various verification strategies (Morse, et al., 2008). These included the understanding and respect of the relation between what is known and what one needs to know, and the constant re-assessing of data and checking of validity in the process of moving towards the answering of the research question.

Purposefully selected participants were selected to add value to the answering of the research question (Creswell, 2009). They included individuals who have been exposed to some form of coaching and were operating at executive level at the time of the interview. They need not have had experience of executive peer coaching. Data obtained validated the identified themes (Kimchi, Polivka, & Stevenson, 1991).

Further to the above, study protocols governing qualitative research applied. This involved semi-structured interviews as well as other procedures followed in the collecting of data and analysis thereof.

3.12 Trustworthiness of Data

The information used in this research was gained through the use of semi-structured interviews. This provided richness in the obtained data which were influenced by the individual participants' experiences. The challenge with this approach is that the participants may raise or lower the importance of their answers to incorporate their own experiences. It therefore posed a challenge to the researcher to be aware of her own bias with regard to analysing the data and remain true to the experiences of the participants.

The researcher, to the best of her knowledge, analysed the information with the help of computerised tools to minimise the researcher bias which may have occurred.

..

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher will give an account of the results obtained during the interview. Taking cognisance of the fact that interviews were semi-structured, some of the themes were selected prior to the interviews. They were establishing the existing coaching programs for executives and what the factors were influencing the choice of individual or peer coaches. The third theme the researcher was looking for was the participants' own interpretations of perceived constraining factors to peer coaching were. These themes represented the safe topics participants would feel free to talk about. They gave accounts of what the current practices were and how they experienced it.

The remaining three themes developed as the interviews took shape. Participants became more relaxed and this allowed the researched to probe deeper. The themes selected namely that peer coaching takes place informally, that leadership plays a role in peer coaching programs and that there were a power dimension affecting coaching decisions within the organisation, such as trust, motivation, presented in all the interviews with the participants. It was decided to concentrate on these themes as they were not isolated by representative of all the organisations represented.

It was therefore interpreted to be of relevance to this study as addressed the answering of the research questions.

4.2 Theme 1: Existing induction programs for executives

None of the participants have had experience of a successful peer coaching program and the researcher set out to establish what the current coaching practices were. This was important as it could indicate what the rationale was behind the decision for their current approach to coaching. This linked directly to

the research question with regard to the implementation of a peer coaching program. It was expected that the lack of internal expertise could have an impact as shown by the response of this delegate:

> *"I think when people don't have the confidence that they can actually be effective coaches to each other" (P7: LS 7:42)*

Furthermore, cost could play a significant role in the decision making process as well. This was also confirmed by the majority of the participants. Although one participant did feel that cost would not be an issue,

> *"I actually don't think cost would be the determinate. I will be very honest with you, I don't think it would be excessive and by that I mean that if your spend is between half a million and a million a year on executive level or senior level, we don't think it is excessive." (P1: RR.docx 1:38)*

It was however the exception as the majority of participants felt that at executive level, the amount spent together with a perceived return on investment was of importance.

> *"We see coaching only for those who pull their weight, so I guess the CEO will want to see if this is a good fit before spending too much money on coaching? Not so much for a once off coaching intervention, but if we are going to do it periodically, it can become a constraint, unless we see some serious return on investment." (P8: NK.docx 8:30)*

> *"Managers feel they are spending a lot of money sending people for coaching but are they I actually deriving any kind of benefit." (P6: FS 2:24)*

So too, on the question of what they believed the biggest factor would be in the decision to assign a coach to everyone on the executive team, cost was given as the answer.

> *"I think it would probably be cost." (P7: LS.docx 7:18)*

> *"He doesn't want everybody wanting to do coaching and there are cost*

implications." (P4: KE.docx 4:22)

What the researcher found interesting was that the respondents mentioned factors, such as the way in which the introduction to the new position of executive took place; the extent to which an explanation and role clarification of the new role was given; the coaching practices and policies for new executives and the presence or lack of performance feedback to have had an impact in them settling in and becoming productive while adding value at the same time.

It was considered to be of importance to explore these factors to better understand the participants' perceptions of the rationale behind the possible implementation of a peer coaching program.

4.2.1. Introduction to executive level

The interviewer started off by finding out what the practices where in the introduction of new executives to the rest of the executive team and the rest of the organisation. The table below shows the diversity of practice in the introduction of new executives.

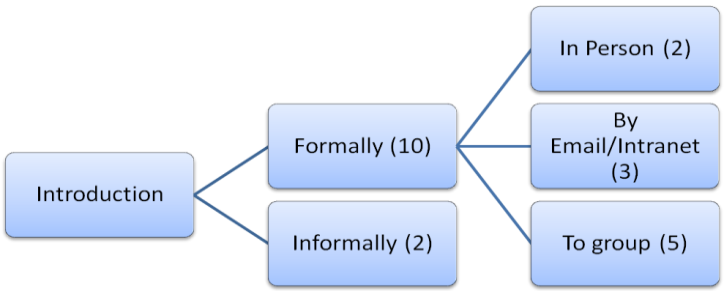

Figure 1: Introduction of new candidate to executive team

Ten of the executives interviewed were introduced to the rest of the executive team formally through either person-to-person introduction, to the executive team at once or via the organisations' electronic media.

"He invited me onto Exco. Then, at the first Exco meeting I arrived, he

introduced and congratulated me – so did everyone else - and we got right down to business." (P11: BM.docx 6:13)

"When it came to announcing it to the organisation, we had a monthly staff meeting where the formal announcement was made followed by an email to all internal staff, both locally and internationally." (P4: KE.docx 7:16)

The interviewer was particularly interested in how they experienced the way they were introduced, because anxiety levels in new appointees are normally higher than that of existing staff members and the pressure on the executive is even greater to perform immediately. The executive is under a magnifying glass from his/her peers, the staff members as well as the shareholders.

"I would say that was probably the most difficult time for me and I wish that it could have been handled a bit differently. It should have been explained better to people and also the process that they would follow with me and what my duties and responsibilities would be. Because I just knew there wasn't any clarity on that and I think therefore this has been a really hodgy-podgy year. So for me it was confusing. Because if those things had been dealt with upfront my transition would have been much easier." (P1: RR.docx 1:124)

None of the organisations could provide a separate induction policy for new executives and acknowledged that executives in their organisations never went on the normal staff induction program. The normal induction programs according to the organisations in this study included welcome packs, full-day or half-day training sessions on the organisations' history, product, policy and people and sometimes included a walkabout, a buddy system where new employees were taken care of for a period of time by existing employees and personal introductions.

"There was really no induction into this role." (P1: RR.docx 9:16)

"It was difficult at first. I came from a public sector environment into a private sector organization and I think part of the transition and difference

between the two worlds were very big. Quite intimidating." (P7: LS.docx 7:54).

The remaining two candidates were introduced informally as both the appointments were because of internal promotions.

> *"It was done at the board level and then they just announced my appointment to the staff. ..... I was handing over some of my work to another manager." (P10: WM 10:2)*

From the responses, it was evident that introductions to the executive team were not as structured as could be found at lower levels of the organisations where formal induction programs were in place. The participants did feel that it would have been much easier had they had an individual at their level, a peer, to help with the transition into executive level or as result of an external appointment.

> *"When somebody new comes in – I think it's harder the higher up they are, but when somebody joins – if they are not made to feel part of the organization and part of the group within a certain amount of time, they are going to be miserable and they are probably only going to stay because they can't find something else rather than because they want to. You are now (at executive level) supposed to know all this stuff that you don't necessarily, even if you have the technical skills, you don't know the organization. At executive level, even more so. I think peer coaching could help a lot in terms of settling people faster. (P4: KE.docx 4:63)*

This prompted the researcher to further explore the impact of role explanation and individual expectation for the executive as this could potentially further compound the experience of a new appointee, be that positive or negative.

4.2.2. Role explanation and expectation clarity

Based on the responses of the participants' experiences at introductions into their new roles as executives above, it was considered important to understand whether the recruitment brief transformed into a role and duty description. The

reason for this was to determine if new executives fully understood what was expected of them and if not, whether or not they believed peer coaching to be an appropriate vehicle of facilitating them settling into the role sooner, therefore being able to add value sooner. The participants said that role clarity and job expectations were vaguely or poorly communicated if at all.

> *“I don’t know about the role being explained, but I think the boundaries were explained,”.(P8 NK.docx 17:3)*

> *“Not really. No. I knew obviously more or less what was involved in the job.” (P4: KE.docx - 4:8)*

> *“Yes and No. No, actually it (role clarity) was done very badly in reality.” (P9: SC..docx - 9:3)*

It was interesting to note that they felt that a form of peer coaching, whether formal or informal would have helped them tremendously.

> *“There was nothing like someone saying: I would like you to work with this person, this is the person that does this and this and this is how you should go about it. Neither are you told to watch out for this and this. That would have been awesome. It would have helped tremendously to be more productive and to settle in faster.”(P1: RR.docx 1:24)*

> *“In our organization it is tremendously difficult to overcome the sharing of expertise. Because of trust and I think that if peer coaching where in place it would help moving everyone towards a common goal, especially for new people.” (P1: RR.docx 1:125)*

When reflecting on these responses, the question did arise as to what formal plan existed for the integration of new executives into their roles and organisations. Furthermore, if formal plans did exist, would this enable or constrain the implementation of a peer coaching program.

4.2.3. Current coaching practices in place for newly appointed executives

In the organisations used in this study, the respondents agreed that not all executives were being coached. This posed the question as to the reason for this practice and the circumstances which prompted the choice of who was to receive coaching and who was not. This could be of significance to this study insofar as highlighting possible enabling and/or constraining factors to coaching per se, which in turn might shed light on understanding the reasoning behind implementing a more formal and structured approach, such as individual or peer coaching.

Reasons for not having a formal coaching program ranged from the MD/CEO thinking it would be great for everyone but him/herself:

> *"He doesn't mind if the team has to change but he is not going to be exposed in any way." (P1: RR.docx 1:106)*

> *"I gathered he had sent other people before and – interestingly – he told me he had been, but apparently he hasn't. " (P4: KE.docx 4:14),*

Furthermore, not everybody saw the need to participate in coaching as they believed they didn't need it:

> *"I suppose small organizations would be managed with money and time. And also for us, time is always a big affair. They never perceive the value of this as being so valuable." (P1: RR.docx 1:05).*

Of the participants felt that it was a financial drain on the company:

> *"Maybe, the boss doesn't want to advertise it because he doesn't want everybody wanting to do it and there are cost implications." (P4: KE.docx 4:20)*

> *"..... it can become a financial constraint, unless we see some serious*

return on investment." (P8: NK.docx 8:31).

Other reasons mentioned were the lack of structure and tangible returns on investment:

> *"I would have a liked a really structured – like at 3 months, 6 months meeting where you could actually sit at structured points and sit down and have discussions." (P1: RR.docx 1:28)*

> *"We needed a bit more structure Those are critical discussions for me and outcomes were not being measured." (P1: RR.docx 1:82).*

The lack of credibility in the process due to the level of feedback being received from either the coach or the coachee was also mentioned as reason for the decision:

> *"Yes, the result of which was unnecessary and could have affected my relationship with the CEO. Luckily I am strong enough to handle it, but I asked her (coach) not to talk on my behalf again or give me feedback from him (CEO)." (P8: NK.docx 8:26)*

The significance this holds for the implementation of a peer coaching program is profound in that it draws the attention to the positioning, structure and perceived outcome of such a program. Furthermore, because peer coaching involves a many-to-many coaching approach, time constraints and physical availability will also have an impact on the decision.

> *"Yeah, and I can see how we will be struggling to get the diaries to talk to each other." (P8: NK.docx 8:43)*

> *"But time is always an issue." (P1: RR.docx 1:107)*

From the above can be seen that the introduction of a new executive to his/her role, is critical to the smooth transition into the role of executive, allowing for the individual to add value in a more constructive way. The representation of current practices shows the hap-hazard approach currently followed in the implementation of a coaching program.

4.3 Theme 2: Factors influencing the choice of the individual and/or the peer coach

The research wanted to find the link between the role expectations and qualities required from external executive coaches, compared to the role expectations and qualities of peer coaches. This was deemed important to establish because of the perceptions people have of their fellow employees. It also served to create a checklist of what the requirements would have to be for peer coaches to be of value to the individual.

4.3.1. Factors influencing Individual coaching relationships

Eight of the respondents have experienced having worked with an individual coach. These are the factors they highlighted as critical for their coaching relationship with an external coach:

The respondents felt that for them it was important that the coach had sound industry knowledge of the industry they were working in:

> *"Yes, I think industry wise; the coach needs to understand the industry rules." (P2: TS.docx 2:37)*

> *"So it could really work as long as you understand our business context." (P5: NN.docx 5:56)*

> *"I think it is important for the coach to understand the context before they hear all the perceptions that go within the context. To have that grounding is pretty important to understand it and work with the*

individual." (P11 BM.docx 1:58).

"Every professional will test you, time and time again, till they are confident that you are the most knowledgeable on that particular issue, or they will not give credit to you." (P1: RR.docx 1:98)

It was important for them to be able to relate to the coach, forming a strong relationship with coach:

"I guess it's dependent on the person that you dealing with. You have got to have a comfort level that what you are saying is going to be kept confidential where necessary, because I suppose a lot of my issues revolved around the personality types and the people in the company, so you have to be comfortable that you doing that". (P4: KE.docx 4:36)

".....I had a meeting and decided to go ahead because I believed I could work with her." (P4 KE.docx 4:21)

"She was one of our lecturers and I just clicked with her, so I have been comfortable of having a coaching relationship with her." (P7: LS.docx 7:11)

"Fortunately I – with my coach, yes. I was able to get on very well. It was really good. I think I was lucky and I just clicked." (P12: CS.docx 12:54)

So I had a one on one to just to get the sense, the feeling of whether we could create the right relationship, so at the end of the day it was a tough call." (P3: JJ.docx 3:7)

"So what I said was let's do it this way, let me meet the coach because it actually depends on the relationship." (P8: NK.docx 8:16)

Credibility both within the organisation as well as in this coaching industry also played a role in deciding on which coach to use:

"So the coach would have to be a credible person themselves. That to

me would be the kind of coach that for me would work." (P12: CS.docx 12:89)

"Credibility is huge! I think I would have to – obviously the conduct of the person when they are with me will tell me a lot about their conduct when they are with someone else?" (P7: LS.docx 7:32)

The commitment and motivation of the executive to go for coaching also played a role in the decision making process as well as the success of the intervention:

"And I think that for myself I have actually set my own development goals. I decided to find myself a coach." (P1: RR.docx 1: 11)

"A colleague who was also offered the coaching process was totally not open to discussing anything. So the person has to be willing and – I mean you can't take a horse to water and make it drink". (P9: SC.docx 9:30)

4.3.2. Factors influencing peer coaching relationships

The expectations of a peer coach, should peer coaching be introduced into the organisation not only demanded the same industry knowledge, relationship match and qualities as above, it also incorporated value issues such as trust, credibility and honesty according to the respondents. Based on their responses of what they were looking for in their external coaches, the researcher focussed on what the expectations would be should they have to choose an internal peer coach. These results were pertinent to peer coaching.

The researcher found that, as with individual coaching decisions, the participants also felt strongly that the peer coach should have relevant industry knowledge.

"In our company they have to have to respect for the facilitator like nobody's business because they will not agree to any coaching if they perceive again that they know more than that person, there is no way

they will give that person a chance." (P1: RR.docx 1:93)

"I think it is important for the coach to understand the context before they hear all the perceptions that go within the context. To have that grounding is pretty important to understand it and work with the individual." (P11 BM.docx 1:58).

With peer coaching, the relationship with the coach became even more important since the coach and coachee also worked together.

"I would never go internally here except for one person". (P1: RR.docx 1:56)

"And so the coach for me in a way should have guts and must be ready to say it as it is with authority" (P2: TS.docx 2:20)

"What I say to her stays with her and I think she believes the same with me and we trust each other. We will talk to each other. I wouldn't go and talk to other exco members, I won't." (P12: CS.docx 12:52)

"I would be worried that he will use what he knows about me against me in the future and see it as a weakness." (P10: WM.docx 10:17)

"I don't think there is a peer in the company currently that can actually coach anybody else. It would either have to be a coach from the outside, an external person... yes it would have be an external one." (P11: BM.docx 11:53)

Furthermore, the participants felt that it was not only the coach's role that was important, but also that of the coachee. The willingness to be true to oneself was labelled as a necessary criterion for successful peer coaching:

"The willingness to share definitely, and to really I would say, make yourself vulnerable, especially if you are going to expose your weaknesses in a peer group, and then it maybe comes back to bite you in another area, and that's always a fear where other people are

involved.", (P9: SC.docx 9:49)

"I think when people don't have the confidence that they can actually be effective coaches to each other. Personality, perceived credibility within the business, perceived technical expertise, perceived leadership capability and all those other things would play a role in influencing whether people perceived that relationship to be one that would work on it. (P7: LS.docx 7:55)

"I would say it's a maturity level. It's a self awareness as well. It's a lot of arrogance and unfortunately you usually find quite a large level of arrogance in successful people." (P9: SC.docx 9:22)

It was interesting to note that all participants felt that trust was paramount to the success of any peer coaching. This was far more important to them than when choosing an external coach:

"You know those of us who do utilize her skills (peer) are very fortunate to be able to do that because of the trust. But if you asking me would I trust anybody else sooner, I would just absolutely categorically say, no." (P1: RR.docx 1:57)

"I won't share everything with everybody because I don't trust them enough to understand my situation, or at least that is my perception." (P8: NK.docx 8:14)

"Look if we trusted each other I can tell you, peer coaching will be perfect...."; (P10: WM.docx 10:35)

"Whereas within a peer group – if that confidentiality and trust gets broken, you can't just walk away. It's now you working with those people and that would be the reservation from my point of view." (P9: SC.docx 9:47)

"Oh it's huge (in peer coaching). Trust is enormous. I think trust and confidentiality are the two that are tantamount. You cannot screw with

those two things". (P2: TS.docx 2:27)

"But it (peer coaching) does require the key thing, trust." (P9: SC.docx 9:25)

"No, trust is one of the reasons, confidentiality, I think is also important. So is commitment to a program such as this. Everyone must do it or else it stands the risk of dividing us?" (P8: NK.docx 8:24)

"Honesty in freedom to share. Just don't know how it would be achieved. That probably is the only inhibiting thing." (P1: RR.docx 1:114)

"The expectation has always been complete confidentiality". (P11: BM.docx 11:57)

"I think the biggest one there would be honesty. Because people come into a group and if they are not honest, then you wasting your time". (P11: BM.docx - 11:31)

"And yes, respecting some of that confidentiality, so you want to be able to let your guard down and actually speak openly....."; (P4: KE.docx 4:67)

The sustainability of a peer coaching program largely depended on the commitment of all the executives. There was fear about the level of commitment individuals would bring to the process:

So is commitment to a program such as this. Everyone must do it or else it stands the risk of dividing us?" (P8: NK.docx 8:24)

It's got to do with commitment from the people and from the organization, I think it would be relatively easy to get anything (peer coaching) started, but a year later I would imagine that at least half of the people would sort have fallen by the wayside?(P4: KE.docx 4:58)

It can be seen from the results above that the participants put a lot more emphasis on factors such as trust, honesty and confidentiality when faced with

a choice to engage with an internal peer coach than with an external coach. This was interesting because of the intensity with which they put their points across. If these factors were not visible to them, they would not engage in peer coaching at all.

4.4 Theme 3: Peer coaching takes place informally

The interview responses started to show a pattern with comments pointing toward an informal peer coaching or peer support role. This is of interest to the research as this trend has not presented itself in the literature review. The interviewer probed to establish if this practice was wide-spread or isolated

The participants shared that where there were individuals whom they looked up to, they would go to them for guidance or just to talk things through:

> *"Like I said you know, they help each other on certain issues. So I guess in a way it (peer coaching) happens." (P1:RR.docx 1:84)*

> *"You know there were some old guys that had years of experience and I was – as I mentioned, this youngster – and as long as you asked the right questions, you got the right answers. I suppose it was a bit of peer coaching?" (P12: CS.docx 12:15)*

Furthermore, if they found a chemistry between coach-coachee and they trusted each other, it facilitated coaching conversations:

> *"Because of trust I think that peer coaching there happened quite a bit where peers would help each other. But it was more of an informal thing than ever been formal. (P1: RR.docx 1:125)*

> *"Because then there would be people who are peers who click and you know it would be that. So it happens, informally." (P5: NN.docx 5:32)*

These conversations were taking place informally and often made use of networking channels. It appeared to be at random and not structured in any way, with the coachee driving the meeting schedule as and when he/she

needed it:

> *"It think it (peer coaching) happens, but on an informal almost a network basis, you know what I am saying. (P1: RR.docx 1:85)*
>
> *"There is something that could be peer coaching, but it is done in pockets, very informal." (P5: NN.docx 5:54)*
>
> *"I think it (peer coaching) would work because I think it already is happening informally." (P7: LS.docx 7:48)*
>
> *"I think it kind of happens in here but it's not structured or facilitated." (P8: NK.docx - 8:34)*
>
> *"You know, we have a person who does exactly that (peer coaching) in another department, if I listen to my counterpart in the terms of the HR head there, it is the way he works." (P6: FS.docx - 6:63)*

Surprisingly, it heightened the awareness around the inclusion of everybody in one of the organisations. It was important for them that everybody should be involved and be given the opportunity share in peer coaching:

> *"And in some respects we almost tried to do this (peer coaching) a little while ago, but the problem is one member is down in Cape Town which makes it a little bit difficult. And the other problem is to try and not make it seem political without wanting it to be seen that we are as a group getting together with them therefore either excluding people or potentially ganging up on people." (P4: KE.docx - 4:54)*

Where peer coaching happen informally, the choice of coach would be subjective and variable as everybody would have his/her own unwritten requirements of the coach:

> *"So formally it (peer coaching) doesn't happen but informally it happens. So I do think that it would work except for the pairing which in this case, it has happened spontaneously without necessarily it being structured and*

guided and all that stuff." (P7: LS.docx 7:39)

This informal, unstructured form of peer coaching at executive level within organisations was not expected. Neither did the researcher anticipate that it would be this wide-spread and present in all the organisations who participated in this study. It is interesting to note that the respondents spoke highly about this practice as relationships they value.

4.5 Theme 4: The role of Leadership in peer coaching programs

Up to this stage in the interview, participants merely alluded to the possible role the leaders of the organisation played when it came to leadership development programs. Peer coaching is a holistic approach and it is therefore important for the leader to commit and get involved. The people development programs within the organisations in this study were normally the responsibility of the people development or human resources divisions, yet the participants felt that peer coaching and other coaching programs for the executive mainly fell under the MD or CEO.

This was significant as none of the leaders were from a traditional people development school of thought. What intrigued the interviewer was the direct role they chose to play in the decision to go with coaching and what approach should be taken. The probing led to four definitive areas the leader would impact when considering the implementation of a peer coaching program.

4.5.1. Leaders' leadership behaviour

Almost all the participants felt that the leadership style of the leader would most definitely have an impact on the implementation of a peer coaching program. This was of importance to the interviewer as it could highlight the level at which peer coaching would need to be pitched if the opportunity existed within a company to implement a peer coaching

program.

Furthermore, the success of such a program, according to the participants, depended very much on the support it received from the leader. This support could be anything from his buy-in, to how he introduces the program and the visible support he gives to it. It was felt that if the leader did not have belief in the value of such an initiative, it would be a waste of resources trying to make it work.

"So when he (MD) got involved; he even got the group CEO to be involved, so he was actually championing the coaching projects on behalf of me, so I had great support." (P5: NN.docx 5:9)

"Because he would typically initiate it and almost tell his executives – you will now go through coaching type of thing." (P11: BM.docx - 11:36)

"His personality will have a huge affect (on peer coaching). One, the way he introduces it is going to be massive." (P11: BM.docx - 11:47)

"Honestly for me it (peer coaching) would work for leadership depending on the type of leader that you have"; (P6: FS.docx - 6:79)

Larger than life leaders also would have an effect on a peer coaching initiative as they could dominate the discussions:

"He is the CEO, he is the MPG, he is the peer group leader, he is the – he is everything! So he decides!" (P1 RR.docx – 1:116)

"And he is a phenomenal capable person. So I think that very much in a way the system is build around him because he is so able to do everything but a lesser person is never going to be able to do that. Never ever." (P1: RR.docx 1:129)

The leaders could also influence the outcome of any peer coaching session with how they treat the process and whether or not they agree to respect the rules of engagement:

"And then we sit there (in a team session), it (the outcome) really depends on his mood" (P6: FS.docx 6:20)

"Coaching him may be superficial. It's the inability to take that feed back. He will take it, he will hear it, but he's not absorbing it and will be holding it against you, so you will say something for the right reasons for the best possible reasons, and it will be thrown out again over the next two years." (P4: KE.docx 4:46)

4.5.2. Executive team leadership behaviour

However, not only did the participants feel strongly about the role of the leader, but equally, they felt that the executive team members had an important part to play. Again, this intrigued the interviewer as the comments were based on their experience within their existing executive teams. It posits that even though the leader may have bought into a peer coaching approach, it did not guarantee success, but that the team behaviour also played a role in the success of such a program.

"I think team leadership or personalities are very important...I would expect in any group it means for everyone to be able to open up, share their vulnerabilities – if someone holds back then it's not really working and also for everyone to see it is a group – I suppose theoretically the whole ubuntu philosophy could be jeopardised." (P9: SC.docx 9:40)

"Because of the personalities and I think you would have to have buy in from most of them. I could see myself, Finance and Training and Development, not a problem. I am sure we would manage a peer coaching session quite fine. I don't know with the rest of the guys. They are too competitive and not open, not open at all" (P12: CS.docx 12:84)

"I think on the exec level you have a similar barrier, because of ten at an exec level, and I am just talking generally not specifically now, there is a certain amount of politics at play, so you are never going to be completely open with your peers at exec level". (P8: NK.docx - 8:44)

"Peer coaching will be difficult to implement because of the personalities although I think you would have buy in from most of them, there are one or two guys that will try to sabotage it." (P12: CS.docx - 12:84)

4.5.3. Leadership development accountability/motivation

Until this stage in the interview, the research has mainly focussed on the team and its relation to peer coaching. The interviewer decided to enquire about the motivation behind the individual team members' drive for development. This was deemed important as it would show the readiness for a coaching intervention and whether or not they could take responsibility for driving the learning process as required in a peer coaching relationship.

"It's been mostly self directed. Maybe selfishly so – I know what I am interested in and where I want to go in business". (P6: FS.docx 6:11)

"Some of it (my development) I suppose was driven by me." (P6: FS.docx - 6:10)

"I do have an executive coach. I always had. I do quite a lot of work also outside of my current job for professional development." (P7: LS.docx - 7:10)

"I am self starter; competitive in a way, I constantly need to learn new ways." (P9: SC.docx - 9:39)

"Once again, I then went and did various diplomas and various bits and pieces, just to keep up with trends. I think that was one of the things that made me do my MBA because, in business I have always believed, you can only get so far and then it keeps changing." (P12: CS.docx - 12:4)

4.5.4. The impact of feedback on development

The research focussed on the role of feedback at executive level because it acknowledged the importance thereof in the growth path of an executive. Although it can be seen from the above responses that the majority of

individuals displayed a high individual drive for self development, they received little if any feedback on their performance. With peer coaching being driven by the individual and not by the coach, this was of particular interest for this research.

> *"There is no structure for feedback in the system that we have at the moment so you don't really know what you are doing. If you doing well, or if you not doing well. There is a lot of pressure on the executive to do well." (P11: BM.docx 11:9)*

> *"Very little feedback. I would actually ask for feedback because I would think, well was this right or was this wrong? Was it well done, or was it not well done?" (P1: RR.docx 1:19)*

> *"No I haven't really received any feedback. I suppose I got feedback when I pushed for it when I ask: I'm not comfortable I'm doing this right, I don't think I'm doing what I need to. Then other than that we do have a – I suppose a formal appraisal system - but in a way that's a little bit different and it is quite formal, so the type of feedback you getting there is often skewed and not discussed in open." (P4: KE.docx 4:11)*

> *"How do we receive feedback? Hammered directly, look we actually don't have a formal feedback meetings." (P8: NK.docx 8:7)*

Leadership and executive team behaviour proved to play a significant role in the organisations' attitude toward development. All of the participants were found to be self driven in their personal growth and development; however it was clear from the responses that the leader and the team would play a significant role in the success of any leadership development initiative. Furthermore, although the necessity of feedback was well understood, very few actually received any feedback except for when they required it or when they were in the wrong.

4.6 Theme 5: Power dimensions affecting coaching decisions

All members of the executive team have equal status on the team, or do they? Throughout the interview, participants alluded to some sort of power-play within their executive teams. This was interesting for the interviewer because within peer coaching, the power dimension lies with the individual requesting the coaching and not with the coach or the sponsor. If there then proved to be "inequality" amongst the equal nature of being on the executive team, the interviewer believed it to be of critical importance for this research, the reason for this being that, if the power dimension was influencing the relationships between members on the executive team, it may influence the effectiveness and therefore success, of a peer coaching program. Because power has a direct influence on relationships, it was important to establish whether or not it also played a role in the decision of implementing a peer coaching program.

4.6.1. Structural power

The participants stated that even though they were considered to be at the same level, there were different degrees to influence at their level due to a variety of reasons. The findings also show that seniority within the ranks of the executive is influenced by issues such as age and length of service. Because of this lobbying amongst each other to encourage certain strategic decisions which may affect or influence the direction the company takes in the future is present. It is way of "pulling rank" on a decision.

The influence this holds for peer coaching is that it will be of great importance to find the "real" leaders in the executive team as the normal avenue to entry into an organisation, such as through human resources, may not be sufficient when influence is required to make a decision.

> *"....they band together on certain things where they want the CEO to go in a certain direction and that they feel, OK, important but they also*

leverage each other all the time" P1: RR.docx - 1:60)

"The relationships between the people on a senior level are really the things that stood out for me the most. Because you watch them and you see that the relationships drive decisions." (P1: RR.docx - 1:2)

"Now within that there have always been one or two people who are a bit more senior but were never nominated as such, so we have now created an exec team which is actually five people which is a lot easier." (P4: KE.docx - 4:39)

4.6.2. Expert power

With expert power, executive members feel that that they have superior knowledge of their field of expertise, industry and environment they work in. This was considered as important because when this form of power becomes all consuming, the individual may experience him/herself above the rest and may not see the need of participating in a peer coaching program.

"You see them breaking down other persons' expertise in order to establish themselves as expert and they almost always do it through showing other people up. Dreadful for team spirit." (P1: RR.docx - 1:102)

"Because I think as individuals, even if we on the same level, you always think that you might know that little bit better or you will try and impress, even if it is an ego thing." (P12: CS.docx - 12:47)

"Everyone will test you, time and time again, till they are confident that you are the most knowledgeable on that particular thing or they will not give yield to you. It's mostly like a professional thing, I think because they are specialists in what they do, but they compete with each other to be the specialist of specialists." (P1: RR.docx 1:122)

"Everybody is very competitive. A highly competitive organization and I think that's just on like a point of pride to be able to do things really well. So I think that they get the results even if they do not always come from

the right angle" (P1: RR.docx - 1:46);

4.6.3. Prestige power = Status

Prestige power or status manifests in various different ways from office size and location, to vehicle make and model. It influences who you are seen with, who you talk to and how you believe these individuals can assist you in getting ahead. The consequences for peer coaching are many, mainly because this type of behaviour relies on a judging mentality based on own bias, therefore excluding possible opportunities for learning from all individuals. These individuals send powerful signals to everyone around them and are often privy to external sources of information which gives them the edge.

This often result in the playing of office politics where those who believe to have superior prestige power will pull rank to get what they want or what they believe to be the best option.

> *"You know what is interesting is sitting in an exco meeting for the first time, I felt a sense of worthlessness. That I don't belong here. They were all so comfortable down to where they were sitting and what they were wearing." (P2: TS.docx - 2:5)*

> *"In a meeting for instance, I get so frustrated because I can't even sit in a different chair". (P1: RR.docx - 1:117)*

> *"No one knows if he is being honest with you all the time. He might say, wonderful, let's play the game, but is it a game or is it honesty? He shifts the goalposts all the time" (P12: CS.docx - 12:85);*

The power dimension is present in all the organisations that participated in the study. From the responses, it is clear that the decision making power does not necessarily conform to the hierarchical structure of the organisation. This is of interest to this study because it indicates the level of influence required to take a decision to implement a peer coaching program in the organisation.

4.7 Theme 6: Participants' perceived constraining factors

During the interviews, the participants were asked what they felt was the biggest constraining factors to the implementation of a peer coaching program in their organisations. This is significant for the study as it provides some insight into what they experience as a way of life within the organisation, therefore how they perceive a peer coaching program's possible implementation.

4.7.1. Unhealthy internal/interdivisional competitiveness

This was of particular interest to the study as it could be expected that in a peer coaching program, individuals coach each other across the boundaries of their divisions. The responses highlighted that interdivisional conflict did not benefit these organisations and therefore could impact a peer coaching program in the same way.

> *"Everybody is very competitive. Highly competitive organization and I think that just on like a point of pride to be able to do things really well. So I think that they get the results even if they not always coming from the right angle, sometimes to the detriment of their peers." (P1: RR.docx 1:46)*

> *"They are scared of treading on each others' toes. And cross – border management? That is my domain – don't touch. It's my domain, don't touch!" (P2: TS.docx 2:34)*

> *"Whereas the bunch before , two of them in particular were probably theoretically more senior but they just never seem to settle into their roles correctly in terms of "you know what – it's mine". It's always, oh well, this person hasn't done this and that person hasn't done that, but it's not my fault." (P4: KE 4:44)*

> *"Because unless you talk their language it's like you just wasting your time – they do not see you." (P6: FS.docx 6:77)*

> *"I think it's both our environment which is competitive and also it is about*

being better." (P12: CS.docx 12:49)

" You know, you sometimes may be considered a little bit higher up than what your peer is, even though you are supposed to be on the same level, and I suppose, are we really equal?." (P12: CS.docx 12:53)

4.7.2. The role of diversity: gender, race, nationality and age

Given the objective of having a demographically representative sample pool of respondents, it was interesting to note that although all the organisations in this study, considered themselves to be equal opportunity employers. The respondent (employees) however felt that the divide was still large and it added to the sensitive nature of trust in the leadership team.

"The older guys that have grown up here, because you have a mix and there is one who has been here 26 years and he has been at senior level management for a lot of that time. So he has become almost set in his ways and it is very difficult to shift him." (P6: FS.docx 6:61)

"We have quite a big cultural gap in our exec team and with that cultural gap you would have different views on what should and shouldn't be said and that kind of thing, and also what is viewed as personal problems and that kind of thing and how to handle those personal problems, so I think it might be difficult to implement a peer coaching program in this context." (P8: NK.doc 8:35)

"But the minute you have a mix in that group, so it's men and women, the tendency for all of them to be socializing together is a lot lower, and if you add race to that, then it's even less. So I think that's a local limitation to implementation (of a peer coaching programme). I don't know? A woman isn't really part of the "boys" is she? And different cultures socialize differently. At least in my experience!" (P8: NK.docx 8:36)

"There are a lot of dynamics at play and on the senior management team, if you like, I'd say there are two South Africans out of six Germans in the top team, differences in culture and nationality let alone work ethic.

Could be difficult to address issues in a peer setting." (P9:SC.docx 9:2)

4.7.3. The role of office gossip amongst the executive

What came out of these responses is the divide gossip talk and actions have amongst the executive. This was noteworthy to this study because of the link to confidentiality and trust. Indeed, peer coaching would find it difficult flourish in an environment where mistrust and the lack of confidentiality were the norm.

"Because I do not believe that there can be impartiality in our environment and by that I mean that so many things will happen in the senior team, like talking about one-another behind their backs." (P1: RR.docx 1:59)

"Whereas the bunch before , two of them in particular were probably theoretically more senior but they just never seem to settle into their roles correctly in terms of "you know what – it's mine". It's always, oh well, this person hasn't done this and that person hasn't done that, but it's not my fault. Blaming each other, always" (P4: KE.docx 4:44)

"It is a sad reality with us that people will talk and stories will get retold – you will hear things you shouldn't and I don't know if it's because of the size of the organization but yes, there are certain things that you are not meant to hear but you can hear." (P10: WM.docx 10:29)

"Where there are extreme conflict of ideas and things like that, then peer group coaching will not work at all. Not with us, we will never agree." (P11: BM.docx 11:43)

"Once you have gone, once that meeting has happened, he (the CEO) walks out and he says the opposite and tell everyone. So yes, I bared my soul to my peers and how was it dealt with afterwards? No thank you, not again!" (P12: CS.docx 12:81)

4.7.4. An environment of mistrust

Linking to the role of office gossip, the interviewer probed more to try and establish what it was that affected trust in the executive team to such an extent that respondents would call it an environment of mistrust. If factors could be extrapolated from the responses, it would assist peer coaches to be aware of possible pitfalls for the implementation of a peer coaching program.

> *"I do not trust the top management team because I have seen how they deal with little stuff like salary increases now I have been part of that process, that is the person that did this and this and this but I mean that was five years ago, are you kidding me?" (P1: RR.docx 1:51)*

> *"And yes, respecting some of that confidentiality, so you want to be able to let your guard down and actually speak openly and know that it's not going to come back at you later, because as long as you always having to cover yourself, you very rarely going to get to the bottom of the issues here." (P4: KE.docx 4:51)*

> *"A lot of it (how we talk/feel about each other) has to do with trust and perceptions don't you think?" (P8: NK.docx 8:41)*

> *"I don't think some of my colleagues would be open enough in that session. No. But I think individually they can. Yes. Because we work with people who are not open if I can put it that way. Yes and I think they change behaviour all the time. You never know where you stand with him." (P10: WM.docx 10:22)*

> *"I don't think we trust each other and we are also afraid to to say they are not pulling their weight. – we don't really have the guts to go and say it." (P10: WM.docx 10:34)*

> *"But if you have a company where there is total distrust and you know there is no honesty, and then you can forget about doing this (peer coaching internally." (P11: BM.docx 11:55)*

> *Well now it comes back to maybe your trust thing. And we have seen his*

background; we have seen his true colours. Could you really do peer coaching with him in the room? I would you feel comfortable." (P12: CS.docx 12:88)

The perceived constraining factors identified by the participants reflected their own environments. It was clear from the responses that the participants felt that divisions within the organisation held different levels of importance to the organisations, thereby increasing interdivisional competitiveness were considered to be normal practice. What did surprise the researcher was the level of diversity stereotyping still in place in the workplace. This, together with the malicious use of the office grapevine, contributed to the environment of mistrust experienced by the participants within their organisation.

4.8. Summary of the results

The research set out to find factors to the implementation of a peer coaching program. The interview explored the way new executives were introduced in their new roles, the amount of role clarity they had when accepting the position and current coaching practices in place for new executives. From the participants' responses, one sees that this stage in the new executives' career does not receive a lot of attention from the employer.

It was further of importance to understand what the factors were that the respondents considered or would consider in the event of them having to choose an external coach compared to a peer coach. This was relevant to peer coaching as these factors would need to be addressed internally and if the coachee got it wrong, the repercussions for the relationships could have far reaching consequences.

After having heard what peer coaching was about, most of the participants said that in practice, discussions similar to that which is called "peer coaching" are already happening within their organisations. These discussions are indeed "coachee" driven, yet pairing happens spontaneously and trust were prominent in these relationships.

This prompted the researcher to investigate further what role leadership styles and behaviour had to play in the implementation of a peer coaching program. There were two distinct role players which emerged, namely the leadership of the leader and the leadership within the team. Out of this the leadership development mindset of the individuals was of particular interest to the research as it showed a self determination and motivation to grow as individual. However, the lack of feedback was evident in the responses. The researcher deemed this as an important factor in the implementation of a peer coaching program.

All respondents were of the opinion that the role power played in the organisation would have a profound impact on the implementation and success of a peer coaching program. Hierarchical power or pulling of rank was at the order of the day, whereas in more specialist positions, expert power presented more frequently. Some of the respondents felt this was also directly linked to the status of the individual, be that tangible or intangible signs of status. This not only affected who got chosen to receive coaching, but also if they believed a peer coaching program would be applicable.

Finally, the researcher asked the participants what they believed the biggest constraining factors were they believed or perceived to play a major part in the decision to implement a peer coaching program. Diversity, trust, interdivisional competitiveness and office gossip or the grapevine at executive level were quoted to be of high importance.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

The interview data is represented in the figure below six themes which shows the richness of the data obtained. The figure shows the logical flow of the interviews and an overview of the collected and represented data.

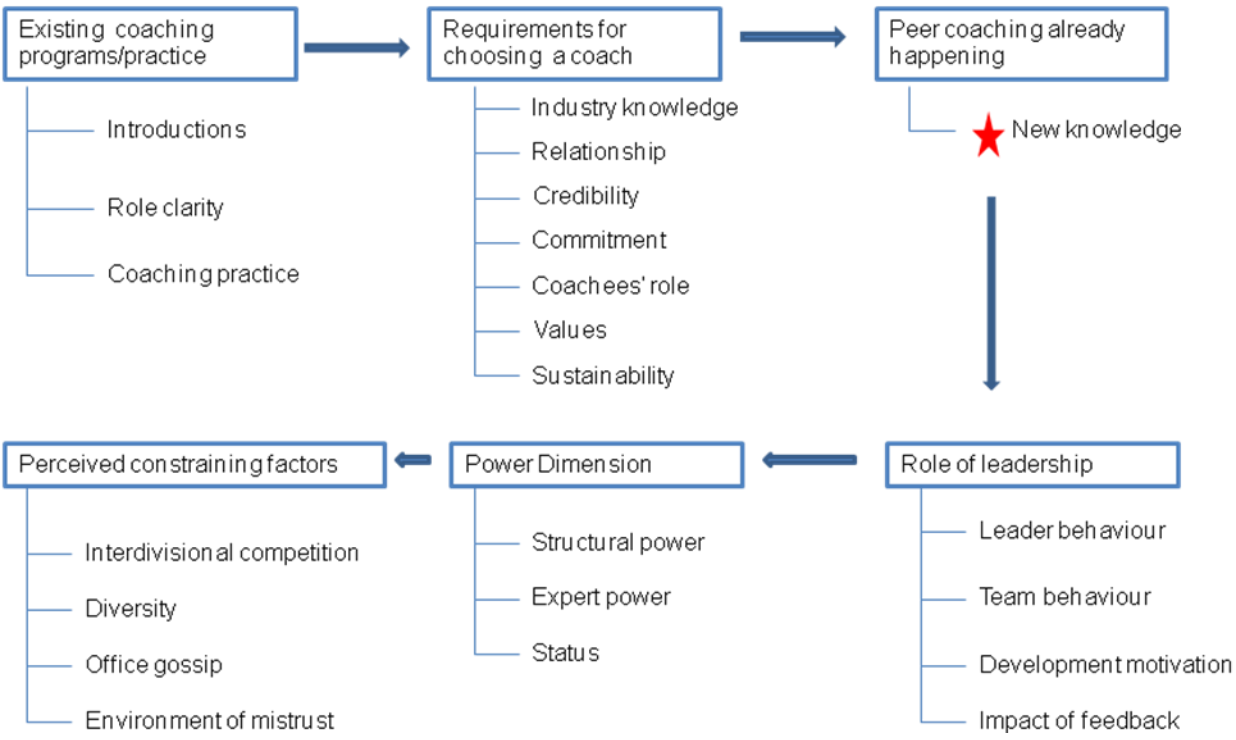

Figure 2: Interview flow and selected themes

Research findings will be discussed at the hand of the six identified themes in order to explore the answering of the research question. The study set out to explore the perceived factors participants to the study believed to be of either constraining or enabling nature to the rationale behind implementation of a peer coaching program. It will therefore remain focussed on answering the research question and its sub-questions at the hand of the identified themes.

5.2. Theme 1: Existing induction programs for executives

Literature suggests that job change, whether it is a new position through restructuring, a new organisation, job insecurity or a promotion, brings with it a level of stress and anxiety for the incumbent. High pressured jobs such as at executive level, may bring about fear of incompetence and feeling of inadequacy (Baumeister & Tice, 1990). As with any new employee, executive appointees also experience anxiety toward the new task at hand, even more so if the new position is at a new organisation. The possibility of failure or exclusion from the executive team increases this anxiety (Baumeister & Tice, 1990).

It was found in this research that the lack of proper induction to the executive team increased the level of anxiety which affected the productivity and individual stress levels. There was no evidence that any form of formal induction programs were in place for any of the participants in the study or their respective organisations. Literature shows the executive on-boarding is a crucial part of the success of new executive appointees into an organisation (Watkins, 2007). It shows that 40% of new executive appointees fail in the first 18 months of starting a new job (Korte & DiVittis, 2010). The new organisations' expectations are as high as the individuals' need to perform, yet, the incumbent often has little knowledge of the organisation. Organisations have realised that the normal induction programs used to disseminate organisational information were no longer sufficient and have incorporated a learning approach of which coaching forms part (Korte & DiVittis, 2010) as well as top management team induction (Zand, 1972).

Over and above the introductions, little evidence was found to show that the participants received job descriptions or had a discussion around role clarity and expectations. In the event of any position being vacant in an organisation, the recruitment policy of such organisation will determine the process followed to fill the position. In most cases it will include some form of job and person specification as well as key areas of accountability, normally in a performance contract, for the incumbent. The participants said that role clarity and job expectations were vaguely or poorly communicated if at all. According to

literature, many of the shortcomings of on-boarding can be traced back to the recruitment process (Reese, 2005). Miscommunication about the expectations of the position, often result in disillusionment of the new executive.

Upon entering the executive level of the organisation, the executive is under a magnifying glass from his/her peers, the staff members as well as the shareholders (Korte & DiVittis, 2010). The executive plays a pivot role in managing the organisation on a day to day basis as well as working towards achieving the shareholder mandate and organisational vision, therefore the pressure on the executive is even greater to perform immediately (Korte & DiVittis, 2010). This study confirmed that inductions to the executive team were not structured at all and was conducted haphazardly. The participants did feel that it would have been much easier had they had an individual at their level, a peer, to help with the transition into executive level or as result of an external appointment.

Executive coaching is a tool within the leadership development toolkit (Korte & DiVittis, 2010; Reese, 2005) which allows for leaders to embark on either one-to-one coaching or group coaching as means to facilitate growth and learning. According to one paper, the on-boarding process should start prior to the start date of the new appointee and last for 60-90 days.

In the organisations used in this study, it was found not all executives received coaching, nor did coaching form part of a formal leadership development plan for executives. Reasons for not having formal coaching program included the facts that executives felt they did not need it, the cost of the intervention, the lack of proof of return on investment and the credibility of the process.

Research shows that indeed the failure of having an on-boarding process in place has significant impact on the successful integration and tenure with the organisation for the new executive (Korte & DiVittis, 2010; Reese, 2005).

5.3. Theme 2: Factors influencing the choice of the individual and/or the peer coach

Executive coaching forms part of the executive development program in all the organisations party to this research. In comparing traditional training companies with the 21st century approach of executive coaching, the biggest changes lie with the providers, delivery format and the focus. Traditional training companies were registered with local governments through SAQA, delivered structured one to five day or longer certificate programs which in turn was delivered in a classrooms style by a trained trainer. The focus of these training sessions were agreed to beforehand by the service provider and/or the client, effectively sending all executives through the same standardised training.

Executive coaching on the other hand is completely different. Coaches may or may not have formal coaching qualifications; they may or may not be registered and/or accredited. Delivery takes place on a one-on-one basis behind closed doors and the focus is mostly individually driven except when performance issues are at play en the sponsor is involved (Judge & Cowell, 1997). It was therefore necessary to establish what expectations executives had from coaches prior to entering into a coaching.

Coaching has become the buzz word amongst executives, with some companies like Coca-Cola and Polaroid positioning executive coaching as the backbone of their executive development programs (Judge & Cowell, 1997). Choosing a coach is arguably the most important step in establishing the coaching relationship. It is well documented that the relationship between coach and coachee is critical to the success of the overall intervention (Berglas, 2002; Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Joo, 2005; Sherman, 2004). Factors such as confidentiality, integrity, credibility and trust were rated as some of the most important factors influencing such a relationship (Joo, 2005; Judge & Cowell, 1997).

This study corroborated this research with participants highlighting the relationship with coach as extremely important. Interestingly, this relationship was often based on a sort of chemistry between the coach and coachee established in the first meeting. This is supported in research (Collins, 2008; Scoular & Linley, 2006; Sherman, 2004) where attention to the chemistry or intuitive factors of rapport are foremost in the process of deciding on a coach. This held true for the choice of both external coach as well as peer coach.

Research further indicates a strong academic underpinning in psychology, business and/or general management experience, the ability to connect authentically with the coachee and a set of professional ethics and principles to be of importance in the choice of coach (Wasylyshyn, 2003). Interestingly, the participants also believed that both the external individual coach as well as the external peer coach needed to have some knowledge of their respective industries. This was contributed to the fact that they believed the coach would be more at ease in "their" environment and they could focus on the coaching outcome instead of trying to get the coach up to speed with the challenges in the industry (L. Thach & Heinselman, 1999).

Factors such as confidentiality, honesty, integrity and trust were important for both peer and external coaches, and it was interesting to note that with internal peer coaching, new dimensions were added. Perceived credibility within the business was important and so too was the maturity level of the peer coach. It was further noted that the peer coach needed to have a good self awareness and a humbleness, all of which form part of a well developed self esteem and emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is defined as having the ability to observe and be self aware of your own feelings and emotions as well as those of other people around you. Furthermore, to utilise this knowledge appropriately in your interactions with other people *(*Salovey & Mayer, 1990*).*

This is further supported by literature highlighting qualities and characteristics such as self-awareness, self regulation, motivation and social skill all to contribute to the emotional intelligence of a leader (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). This is of importance to peer coaching because executives

working together in an organisation form an integral part of the peer coaching process.

5.4. Theme 3: Peer coaching takes place informally

Informal discussions and coaching that exists among trusted colleagues have been observed especially in the field of education. In some of the instances, this has lead to the introduction of more structured peer coaching programs (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990; Levene & Frank, 1993). This research found that at executive level, these informal discussions do take place. In fact, the participants all agreed that where they do engage in these informal discussions, it is based on a trust relationship they have with their peer. The participants agreed that were there was a comfortable rapport; informal peer coaching spontaneously fell into place.

In today's workplace where change seems to be the only constant, learning too has changed from being a once off qualification, to a life-long learning experience (P. Parker, et al., 2008). Part of the tools of career learning is peer coaching (Parker, et al., 2012). Although research on this practice is largely limited to the application of peer coaching in the educational sector (Showers, 1985; Showers & Joyce, 1996), recent emerging research have identified peer coaching as a strong learning relationship for all parties involved.

Elements required to create an effective peer coaching relationship include:

- Bother parties to be of equal status;
- Both parties to enter the relationship from a learning point of view with clear goals;
- Both parties agree to a time frame which is usually short or till the goal has been reached and
- A self awareness and deep reflection on incidents to ensure focus on the goal is maintained (Parker, et al., 2012).

There appears to be lack of empirical research data on this practice in the business world, especially at executive level. Words such as “networking” and phrases such as “we just clicked” are used to describe how the executive in this study experience peer coaching. Although it may be argued that what they experienced may not be peer coaching in the truest form, they clearly found a workable solution based on qualities which resonated with them.

In leadership development, leaders are encouraged to form peer coaching dyads to share insights in their experiences in order to reach goals. These dyads have the ability to continue after the formal process based on the relationship of support built during the process (Parker, et al., 2012). These relationships are built on trust and confidentiality (Waddell & Dunn, 2005). However, this may lead to some limitations to the effectiveness of peer coaching programs.

Parker, et al (2012) posits that there are certain risks in both formal and informal peer coaching within the business context. The model of risk factors is displayed in this diagram below showing the risk factors on individual, relational and contextual macro systems (Parker, et al., 2012).

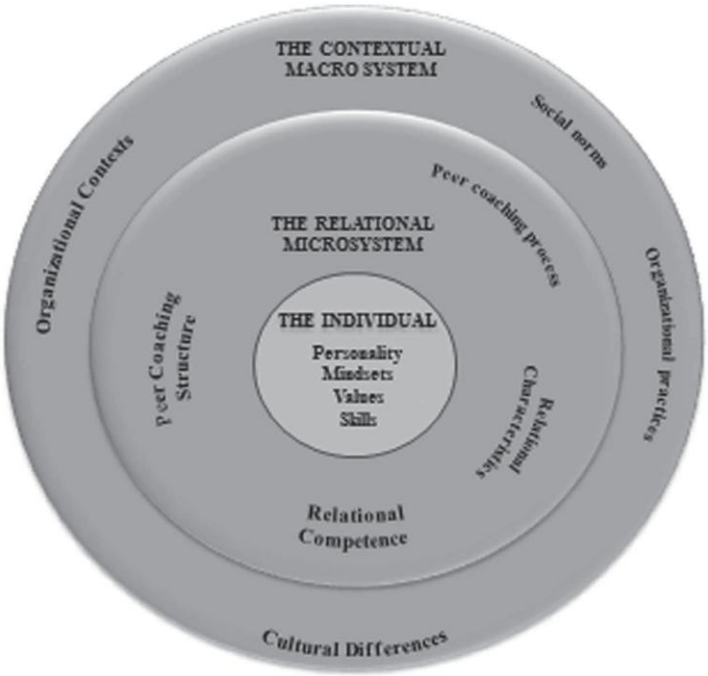

Figure 3: Risk factors in peer coaching: An ecological systems perspective

This figure posits that on an individual level such as personality, mindset to learning, values and skill of both individuals need to be in sync in order for peer coaching to be effective. This was supported in the findings of this research in a South African context.

Parker et al. (2012) further notes that these individual requirements has a knock-on effect on the relational as well as the contextual levels and will influence the effectiveness of peer coaching in organisations.

5.5. Theme 4: The role of Leadership in peer coaching programs

The leader plays a fundamental role in determining the importance leadership development carries within the organisation. With leader self-awareness comes insight into his/her own being, talents, purposes, values and beliefs (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). The rest of the leadership team will emulate behaviours observed from its leader (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005) when they identify with observed behaviour. Where leaders exhibit leadership which include behaviour such as correlation between what is said and done; consistency in how ethical standards are upheld, a deep level of self awareness and impact they have on others, followers view them to be authentic.

The word “authentic” comes from the Greek concept of “to thine own self be true” (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Authenticity is defined as:

> *“Those who are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others’ values/moral perspectives, knowledge, and strengths; aware of the context in which they operate; and who are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and of high moral character” (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004)*

These leaders have an impact on their followers’ development through their relationships with them and their interest in the growth of not only themselves but also that of their followers. All participants interviewed, regardless of

whether they have had coaching or not, were of the opinion that the authenticity of the leader was of utmost importance in implementing any leadership intervention successfully. It was found that should authenticity in the leader be absent, leadership interventions would be a number crunching exercise looking good in the annual report.

Not only was the leaders' behaviour of concern to the participants, so too where the rest of the executive teams' leadership behaviour. In affecting decisions taken at executive level, personalities will come into play. Negative conflict within the team may affect the implementation of decisions taken because they may not have fully participated in the decision making process (Amason, 1996). In implementing a TMT leadership development program at executive level, cognisance must be taken to the different role players in the team specifically their experience, their role within the team, their personalities, behaviour and how they impact on one another.

Research posits that often, the more successful TMT's are "characterized by intellectual flexibility, optimism, and cohesiveness (but not centralization of power)..." (Peterson, Smith, Martorana, & Owens, 2003 p 802).

Because the participants all viewed themselves as highly motivated to grow, it was not surprising that the lack of feedback also lead to frustration amongst them insofar as the improvement of their performance and career growth went. Performance feedback or the lack thereof created in them feelings of insecurity and self-doubt. All the participants relayed the feedback normally only happened when something was seriously wrong or if they initiate the request for feedback. Feedback is one of the main contributors to the failure of executives to perform well and make a success of his/her career (Reese, 2005).

There are a few forms of feedback such as when performance evaluations of an employee are collected from more than one source. This is generally known as multisource feedback. Where feedback is obtained from your subordinates, it is referred to as upward feedback. Finally, when feedback is received from your superior(s), it is called downward feedback where supervisors receive ratings

from multiple subordinates (Walker & Smither, 2006).

This research probed the existence of downward and multisource feedback and has found that feedback per se is largely lacking at executive level (Judge & Cowell, 1997). Leaders often lack the competence of giving feedback, especially when the feedback is deemed to be negative. The giving of negative feedback is rarely practices because of the potential of creating conflict, therefore feedback is often identified as a weakness in a leaders' portfolio. They are uncomfortable with giving it especially when it is negative, not sure when and how often to give it nor do they know how to make it a constructive and positive experience (London, 2003).

The concern about how the receiver will react to the feedback is often greater than the need to give it and then it is not given, sometimes with negative consequences. It must be noted that feedback rarely stands alone. In order for feedback on performance to take place something must have happened, i.e. learning has taken place, behaviour has changed and targets were met or not. Therefore, performance needed to have been observed and measured in one way or another (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

One could argue that feedback at executive level should be part of daily operation because of the importance thereof in the growth path, value add to the organisation and increased productivity of an executive. However, in all the organisations interviewed, none had a formal feedback system in place. Feedback which was received was informal through peers and experience. Those seeking feedback was always concerned with how they were doing and how they could be even better at what they did. This is corroborated by research in this field where individuals who seek feedback, often are concerned with answering three questions namely, "Where am I going? How am I doing? and Where to next?" (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

5.6. Theme 5: Power dimensions affecting coaching decisions

According to studies relating to the power dimension in top management teams, there seem to be four major types of power dimensions at play namely structural power which is based on hierarchical position of the executive; ownership power which management hold in their capacity as agents acting on shareholders' accounts; expert power which emanates from the knowledge management hold of the operational environment and prestige power also known as status where the individual hold power to influence due to others looking to them for direction. Power is defined as the ability of an individual to apply their influence and control as they see fit (Finkelstein, 1992).

Another definition of power is the ability of a person to apply his/her will onto others (Haleblian & Finkelstein, 1993). In the context of this study only the top management team structure was taken into account. Because of hierarchical nature of this power, the MD or CEO has more influence that of say the Financial Director or the Sales Director, purely because of the structure of the organisation. Often, dominant MDs and CEOs can have a negative impact on the sharing of information with their teams. This is particularly true where a team members' contribution is seen as less important than the others' contribution (Finkelstein, 1992). They could also have a direct impact on the top management style of management (Pitcher & Smith, 2001). In a way they can control their teams' actions to a certain extent and will have veto power when it comes to strategic decisions.

It was interesting to note that all participants in this research concurred with the literature and that the success to any leadership development initiative would lie in the support it received from the leader. Furthermore, should they introduce any initiative which is not in line with the MD or CEO's thinking they would rather start to lobby support amongst the other team members in fear of being ostracised by the leader. This is also evident in literature in which a fear for information sharing develops in organisations where dominant CEOs are

present (Hambrick & D'Aveni, 1992).

It was clear from the responses that this practice was considered “normal” in organisations with particularly dominant MDs or CEOs. However, where structural power was more balance in the team, team members we more at ease with introducing or sharing new ideas.

Another form of power, known as expert power is when executive members feel that they have superior knowledge of the industry and environment they work in (Finkelstein, 1992). This was not wide spread in this study, however in one of the organisations; it was normal practice. This particular organisation not only had a dominant CEO, but the industry demanded the best technical expertise. This was also the only organisation where non-technical peer coaching was questioned because the CEO knew it all. A further factor was the age of the top management team, all of whom were seen to be experts in their fields. The hoarding of power clearly at play even thought the belief in the organisation was that that was what gave them the competitive advantage (Conger, 1989). These individuals believe themselves to be so good they see themselves as invincible. Unfortunately, this behaviour flows over to their subordinates which in turn results in interdepartmental competitiveness, none of which is good for the implementation of a peer coaching program.

Prestige power or status manifests in various different ways from office size and location, to vehicle make and model. It influences who you are seen with, who you talk to and how you believe these individuals can assist you in getting ahead. The consequences for peer coaching are many, mainly because this type of behaviour relies on a judging mentality based on own bias, therefore excluding possible opportunities for learning from all individuals. These individuals send powerful signals to everyone around them and are often privy to external sources of information which gives them the edge (Finkelstein, 1992). This often results in the playing of office politics where those who are believed to have superior prestige power will pull rank to get what they want or what they believe to be the best option.

Competitiveness, lobbying, status, expertise, rank, belittling of team members all contribute to an environment where learning and sharing is made very difficult. All of these were evident in the responses obtained in the interviews with no exception.

5.7. Theme 6: Participants' perceived constraining factors

During the interviews, the participants were asked what they felt the biggest constraining factors were to the implementation of a peer coaching program in their organisations. They highlighted four areas which for them would represent constraining factors. This was based on their own individual experiences in their organisations. These factors included unhealthy interdivisional competitiveness; diversity with the emphasis on gender, race, nationality and age; the role of office gossip and an environment of mistrust.

Competitiveness is of the essence amongst business, it is part of their right to existence (Walton & Dutton, 1969). Formal conflict within business is easy to manage as it is mostly regulated by laws, dispute mechanisms and policies. External involvement gives impetus to the resolving of such conflict. However, informal conflict is often seen through actions or emotions. It takes shape in the forms of vengeance, gossip, lobbying and plain nastiness (Ragins & Cotton, 1991). Often, interdivisional competitiveness is as a result of two or more individuals in senior positions who have had some form of dispute with the other, or who are jockeying for the same more senior position. It could also be as result of expert power where the one sees him/herself or the division he/she represents as superior to the other in knowledge or importance in the organisation (Finkelstein, 1992).

This was clearly present in all the organisations party to this research. It was found that interdivisional rivalry or competitiveness was so strong that it went as far as undermining the achievement of organisational goals insofar as actions being detrimental to the peer group. Executives rarely had only good things to say about their peers, and all felt that as long as they themselves stayed out of

trouble, they could not care about the others. This type of conflict is described in literature as informal conflict (Kolb & Putnam, 1992) and if left unchecked, could paralyse the organisation. This type of conflict is rarely resolved, but is dealt with in different ways such as withdrawal, undermining, passive aggressiveness toward the other party, and unless addressed, could lead to embedded perceptions of strength and/or weaknesses. Blame avoidance is rife as is the "showing up" or "catching out" of individuals. These practices also have a limiting effect on information in the organisation which may stifle new innovation.

These practices played directly to the creation of an environment where trust became an issue. Trust is a key component in the coaching relationship (P. Parker, et al., 2008). A definition of trust in the workplace may include aspects of "walking the talk", setting and meeting expectations, reliability and dependability of the person and some form of certainty about future behaviour of a person. When behaviours show up which undermines trust (Baker & Jones, 1996), it fosters an environment where gossip manifests as the truth and individuals become reluctant to follow the leader as there are no guarantees of predictability in the future. It may further create relational conflict between members of a team.

Because the executive does not operate in isolation, but is really the "face" of the organisation both internally and externally, their actions or the lack thereof is noticed by their followers. Trust is a fundamental requirement in interpersonal relationships yet it is probably easier to describe due to experience than due to literature definitions. Trust embodies the willingness to take risks with another individual and hoping that the relationship will be mutually beneficial, yet knowing the opposite could also be true. According to some writers, there are a number of benefits which can be gained through trust. These include overcoming cultural differences, creating an environment open to the sharing of information, curbing the need to legalise human interaction through contracts, saving costs and enabling a work ethic of togetherness (Child, 2001).

It was interesting to note that the creation of mistrust was not so much as a result of external factors as that it was created by the behaviour, communication and example the executive set for the rest of the organisation. The executives who answered these interviews displayed definite mistrust to certain members of their peer group. They indicated that these individuals could not be trusted based on personal experiences where they did not deliver on agreed outcomes, breach of confidentiality and the fear of being exposed or blamed. Openness and the sharing of ideas happen sporadically in environments where they feel safe with a few select individuals, but could be misconstrued as lobbying or creating a coalition to introduce new ideas.

Integrity is something everybody claims they have, yet few show it in their actions. It is often interpreted as honesty where honesty represents sincerity, fairness, lack of conceit, and lack of greed (Lee, Ashton, & de Vries, 2005). When having coaching conversation, there needs to be a sense of honesty and credibility in the discussion. Honesty starts within ourselves and it is a virtue which underpins our relationship with ourselves – we cannot be honest with someone else if we cannot be honest with ourselves.

The office grapevine always starts with a rumour or a gossip spread from something someone said or did. Individuals often get tagged as “the office newspaper”; however, these behaviours only serve to break the integrity of the gossiper (Kurland & Pelled, 2000). There is an old saying that actions speak louder than words and nowhere is this truer than with integrity. Spoken words which are not supported by actions, will again affect the integrity of the individual.

Unfortunately this is also a value which is hard to measure but easy to see. If, in a coaching relationship, either of the parties does not act with integrity, it will jeopardize the relationship. The majority of the participants felt strongly about the value of integrity.

Confidentiality of a coaching intervention stands on three pillars – that of the coach, the coachee and the sponsor. Throughout the intervention, other forms of confidential material may also be consulted and generated such as

assessments and 360 feedback discussions. It is critical that all three parties agree to the confidentiality and that it be set out clearly at the beginning of the contract. With the use of an external coach, one is also faced with organisational confidentiality issues which may infringe on the quality of discussion which can be had by the coach and coachee (E. C. Thach, 2002; Wasylyshyn, 2003).

If, for any reason, the confidential nature of the situation impacts on the coachee, he/she may not be at liberty to discuss this with the coach. This leaves the coach at a disadvantage in working toward a common goal as agreed on. With peer coaching this is largely addressed as conversations take place within the organisation at peer level, therefore confidentiality should be easier to establish and will support the conversations (Sparks & Bruder, 1987; Swafford, 1998).

The results showed that confidentiality as a value between members of the leadership team also proved to be valued highly in the responses from the participants. The lack thereof has a direct causal effect on the level of trust in the organisation. Mistrust is also present in the informal structure or the grapevine of the organisation (Crampton, Hodge, & Mishra, 1998). Where the informal structure works well is when it adds positive value to the organisation such as getting things done faster because of the ability to pull the right people together, regardless of the structure. It complements the formal hierarchical structure and adds value to it through the application of power, talent and experience of individuals. Information is spread far quicker than through the formal communication structures (Bluckert, 2005a; Cox, et al., 2009).

Unfortunately, this informal structure can also be extremely negative with far reaching consequences. Typically, when using the informal structure, one has to be aware of what it is you want to achieve. If you happen to use the wrong individuals, or leave out certain individuals who believe they could assist in your effort, you may find yourself in trouble. Also, the amount of information you feed into the structure can be used against you. Unfortunately, little attention is given to this informal structure by the executive. Because it is not documented and

the roles people play within the structure changes often, executives need to foster relationships in this structure to be able to gauge the levels of trust and culture of the organisation as well as to obtain critical information, although it needs to be validated, which may lead to advancing the competitive advantage of the organisation.

Literature (Reese, 2005; Watkins, 2007) in this field was confirmed by the research results. In these cases, the informal structure used at executive level, mainly concentrated on the use of gossip about fellow executives to anybody who cared to listen. This information was then spread throughout the organisation resulting in a lack of credibility of the executive.

Over and above the mistrust, interdepartmental competitiveness and the role of the informal structure in the organisation, the researcher was quite surprised by the instances of stereotyping still embedded in the executive teams. Given the objective of having a demographically representative sample pool of respondents, it was interesting to note that although all the organisations in this study considered themselves to be equal opportunity employers, their own prejudice and bias still prevailed in areas of gender, race, nationality and age. The participants felt that the divide was still large and it added to the sensitive nature of trust in the leadership team. This could be contributed to a number of reasons which did not form part of this research, but it was interesting to note that such stereotyping is still active in business.

Whenever two or more people interact with each other, one is likely to come across diversity. Diversity has many dimensions; however it is a great conduit for change as it brings variety and conflict. It will elicit debate, participation and heighten awareness of different issues. Diversity can be a great source for competitive advantage as similarities, together with differences, will allow us to learn which in turn will allow us to change and adapt. Executives who reflect on their own diversity practice may come to different or even better alternatives to managing diversity in the workplace (Dass & Parker, 1999).

Although some writers claim that there is one “best” way to manage diversity,

there is little agreement on what that should look like. One point of view posits a framework for managing diversity linking the leader's perspectives and priorities to the managing of diversity, performance and organisational conditions (Dass & Parker, 1999). If this is the case, the role of the leader becomes even more critical in creating an environment in which any form of diversity stereotyping is taboo. The moment business realise that diversity is more than just addressing discrimination, fairness, access and legitimacy, they start to embrace to potential for sharing of information and new ideas (Thomas & Ely, 1996).

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Introduction

It did not take long for peer coaching, with its origins in the educational field (Showers, 1985), to contribute to the learning processes in other disciplines such as professional learning (Waddell & Dunn, 2005). Even more recently, business specific research in the application, benefits and risks of peer coaching has seen the light (P. Parker, et al., 2008; Parker, et al., 2012). This research also consulted research available on top management team development, trust and ethics, leadership and executive coaching to assist with the answering of the research question. The research set out to answer the following research question:

> *"Explore the factors influencing the implementation of executive peer coaching."*

The structure of this chapter will focus on how this question has been answered at the hand of two sub questions, namely:

> *"Explore the enabling factors influencing the implementation of executive peer coaching" and*

> *"Explore the constraining factors influencing the implementation of executive peer coaching."*

The answering of these two questions will follow a similar logic to the themes identified for the research. Not all themes are applicable to both questions as will be seen in the discussion.

6.1.1. Explore the enabling factors influencing the implementation of executive peer coaching

Executive appointments in organisations entail rigorous recruitment drives which answer to a variety of influences. These include legal requirements with regard to business, labour laws, recruitment processes, formal and informal organisational structures, technical expertise, management and leadership ability. These differ only from appointments through the rest of the organisation insofar as the legal business requirements.

This, notwithstanding the fact that the same organisations pride themselves with having state of the art induction programs for the rest of their work force, it is understandable that the expectation at executive level is such that the normal run of the mill induction programs are not pitched at the executive level due to the limited influence the work force has on the strategic performance of the organisation.

The absence of formal induction programs may indeed be an enabling factor to the rationale underlying a decision to implement a peer coaching program. The structured, yet flexible approach to peer coaching can facilitate the induction of the executive while at the same time contribute to the perceived level of trust within the executive. Not only can the executive become a productive member of the team, it opens an avenue for honest feedback and the sharing of information.

A further enabling factor to the decision whether or not to implement peer coaching, lies with the cost of the program. It was evident in the literature (Sherman, 2004) and the responses from participants that the cost of leadership and executive development could be exorbitant compared to the return seen on investment. Because the majority of peer coaching takes place between members of the executive team, and some take place between external peers as well, it can remain ongoing at no extra cost to the company except the time

invested by the individuals.

The return on investment is immediate in that it fosters trust and credibility within the organisation. The cost of using an external coach or facilitator to facilitate the process is much lower that the cost of individual coaching for every team member. An added benefit to the implementation of a peer coaching program is the possibility that the practice can snowball throughout the organisation, driven by the executive team.

A further enabling factor was identified in organisations where informal peer discussions or coaching already took place (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990) (Levene & Frank, 1993). Although none of the respondents have had any experience with formal peer coaching, they confirmed that a practice similar to what they see as peer coaching was in place.

The researcher has termed this phenomenon “informal peer coaching”. It presented itself in the form of non-structured discussions on work related and personal issues, it was considered more that mentoring because it allowed for debate and challenge of existing status quos. Pairing happened spontaneously based on a chemistry or rapport between two individuals, it cost nothing except time and commitment existed for as long as the relationship was beneficial to both parties.

A further interesting note was that in all instances named “informal peer coaching” both parties were of equal status in the organisation. Cognisance therefore must be taken of the fact that a form of peer coaching already exists within organisations. The risk in the formation of these “informal” relationships have been raised (Parker, et al., 2012) in that these relationships may create unmet expectations, may flounder in the presence of the lack of self awareness from either one or both of the parties or that the parties have differing learning method and needs. Furthermore, these relationships may unintentionally turn negative in the absence of reflective learning, active listening and clear goals (Parker, et al., 2012).

However, should these be managed and addressed through either a formal or informal structure, existing “informal” peer coaching may well facilitate accelerated career learning. However, it must be noted that the practice is to a large extent encouraged by the self motivational drive of the individual executive and condoned by the leader. This is underlined in research which confirms that within peer coaching, the relationship is equal with the intent of growing and learning both parties (P. Parker, et al., 2008; Parker, et al., 2012).

Hence the last enabling factor being identified as part of this research is the role the leader plays be that the MD or the CEO, in the emphasis placed on leadership development. It was found that where the leader took an active role in the promotion of leadership development, the possibility of the successful implementation of leadership interventions was greater than where the opposite was true. These leaders not only took leadership development seriously, they also worked hard at being authentic leaders, with authentic leadership being characterised as walking the talk, trustworthy, of integrity and a leader who understands the impact he/she has on others, taking into account their thoughts and moral perspectives as well as the feelings of others.

In summary, the researcher posits that the following are perceived to be enabling factors to the rationale behind implementing an executive peer coaching program:

- In the absence of a formal induction program for executives, peer coaching is a vehicle for building trust, creating opportunities for the sharing of information and establishing a culture of honest feedback;
- The cost of a peer coaching program is significantly lower and more sustainable that embarking on shorter one-on-one and group coaching interventions;
- Informal peer coaching is already present in organisations, therefore the concept of formal peer coaching will capitalize on the positive outcomes already experienced and
- Peer coaching is a channel through which authentic leadership may be cultivated.

As is evident from the above, the 1st proposition, namely that there are clear enabling rationales for initiating executive peer coaching programs, have been answered.

6.1.2. Explore the constraining factors influencing the implementation of executive peer coaching

A great deal has been written in the literature (Joo, 2005) which confirms the importance of the relationship between coach and coachee. Such is the importance of this that in the absence of a good relationship, the coaching intervention is likely to fail. The response of the participants confirmed that this was true for external coaches and even more so for internal peer coaches. Whereas factors such as trust, integrity and confidentiality were important with external coaches, it was even more so with peer coaches. The risk of getting it wrong with a peer coach exceeded the will to try as they felt the consequences of this could be disastrous. As they work together, a breach of any of the required factors could have far reaching effects for them insofar as their career was concerned within the organisation. The consensus was that they did not believe their current team members to be suitable peer coaches.

It is also true, that all of the respondents have had some history with their current team members, positive, negative or both, which played a role in the possible selection of a peer coach. When analysing the informal peer coaching network, it is clear that individuals opt for peers with whom they have built a rapport over a period of time with a formal executive on-boarding process (Reese, 2005; Watkins, 2007). This process may form part of the formal peer coaching program which has the potential to morph and continue into the informal peer coaching discussions (Parker, et al., 2012). This in itself poses the danger that growth may be limited during those discussions to serve the interest of the parties and that challenges will be set which are too easy to achieve. Also, certainly a red flag may also be raised as to whether or not the relationship is peer mentoring rather than peer coaching.

As with the enabling factors, leadership could also be seen as a constraining factor to the implementation of an executive peer coaching program. This is particularly true where there is a dominant leader present who does not value growth and learning or leadership development. These are leaders who have a “know it all” attitude and frown upon the request for assistance, or even worse, who cultivate an environment of internal competitiveness by playing one against the other, sometimes in public. For less dominant executives, the fear of being shown not to be of equal status is huge and they will try and form allegiances with the dominant leaders (Finkelstein, 1992). These leaders were viewed as non-authentic and their tenure is characterised by infighting, gossip and revenge amongst the management team.

Often these leaders are also embracing power dimensions in their leadership style. As the responses show, quite often the leader will do as he pleases because he can, he will consider himself the best there is and quite often will not allow anybody else to know more than he does on a subject. Even worse is when the rest of the executive team consider themselves total experts in their fields and believe that it is necessary to always be seen as being the best. This could be a serious constraint for the implementation of a peer program because of the belief that they know it all.

Further constraining factors were identified as internal competitiveness between divisions. This could be present where the leadership style is dominant as described above or where the two heads of division have had a running in with each other, creating conflict which is largely ignored and therefore festers and shows up through derogatory comments about each other or the respective divisions.

This practice could contribute to an environment of mistrust as also mentioned as a constraining factor. With trust being a critical factor in the success of any relationship, this research showed that where the executive of the organisation do not trust each other, it sets the example for the rest of the organisation to follow. In such a case, implementing a peer coaching program will receive a lot of resistance and may take a long time to yield success because of the history

between individuals.

Again, this fed into another constraining factor where the mistrust infiltrated the informal communication structure or the grapevine of the organisation. Although it is easy to employ a nonchalant attitude toward the grapevine, executives who do, stand the risk of losing valuable and critical organisational information which could have a positive impact on the organisation. The responses indicate that most of the executive team got this wrong. They were entertaining the wrong information and acting on it without clarifying the veracity of the information. This impacted on their perceived confidentiality and credibility.

The last constraining factor was quite surprising as it was not anticipated when the research started out. In organisations where diversity discrimination still existed, peer coaching was likely to fail. As understanding where the discrimination came from was not the purpose of the study, it may be of interest to explore this further. The fact that the presence of diversity discrimination is still evident in the workplace means that the application of peer coaching could be limited. It is evident that gender, race, nationality and age quality is still but a dream in these organisations.

In summary the researcher found the following perceived constraining factors to the rationale behind implementation of a peer coaching program:

- The factors influencing the choice of peer coach;
- The relationship between executive and peer coach;
- The presence of a dominant unauthentic leader;
- A leadership environment built on power dimensions;
- An environment of mistrust, gossip, and interdivisional competitiveness and
- The presence of diversity discrimination.

Evidence in this research has shown that the implementation of an executive peer coaching program is influenced by certain critical constraining factors, therefore answering proposition 2.

6.2. Implications for stakeholders

As set out at the beginning of the research, stakeholders include the top management team or the executive, human resources practitioners and business executive coaches.

6.2.1. Implication for top management teams

Top management teams have in the last couple of years, since the explosion of individual executive coaching, missed an opportunity for building team cohesion through training. Even though traditional classroom training no longer answers to the needs of today's business, it still provided an opportunity to grow and stretch each other in a safe environment. Leadership development training today is normally linked to tertiary institutions and can be very individualistic, adding to the competitiveness with business. The tendency today is to combine any form of team build or development with the strategic getaways and this rarely impacts positively back at the workplace.

The significance of this research to top management teams lies in the opportunity it creates for the top management team to recapture the growth and personal stretch in an individually applicable environment. This allows the executive to drive his/her own development within the organisation with the option of external peer coaching. It has the ability to forge long lasting relationships built on trust, confidentiality and mutual respect – all factors listed as critical success factors to coaching relationships in this research.

6.2.2. Implication for human resource practitioners

As human resource practitioners often are seen as the originator of leadership development initiatives and also as the custodian of the process, they face an incredible variety of choice when it comes to coaches in the market. They are tasked with the verification of the coach's credentials and have to find a suitable number of candidates to ensure the best possible choices for the top management team. Often, when a match cannot be found, this process repeats

itself or the practitioner has to build up his/her own registry of what they believe to be suitably qualifies coaches.

This in itself poses the challenge of finding the right coaches without having personal bias enter the decision making process and possibly limiting the impact coaching can have with the top management team. This study further highlights the need for a thorough and honest assessment of current leadership practice within the organisation and how it may affect the future of the organisation. Understanding the informal peer coaching practice and harnessing it to the best interest of the organisation is important as it in itself can identify possible dangers leaders' development, such as the transfer of undesired habits.

6.2.3. Implications for business executive coaches

This research magnifies the need for proper needs analysis, not only between coach, coachee and sponsor, but also the business environment in which the relationship functions. As stated at the outset of this research, peer coaching is not seen as a replacement for individual or group coaching, it is seen as additional to the skill of the coach. Peer coaching is a structured process and participants need training and facilitation to get this right. The individual coach can indeed become a facilitator of the process.

The implication however, will entail coaches being trained specifically in becoming facilitators of peer coaching programs and working much closer with the internal custodian to ensure the success of the program for the organisation. The research also implies that the mere fact that individual external coaching is considered to be confidential, limits the influence the coachee has when implementing his/her growth strategies. When these coachees embark on a peer coaching process however, they may find implementation easier with increased sustainability due to internal support.

6.3. Suggestions for further research

The purpose of this research was to explore perceived enabling and constraining factors behind the rationale for implementing executive peer coaching in South African business. To this end, existing literature was analysed together with clarifying the differences between individual, team and peer coaching. This exploratory research used a qualitative approach together with deductive content analysis.

Research methods included semi-structures interviews, observations and literature reviews. Data obtained though semi-structured interviews were coded and themed to form the basis for answering the research questions. Quotes were used to support the themes. Data analysis followed the following steps:

- Transcribing of the semi-structured interviews;
- Check accuracy of transcriptions;
- Using Atlas Ti coding software to code data;
- Refining of themes;
- Ensuring data quotes support the themes and
- Integration and analysis of themes

The research is bound by the ethical guidelines of the Institution taking into account the confidentiality, safety of recordings and professional competence of the researcher.

Limitations include the fact that few organisations within South Africa have implemented a peer coaching program. Furthermore, peer coaching is considered an emerging field in accelerated career learning. This study has proven to be anything but exhaustive in the field of business peer coaching in South Africa. It found that within the South African context, issues such as diversity played a larger role that elsewhere in the world. This could be because of the political history of the country, but needs further qualitative research to explore the impact this will hold for peer coaching.

Also, some of the constraining factors such as the factors influencing the choice of peer coach and the relationship between executive and peer coach could be

addressed through a properly planned and executed executive on-boarding process. A thorough research may be needed in the South African context of what a proper on-boarding program will look like and the role peer coaching may play in the effective implementation thereof.

It is hoped that these research findings contribute towards a better understanding of the role executive peer coaching can play in the attracting, integration and retention of executives, as well as to give an executives' perspective of what the important factors to this are. As peer coaching is in its infancy in the business world, the full benefit of understanding the process and adding it to the armoury of a coach may be undervalued.

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APPENDIX A – RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

A.1 Research protocol

A.1.1. Sample e-mail

Dear Sir/Madam,

Our telephonic conversation of _____ (date) refers. Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study. I have attached three documents for your information.

a. The first document is an introductory letter explaining the background to the research (6.2 below).

b. The second document is the participant information document which addresses key questions you may have regarding participation in this research project (6.4 below).

c. The third document is a consent letter which needs to be read through and completed. This consent letter contains ethical guidelines required for the research as well as information regarding the use of information gathered during our interview (6.5 below).

Please feel free to contact me should you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

Researcher

Contact details

A.1.2. Letter of introduction

University Name & School

Address

Date

Informant Name

Address

Dear Mr/Ms _____

This letter serves as introduction for _____ (Researcher), who is currently enrolled with the Wits Business School completing a Masters in Management Degree in Business Executive Coaching (MMBEC).

She is researching specifically in the field of executive peer coaching and believes that by interviewing you it will help her to answer her research question, namely: “An exploration of enabling/constraining factors to the implementation of executive peer coaching”.

The research project aims to better the understanding of implementation criteria to executive peer coaching in organisations such as your own. The outcome may prove valuable for the organisations’ executive leadership development programs in the future.

It will be highly appreciated if you could give her any assistance in this regard.

Yours sincerely,

Supervisor

A.1.3 Interview Schedule – Checklist

<table>
<tr><td>Research topic:</td><td colspan="2">Executive Peer Coaching</td></tr>
<tr><td>Research question:</td><td colspan="2">Perceived Enabling and Constraining Factors Influencing the Implementation of Executive Peer Coaching in South African Organisations</td></tr>
<tr><td>Research sub-
questions:</td><td colspan="2">○ Establish the enabling factors influencing the rationale for implementing an Executive Peer Coaching program
○ Establish the constraining factors influencing the rationale for implementing an Executive Peer Coaching program</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Organisation:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Informant:
Contact number:
e-mail address:</td><td>Gatekeeper:
Contact number:
e-mail address:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Interview date & time</td><td>Arrival & observations</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Interview checklist:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Pre-interview:
• Thank interviewee for time and willingness
• Restate research question
• Recording permission and equipment
• Ethics issue and consent letter</td><td>Post – interview:
• Thank interviewee
• Ask for other contacts
• Ask permission to ask for clarification</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Interview:
• ± 60-90 minutes</td><td>Interview schedule:
• Presented to interviewee</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Other data:
• Additional data/documents offered</td><td>Field notes:
•</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Transcript:</td></tr>
</table>

A.1.4. Participant Information Document

This document will be e-mailed to the participant before the interview to the participant (Remenyi, 2011)

	Issue	**Detail**
1	Researcher information	Ms Allison van Emmenis allisonve@mweb.co.za +27 (0)83 456 6733 MMBEC Student
2	Research project	Perceived enabling and constraining factors influencing implantation of executive peer coaching in South African organisations.
3	Purpose of the study	Understanding the factors influencing the rationale organisations consider when implementing (or not) an executive peer coaching program.
4	Description of the study	The study will be conducted through semi-structured interviews and literature reviews.
5.	Duration	8-12 months
6	What is involved and how long will it take?	You will be required to partake in an interview. This interview will be recorded to ensure exact transcription and eliminate researcher bias and interpretation. You may decline to have the interview recorded. Interviews will take 60-90 minutes.
7.	Why have you been asked to participate?	You have been identified as an executive level employee who has experienced individual, team and/or peer coaching.

8	What will happen with the information you give the researcher?	The information gathered (interview transcripts, recordings and other data) will be kept in a safe away from any business premises. Once the study has been successfully completed, all documents and recordings will be destroyed or shredded.
9	What will be done with the results of the study?	The interpretation of the data will be reported in the findings of the research project and handed in to the Wits Business School. The results may prompt further research.
10	What are the possible disadvantages?	Other than your time given to the interview, no cost will be incurred to you as result of this study. No other negative impact is envisaged.
11	In what way will the research be beneficial and to whom?	From the results of this study, it is hoped that organisations will be able to identify constraining factors and address these in order to embark on executive peer coaching either as alternative to individual or team coaching, or as continuation of the coaching intervention.
12	Who has reviewed this study to ensure compliance with the university's ethical standards?	This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr Kerrin Myres and has been reviewed and accepted by the Ethics Committee of the Wits Business School, University of the Witwatersrand.
13	Can permission be withdrawn having previously been granted?	Yes, all participants have the right to withdraw permission previously granted prior to the final submission of the research project.
14	Can you refuse to answer any questions?	Yes, you may refuse to answer any question and you may end the interview at any time if you should wish to do so.

A.1.5. Letter of Consent (WBS Letterhead)

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

Masters of Management RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

Study: Enabling and constraining factors to the implementation of executive peer coaching in multi-national organisations

INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM

Who I am

Good day, I am Allison van Emmenis. I am conducting research for the purpose of completing my MM at Wits Business School

What I am doing

I am are conducting research on the enabling and constraining factors influencing the implementation of executive peer coaching in multi-national organisations. I am conducting a qualitative study with ten to twelve experts to establish the rationale for initiating an executive peer coaching programme and to determine the enabling and constraining factors influencing the implementation of such a programme.

Your participation

I am asking you whether you will allow me to conduct an 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 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 research report. I will refer to you by a code number or pseudonym (another name) in the report 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 the rationale for initiating an executive peer coaching programme as well as to determine the enabling and constraining factors influencing such implementation. If you would like to receive feedback on the study, I can send you the results of the study when it is completed sometime after January 2012.

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, Ms. Mmabatho Leeuw. Mmabatho.leeuw@wits.ac.za

If you have concerns or questions about the research you may call my academic research supervisor Dr Kerrin Myres (011 717 3830).

CONSENT

I hereby agree to participate in research on enabling and constraining factors influencing the implantation of an executive peer coaching programme. 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**:……..

A.1.6. Interview questions – Respondents with coaching experience

Interview Questions:

1. Can you share with me what your experience has been upon entering the executive level of the organisation?
   Prompts:
   - How were you introduced and how did it make you feel?
   - How was your new role explained?
   - In what way were you supported with regard to your further development?
   - What role has feedback played in your development after your entry to executive level?
2. Could you tell me about the coaching program (if any) in your organisation?
   Prompts:
   - How did you decide on who your coach would be?
   - How many executives in your team have/ had/is being coached?
   - Can you explain the roll-out and process of the program from the time a decision was taken to implement to where you are now?
   - What was the rationale behind the decision to embark on this executive coaching?
   - What were the executive teams' (your own) expectations of the process and have they been met?
   - Who is the custodian of the process?
   - How long has the program been running?
   - Can you share with me why the decision was taken to implement this program at executive level?
3. Could you share with me what your expectations have been with regards to confidentiality between coachee, coach and sponsor?
   Prompts:
   - How do you decide how much you can disclose about an issue you wish to discuss with the coach?
   - How has your coach broadened his/her understanding about your organisation and your own development?

- What information goes back to the sponsor in the form of feedback?

4. How does your coaching intervention fit into the executive teams' development program?
   Prompts:
   - How is the development plan linked to the overall strategy of the organisation?
   - How is your coaching aligned to the function specific outcomes of your position?
5. Have you ever come across the terms "team coaching" and "peer coaching"?
   Prompts:
   - What is your understanding of these two terms?
   - What types of teambuilding do you your executive team do and how effective are they?
   - What, if any, is the lasting effect of this type of teambuilding?
   - In what way are relationships strengthened between the executive team members?
   - In your opinion, which factors were critical to obtain and retain buy-in from all team members?

Allow me to give you some information on executive peer coaching:

Definition:

Dimension	**Individual**	**Team**	**Peer**
Power	Coach	Coach	Individual
Facilitation	External	External/Internal	Internal
Relationship ratio	1 : 1	1 : Many	Many : Many
Development Emphasis	Individual	Team	Individual/Team
Duration	6-12 months	3-6 months	Continuous

6. Based on what you have just heard, do you believe there is a place for peer coaching in your executive team?

   Prompts:

   - Why?
   - Why not?
   - Where do these beliefs/opinions come from?
   - Why do you think such an implementation will solicited these reactions?
   - What do you believe should the intervention be which brings your team together as a unit working in synergy towards a common strategy?
   - How can peer coaching assist in this process?
   - Why do you say that?

7. Are there any other issues you would like to raise which may be relevant to this study?
8. Is there anybody else you think I should talk to in your organisation or externally?

A.1.7. Interview questions – Respondents without coaching experience

Interview Questions:

1. Can you share with me what your experience has been upon entering the executive level of the organisation?
   Prompts:
   - How were you introduced and how did it make you feel?
   - How was your new role explained?
   - In what way were you supported with regard to your further development?
   - What role has feedback played in your development after your entry to executive level?
2. Could you tell me about the coaching program (if any) in your organisation?
   Prompts:
   - How did/would you decide on who your coach would be?
   - How many executives in your team have had/is being coached?
   - Who will decide on a possible roll-out and process of a coaching program?
   - What could be a rationale behind the decision to embark on executive coaching?
   - What would be the executive teams' (your own) expectations of the process?
   - Who will be the custodian of the process?
3. Could you share with me what your expectations would be with regards to confidentiality between coachee, coach and sponsor?
   Prompts:
   - How would you decide how much you can disclose about an issue you wish to discuss with the coach?
   - What is your expectation of what information goes back to the sponsor in the form of feedback?
4. How would your coaching intervention fit into the executive teams' development program?
   Prompts:
   - How would the development plan link to the overall strategy of the organisation?
   - How would individual coaching align to the function specific outcomes of

the executive's position?

- What factors will influence the introduction of a coaching program at executive level?

5. Have you ever come across the terms "team coaching" and "peer coaching"?
   Prompts:
   - What is your understanding of these two terms?
   - What types of teambuilding do your executive team do and how effective are they?
   - What, if any, is the lasting effect of this type of teambuilding?
   - In what way are relationships strengthened between the executive team members?
   - In your opinion, which factors were critical to obtain and retain buy-in from all team members?

Definition:

Dimension	**Individual**	**Team**	**Peer**
Power	Coach	Coach	Individual
Facilitation	External	External/Internal	Internal
Relationship ratio	1 : 1	1 : Many	Many : Many
Development Emphasis	Individual	Team	Individual/Team
Duration	6-12 months	3-6 months	Continuous

6. Based on what you have just heard, do you believe there is a place for peer coaching in your executive team?
   Prompts:
   - Why?
   - Why not?
   - Where do these beliefs/opinions come from?

- Why do you think such an implementation will solicited these reactions?
- What do you believe should the intervention be which brings your team together as a unit working in synergy towards a common strategy?
- How can peer coaching assist in this process?
- Why do you say that?

7. Are there any other issues you would like to raise which may be relevant to this study?
8. Is there anybody else you think I should talk to in your organisation or externally?

A.1.8. Letter of Thanks

University Name & School

Address

Date

Informant Name

Address

Dear Mr/Ms _____

Thank you for your participation in my research project. Your input during our discussion has been most helpful and is appreciated.

I will be happy to forward you a copy of my research report once it has been accepted, or alternatively, I could forward you just your section of my findings. Please let me know if you would be interested.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher

ANNEXURE B - ETHICS PROTOCOL

The University of the Witwatersrand has prescribed a formal ethics protocol for this research project which was accepted with the proposal to this research.