The perceived long-term impact of group coaching on women entrepreneurs in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

Women entrepreneurs play an important part in the economy of a country through creation of employment and alleviation of poverty, however women entrepreneurs still face challenges in starting and growing their businesses. Coaching is seen as one form of intervention that has the potential to offer support to women during the creation and growth of their businesses.

The research aimed to explore the perceived long-term impact of a group coaching programme on women entrepreneurs in the Free State province of South Africa. The study focused on articulating how the group coaching contributed to the long-term impact and identified recommendations for enhancing the long-term impact of the programme. The study used a multiple case study approach using semi-structured interviews to collect data from two cases, that is, from participants, coaches and business advisors involved in two different group coaching programmes, which ended two and four years ago respectively. Data was analysed using thematic analysis, including in-case and cross-case analysis.

The results of the study indicate that group coaching had a perceived long-term impact on women entrepreneurs, both personally and on their businesses. Specific areas of impact personally include increased self-confidence, enhanced leadership skills, developed strategic thinking ability, improved marketing skills and enhanced organising skills. Impact on the business includes growth in the business and improved business systems and/or processes. Factors in the group coaching programme that contributed to the long-term impact include the structure of the programme, meaningful content, the coaching approach, the value of having two coaches, and the group learning and sharing. Factors in the programme that assisted the women to sustain the changes over the long term were continued communication with the group and coach, and referral to programme material. Recommendations to improve the programme are also provided for Seda, the coaches and other agencies that implement group coaching programmes. The study provides insight into the impact of a group coaching programme and the results add to the body of knowledge on the long-term impact of group coaching.

Key words: Group coaching, women entrepreneurs, entrepreneurial coaching, long-term impact and sustainable outcomes.

DECLARATION

I, Boiyane Suzan Mshumpela hereby declare that this research is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment off the requirements for the degree Master of Management (Business and Executive coaching) in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before or any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Boiyane Suzan Mshumpela

Signed at Johannesburg, on the 29th day of March 2019.

DEDICATION

To my family, for your love and support throughout this journey!

To God, for giving me the strength to push through!

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I would like to thank the following people:

Firstly, I would like to thank my husband Themba and son Refentse for believing in me and supporting me throughout my studies.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

DSBD: Department of Small Business Development

Dti: Department of Trade and Industry

FS: Free State province

GEM: Global Entrepreneurship Monitor

NEF: National Empowerment Fund

SARS: South African Revenue Services

Seda: Small enterprise Development Agency

SEFA: Small Enterprise Finance Agency

SMMEs: Small Medium and Micro Enterprises

WECP: Women Enterprise Coaching Programme

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this qualitative case research is to explore the perceived long-term impact of group coaching on women entrepreneurs in the Free State Province of South Africa, in order to provide recommendations for improving the implementation of the coaching programme towards enhancing its long-term impact. The study aims to also understand how the group coaching contributed to the women entrepreneurs, as individuals and as business owners.

The Small Enterprise Development Agency (Seda) is a government agency mandated to implement the government's small business strategy and to integrate all government funded agencies. Seda recognised the need to support women-owned projects that contribute towards sustainability and as a result, the Women Enterprise Coaching Programme was introduced in 2012 in KwaZulu Natal and Gauteng provinces.

Since then, Seda Free State (FS) has implemented three Women Enterprise Coaching Programmes, with each being facilitated by different external coaches. The first programme ran over a period of seven months from February 2014 to August 2014 in the Mangaung Metro (Bloemfontein). The second programme ran over a period of ten months from August 2015 to March 2016 in the Lejweleputswa District (Welkom). Thus, the first programme was completed four years ago, and the second programme was completed two years ago. The most recent programme was implemented from July 2017 to March 2018; however, it did not form part of the study as the aim of the study is to explore the perceived long-term impact over a period of two years and more. Each of the first two group coaching programmes involved 20 to 30 women entrepreneurs who were coached as a group over a period of seven or 10 months, respectively. For these two programmes, Seda has relied only on the feedback from the coaches regarding the perceived impact at the end of the programme. However, Seda has not analysed the long-term impact of these two programmes, relating to the key goal of the coaching programme, which is focused on promoting long-term sustainability of the women entrepreneurs. This research therefore uses a qualitative case study design to explore the perceived long-term impact of group coaching on women entrepreneurs. The study comprises two cases, that is, the first programme completed four years ago, and the second programme completed two years ago.

1.2 Context of the study

Small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) play an important role in stimulating economic activity, creating jobs, alleviating poverty and uplifting living standards. Governments see entrepreneurship as a key driver of growth and job creation (Chinomona & Maziriri, 2015). Entrepreneurship has traditionally been a male dominated phenomenon (Ahl, 2006), however, female entrepreneurship is increasing rapidly and women are now participating in traditionally male sectors like construction (Mandipaka, 2014). The government also acknowledges the role played by women entrepreneurs in the economy by giving them support through programmes and policies that ensure their participation in the mainstream economy (Mandipaka, 2014).

According to the Integrated Strategy on the Promotion of Entrepreneurship and Small Business (2005), the promotion of entrepreneurship and small businesses remains an important priority of the SA government. In this report and the Integrated Strategy for the Promotion of Co-operatives (2012-2020), the strategic framework on gender and women economic empowerment proposes a number of initiatives aimed at providing various kinds of support to women-owned businesses. These support measures include entrepreneurial education, financing of women enterprises, involvement of women in international trade, science and technology, and support for rural women.

According to the 2014 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) report for South Africa, female entrepreneurship could be the key to unlocking economic growth, if more effort is made to support women entrepreneurs in a targeted way (Herrington, Kew, & Kew, 2014). Many women still face greater difficulties in becoming entrepreneurial (Herrington, Kew, & Mwanga, 2016). The challenges include higher levels of domestic responsibility, lower levels of education and lack of female role models in business, lack of capital and assets, and lack of assertiveness and confidence in their ability to succeed in business (Herrington et al., 2016). Other challenges include limited access to finance, gender bias or gender discrimination, and lack of education and training (Chinomona & Maziriri, 2015). Moses and Amalu (2010) noted that women often experience greater constraints on their economic actions relative to men. Despite many efforts to support women entrepreneurs, women enterprises still fail (Herrington et al., 2016).

One form of support that has the potential to provide effective support to women during venture creation is coaching (Fielden & Hunt, 2011). Coaching is used as a support function and an important development tool for entrepreneurs (Brinkley & le Roux, 2018; Dobrea & Maiorescu, 2015; Fielden & Hunt, 2011; Saadaoui & Affess, 2015). While a growing number of small and medium enterprises use coaching, little is known about the perceived benefits of coaching as a support intervention in the small to medium enterprise sector (Audet & Couteret, 2012; Crompton & Smyrnios, 2011; Gray, Ekinci, & Goregaokar, 2011; Saadaoui & Affess, 2015). Research on coaching appears to relate mostly to dyadic (one-on-one) coaching, with few models of group coaching being developed (Brown & Grant, 2010). Compared to dyadic coaching, there appears to be a gap in the literature on the emerging practice of group coaching and its impact (O'Connor, Studholme, & Grant, 2017) particularly in relation to women entrepreneurs.
The present study explores the perceived long-term impact of a group coaching programme, implemented by the Small Enterprise Development Agency (Seda), on women entrepreneurs. This government agency is mandated to implement national government’s small business strategy throughout South Africa (SA) in

respect of small enterprise development and has recognised the need to support women, allocating an annual target of 40% for support initiatives aimed at women-owned businesses. As a result, a group coaching programme was introduced and has been implemented in different provinces of SA since 2012. In July 2015, Seda also commissioned a survey by an independent company to evaluate the relevance of its support services to small enterprises and co-operatives in line with the strategic plans of the Department of the Small Business Development (DSBD). The Women Enterprise Coaching Programme (WECP) was also one of the programmes that was evaluated. This survey focused on the perception of Seda's employees, management, external partners, stakeholders, and Seda clients. The results of the survey indicated that 55% of Seda clients and 42% of employees were uncertain of how to rate the programme, 26% of customers and 22% of employees rated it as good. Only 8% of Seda employees and 10% of clients rated the programme as excellent. However, little is known about the perceived impact of the group coaching programme over the long term – on the women entrepreneurs as individuals and on their businesses. Given that long-term sustainability of these women entrepreneurs' businesses is important, this study explores the perceived long-term impact of the programme on the women entrepreneurs, focusing on two programmes completed in the Free State – one completed four years ago, and the other completed two years ago.

1.3 Research problem

To explore the perceived long-term impact of a group coaching programme on women entrepreneurs, towards recommending improvements to the programme for enhancing its long-term impact.

1.4 Research objectives

The research objectives are outlined as follows:

1. To explore the perceived long-term impact of the group coaching programme on women entrepreneurs
2. To articulate how the group coaching contributed to the perceived long-term impact on women entrepreneurs
3. To recommend improvements for the group coaching programme towards enhancing the long-term impact

1.5 Research questions

The study sought to answer the following questions:

1 What is the perceived long-term impact of the group coaching programme on women entrepreneurs?
2 How did the group coaching contribute to the perceived long-term impact on women entrepreneurs?
3 How can the group coaching programme be improved towards enhancing the long-term impact?

1.6 Significance of the study

Research on coaching appears to relate mostly to dyadic (one-on-one) coaching and few models of group coaching have been developed (Brown & Grant, 2010). There therefore seems to be a gap in the literature on the emerging practice of group coaching and its impact (O'Connor et al., 2017).

The present study enhances the understanding of how group coaching contributes to the perceived long-term impact on women entrepreneurs, as the study is based on the women's perceptions of how the group coaching impacted them both personally and in their businesses. The findings recommend how Seda can specifically improve the implementation of the group coaching programme, in the Free State and in the rest of South Africa, to enhance the long-term impact on women entrepreneurs, which is crucial for their growth and sustainability. In addition, recommendations are made to other stakeholders who have an interest in group coaching, such as organisations who are implementing group coaching programmes and coaches who are facilitating group coaching programmes. Finally, the study also adds to the body of knowledge on the perceived long-term impact of using group coaching as an intervention, and in particular, how a group coaching programme may contribute to sustaining long-term changes made by the participants.

1.7 Delimitations of the study

The study is a qualitative case research. The study focuses on a group of women entrepreneurs who participated in the group coaching programme in the Free State province, specifically in the Mangaung Metro (Bloemfontein) and Lejweleputswa district (Welkom). Only women who graduated from the programme are included in the study. The study excludes a group of women who recently completed the group coaching programme in 2018. The sample consisted of six women per group, two external coaches and a business advisor from Seda allocated for each group. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews.

The research focuses on the participants' perceptions of how the coaching impacted them and their businesses long after the programme had ended. The business advisors' and coaches' perceptions of how the programme impacted the women are also included in the study. The study does not include perceptions of other people who work with the women entrepreneurs, nor their subordinates. Experts from different institutions and speakers were invited to give presentations during the programme. The study does not include perceptions of these experts.

The study excludes one-to-one coaching as the entrepreneurs were coached as a group by the two external coaches. Team coaching is excluded from the programme. Although the group objectives are formulated as an outcome or requirement of the programme, each entrepreneur works towards achievement of their individual business' goals. Internal coaching is also excluded, as the business advisors' roles are to monitor and evaluate implementation of the programme by the coaches, and not to coach.

1.8 Definition of terms

- Business coaching is the process of engaging in regular, structured, conversations with a client, an individual or team who is in the business, profit or non-profit organisation, institution or government and who is the recipient of business coaching. The goal is to enhance the client's awareness and behaviour in order to achieve business objectives for both the client and their organisation (Worldwide Association of Business Coaches, 2007; Rostron & van Rensburg, 2012).
- Entrepreneur is defined as an individual with a skill, mindset and the vision to start up a high-potential venture and the typically more seasoned, risk averse professional with the ability to scale the enterprise (Timmons & Spinneli, 2004, p. 27).
- Entrepreneurship is defined as the act of initiating, creating, building, expanding and sustaining a venture, building an entrepreneurial team and gathering the necessary resources to exploit an opportunity in the marketplace for long term wealth and capital gain (Chinomona, Maziriri, & Moloi, 2014, p. 23).
- Entrepreneurial coaching is defined as individual support through a partnership with a professional coach for entrepreneurs whose firms are at the start-up or early growth stages (Audet & Couteret, 2012).
- Group coaching is defined as a small group of people meeting together in active participation on several occasions for the purpose of learning, including the developing of new capacities and skills. Participants learn through exchange and interaction with each other (Thornton, 2010, p. 9).
- Perceived long-term impact, in this study, is defined by the researcher as the impact on the women entrepreneur participants two or more years after the group coaching programme has ended.

- Women entrepreneur: A “woman or group of women who initiate, organise and run a business enterprise” (Sharma, 2013, p. 9).

1.9 Assumptions

- The participants answered the questions truthfully and honestly and that they had enough time to articulate the responses to give more depth to the questions asked.
- The participants provided insight into how the programme impacted them both personally and professionally.
- The coaches had knowledge and experience in the field of group coaching and gave valuable inputs into the impact of the programme.
- The business advisors allocated to manage the programme had insight into the field of coaching.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature review first gives an overview of the context and key concepts which are relevant to this study. This section focuses on defining women entrepreneurship, an overview of women entrepreneurship and the challenges they face, followed by coaching as an intervention used to support entrepreneurs. Thereafter, the concept of group coaching is outlined, and finally, a discussion of the concept of the long-term impact of coaching. After this first section, the literature review then focuses on addressing each of the three research questions of this study. The literature is then concluded with a review of the research propositions.

2.2 Background discussion

This section gives an overview of the context in which the study is situated and discusses key concepts of relevance to the study.

2.2.1 Defining women entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship and small businesses play a key role in stimulating economic activities, alleviating poverty, creating jobs and uplifting living standards (Mandipaka, 2014b). Defining an entrepreneur remains a problem as academics and researchers never seem to agree on the definition (Nieman & Nieuwenhuizen, 2009). According to Chinomona and Maziriri (2015, p. 836) the international definition of an entrepreneur is that "he or she is an enterprise builder, perceives new business opportunities and creates businesses where none existed before, directs these businesses by using his or her borrowed capital, takes associated risks and enjoys profits as rewards for the efforts". Timmons and Spinelli (2004, p. 23) define an entrepreneur as "an individual with a skill, mindset and the vision to start up a high-potential venture and the typically more seasoned, risk averse professional with the ability to scale the enterprise". Nieman and Nieuwenhuizen (2009, p. 9) see an entrepreneur as "a person who sees an opportunity in the market, gathers resources and creates and grows a business venture to meet these needs. He or she bears the risk of venture and is rewarded with profit if it succeeds" The common factors amongst these definitions is innovation, risk taking and rewards with profits.

Sharma (2013, p. 9) defines a woman entrepreneur as a "woman or group of women who initiate, organise and run a business enterprise", which is the definition used in the present study. Bruni, Gherardi, and Poggio (2004) assert that attempts have been made to draw up different typologies of women entrepreneurs, and if the best classifications are combined, women entrepreneurs typically have one or more of the following profiles or motives:

i. an "aimless young woman" who sets up an enterprise essentially as an alternative to unemployment;
ii. the "success oriented" young women for whom entrepreneurship is not a more or less a random choice but a long-term career strategy;
iii. the "strongly success oriented" women, usually without children, who view an entrepreneurial activity as an opportunity for greater professional fulfilment or as a means to overcome obstacles against career advancement encountered in organisations for which they previously worked;
iv. the "dualists" often with substantial work experience, who must reconcile work and family responsibilities, and are therefore looking for a solution which gives them flexibility;
v. the "return workers", or low-skilled workers, who have quit their previous job to look for and are motivated by economic considerations or desires to create space for fulfilment outside the family sphere;
vi. the "traditionalists" or women with a family background in which owning or starting a business is a long-standing tradition;
vii. the "radicals" or women motivated by a culture antagonist who set up initiatives intended to promote the interests of women in society.

Depending on their profiles or motives for becoming entrepreneurs, women face many challenges in starting and growing their businesses; these are elucidated in the next section.

2.2.2 Women entrepreneurship and key challenges they face

Van der Merwe and De Swardt (2008) assert that women entrepreneurship is increasing rapidly, and women are starting their own businesses to take control of their personal and professional lives. Due to low economic growth and the high unemployment rate in SA, young people and women are forced to choose entrepreneurship as a way of self-employment (Mandipaka, 2014b). Unemployment in SA is widespread with the official rate ranging between 20-25% for most of the past 25 years (Vermeulen, 2017). The SA economy has been experiencing negative growth for two or more consecutive quarters growing at -2.6, and as a result, the economy slipped into a recession in the second quarter of 2018 shrinking by 0,7% quarter-on-quarter (Stats SA, 2018).

According to the 2016/17 GEM Report, the ratio of male to female participation in early stage entrepreneurial activities differs considerably across all GEM sample countries; however, a consistent finding is that men are more entrepreneurial than women, even in South Africa (Herrington et al., 2016). This is because women face greater difficulties in becoming entrepreneurial. These obstacles include higher levels of domestic responsibility, lower levels of education, lack of role models in the business sector, fewer business-oriented networks in communities, lack of capital and assets, lower status in society, and culturally induced lack of assertiveness in their ability to succeed in business

Akhalwaya and Havenga (2012) argue that women entrepreneurs play an important role in the economy of the country with regards to income and employment creation, however, their contribution has not been sufficiently nurtured and developed (Mandipaka, 2014). Not only does female entrepreneurship contribute to economic development and employment creation, but it is also increasingly recognised to enhance the diversity of entrepreneurship in any economic system (Jamali, 2009).

Many women are motivated to start businesses and their motivation is associated with different factors. Some of the factors affecting women entrepreneurs are classified as pull or push factors. The push factors include unemployment, redundancy, recession, inadequate family income, dissatisfaction with being employed, and the need to accommodate home and work roles simultaneously (Okurut & Ama, 2013). Other push factors that motivate women to start businesses include frustration, job dissatisfaction, deployment, divorce and boredom in their previous jobs (Moses & Amalu, 2010). The pull factors include the motivation for independence and the need to succeed better than other entrepreneurs, the need for autonomy, education and family security (Moses & Amalu, 2010).

Moses and Amalu (2010) identified the following challenges that inhibit women in taking advantage of and succeeding with entrepreneurial opportunities: poor financial management, liquidity problems, management inexperience and incompetence, poor or non-existent books and records, sales and marketing problems, staffing difficulties with unions, the failure to seek expert advice, limited social and business networks, and lower level of demand in the local economy. Women entrepreneurs, and the challenges they face in general, are recognised by the South African government. O'Neill and Viljoen (2001) assert that the White Paper on the National Strategy for the Development and Promotion of Small Business (1995) emphasises the following aspects:

- Problems facing women entrepreneurs experienced in the past with regard to legal status and access to finance;
- Special needs of female entrepreneurs with regard to the provision of appropriate infrastructure;
- Special training needs for female entrepreneurs;
- The need for tax concessions to large enterprises to support female entrepreneurs;

- The need to improve the position of female entrepreneurs as an initial high priority target are in the small business development efforts

In emphasising these challenges, the government, by implication, recognised the potential role of women in the future economic development of South Africa and came up with different support initiatives for women entrepreneurs. As part of government's policy to promote entrepreneurship, The Integrated Strategy on The Promotion of Entrepreneurship and Small Enterprises (2005) proposed a number of initiatives to support women entrepreneurs. These initiatives include the provision of business information, entrepreneurial education and training, financing, international trade programme, mentorship programmes, research and statistics on enterprising women, technology fund for women and literacy programmes for rural women. However, despite these efforts to support women entrepreneurs, there are still not enough women entrepreneurs (Chiloane & Mayhew, 2010) and many of the businesses still fail (Herrington et al., 2016). One of the inhibiting factors to entrepreneurship development is lack of awareness of, and the inaccessibility to, support initiatives in the communities (Gwija, Eresia-Eke, & Iwu, 2014).

2.2.3 Coaching as a support intervention for entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurs often lack the tools and support needed to build successful businesses and turn to coaching to provide support for the future success of their businesses (Brinkley & le Roux, 2018; Crompton, Smyrnios, & Bi, 2012). Coaching can be used as a means to empower the entrepreneur and encourage the entrepreneur to think more strategically and arrive at their own solutions (Audet & Couteret, 2012; Brinkley & le Roux, 2018). Coaching entrepreneurs allows them to develop skills and capabilities to manage the businesses, improve its efficiency and increase self-confidence (Saadaoui & Affess, 2015). Similarly, coaching promotes the development of entrepreneurial skills through facilitating implementation of their strategic vision (Rosha & Lace, 2016). The coach can play the role of facilitator and catalyst, giving a more personalised approach to coaching that focuses not only on the business, but on the entrepreneur as an individual (Audet & Couteret, 2012). Other benefits of coaching include increased productivity and performance, enhanced communication, goal attainment, life and work satisfaction and fulfilment, increased self-awareness and leadership effectiveness (Brinkley & le Roux, 2018).

Coaching is defined by Whitmore (2017, p.13) as “unlocking people’s potential to maximise their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them” The coach “works with a client to achieve speedy, increased and sustainable effectiveness in their lives and careers through focused learning” (Rogers, 2012, p. 7). The coach’s sole aim is “to work with the client to achieve all of the client’s potential, as defined by the client” (Rogers, 2012, p. 7).

Mentoring, in general, is defined by Clutterbuck (2001, p. 3) as “offline help by one person to another in making significant transitions in knowledge, work or thinking”. Entrepreneurial mentoring specifically involves a support relationship between an experienced entrepreneur and novice entrepreneur in order to foster the latter’s development (St-Jean & Audet, 2009). In a similar vein, entrepreneurial coaching is defined as individual support through a partnership with a professional coach for entrepreneurs whose firms are at the start-up or early growth stages (Audet & Couteret, 2012, p. 516) which is the definition that is used in this study.

It is therefore worth noting that mentoring and coaching share some similarities and differences - and in the SME sector, these two concepts are sometimes used interchangeably and as subsets of each other (Crompton et al., 2012; Gray et al., 2011; Peel, 2008). Both coaching and mentoring emphasise the importance of confidentiality and trust within the relationship (Crompton et al., 2012). As with coaching, in mentoring, the relationship is the greatest predictor of success (McCarthy, 2013). Mentoring can be practiced in a variety of contexts at work, in educational institutions and community development projects (Watson, 2009). Similarly to coaching, mentoring programmes have been developed within large organisations (Audet & Couteret, 2012). A mentoring relationship is characterised by the process of rapport building, direction setting, progress making, winding down and moving on (Clutterbuck, 2013). Similarly, coaching follows the same process of rapport building, contracting, challenging and supporting (Hardingham, 2013). The differences between coaching and mentoring are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Differences between mentoring and coaching

Key drivers	Coaching	Mentoring
Focus	Performance enhancement or goal attainment (Joo, 2005).	Career progression, networking and growth (Joo, 2005).
Skills	Provides specific skills for managers (Audet & Couteret, 2012)	Helps entrepreneurs to grow and widen their horizons (Audet & Couteret, 2012)
Relationship	Coaching is a business relationship with coaches who are financially rewarded for their work (Audet & Couteret, 2012)	Mentoring is voluntary through other experienced entrepreneurs (Audet & Couteret, 2012)
Duration	Long-term engagement (Joo, 2005)	Short-term engagement (Joo, 2005; McCarthy, 2013).

Although the above differences between coaching and mentoring are blurred, coaching has been found to have an impact on entrepreneurs. A few studies on entrepreneurial coaching are outlined next to illustrate its impact.

Gray et al. (2011) measured the impact of coaching experience on the personal development of SME managers and discovered that coaching had a significant impact on personal attributes such as managing self-cognition and managing self-emotion whereas impact on business-related attributes was weaker. In another study conducted by Gray and Goregaokar (2007) the results of a three-year programme which provided SME managers with coaching, were analysed. What emerged strongly from this research was that the SME managers achieved a greater sense of strategic direction (especially strategic change), planning, the ability to prioritise and focus on key areas of the businesses as a result of coaching (Gray, 2016). Brinkley and le Roux (2018), on the other hand, found that coaching is useful as a support function for entrepreneurs who lack skills to make a success of their businesses. In addition, Crompton et al. (2012) conducted a study assessing whether business coaching directly or indirectly enhanced a firm's growth. The researchers found that business coaching is a non-direct influencer of firm growth through entrepreneurial level of confidence (self-efficacy) on firm growth (Crompton et al., 2012). Bozer, Sarros, and Santora (2013) found that it is important to assess coachee-related factors when selecting participants for coaching programmes. In addition, in order to maximise the value of coaching for both the organisation and coachee, progress should be monitored throughout the intervention and outcomes evaluated systematically (Bozer et al., 2013).

The above studies focused on the effectiveness of dyadic coaching (that is, one-to-one coaching) on entrepreneurs, and not on group coaching. The concept of group coaching is discussed in the section that follows.

2.2.4 Group coaching

To date, most applications of coaching in the workplace involve one-on-one coaching relationships and there has been interest in extending this individualistic approach to teams and groups (O'Connor et al., 2017). Though researchers acknowledge the necessity of interventions on a group level to promote organisational change, few models of group coaching have been developed (Flückiger, Aas, Nicolaidou, Johnson, & Lovett, 2017).

As a group coaching programme implemented by Seda is the focus of the current study, it is important to define and understand the concept of group coaching. Britton (2010, p. 6) defines group coaching as "a small group process through which there is the application of coaching principles for the purposes of personal or professional development, the achievement of goals or greater self-awareness along thematic or non-thematic lines". Brown and Grant (2010), cited in Fusco, O'Riordan, and Palmer (2016, p. 121) define group coaching as "a single group setting, which is primarily focused on the development of the individual within the group, while leveraging input from a range of varying peer perspectives and experiences". Thornton (2016) describes group coaching as "a small group of people meeting together in active participation on several occasions for the purpose of learning, including the developing of new capacities and skills. Participants learn through exchange and interaction with each other". The latter definition is used for the purpose of this study as it explains that group coaching involves the facilitation of a group that meets regularly over a period of time, which aligns with the group coaching programme being studied.

Group coaching involves a coach, or two or more coaches, and it differs from the dyadic form of coaching with a single coach and a coachee (Brown & Grant, 2010). Another difference between group coaching and one-on-one coaching is that group coaches need a strong understanding of group dynamics and group-based dialogue processes (Brown & Grant, 2010). However, just as rapport is important for individual coaching, group coaching requires good rapport at group level (Brown & Grant, 2010).

In group coaching, the group is used as a vehicle to accomplish awareness and effectiveness within the individual (Van Dyke, 2014). The individuals work as a group serving both themselves and one another in the process, however, they are not focused on a group deliverable such as a team goal (Fusco et al., 2016). Yet, Wotruba (2016) found that establishing and maintaining a trust-based relational connection with teams at both individual and collective levels, was at times, both challenging and complex. This view is also held by O'Connor and Grant (2017) who assert that group coaching is more complex than individual coaching.

Group coaching occurs in corporations, small businesses, and government programmes, either with intact groups or groups of strangers coming together, and may be in person or virtual (Britton, 2010). Grounded in coaching principles and skills, group coaching utilises core coaching skills and competencies, while adapting skills and approaches from facilitation and training (Britton, 2010). Group coaching is an intimate conversation space, focused on goal setting, awareness building and accountability (Britton, 2010). The individuals work as a group serving both themselves and one another in the process, however, they are not focused on a group deliverable such as a team goal (Fusco et al., 2016) which is the purpose of team coaching.

The terms 'group coaching' and 'team coaching' are frequently used interchangeably and there can sometimes be confusion over their use (Fusco et al., 2016); however, the two terms do differ (Brown & Grant, 2010; O'Connor et al., 2017). In team coaching, individuals come together and work towards a defined goal; whereas group coaching relates to a broader category that relates to any group of individuals, but is not limited to teams, whether participants are working together towards a specific goal or not (Brown & Grant, 2010).

2.2.5 The long-term impact of coaching

The present study explores perceptions of the long-term impact of a group coaching programme on women entrepreneurs. The concept of 'long-term impact' in the context of coaching therefore needs to be clarified. Despite the increasing popularity of coaching (Bozer et al., 2013; Ely et al., 2010; Theeboom, Beersma, & van Vianen, 2014), empirical research evaluating the effects or impact of coaching has lagged behind (Cavanagh & Grant, 2004; De Meuse, Dai, & Lee, 2009) with only one third of coaching initiatives being evaluated (McDermott, Levenson, & Newton, 2007). To improve our understanding of whether coaching makes a difference to leadership behaviour as well as other individual and organisational outcomes, much more rigorous research is needed (De Meuse et al., 2009).

Of relevance to the concept of "long-term impact of coaching", Bachkirova and Cox (2010, p. 1) define coaching as a "human development process that involves structured, focused interaction and the use of appropriate strategies, tools and techniques to promote desirable and sustainable changes for the benefit of the coachees and other stakeholders". In addition, Rostron and Van Rensburg (2012, p. 15) assert that "business coaching focuses on an effective, sustainable and measurable way of developing managerial leaders and their teams". It is clear from these definitions of coaching that sustainable change is critical for success, which aligns with the notion of the long-term impact of coaching. However, there is a lack of empirical coaching studies on long-term sustainable change (Koroleva, 2016, p. 84) One of the major issues in determining coaching outcomes is that changes in human behaviour often take a long time (Laske, 2004), hence the question as to how coaching interventions or programmes are evaluated needs to be addressed, with emphasis on assessing longer term outcomes or impact.

A coaching intervention is guided by the needs, characteristics and experiences of the client, the knowledge, skills and perspectives of the coach and the needs of the organisation (Ely et al., 2010). As a result, there are no two identical coaching experiences, which presents unique evaluation challenges (Ely et al., 2010).

Coaching literature indicates that the traditional paradigm for evaluating effectiveness of development or training programmes developed by Kirkpatrick (1977) have also been used for evaluating coaching interventions (Grant, 2012; McGovern et al., 2001; Phillips, 2007). This evaluation model focuses on four levels of impact (Grant, 2012):

1. Level one is about evaluating participants' reactions – that is, how much a participant likes or enjoys the training programme.
2. Level two is about evaluating the learning which occurred through measuring the knowledge acquired, skills improved or changes in attitudes.
3. Level three is about assessing change in behaviour – that is, the extent to which the participant is doing things differently as a result of the

programme or learnings acquired that are practiced in the workplace through observable behaviours.

4. Level four focuses on results that occur due to the training programme. These could include increase in sales, reduced costs or any tangible or intangible business-related metrics.

The above levels 1 and 2 relate to short-term evaluation of outcomes immediately after the intervention, while levels 3 and 4 are focused on long-term evaluation of sustainable behavioural change and/or business results. Typically, long-term evaluation examines the sustainable outcomes of an intervention from six months (Lawler, 2012) to 12 months (Koroleva, 2016) after the intervention has ended. In the present study, long-term impact refers to the sustainable outcomes of coaching 24 months or more after the completion of the group coaching intervention implemented by Seda, thereby aligning with levels 3 and 4, with a focus on the perceived impact on behaviour and results, as opposed to quantitative measures. It was important to focus on a longer-term perceived impact in this study (compared to the norm of 6 to 12 months used for evaluation purposes), as the intent of the group coaching programme for the women entrepreneurs is to facilitate them having sustainable businesses - which will survive and grow well beyond a period of 12 months.

Phillips (2007a) and Phillips and Phillips (2005) also built on Kirkpatrick's (1977) four-level framework and added a fifth level, Return on Investment (ROI) for measuring the success of coaching. The ROI metric is typically positioned as being an extension of Kirkpatrick's (1977) four level taxonomy for evaluating training programmes. The ROI value is generated as the cost of coaching and is compared to the monetary returns of the business impact measures (Phillips, 2007a; Phillips & Phillips, 2005). ROI is used to provide credible value reflecting the return on the investment in the coaching assignment (Phillips & Phillips, 2005). De Meuse et al. (2009) however, caution that although the use of ROI is valid, it is not always practical as coaching can have both tangible and intangible effects on the organisational effectiveness to varying degrees. Furthermore, the

ROI metric depends on two key factors (a) the overall cost of a coaching engagement and (b) the financial benefits it obtains (De Meuse et al., 2009). It is difficult to measure the two items as they are also unique to a specific coaching engagement (De Meuse et al., 2009). Similarly, Grant (2012) argues that although ROI is an accepted metric, it is an insufficient and unreliable measure of coaching outcomes and that an overemphasis on financial returns can restrict coaches' and organisations' awareness of a full range of possible outcomes through coaching.

Ely et al. (2010) have proposed an integrated framework evaluating coaching based on a review of literature on leadership coaching. The model focuses on (i) outcomes to assess coaching effectiveness as a development intervention (summative evaluation), and (ii) processes to account for the dynamic and customised nature of coaching (formative evaluation) (Ely et al., 2010). Summative evaluation includes assessing the effectiveness of completed interventions, while formative evaluations are process oriented and focus on identifying areas for programme improvement (Ely et al., 2010). In the present study, only summative evaluations of a group coaching programme are included. Summative evaluation is focused on the perceived long-term impact of the group coaching intervention, that is, what perceived changes in behaviour and/or results were sustained two years or more after completion of the intervention.

Theeboom et al. (2014) reported a meta-analysis of the effects of coaching on several outcome criteria. The researchers reported positive overall effects of coaching on performance and skills, well-being, coping, work attitudes and goal directed self-regulation (Theeboom et al., 2014). The findings indicate that coaching is an effective tool for improving functioning of individuals in an organisation. Furthermore, with regard to the intensity of coaching interventions, Theeboom et al. (2014) found that a greater number of coaching sessions does not necessarily result in positive effects.

De Meuse et al. (2009) conducted a meta-analysis of empirical research and reviewed retrospective studies evaluating the effectiveness of coaching. Based on a meta-review of coaching evaluation studies, six areas that influence the way research practitioners evaluate the effectiveness of coaching and affect the conclusions they may draw from their findings, have been identified as follows (De Meuse et al., 2009)

1. The purpose of the coaching evaluation - summative versus formative evaluation, or both;
2. Criteria used to measure coaching effectiveness - ROI versus coaching objectives (Of note, the authors advocate a focus on coaching objectives because there are too many variables to measure ROI effectively);
3. Rigor of coaching evaluation - the research design employed to assess coaching;
4. Type of coaching implemented - developmental versus remedial, as the purpose of coaching is different for these;
5. Content of the coaching engagement - skill acquisition and behavioural change versus unconscious discovery and deep learning; and
6. Coaching methodologies - the interaction between the coaching methods and coaching content.

However, the above findings of De Meuse et al. (2009) and Theeboom et al. (2014) relate more to dyadic coaching. There is still a need to assess the long-term impact of coaching interventions (Koroleva, 2016), particularly group coaching as it is a more recent phenomenon in the coaching field with limited empirical research on it (O'Connor et al., 2017).

2.3 The long-term impact of group coaching on women entrepreneurs

This section reviews literature in relation to the first research question of the study: what is the perceived long-term impact of the group coaching programme on women entrepreneurs? The coaching literature reveals that group coaching is a more recent phenomenon (Britton, 2010; Brown & Grant, 2010; Fusco et al.,

2016) with only a few empirical studies on group coaching (O'Connor & Cavanagh, 2017). Some studies have attested to the effectiveness of group coaching and the type of outcomes that the participants experience. These are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Research on the effectiveness of group coaching

Research findings	**Author/s of study**
Development of trust and support within the group, improved listening and communication, constructive conflict resolution, greater commitment and accountability, understanding and self-regulation of acceptable behaviours, increased emotional intelligence, leadership awareness, appreciation and alignment of individual goals, and improved systemic awareness.	Brown and Grant (2010)
The opportunity for peer coaching and exchange in the group, the opportunity for team building, and time and cost efficiency	Nicholas and Twaddell (2008)
Group coaching had the strongest impact on the task orientation in teams and also influenced the common perception of leaders' trustworthiness	Vesso (2015)
The team's clarity of focus, openness to change and their willingness to hold one another accountable	Wotruba (2016)
Cultivating creative confidence and building a solid motivation to nurture creativity in the group members	Fumoto (2016))
Establishes a foundation of trust among the group, makes for constructive conflict resolution, and leads to greater commitment and accountability.	Kets de Vries (2005)
Having time and a group forum for discussion, developing clear shared and focused goals, emphasising safety and sharing, and valuing diversity of perspectives across member disciplines	Peters and Carr (2013)
Enabling self, enabling others and self-confidence. In addition, learning through receiving external input, providing for sharing and support, staying on track to goal plans.	Reid (2013)

Research findings	**Author/s of study**
Group coaching is demonstrated to be empirically effective, and especially if combined with one-to-one coaching. In addition, follow-ups by coaches testify to the fact that many participants had made significant changes.	Ward, Van de Loo, and ten Have (2014)
Self-understanding, self-management, mindful management, understanding of others, flexible and effective interaction with others, leadership capability and proactivity, and strategic orientation. In addition, group cohesion and psychological safety of participants.	Fusco, O'Riordan, and Palmer (2015)
Entrepreneurs gained confidence and their businesses changed too. Coaching encouraged entrepreneurs to think more strategically about their businesses, assisted with clarification of vision for the company and they also understood the difference between managing and leading their companies. Furthermore, through peer coaching, participants experienced peer support, networking, knowledge sharing and a framework to understand their own experiences.	Kutzhanova, Lyons, and Lichtenstein (2009)

Many of the above studies have reported changes in behaviour and client satisfaction due to group coaching, ranging from increased self-confidence to improved leadership capability. It therefore seems valid to say that group coaching helps the individual members of the group, but does it add value to the business or organisation? Coaching practitioners must therefore find ways of proving that outcomes are both organisationally desired and personally beneficial (Laske, 2004). In the present study, it is therefore important to establish how group coaching contributed to changes in both the women entrepreneurs' behaviour and their businesses.

In addition, most of the studies on group coaching in Table 2 seem to be referring to short-term outcomes and not to long-term outcomes. One study, by INSEAD Business School (Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2010), evaluated the longer-term effectiveness of a Leadership Programme, which incorporated group coaching. They found the following had changed in the participants, as a result of the programme, one year after the programme had ended:

- An increase in self-awareness due to in-depth self-analysis, which led to a clearer understanding of what makes them tick and more clarity of their desires and goals in their career and life.
- A change in behaviour patterns contributing to better listening skills, team building skills, management skills, giving feedback and other people-oriented behaviours.

While there is limited research on the effectiveness of group coaching on women leaders (Bonneywell, 2017), there seem to be no specific studies on group coaching of women entrepreneurs. In Bonneywell's study (2017), which focused on an intervention for women leaders, comprising twelve one-on-one coaching sessions and six group coaching sessions, certain outcomes of the group coaching were perceived. These were: increased self-awareness and personal identity development, relational ability and transformational learning. Participants reported increased esteem, confidence and self-appreciation. Within the group coaching component, the women reported developing a shared sense of identity, of connection and belonging, which gave them a sense of power. The group coaching created a safe environment for them to share their experiences, both positive and negative. Their approach to power and politics was enhanced by the combination of individual and group coaching. The group coaching supported their development in areas concerning their relationship to others, and balancing of their roles as leaders and within their families. Many women chose to give back by becoming coaches or mentoring others (Bonneywell, 2017). Again, this research by Bonneywell (2017) seemed to focus on the short-term outcomes of the programme, and not on the longer-term outcomes. Also, it is not clear how the inter-play of individual coaching with the group coaching affected the perceived outcomes of the programme.

2.3.1 Proposition 1

Group coaching leads to a range of outcomes for participants. However, the perceived long-term impact of group coaching needs to be empirically researched. It therefore forms the basis of the first research objective which is to explore the perceived long-term impact of group coaching on women entrepreneurs.

2.4 The contribution of group coaching to long-term outcomes

This section reviews literature in relation to the second research question of the study: How did the group coaching contribute to the perceived long-term impact on women entrepreneurs? This section focuses firstly, on the factors that promote effective outcomes of group coaching, and secondly, the factors that specifically promote sustainable outcomes over the longer term. There are not many studies on the long-term impact of group coaching, with a scarcity in relation to the group coaching of women entrepreneurs; hence the literature also draws from studies on dyadic (one-to-one) coaching.

2.4.1 Factors that promote effective outcomes of group coaching

To be fully effective in one-on-one professional coaching interventions, a coaching relationship needs to be built on the firm foundation of four key factors (Leedham, 2005, p. 38):

- The skills of the coach such as listening, questioning, giving clear feedback, establishing rapport and providing support
- The personal attributes of the coach such as knowledge, experience, qualifications, being inspirational, having belief in the coachee's potential
- The facilitation of the coaching process, including clear structure and discipline, being mentally challenging and stretching
- The coaching environment – through providing a safe, supportive place to discuss confidential and sensitive issues, providing time and space to think and reflect.

De Haan, Duckworth, Birch, and Jones (2013) also identified ingredients that predict the effectiveness of one-to-one executive coaching. They found common factors that have an impact on the outcomes of coaching to be: the strength of the coaching relationship as seen from the client's perspective; the importance of a full range of coaching techniques used by the coach; and the general self-efficacy of the client (de Haan et al., 2013).

Group coaching has similarities to dyadic coaching, and the factors highlighted above by Leedham (2005) and de Haan et al. (2013), will therefore also be important in contributing to effective outcomes of group coaching. In group coaching, the agenda comes from the group (Britton, 2010). The group drives the process and strongly influences the direction, pace and themes that are discussed (Britton, 2010), which is similar to one-on-one coaching where the client sets the agenda for coaching (Rogers, 2012).

However, group coaching also differs from one-on-one coaching in some aspects and other factors will therefore be crucial for promoting effective outcomes. The key difference between group coaching and dyadic coaching is that group coaches need a strong understanding of group dynamics (Brown & Grant, 2010). Additionally, just as individual coaching requires good rapport between coach and coachee, so does coaching at group level (Brown & Grant, 2010). However, Wotruba (2016) found that establishing and maintaining a trust-based relational connection with groups at both individual and collective levels was at times, both challenging and complex. This view is also held by O'Connor and Grant (2017) who assert that group coaching is more complex than individual coaching. In addition, Nicholas and Twaddell (2008) reported that a number of respondents in a 2008 global group executive coaching survey found that group coaching was far more taxing for the coach, was much more difficult to manage, and had an added burden of maintaining confidentiality in the session if the coach also engaged in one-on-one coaching with some of the group members.

A number of different programme designs have been utilised in group coaching interventions, which may affect the outcomes of the coaching. Many group coaching interventions resemble the iterative nature of individual coaching approaches, utilising multiple sessions of differing lengths over extended periods of time (O’Connor & Grant, 2017). Some approaches use a combination of individual and group coaching (Bonneywell, 2017), while others focus on coaching individuals on their individual goals within the group setting (Brown & Grant, 2010). Some group coaching interventions focus on coaching the group as a unique entity with a focus on group dynamics (Brown & Grant, 2010). Others employ a mixture of methodologies that include group facilitation, training, peer-to-peer coaching and 360 degree feedback, while still referring to the process as group coaching (O'Connor et al., 2017).

The size of the group is also critical in group coaching. A maximum group coaching size is seen as fifteen (Britton, 2010), yet, the 2008 Group Executive Coaching study found that a group of seven was optimal for group coaching (Nicholas, 2008).

The effectiveness of coaching may also be related to the coaching methodology and tools being employed (De Meuse et al., 2009). Coaching is a multidisciplinary practice with professionals coming from different academic backgrounds such as psychology, human resources, social work, marketing, training and development and business (Liljenstrand & Nebeker, 2008). Coaches will therefore use different methodologies to help clients. These methods include psychodynamic approaches, behavioural therapy, cognitive-behavioural approaches and adult learning (De Meuse et al., 2009). Cox, Bachkirova, and Clutterbuck (2014) articulated 13 theory-based approaches to coaching, the majority of which were originally developed in the field of psychotherapy and were adapted to coaching. Different coaching methodologies may be effective at dealing with different content areas and coaching is likely to be successful when the methodology fits the coaching objective. In group coaching, as in one-on-one coaching, the same core tools that coaches may use are similar. These tools include, brainstorming, visioning, root-cause analysis and force field analysis (Britton, 2010). Assessment tools that are commonly used by coaches include Myers Briggs Type indicator, Jungian Type Index (JTI), StrengthsFinder, Motivational Appraisal of Personal Potential (MAPP) and 360-degree questionnaires (Britton, 2010). Other tools that have been developed specifically for the context of group coaching are laser coaching and Organisation and Relationship System Coaching (Britton, 2010).

2.4.2 Factors in group coaching that promote sustainable outcomes

Limited empirical research seems available on the long-term outcomes of group coaching. The existing literature lacks theoretical and empirical research on sustainable change in individuals as a result of individual or group coaching, hence the need to analyse how coaching facilitates sustainable changes that last over time after completion of the coaching interventions (Koroleva, 2016). Sustainable change is defined by Koroleva (2016, p. 84) as: “sustainable change matters, maintains, is consistent under pressure and in stressful situations, can have profound impact, lasts over time (minimum of one year) and retains once coaching support ceases.”

According to Kets de Vries and Korotov (2010, p. 16), the participants in the INSEAD Leadership programme (which incorporated group coaching), twelve months after the programme was completed, attributed their changes in behaviour and leadership style to the following:

- Group coaching appeared to be a major vehicle to increasing self-awareness and building commitment among the members of the group to execute their self-development goals;
- Action plans helped to provide focus on what needed to be done as they served as a commitment-enhancement mechanism;
- Experimentation with new behaviours between the modules was seen as an important way to continue to learn and to use feedback for self-improvement;
- Staying in contact with the learning community (made up of the members of the programme) was viewed as a foundation for current and possible future personal transformations.

The researchers argue that there are often challenges with measuring the effectiveness of coaching, hence they had adopted an ongoing evaluation of the personal progress made over the course of the programme (as opposed to an end-of-programme evaluation), in combination with continuous feedback from participants and coaches (Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2010).

Limited research has been conducted on identifying the factors in dyadic coaching of importance to foster sustainability of coaching outcomes, which may be applicable to promoting sustainable outcomes of group coaching. A study on dyadic coaching by Koroleva (2016), found that three factors: (i) the coachee's attitudes, (ii) resources, and (iii) routinisation, play a key role in embedding sustainable change. She therefore developed a model for sustainable change to enhance coaching practices in order to facilitate sustainable change. According to the model, there are three important aspects to the first factor identified, the coachee's attitudes, which imply that a coachee should be: ready for change, committed to change, and believe in the change. The second factor, the resources in the coaching process required to promote sustainable change, are: having trust in the coaching relationship, having space to think, feeling special, receiving feedback from the coach, and learning about yourself and others (Koroleva, 2016). The third factor, routinisation to embed sustainable change, includes two aspects: doing something for yourself, and practising new behaviours (Koroleva, 2016).

The model suggests that a clear articulation of the coachee's attitudes, required resources for sustainable change and routinisation must be discussed and acknowledged. In terms of the coachee's attitudes, there is a need for a stronger assessment stage prior to commencing executive coaching. Furthermore, in terms of the required resources and the required routinisation, there is a need for a clear contract for all stakeholders involved; that is, coachees, coaches, sponsors of coaching interventions (Koroleva, 2016).

Another relevant earlier study, relating to long-term changes from dyadic coaching, was a survey conducted for a global company on the effectiveness of a coaching programme for high potential employees (Wasylyshyn, Gronsky, & Haas, 2006). The survey results indicated sustained learning and behaviour changes among participants (52%) over an extended period (one to six years) depending on when they had completed the programme. In addition, on-going company activities, relevant job experiences, informal mentoring and more focused performance management, helped reinforce the coaching programme outcomes. Successful outcomes seemed to be related to careful selection of participants, a collaborative model, an insight-oriented approach and efforts to brand the programme as a developmental resource (Wasylyshyn et al., 2006).

Bozer et al. (2013) examined key success factors of coaching as reflected in learning and sustained behaviour change. The researchers explored the relationship among coachee characteristics in terms of executive coaching effectiveness. They found that several coachee characteristics were associated with coaching effectiveness: coachee learning goal orientation; coachee pre-training motivation; coachee feedback receptivity and coachee developmental self-efficacy were positively related to coaching effectiveness (Bozer et al., 2013). If the individual being coached does not feel the need to change, then long-term behaviour change is unlikely to occur (Smith, Van Oosten, & Boyatzis, 2009).

Saukkonen, Nukari, Ballard, and Levie (2016) evaluated a collaborative entrepreneurial coaching programme designed to enable learning between start-up companies and students. The authors measured the impact of the programme on the participants' self-assessment of their capabilities, and of critical capabilities for the start-up success, comparing the assessments before the programme, at its end, and one year subsequently (Saukkonen et al., 2016). The results showed that in the longer term, there were fewer capability areas for the positive impact that had endured. More precisely, for the start-up team members, only one capability area (marketing and sales), showed a significant higher level statistically than before the training; and for students, the same applied to three different capability areas. Marketing and sales was the area in which significant long-term learning effect was achieved both for student cohort members and start-up team members (Saukkonen et al., 2016).

Smith et al. (2009) presented a particular type of coaching; one focused on achieving sustained desired change in the individual being coached. The authors argued that the coaching relationship is of particular importance as individuals attempt to make desired changes in their lives hence, achieving sustained desired change is facilitated when the coach shows compassion for the person being coached (Smith et al., 2009). They also argued that not only the person being coached benefits from such a relationship, but also the person who is coaching (Smith et al., 2009).

2.4.3 Proposition 2:

There is a growing body of knowledge on the factors which contribute to effective group coaching outcomes. However, the contribution of group coaching to long-term outcomes for participants needs to be researched, with emphasis on determining what factors in group coaching may contribute to sustaining long-term changes in participants. This forms the basis of the second research objective which is to explore the contribution of group coaching to the perceived long-term impact on women entrepreneurs.

2.5 Recommendations for improving group coaching towards long-term outcomes

This section reviews literature in relation to the third research question of the study: How can the group coaching programme be improved towards enhancing the long-term impact? Few studies have focused on the effectiveness of group coaching (O’Connor & Cavanagh, 2017), particularly in terms of its long-term impact. This section therefore explored the recommendations made in the group coaching literature for enhancing the effectiveness and long-term impact of group coaching. The focus was specifically on the recommendations from group coaching studies. Thereafter, relevant literature and studies on sustaining long-term outcomes from dyadic coaching are also referred to, in order to identify possible recommendations for enhancing the long-term impact of group coaching.

2.5.1 Recommendations from group coaching studies for enhancing the long-term impact

With regard to enhancing the long-term impact of group coaching, Britton (2010) recommended the following:

- Follow-up with the group and check in on accountabilities both collectively and individually.
- Obtain feedback from the group in the medium and long term as to what impact the programme really had on them. What are the benefits and what were the results? What changes need to be made? Keeping these ideas in mind before, during and after the programme increases the impact and satisfaction of the group coaching process for coaches and clients alike.

Reid (2013) found that group coaching facilitated particular competencies for example, self-insight, enabling others, sharing, feedback, continued improvement and confidence. She recommended that group coaching formats be considered for leadership development initiatives that aim to develop these competencies. In addition, the study participants also recommended that the duration be long enough to explore aspects mentioned above and that coaches be experienced and able to manage both coaching and group dynamics. Coaches need to complement their traditional coaching skills with expertise and experience in group coaching processes, group dynamics and group coaching tools. Furthermore, adequate attention should be paid to how group coaching processes are designed and how group coaches are trained to create impact (Reid, 2013).

Brown and Grant (2010) developed a group coaching model that integrates dyadic coaching with group coaching methodologies. According to the researchers, this approach to group coaching provides an effective way to harness the goal-focused nature of one-to-one coaching with the systemic perspectives inherent in group processes (Brown & Grant, 2010). In this way, the coaches may foster real change at individual, group and organisational level through developing systemic thinking in their clients (Brown & Grant, 2010).

Fusco et al. (2015) suggested that the parallel process of enabling the participants to work at both the *intra* and *inter* personal levels of experience, exploring and developing their self-concept in the social context, holds the key to effectiveness of group coaching. In assessing the efficacy of an authentic group leadership programme, Fusco et al. (2016) recommended that a longitudinal evaluation be conducted to assess if any of the reported changes are subject to atrophy. The researchers suggested that an additional assessment at 18 to 24 months may yield valuable results (Fusco et al., 2016).

O'Connor et al. (2017) identified lessons learned from group coaching in a large organisation, and recommendations on how the programme could be improved from the coachees' perspective included: a need for clear and explicit goal focus; the need for solid upfront preparations and communications; the need for a group coaching process structure; to ensure the right people attend (that is, genuinely engaged participants); and the need for explicit programme sponsorship and follow-up. The coaches recommended a need for programme governance and sponsorship, in order to influence and champion the process, inform programme design and manage processes. In addition, there is a need for the coaching process and structure to connect theory and practice, and also more time allowed to make progress towards goals. Furthermore, this includes a need for upfront preparation and communication to enable the participants to understand the aims, expectations and process to help overcome resistance (O'Connor et al., 2017).

Fumoto (2016) developed a group coaching model using an action research methodology. The study indicated that group coaching can cultivate creative confidence and build a solid motivation to nurture creativity. The model was found to be particularly effective when:

- The group coaching intervention is kept to a minimum to maximise the group dynamic and independent thinking.
- The group coach keeps faith in his or her capabilities, the model, and participants' potential (Fumoto, 2016).

Kutzhanova et al. (2009) examined an enterprise development programme that used a blended personal and peer group coaching programme to develop the skills of entrepreneurs, of particular relevance to the present study. In order to enhance and maintain the learning of entrepreneurs, the researchers recommended an assessment of the skill level of entrepreneurs for coaching to be tailored to their needs, which are different at each skill level. In addition, continuous monitoring of changes in skill level is important so that coaching can be modified accordingly. Furthermore, hiring coaches with experience in entrepreneurship and training in business coaching was crucial, and combining entrepreneurs into peer coaching groups at the same skill level for them to learn from one another (Kutzhanova et al., 2009). Skill development is transformational and takes time to unfold; therefore longitudinal research is necessary to further knowledge on how entrepreneurs develop skills and how the process affects both entrepreneur and business performance (Kutzhanova et al., 2009).

Kets de Vries (2005) argued for the benefits of group leadership coaching namely; high performance teams, building boundaryless organisations, reducing silos in organisations and true knowledge management. The researcher cautioned that for durable changes in behaviour to occur, companies wishing to hire coaches should be selective in assessing the training and experience of coaches and that coaches should understand that coaching is built on a solid base of psychology (Kets de Vries, 2005).

2.5.2 *Recommendations for enhancing the long-term impact of dyadic coaching*

There seem to be limited studies on the long-term impact and sustainability as a result of group coaching, hence recommendations from dyadic coaching research may also apply to group coaching. Lack of research on sustainable change as a result of coaching requires conjecture, generalisations and speculations about its potential outcomes for managers and their organisations (Koroleva, 2016). Stout-Rostron (2014) argued that no one can guarantee that behaviour change is truly sustainable as a result of coaching, until there is reliable research from a wide variety of organisations. However, Stout-Rostron (2014) provided guidelines for dyadic coaching that can help ensure that behaviour change is indeed sustainable, which are: building the relationship; learning from experience; understanding the role of others in the system, developing EQ, being flexible; making your ethical code explicit; being coached yourself; creating a developmental plan with goals, measuring coaching results; and evaluating and reviewing the coaching process and outcomes.

A survey on the effectiveness of a dyadic coaching programme for high potential employees indicated sustained learning and behaviour change among programme participants over an extended period (Wasylyshyn et al., 2006). Recommendations to improve the programme included a formal check in or follow-up a year or two after participation, on-going support, branding the programme as a developmental tool, ensuring a diverse sample of participants, and remaining sensitive to cultural differences (Wasylyshyn et al., 2006). As learning transfer and sustained behaviour change are important coaching objectives, Bozer et al. (2013) highlighted the importance of understanding the coachee-related factors when selecting participants for coaching programmes. Additionally, in order to maximise the value of coaching for both the organisation and coachee, progress should be monitored throughout the intervention and outcomes evaluated systematically (Bozer et al., 2013). Smith et al. (2009) highlighted that there are specific skills necessary to effectively coach individuals for sustained change. The authors suggested 12 competencies for coaches attempting to bring about lasting behaviour change to possess: (i) approachability, (ii) comfort around top management, (iii) customer focus, (iv), political savvy, (v) listening, (vi) dealing with paradox, (vii) compassion, (viii) self-knowledge, (ix) creativity, (x) integrity and trust (xi) interpersonal savvy, and (xii) intellectual horse power (Smith et al., 2009).

2.5.3 Proposition 3

Lessons learnt from the implementation of group coaching initiatives, together with recommendations for improving the sustainability of dyadic coaching, can be used as guidelines to enhance the long-term impact of group coaching. The third research objective, which is to explore recommendations on how to improve the long-term impact of a group coaching programme for women entrepreneurs, draws from these lessons learned in the literature.

2.6 Conclusion of Literature Review

Entrepreneurship and small businesses play an important role in stimulating the economy of a country. The SA government sees entrepreneurs as catalysts for job creation and economic development. Meyer (2009) asserts that women entrepreneurs do not only contribute to job creation, but they also contribute to the diversity of entrepreneurship in the economic process. Women are increasingly starting their own businesses, however, women still face challenges in starting and growing their businesses (Herrington et al., 2014). The role of women entrepreneurs is acknowledged by the SA government through policies and programmes to develop and support women entrepreneurs.

Coaching is increasingly becoming an important support initiative for women entrepreneurs to develop and grow their business (Brinkley & le Roux, 2018). Although dyadic coaching is not a new phenomenon, the concept and practice of group coaching is still growing. Group coaching is seen as a cost-effective way to develop women entrepreneurs and there is evidence of the benefits of group coaching in the literature.

Despite the emerging body of knowledge on the outcomes of group coaching, there is little evidence of the long-term impact of group coaching. There is also a need to understand what factors in group coaching may promote the sustainability of the coaching outcomes. The current study therefore investigated the perceived long-term impact of group coaching on women entrepreneurs, and what factors in the group coaching contributed to sustaining the coaching outcomes, towards recommending improvements for future group coaching programmes for women entrepreneurs.

The literature review forms a theoretical basis for the research. The next chapter outlines the methodology followed in order to answer the research questions.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology that was followed to address the research questions. The research approach is outlined, followed by a description of the research design, a discussion of data collection methods, population and sample, the research instrument, procedure for data collection, and data analysis. This chapter also includes the research limitations of the study, measures adopted to foster validity and reliability, and finally, an overview of the demographic profile of respondents in the study.

3.1 Research Approach

A qualitative approach was deemed to be suitable for this study, as the focus of the study was to understand the participants' experiences during the coaching programme and to gain insight into their perceptions of how the programme impacted them long after the programme had ended. Qualitative research is "an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals and groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2014, p. 32).

A key strength of the qualitative approach is its capacity for generating rich detailed accounts of human experiences (emotions, beliefs and behaviours) and narrative accounts that are examined within the original context in which observations occur (Castro, Kellison, Boyd, & Kopak, 2010). Qualitative methods provide an in-depth analysis of human experiences in a manner that cannot be fully captured in measurement scales and multivariate models (Plano Clark, Huddleston-Casas, Churchill, O'Neil Green, & Garrett, 2008). High quality research is marked by a rich complexity of abundance and descriptions and explanations that are rich (Tracy, 2010).

Limitations of the qualitative approach include difficulties in reliable integration of information across cases or observations and difficulties in assessing links and associations that occur between observations or cases (Castro et al., 2010). In addition, while purely qualitative studies have been challenged for their small or unrepresentative samples and their limited capacity to produce generalisable findings (Castro et al., 2010), their value is in using the findings to build theory (Creswell, 2014).

3.2 Research Design

Five qualitative approaches identified by Creswell (2010) include: narrative research, phenomenological research, grounded theory, ethnography and case study. A qualitative case study design was adopted for this research as it focuses on the perceptions of women entrepreneurs who participated in a group coaching programme in the Free State province of SA, implemented by a government agency (Seda). Case study research involves an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of similar units observed at a certain point or over some delimited period of time (Baskarada, 2014, p. 1). A classic case study consists of an in-depth inquiry into a specific complex phenomenon set within a real-life world context (Yin, 2013). A case study design should be considered when the focus of the study is to answer “how” and “why” questions, and you cannot manipulate the behaviour of those involved in the study, and you want to cover contextual conditions you believe are relevant to the phenomenon you are studying (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

A qualitative case study approach was therefore relevant for the present study as it focused on the perceived long-term impact of a group coaching programme on women entrepreneurs. The study can either be descriptive, exploratory or explanatory. Exploratory case research explores those situations in which the intervention being evaluated is not clear or does not have a single set of outcomes (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The present study was exploratory in nature as it explored the perceived long-term impact of a group coaching programme on the participants, and how the programme contributed to sustaining the long-term changes of the participants.

The case study method has been criticised as lacking robustness as a research tool, hence crafting the design of case studies is critical (Zainal, 2007). Researchers must consider if it is prudent to conduct a single case study or a multiple case study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). A multiple case study allows the researcher to analyse data within each setting and across settings to understand the similarities and differences between the cases (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Given the research problem of exploring the perceived long-term impact of a group coaching programme on two groups of women entrepreneurs that completed the programme - one completed two years ago, and the other completed four years ago - the current study adopted a multiple case design. The study explored the perceived long-term impact of group coaching on each group and also assessed similarities and differences across the two groups to answer the research questions.

Evidence from a case study is generally considered to be robust and reliable (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The reason for this is that the researcher gets the opportunity to explore issues in depth and in context, and draws out analyses which may be applicable on a wider basis (Hartley, 2008). The design is also flexible in that it is able to adapt to areas of planned but also emergent theory; yet in contrast, case studies can also be time consuming and expensive to conduct (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

3.3 Data collection methods

The interview remains the most common method of gathering data in qualitative research (King & Horrocks, 2010). The semi-structured interview was the main method used for collecting data in this study as it captured the participants' experiences during the programme and their perceptions on how it impacted them personally and their businesses. A semi-structured interview is sometimes known as a qualitative interview (Saunders, 2011). Qualitative research interviews vary in methodological features such as length, style of questioning and participant numbers (King & Horrocks, 2010). In qualitative interviews, the researcher may conduct face-to-face interviews with participants, have telephone interviews, or engage in group interviews with six to eight interviewees in each group (Creswell, 2014).

A semi-structured interview has advantages of including both open ended and structured questions and allows the researcher control over the line of questioning; while being flexible to the interviewees' responses (Creswell, 2014). The interview however, has limitations in that it provides indirect information which is filtered through the views of the interviewees and also that the researcher's presence may bias responses (Creswell, 2014). The goal of any qualitative research interview is therefore to see the research topic from the perspective of the interviewee and to understand why they have the particular perspective (King & Horrocks, 2010).

3.4 Population and sample

3.4.1 Population

The context of this study is a SA government agency, Seda, which is mandated to implement national government's small business strategy, to design and to implement a standard national delivery network that must uniformly apply throughout the provinces of SA, in respect to small enterprise development. The agency provides business related information, advice, consultancy, training and mentoring services in all areas of enterprise development. This agency has recognised the need to support women-owned projects and to increase its services to women enterprises and, as a result, has introduced the group coaching programme for women entrepreneurs (the subject of this study) in different provinces of SA since 2012. It is a coaching programme which aims to develop and enhance management competencies of owners and business managers by creating an environment conducive for the establishment of networks, sharing of experiences and exchange of information.

The coaching programme was based on a Plato methodology which originated from Belgium. Plato is a formal business networking programme organised by an independent association of Flemish companies called VOKA, is subsidised by the Flemish government, and it is expected to contribute to SMME development and growth (Schoonjans, Cauwenberge, & Bauwhede, 2013). The group coaching programme for women entrepreneurs was developed from the Plato programme and was modified by Seda to suit South African needs, hence the name SAPlato. The aim was to assemble groups of twenty to thirty business women (entrepreneurs) under the facilitation of coaches in order to develop and enhance their management competencies. The objective was to create an enabling environment for the women entrepreneurs to facilitate an increase in their revenue, an increase in jobs, to act as a business hub, to improve compliance, to provide advice and support, to improve efficiency and effectiveness of their businesses, and to improve sustainability of their businesses.

The population for this study were all the group coaching programmes implemented to date for women entrepreneurs in the Free State province of SA. Each of these programmes was implemented in a different district by external coaches. The first group of twenty-five (25) women participated in the programme in Mangaung Metro (Bloemfontein) from April 2014 to August 2014 for a period of seven months. The second group of eighteen (18) women participated in the Lejweleputswa district (Welkom) programme which ran from 25 August 2015 to March 2016, for 10 months. The second programme's duration was extended to 10 months due to recommendations from the first programme (which is Case 1 in this study) and other programmes implemented in other provinces. The third, and most recent group of twenty-five (25) women, participated in the programme for a period of 10 months in Dihlabeng (Bethlehem), Free State. The third programme was not included in the study as it was recently completed, meaning it would not meet the purpose of the study in terms of exploring the perceived long-term impact two or more years after the end of the programme. Two external coaches for each programme were sourced from Seda's database of service providers to facilitate the programme, and a business advisor from Seda was also allocated to each programme to provide support and monitor progress during implementation of the programme.

3.4.2 Sample and sampling procedure

The sampling procedure of the two cases was purposive. Purposive sampling, also called judgement sampling, is the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). It involves selecting a certain unit based on the specific purpose associated with answering a research study's question (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). The researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience (Etikan et al., 2016). The study is purposive in selecting the two coaching programmes as cases, based on having been completed at least two or more years ago, in order to include participants who would have perceptions about the long-term impact of the programme**.** The sampling approach also relied on convenience sampling, as the researcher was able to gain access to the names of participants in the two cases by virtue of being employed at Seda. While the researcher had some knowledge of the WECP, her role did not include any direct involvement in these two programmes. Convenience sampling "is a type of non-probability sampling where the members of the target population that meet certain criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at any given time or willingness to participate are included for the purpose of the study" (Etikan et al., 2016, p. 2). Ethical clearance for this study therefore involved gaining permission from Seda to conduct this study and to disclose the name of the agency in the research report, while ensuring anonymity of those individuals participating in the study.

A sample of six women per case (that is, the two group coaching programmes) was interviewed, after ethical clearance was given by the Wits Business School. An e-mail was sent to the participants from each programme inviting them to participate voluntarily in the study and a sample was planned to be taken from the first six women who had responded and met the selection criteria. The key selection criteria were that the women needed to have completed the entire programme in which they had participated, and that they were still entrepreneurs at the time of the study. In addition, the two coaches and the business advisor per group coaching programme were also invited to participate voluntarily, which they all agreed to do. They were interviewed to gain multiple perspectives on the long-term impact of the group coaching programme and how it could be improved in the future to enhance the long-term impact.

Overall, there were a total of nine participants for each case, resulting in a combined sample of 18. The 12 women entrepreneurs (with six from each group coaching programme) had businesses across a range of sectors, as indicated in Table 3.

Table 3: The range of businesses owned by the women entrepreneurs

BLOEMFONTEIN PROGRAMME (Case 1)		**WELKOM PROGRAMME (Case 2)**	
Sector	**Number of participants**	**Sector**	**Number of participants**
Tourism	1	Agriculture	1
Services	1	Tourism	2
Manufacturing	2	Services	1
Agriculture	1	Finances	1
Marketing	1	Marketing	1

3.5 The research instrument

The main method for collecting data was the semi-structured interview. The semi-structured interview is useful when participants cannot be directly observed, participants can provide historical data and it allows researcher control of over the line of questioning (Creswell, 2014).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect rich data from the participants to answer the three research questions. The interview guide was divided into three categories - for the coachees (women entrepreneurs), the coaches, and the business advisors. During the interview, open ended and probing questions were asked to gain perceptions in relation to each of the three research questions. See Appendix A for the interview guide that was used for the sample of women entrepreneurs (coachees), the coaches and the business advisors per case (or group coaching programme).

3.6 Procedure for data collection

3.6.1 Procedure

Qualitative researchers gather multiple forms of data such as interviews, visual information, observations and documents rather than rely on a single data source (Creswell, 2014). This ensures an exploration of a phenomenon within context, to ensure that an issue is not explored from one lens but a variety of lenses (Baxter and Jack, 2008) and to allow multiple facets of phenomenon to be revealed and understood, particularly for case study research which involves an in-depth inquiry into a specific phenomenon within a real-life world context (Yin, 2013). While the semi-structured interview was the main research instrument for the study, other sources of information were also used to gather more understanding of the context and the two group coaching programmes; for example, the proposals submitted by the coaches during the recruitment stage, the reports submitted by coaches during implementation of the programme and the Seda WECP implementation file.

Authorisation to conduct the study and approval to disclose the agency’s name in the report were granted by Seda. Each participant was then sent a letter via e-mail requesting them to participate voluntarily in the study, however, the response rate from the e-mail was poor and the researcher had to contact the participants telephonically to encourage them to participate. This approach was adopted to gain six participants for Case 1 and for Case 2 who met the sampling selection criteria. In Case 2, the business advisor who participated in the programme assisted the researcher to make appointments for the interviews with the participants, who agreed to participate.

Two coaches from each group who facilitated the group coaching sessions, and the business advisors who provided support, were also interviewed. A total number of 18 interviews were conducted by the researcher, thirteen were done face-to-face and five were done telephonically, because it was difficult to arrange some face-to-face interviews due to distance and time constraints. Face-to-face interviews took place at participants' business sites. Interviews differed in duration from 45 minutes to not more than 90 minutes. The researcher used open-ended questions to get data from the participants. In areas where data was not clear or insufficient, probing questions were also used to gain in-depth data from the participants. The researcher avoided leading questions to reduce bias.

The telephonic interviews seemed to be as effective as the face-to-face interviews, as the participants shared their perspectives openly. Of relevance, advantages of the telephone interview method include savings in time and travel costs, and greater anonymity around sensitive questions (Irvine, Drew, & Sainsbury, 2013). All interviews were digitally recorded with the permission of the interviewees and then transcribed by an independent transcriber. The interview transcripts were reviewed by the researcher and also sent to the participants to check for accuracy (Mays & Pope, 1995).

3.6.2 Pretesting of the semi-structured interview guide

It is important to first pilot the interview schedule on several respondents prior to data collection to ensure that the schedule is clear, understandable and capable of answering research questions (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008).

The semi-structured interview guide was pretested through interviews conducted telephonically with an external coach who had facilitated a similar programme in Bethlehem, Free State, and a woman entrepreneur who had recently participated in the same programme; to assess if the semi-structured interview would have an easy flow and whether the questions were clear. It also gave the researcher an opportunity to practise the interview and reflect on her interview approach. The researcher found that both participants did not understand Question 3 clearly and therefore had to add more probing questions to make the question clear and understandable.

3.6.3 Ethical Considerations

Participation in the research was voluntary and no one was forced to participate. All participants were sent a letter explaining the research project and that they were free to withdraw at any time. To ensure anonymity, all participants were referred to as a code in the research report, for example, E1-E6 for women entrepreneurs and C1-C3 for coaches and business advisors in both cases. Hard copies of collected data were stored in locked filing cabinets and the interview data was stored electronically in a password protected computer and secure network.

3.7 Data analysis and interpretation

Analysing data is the heart of building theory from case studies but it is the most difficult part of the process (Eisenhardt, 1989). Organising and preparing the data for analysis involves transcribing interviews and typing up field notes, sorting and arranging data into different types depending on sources of information (Creswell, 2014).

After the interviews were transcribed and the transcripts were verified by the participants, these were analysed, using thematic analysis, to identify the themes to answer each of the three research questions. Thematic analysis is a method for organising and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set (Braun, Clarke, Hayfield, & Terry, 2019, p. 57). One consideration associated with the analysis phase is that each data source could be treated independently and findings reported separately (Baxter & Jack, 2008). With the current study being a multiple case study, involving two cases, the researcher therefore ensured that in addition to analysing each case (within-case analysis), the data was also converged (across-case analysis) in order to understand the overall case, not only the various parts of the case (Baxter & Jack, 2008), to address the research questions. How the analysis was conducted is discussed next by focusing firstly on the within-case analysis, and then the across-case analysis.

3.7.1 Within-case analysis

Within-case analysis involves detailed case study write-ups for each case (Eisenhardt, 1989). In this study, each case was analysed in order to identify common themes and patterns. Within-case analysis is driven by the realities that a researcher has to deal with large volumes of data, which can be more daunting because the research problem is open-ended (Eisenhardt, 1989). The researcher started with Case 1, and then proceeded to Case 2 for the within-case analysis.

The first step for each case was coding, which is a process of organising the data by bracketing chunks and writing a word representing each category in the margins (Creswell, 2014). Coding can be used to generate a small number of themes or categories to display multiple perspectives from individuals. One issue to consider when coding is whether the researcher should (a) develop codes for those emerging from information or data collected from the participants (an inductive approach), or (b) use predetermined codes and themes to fit the data (a deductive approach), or (c) to use some combination of emerging and some predetermined codes (Creswell, 2014). The traditional approach is to allow codes to emerge during the data analysis (Creswell, 2014), which is the inductive approach used in this study.

The researcher read the transcribed interviews and coded them using coloured pens. Different colours were used to identify common themes in the transcripts, as well as in the participant quotations that were transferred to an Excel spreadsheet. Key quotations (with relevant colour coding) from all the participants were identified for each interview question aligned to each of the three research questions (on a separate spreadsheet), with a column for each study participant This approach allowed the researcher to reduce and organise the large volume of data, and to then identify the key themes across participants and different interview questions to answer each research question as the basis of the within-case analysis (see Appendix F for an example to illustrate this). The findings of the within-case analysis for each case is presented in Chapter 4, as a precursor to the cross-case analysis, the findings of which are presented in Chapter 5. The within-in case analysis highlighted common themes and differences across the programme participants and the two coaches and business advisor, captured in tables with supporting quotations, with a narrative on the findings.

3.7.2 Cross-case analysis

The researcher also analysed the common themes and differences that emerged across the two cases by using cross-case analysis. Challenges with cross-case analysis include poor processing of data, conclusions based on limited data, or dropping disconfirming evidence (Eisenhardt, 1989). Thus, the key to counteracting these challenges is by looking at the data in many divergent ways, for example, looking for within group similarities coupled with inter-group differences. Another example is to select pairs of cases and then list the similarities and differences between each pair to identify subtle differences between the cases (Eisenhardt, 1989).

In this study, the cross-case analysis was conducted by systematically identifying similar and different themes (across both Cases 1 and 2) for each research question, using tables in many instances to illustrate this in Chapter 5. A narrative summary of the cross-case analysis is presented for each research question in Chapter 5, interpreting the themes or findings that emerged in relation to the literature.

3.8 Limitations of the study

The study focuses on women who participated in two women entrepreneur group coaching programmes that took place in 2014 and 2016, respectively. The study focused on the perceived long-term impact of the group coaching programme. Only six women per group, two coaches, and a business advisor were interviewed for the study. The size of the combined cases was a sample of 18 participants which could be seen as a small sample and therefore the results cannot be generalised (Mays & Pope, 1995). However, the findings may be transferrable to other similar contexts as deemed by the reader (Shenton, 2004).

The study relied on self-reported data from the participants and coaches, relying on their memory of the group coaching programme. The timing of the study was a challenge as it was two years or more after the two programmes had ended, and for one of the participants in Case 1, there was some confusion of the events around the programme with another programme she had attended. This limitation was overcome by clarifying some issues about the programme and probing more where the participants' responses were not clear.

3.9 Validity and reliability

Qualitative validity means the researcher checks for the accuracy of findings using other methods, while qualitative reliability indicates whether the researcher's approach is consistent across different projects (Creswell, 2014). Many authors agree, however, that in qualitative research the terms transferability, dependability, credibility, and confirmability are the essential criteria for ensuring validity and reliability (Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Measures were taken in this study to address each of the criteria used for qualitative research.

3.9.1 Transferability

The ability to transfer research findings or methods from one group to another, or "how one determines the extent to which the findings of a particular inquiry have applicability in other contexts or with other subjects/participants," is called transferability in qualitative language, equivalent to external validity in quantitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290, cited in Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). This is the extent to which the findings of one study can be transferrable to a larger population (Shenton, 2004). By including two cases in this study, with supporting background information on these two programmes, it potentially makes the findings more transferable within the context of the government agency concerned, and for other readers who are implementing group coaching programmes in similar contexts.

3.9.2 Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research is similar to reliability in quantitative research. Dependability occurs when another researcher can follow the decision trail used by the researcher to replicate the research (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). In order to address dependability of research, Shenton (2004) recommends reporting the procedures of data collection and analysis in detail. The manner in which the study was designed and implemented are all covered in the sections of the report. Detailed descriptions of the research method followed, were given, particularly an explanation of how the analysis of the data was conducted.

3.9.3 Credibility

Credibility, similar to internal validity in quantitative research, is the element that allows others to recognise the experiences contained within the study through the interpretation of participants' experiences (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Qualitative credibility is achieved through practices including triangulation, or crystallisation, multivocality and partiality (Tracy, 2010). Achievement of credibility occurs by checking for the representativeness of the data as a whole. To establish credibility, the individual transcripts were verified for accuracy by the participants before analysis. Thereafter, credibility was enhanced in the analysis of the data, by firstly, looking for similarities within each case (involving triangulation of the participants' perspectives and the coaches/business advisors' perspectives for each coaching programme) and then across the two cases (that is, the two coaching programmes).

Triangulation in qualitative research "assumes that if two or more sources of data, theoretical frameworks, types of data collected or researchers converge on the same conclusion, then the conclusion is more credible" (Tracy 2010, p. 843). Put another way, findings may be judged valid when different and contrasting methods of data collection yield identical findings on the same research subjects (Tracy 2010). In addition, verbatim extracts from participants provided evidence of the themes identified.

It is worth noting that the researcher works for the Agency concerned (Seda) and had some knowledge of the programme being studied which might have introduced bias. To reduce bias, the researcher requested a Branch Manager in Mangaung (Bloemfontein) Branch to review the information presented in the study. The manager is not familiar with the programme as it was implemented before he was appointed in the branch.

3.9.4 Confirmability

Confirmability can be explained as objectivity and it is concerned with presenting the results of the study as a true reflection of the experiences of the participants, not as an interpretation of the researcher (Shenton, 2004). Steps followed in the collection and analysis of data were outlined in detail. Where there was a need for clarity during the interviews, interviewees were asked to clarify points, to give examples, or to explain metaphors used by them. Evidence of participants' quotations are provided in the findings to confirm the themes identified. In addition, the research supervisor reviewed the themes identified and the quotations used as supporting evidence.

3.10 Demographic profile of respondents

The participants of both studies were all women. In the first group that participated in the programme in Mangaung Metro (Bloemfontein), all women were black and their ages ranged between 25 years and 50 years old. The two coaches in the first group were both black males in their 50s, and the business advisor was a black female in her early 30s.

In the second group that participated in the programme in Lejweleputswa district (Welkom), three were white and three were black. Their ages ranged between 29 years to 63 years old. The coaches in the second group were both white female in their 50s and the business advisor was a black female in her early 40s.

CHAPTER 4: WITHIN-CASE ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings for each of the two cases thematically. The themes discussed per case were derived from the semi-structured interviews with the participants. The categories of findings are presented per the three research questions shown in the table below:

Table 4: Research Questions and Categories

Research Question	Category
1. What is the perceived long-term impact of the group coaching programme on women entrepreneurs?	Perceived long-term impact on the entrepreneurs
	Perceived long-term impact on the entrepreneur's business
2. How did the group coaching programme contribute to the perceived long-term impact on women entrepreneurs?	Factors in the programme which contributed to the overall long-term impact
	Programme factors which helped the entrepreneurs to sustain the changes
3. How can the group coaching programme be improved towards enhancing the long-term impact?	Recommendations to improve the programme

As the focus of this study is to assess the perceived long-term impact of the group coaching programme on women entrepreneurs, interviews focused on the impact of the programme on entrepreneurs, both personally and on their businesses. Further categories focused on the factors which contributed to the overall long-term impact, factors which helped the entrepreneurs to sustain the changes, and recommendations to improve the programme in order to enhance its long-term impact, as per the second and third research questions in Table 4 above.

In this chapter, tables with participants' quotes are used to illustrate the themes identified for each of the above categories. Mostly, the themes depicted in these tables are those which were found to be consistent across the two sub-groups within the sample: (i) the six programme participants (women entrepreneurs), and (ii) those involved in the facilitation of the programme (the two coaches and a business advisor). Where there is a difference between the two-sub-groups for a theme, this is also captured. Participants in each of the two sub-groups were given codes as follows: for (i) E1 to E6, and for (ii) C1 to C3. Additional quotes are given in the text when specific responses came from only one or two individuals, to highlight certain variation in relation to a theme.

4.2 Results pertaining to Case 1

4.2.1 Background of the programme

The programme was the first Women Enterprise Coaching Programme (WECP) implemented in the Free State province. The duration of the programme was seven months from February 2014 to August 2014 in the Mangaung Metro (Bloemfontein). Six women who participated in the programme, two external coaches and a business advisor from Seda were interviewed. The women's businesses came from different sectors, with the six programme participants in this study being from services (1), agriculture (1), marketing (1) manufacturing (2), and tourism (1). The women met once a month to be coached as a group by the two external coaches for a period of seven months. The lead coach was responsible for overseeing the implementation of the project, handled group coaching sessions, conducted site visits, identified growth bottlenecks and provided regular feedback to the clients on progress. He also acted as a link between Seda and the team during project implementation. The other coach was responsible for co-ordinating the activities of the programme, carrying out coaching and training functions, documenting gaps identified during group coaching sessions and providing feedback to the participants on their progress. He was also responsible for researching business linkages, negotiating and concluding collaborations with other organisations for the benefit of the participants.

The programme started with an orientation session to clarify the objectives of the programme and the concept of coaching was explained to the enterprises. The participants were allowed to formulate individual objectives to be achieved at the end of the programme. This session was followed by a two-day strategic planning workshop where the entrepreneurs were guided to develop strategic plans for their businesses and one of the objectives formulated for the whole group was growth planning. Different strategic management tools were used during this session, for example, SWOT Analysis, Break even Analysis, and the Business Canvas Model. Then the monthly group coaching sessions commenced. In addition to the coaching sessions, experts from industry presented different topics, which were: The Management Functions, Managing your Customer Base, Recruitment and Motivating Staff, Key Performance Indicators, Legal Issues affecting Business, Financial Management, Access to Markets, Access to Finance, Skills Development, Effective Leadership Skills Development, and Health Issues affecting Business People. Other organisations were also invited to come and share opportunities for the women entrepreneurs, for example, SA Breweries Ltd (SAB), Small Enterprise Finance Agency (SEFA), Department of Labour, Sage Payroll, Standard Bank, South African Revenue Services (SARS), Transnet and Eskom, to name a few. The coaches also conducted on-site visits to the women's business to collect baseline data at the beginning of the programme and also to assess if there was any growth at the end of the programme.

The themes identified in Case 1 are outlined for each category in Table 4.1 to address each of the three research questions.

4.2.2 Perceived long-term impact on the entrepreneurs

Four themes were identified in this category as follows: (i) increased self-confidence, (ii) enhanced leadership competence, (iii) developed strategic thinking, and (iv) improved marketing skills. These themes, related to the perceived long-term impact of the group coaching programme on the entrepreneurs personally, are discussed below.

The first theme that emerged is increased self-confidence. Both the entrepreneurs and coaches perceived that the group coaching programme had a long-term impact on the entrepreneurs' self-confidence in managing their businesses, as stated in Table 5 below. Self-confidence was expressed in their ability to make presentations, to market their own businesses and canvas for more clients.

Table 5: Increased self-confidence

Women Entrepreneurs	Coaches and Business Advisor
E1: I was able to talk to others about my business. E2: I've grown, it opened my eyes a lot, towards the business, I prepared myself to be a business woman, who am I in my business - and I've grown. E6: I was able to inform others *[prospective clients]* about my businesses. E5: I was able to close deals and do pitching.	C1: A lot of them gained self-confidence, "they came alive" C2: They gained confidence to market their businesses. Some of them can now stand in front of people and make presentations about their businesses. Gave them confidence to canvas for business C3: It impacted a lot on their attitude – …It's sort of affirmation that you are doing it right.

The second theme identified is enhanced leadership competence of the women entrepreneurs. Three entrepreneurs indicated that the programme enhanced their leadership competence which related more to improved management, motivation and treatment of their staff, and in the case of E4, being authentic as a leader. A coach (C2) also pointed out that the programme assisted them to focus on their qualities as leaders as expressed in Table 6.

Table 6: Enhanced leadership competence

Women Entrepreneurs	Coaches and Business Advisor
E2: I learnt a lot, especially human resources and conflict resolution. E3: The way I handled my staff, motivated them. How I thought about my staff, how I treat my staff…I engage my staff more. E4: I was also not managing my staff well *[before the programme]*…….. If you are a leader, you need to be trusted and honest, you must be the face of the business and be yourself, not somebody else. E6: I gained a lot about labour issues and how to manage staff.	C2: The programme assisted them to focus on themselves, qualities they possess as leaders. C3: Some would say, the coaching has helped them to engage with staff members more and get a lot of input from them and that helps in the business.

Developed strategic thinking of the women entrepreneurs is the third theme to emerge for this category. Two entrepreneurs reported that the programme assisted them to understand their business, to think strategically and diversify their businesses and another entrepreneur (E3) indicated that she was able to work on her vision and share it with her employees. One of the coaches (C2) indicated that strategic management tools that they used in the programme also assisted, as indicated in Table 7.

Table 7: Developed strategic thinking

Women Entrepreneurs	Coaches and Business Advisor
E2: I learned a lot about strategy and how to diversify my business. Assisted me to understand strengths and weaknesses of my business, competitors and how to overcome them.... SWOT analysis discussion assisted us to learn. E3: I now share my vision with my employees. I tell them, this is where I am, this is where I am going, and this is where I see myself in four to five years. E6: It gave me ideas of not concentrating on one thing, I can do for example, packaging for others	C1: This programme has prompted them to think; if this happened, what is it that I can do? ….to come up with own solutions. C2: We used a business model canvas *[a strategic tool introduced on the programme]* for them to understand their businesses.

One of the coaches however, cautioned that most of the participants struggled with understanding strategic management terms as stated below:

C2: Many struggled at the beginning with strategic management terms.

The fourth theme that was perceived as a long-term impact from the programme, on the entrepreneurs personally, was improved marketing skills. All the participants indicated that they were able to improve their marketing skills. This meant that the participants were able to pitch their businesses, close business deals and gain new customers which led to more growth in their businesses, as indicated in Table 8. It is worth noting that this programme had a strong perceived marketing impact as all six of the entrepreneurs emphasised this point. In addition, the first theme which related to their increased self-confidence seemed to be influenced by their improved marketing skills. This finding could be due to a group objective set at the beginning of the programme, which emphasised growth planning as indicated in the programme overview for Case 1 in Appendix D.

Table 8: Improved marketing skills

Women Entrepreneurs	**Coaches and Business Advisor**
E1: Marketing; I am now marketing to schools. E2: Marketing was a challenge, programme assisted me with it. E3: The programme also helped me to do marketing, go out and search for my clients and how to develop my approach the clients. E4: Our marketing improved. I used to use only flyers and business cards, but after the programme, I marketed my business to other people. I am everywhere, also because of branding on my car. E5: Marketing strategies assisted us; we had challenges with market access. E6: Marketing of my business, new markets, I also learnt about doing business with other places and making quotations. Learned how to pitch ideas in a few minutes to someone.	C1: Social media specialist also assisted. C2: Understand their customers, quickly pitch their businesses.

4.2.3 *Perceived long-term impact on the entrepreneur's business*

Two themes were identified as long-term impacts from the group coaching programme on the entrepreneur's business, namely (i) improved business systems, and (ii) growth of business, which are discussed below.

The first theme that emerged is improved business systems. Five of the entrepreneurs indicated that they were able to improve business systems and/or processes primarily through better management of their finances as depicted in Table 9. All three coaches indicated that improved systems and better management of finances led to regular measurement of the performance of the business to bring efficiency and effectiveness to their businesses. The management of finances as the basis of improving their business systems was raised by eight out of the nine interviewees, and could be attributed to two of the objectives of the group which related to finance, which were (i) to clean up financial records, and (ii) to have access to financial assistance. Two topics on finance were also presented during the programme, Financial Management and Access to Finance, as indicated in the programme overview in Appendix D.

Table 9: Improved business systems

Women Entrepreneurs	Coaches and Business Advisor
E1: Taught me how to manage finances. E2: How to manage finances. E3: Most of the time, we as business women have that one account, and you pay everything from it. I learned to separate the two accounts and our finances improved. E4: Finances, I was using business money for my personal use. I did not separate the business and personal accounts. Now I have separated the two accounts and I pay myself a salary. E6: Made me realise the importance of doing business the right way, e.g. paperwork, books, budgeting.	C1: Systems in HR, financial systems, and spreadsheets assisted. They understood how systems are supposed to work and the interrelationship of systems for their business. C2: They learned how to manage their finances C3: Planning their finances. Because before the programme most of them did their financial management based on the cash available. But now they have ways of checking the performance of the business from month to month.

Five of the entrepreneurs stated that their businesses grew because of participating in the programme, which was the second theme for this category of findings. Their business growth was reported in an increase in profits, assets, number of employees and in the retention of customers, as highlighted in table 10. One of the coaches (C3) indicated that there were success stories written from an improvement assessment that was done six months after the completion of the programme and that they have access to new markets, besides tenders to gain new business.

Table 10: Growth in business

Women Entrepreneurs	Coaches and Business Advisor
E1: Because of marketing, profit margins have improved. E2: Assisted me to put my XXX business back in business. E3: Before the programme, I was on a scale of 4 and now I see myself on a scale of 7. It had a huge impact on my business. As you can see, my office moved from home to a new office space. It was a year after the programme and I bought two new vehicles. E4: I still have the same customers, I check them to see if they are happy. I'm growing. E5: We retained clients and maintained the relationships. We were able to close deals and our market access increased. We employed one staff who focused specifically on marketing.	C1: We have success stories, assessment done to check improvement on business six months after the programme ended. C3: They relied on tenders, now they have gone beyond tenders.

One coach however, also indicated that not all of the women on the programme have achieved growth in their business since the completion of the programme - as below:

> *C3: Unfortunately, it's not all of them. An immediate impact study was done, there was an improvement in turnover, jobs were created, better management, during the programme and immediately after the programme. We did not go back to do the impact assessment [after this].*

4.2.4 Factors in the programme which contributed to the overall long-term impact

Four themes emerged under this category, as follows: (i) planned time-line (ii), meaningful programme content, (iii) structure of the programme, and (iv) the coaching approach. These themes are discussed below.

The first theme is the planned time-line of the programme. Three of the entrepreneurs stated that the programme was well organised in that they had the schedule for the month and this assisted them to plan well for attendance. They were able to attend sessions as planned and if there were challenges, there was flexibility in accommodating them as indicted in Table 11.

Table 11: Planned time-line

Women Entrepreneurs	Coaches and Business Advisor
E3: The way we met was quite good. I have the programme for the whole month, you can plan well for attending E4: Programme was well organised. Everything was made in time, we knew what we're going to do every week. E6: I was able to attend the sessions as planned, if there was a problem, it was flexible	

The second theme that emerged under this category is meaningful programme content. Four of the entrepreneurs indicated that the programme content was meaningful as stated in Table 12. They appreciated the information from experts as it helped them in their businesses. The coaches highlighted that the presentations from the different speakers were based on the entrepreneurs' needs (identified at the start of the programme) and they reinforced what happens in practice.

Table 12: Meaningful programme content

Women Entrepreneurs	Coaches and Business Advisor
E1: The SARS presentation helped me a lot. E3: I still have the toolkits from the programme. E4: Speakers from SARS, BANK, SETAS and FDC came and give us information. Experienced people came to share. I also learned that I could use Professionals in my business to help me solve problems, e.g., Legal Experts. E6: Information about labour, workers' rights, UIF and dealing with employees assisted me a lot. There was also a session on "Thinking Out of the Box" and pitching your business to someone in few seconds in a lift. That was good.	C1: Experts also came in and made presentations. The coach does not have a solution for everything. Bringing in experts sort of assisted, especially the social marketing expert assisted. C3: The issue of speakers, was as a result of the needs of entrepreneurs, what they expressed, what they wished they could get. They reinforced what is happening in practice. Shed more light on how they worked. Some took the relationship further and benefited, e.g., SAGE.

Concerns were however, raised by two of the entrepreneurs regarding presenters who did presentations during the programme. They found that that in certain instances what was 'promised' or 'sold' to them was not that accessible to them in reality, as reflected in their quotes:

> *E3: You get people from NEF, SEFA, NYDA, SARS coming to present. When the guys are there, they talk so smoothly and you will do all the paperwork, when you go there, it's a closed door. The persons who come and present must give facts, and not give you false hope.*
>
> *E6: The experts that visit promise us things that they do not deliver on.*
>
> *When they present, they make it sound easy, but when you visit them, it is difficult to get help, e.g., Sefa and XXXXX Bank.*

The third theme that was perceived to have contributed to the overall long-term impact was the structure of the programme which was described as good and excellent by one of the participants (E5). Two participants (E3 and C1) appreciated the participative and practical structure of the programme referring to the exercises done in groups, which were focused on discussion of relevant issues, or on homework and assignments that needed to be completed, as depicted in Table 13.

Table 13: Structure of the programme

Women Entrepreneurs	Coaches and Business Advisor
E1: We were supposed to do homework and also implement in our business. E2: Programme was interesting and interactive. It was a group programme, we shared problems and the group assisted with solutions. Coaches would check on us when we were busy with assignments. E3: The discussions during this programme, we could deliberate on an issue for some time for you to understand it. The one thing that I liked was homework, it kept you so busy, plus the exercises we have done, it was good. E5: Structure of the programme was good and excellent. In a group, different minds in one class assisted. It was not only training in the classroom, we managed to go and implement in our businesses. E6: We were grouped according to our businesses and we did the assignments together.	C1: Assignments were good, some grouped together according to sector were able to realise challenges. Tackling assignments with colleagues at work as well.

The fourth theme which emerged was the coaching approach adopted by the two coaches, as depicted by quotations in Table 14 below. Four entrepreneurs perceived the coaches to be organised with specialist knowledge and complementary skills for both working with the group and for giving one-to-one attention to individuals. One entrepreneur (E6) also appreciated the fact that coaches had knowledge of different business sectors. The fact that the coaches attended a two-day refresher course on coaching fundamentals also assisted as stated by one of the coaches (C1). The approach followed by the coaches involved coaching conversations and discussions and opportunities for reflection and feedback as indicated by coaches C2 and C3. The methodology followed by the coaches involved focusing on the participants' issues and challenges in their businesses to come up with objectives and their own solutions.

Table 14: The coaching approach

Women Entrepreneurs	Coaches and Business Advisor
E2: Coaches were professional and always prepared. Coaches would check on you when busy with assignments. E3: Service providers *[the two coaches]* were good, they could act one-to-one with you if you did not understand something. Discussions during the programme, deliberate on it thoroughly for you to understand. E5: Coaches, they were organised. They had different skills and they were specialists in their areas. They focused on their strengths and their approach was good. E6: They knew what they were talking about. They knew about the different businesses, they gave us time to answer our own challenges.	C1: Approach of the coaches, they were on the right track, the two-day refresher for coaches assisted. The right questions were thrown to participants. C2: Emphasised coaching conversations, unravelled a lot of things, discussed ideas, and identified solutions. Coaching exercises and coaching conversations were used. C3: They had enough time to reflect and ask questions until they are clear. The approach was not a top-down approach, it began with them giving us their businesses issues and what they aspire for in terms of objectives. It was easy for them to participate, reflect and give feedback about the previous sessions. The whole approach went deeper. We listened to them, we made sure we understood what they wanted. C3: Even, even the small groups there were times we would also be interacting one-on-one just to find out whether we, we really addressing the issues that, that they had raised to us. I think that is, that also assisted in ensuring the effectiveness of the coaching programme.

The fifth factor that contributed to the perceived long-term impact of the coaching programme on women entrepreneurs is group learning and sharing. As this was a group coaching programme there were many opportunities to share and exchange ideas amongst the participants, which further enhanced peer learning, as depicted in Table 15 below. All six entrepreneurs indicated that the sharing of ideas and learning from one another, not only enhanced learning, but also improved their networking and helped them to grow. The three coaches also highlighted the positive impact of the group as a learning and sharing forum for the women entrepreneurs.

Table 15: Group learning and sharing

Women Entrepreneurs	Coaches and Business Advisor
E1: Group established a WhatsApp group. XXXX from the group assisted me to get other contracts.	C1: Group-sharing experience. They would teach each other, peer learning from others. Group set-up helped them push.

E3: The group programme was good for me. We are there with different business, sometimes I feel that in my business, I am down. Then you listen to other people, what they do to improve themselves. E4: When attending the sessions, my networking also improved. Some people came with ideas and you could use it in your business. E5: I developed a relationship with other women. The group sessions were good. We had an opportunity to learn about each other's businesses during the programme. E6: Group was beneficial, though we did not come from the same sector, our challenges were the same. You get advice from others, we were able to communicate and helped each other grow.	C2: The women were comfortable with one another, got solutions from each other. That for me was impactful. C3: They also learned from others, improved their networking and started working together. Because it was a group exercise, If a lady had a serious problem with a point, other ladies would say, no, we've been there, this is how you deal with it.

One of the participants also acknowledged that, while being part of a group also led to some conflict and disagreement during sessions, it was still beneficial to be in a group - as stated below:

> *C4: Sometimes there were conflicts, not agreeing to what the coaches say or whoever is saying something. But it was good to be part of the group.*

4.2.4 Programme factors which helped the entrepreneurs to sustain the changes

Two themes emerged that helped the entrepreneurs to sustain their changes over the long term since the programme ended, which are (i) reference to programme material, and (ii) continued communication with the group and coaches. The two themes are discussed below.

Four of the entrepreneurs still refer to notes and material received during the programme. This ensures that the participants sustain the changes they made during and after the programme, as indicated in Table 16.

Table 16: Reference to programme material

Women Entrepreneurs	Coaches and Business Advisor
E1: I still refer to notes that were given. E3: I never threw my marketing things way, I've got still toolkits and I go back and check. I am always going back to the files and do research. E4: I still refer to the information, I go back and check the manual that we received. E5: Since then, we absorbed the information. That really made us hold on to that.	

One of the coaches (C3) indicated that a strategic plan formulated at the beginning of the programme was meant to assist the entrepreneurs to implement and sustain the changes after the programme as expressed below:

> C3: *They were expected to come out with a strategic plan to sustain and guide them going forward*.

The second theme, continued communication with the group and coaches, was perceived to assist five of the entrepreneurs to sustain the changes they made, as indicated in Table 17. Two of the entrepreneurs indicated that they still have a relationship with the coach, and three of them stated that they still continue to communicate with the group members for referral of business and peer learning.

Table 17: Continued communication with the group and coaches

Women Entrepreneurs	Coaches and Business Advisor
E1: Group had established a WhatsApp group. I still speak to coach E3: That group helped, till now. Because two days ago I sent somebody a CV of one of the children who needs work. We are still in that group. E4: Coach XXXX is now my accountant, he is doing my books. E5: ……(Name of business) is still my client. We learn from each other, overcoming challenges.	C1: The group set-up assisted them to sustain the changes.

E6: I contact them only when I need something.	

One coach however, felt that the coaching approach used, which focused on problem-solving and using one's strengths, also assisted the participants to sustain the changes. This is elaborated on in the statement below:

> *C3: Coaching did somehow contribute. It really centred around what they themselves thought were problem issues in their business, and the coaching exercise, was teaching them an approach to problem solving, to say when you have a problem in your business, you are a player, this is how you assess yourself, these are my strengths, and with my strengths, this is what I can do and with what I don't have, this is what I can do.*

4.2.5 Recommendations to improve the programme to enhance its long-term sustainability

Four themes emerged in this category as follows: (i) duration of the programme to be increased, (ii) more follow-up after the programme, (iii) proper selection of participants, and (iv) broader selection of coaches. These themes are discussed below.

The first theme identified was to increase the duration of the programme as highlighted in Table 18. Two of the entrepreneurs and all three coaches felt that the time-line of the programme was too short to allow for implementation of the learnings in between the sessions. Entrepreneurs felt that more content could be added to the programme for participants to reap more benefits. They recommend that the programme be extended to at least twelve months. This will, however, have cost implications as more sessions will mean more funds for the programme.

Table 18: Duration of the programme to be increased

Women Entrepreneurs	**Coaches and Business Advisor**
E3: Just put the programme for ten, twelve months, that will be good. You've got your whole yearly programme. E5: Time was short, other things could have been added e.g. quality management systems. It felt as though they had shrunk everything. They should extend it to twelve months and we should meet at least once a month.	C1: If only we had more time. 8 to 12 months would assist. They will reap more benefits. C2: It was not easy to visit all businesses or allow them to implement and come back. Extend time to allow for business modelling for strategic planning C3: Time-line of seven months was short, everything was limited to time.

Although all the coaches and two entrepreneurs (E1 and E2) felt that the duration of the programme was too short, there were two participants who had a different view, feeling that the duration was too long, as expressed below:

> *E1: Time-line was bad, my business was struggling. Duration, make it shorter, maybe weekends. Give them time to return to business*

> *E2: The programme was too long, had to cut some classes. Keep it shorter.*

One entrepreneur (E4) did not have challenges with the time-line of the programme as indicated below:

> *E4: Time was good, everything was done in good timing.*

The second theme for improving the programme was a need to include more follow-up with the participants, as indicated in Table 19. Three entrepreneurs (E3, E5 and E6) highlighted the importance of one-to-one visits by the coaches so that they can help to assess further challenges in the entrepreneurs' businesses. Two coaches also highlighted that participants opened up more after on-site visits by the coach and that they feel the visits also ensured more impact as depicted in Table 19.

Table 19: More follow-up after the programme

Women entrepreneurs	Coaches and Business Advisor
E3: One-on-one session, I would say make an appointment with the service provider (coach) if you've got something to talk one-on-one. For example, the coach was at my house and there was one file, like an employee's file that wasn't, right. And just quickly, they say do one, six, twelve and I did it. E5: After the group sessions, visit businesses to check if people are implementing what they learned immediately, if the visit is done, there will be more impact. E6: Coming back and checking to assess whether we are implementing or growing is important.	C1: When coach did on-site visit, they had confidence to open up more. C3: We could not really go back and sort of do an impact on monitoring and evaluation in like a month later. In future programmes [it should] be something that can be on the programme to, er, to even go back and, and see after a month or two months, or after three months.

The third theme under this category was to use proper selection criteria of participants for the programme, as stated in Table 20. While one entrepreneur (E3) felt that businesses should be operational when selected to be part of the programme and not be in start-up phases or tender businesses, another (E1) recommends the programme be sector-specific. Another entrepreneur (E5) highlighted that growth levels of the businesses are also critical when doing selection of the participants. One of the coaches also recommended that participants be recruited outside the Seda database to select more quality clients.

Table 20: Selection criteria of participants

Women Entrepreneurs	Coaches and Business Advisor
E1: Sectorise the programme so that we can speak one language, If I am in manufacturing, I will benefit more from ladies in the same sector. E3: Selection of clients to be correct, business must be operational, not tenders. E5: Selection of the participants is critical. Check the growth levels of the businesses so that content is relevant, some of the content was too basic for me.	C1: Broaden the scope of recruitment to get more quality clients, outside Seda database. We could approach business chambers, allow ourselves enough time to recruit, we will get more clients.

The fourth theme for improving the programme was the selection of coaches. This was seen as critical for the success of the programme and ensuring that Seda has a broad database of coaches to recruit from will ensure impact. The coaches are also encouraged to upgrade their skills and to keep up to date with the latest changes in the market as indicated in Table 21.

Table 21: Selection of coaches

Women Entrepreneurs	Coaches and Business Advisor
E5: Coaches to keep up to date with changes in the market to remain relevant.	C1: Recruit more coaches to broaden scope. Invite business people who have been in business to also coach. C2: Coaches to read more and coach more.

4.2.6 Summary of Case 1

The perceived long-term impact of a group coaching programme was explored. In terms of the perceived long-term impact on the entrepreneurs personally, the participants reported increased self-confidence, enhanced leadership competencies and developed strategic thinking. The programme had a huge impact on their marketing skills which was reported by all the participants. This impacted their businesses positively as they were in a position to canvas for more business, pitch their ideas and also close more deals. The programme also had a long-term impact on the entrepreneurs' businesses through improved businesses systems (due to more effective financial management) and on the overall growth of the businesses (in increased revenue, sales or assets).

Four factors in the programme contributed to the overall long-term impact on the women entrepreneurs. The planned time-line of the programme ensured that there was a proper schedule for the session and women could plan their schedules around the time-lines to attend the coaching sessions and also implement their learning through the action plan. The structure of the programme and the meaningful content ensured that they received information that was relevant for their business as the content was based on their needs and the objectives that were set by them. The coaching approach also ensured impact on the women entrepreneurs as the programme focused on the participants' issues and not the coach's agenda. Coaching exercises, questioning and listening skills of the coaches were perceived to have an impact on the participants.

Factors that were perceived to assist the participants to sustain the changes over the long term were reference to the material received during the programme and continued communication with the group and coaches. Some participants retained the relationship with the coach even after the programme had ended and entrepreneurs continued to share information and business referrals amongst themselves.

As the programme was for seven months, there were mixed feelings expressed by the entrepreneurs regarding its duration. Two entrepreneurs and three coaches felt that it was too short and that more information could have been added if it had been longer. Recommendations to extend the programme for twelve months to ensure proper implementation in the businesses were made. This will however, have cost implications for the sponsor. Proper selection of participants was seen as critical to ensure success of the programme. If participants were on the same level and in the same sector, there would be more opportunities for peer learning as they faced similar challenges. More follow-up to assess if the participants had implemented what they had learned and also to assess growth in the business was suggested. Proper selection of coaches and broadening the database of coaches was seen as important to ensure a mix of coaches from which to select. Skills of the coaches and continuous professional development were seen as important for success of the programme.

4.3 Results pertaining to Case 2

4.3.1 Background on the Programme

The programme was the second WECP to be implemented in the Free State for a period of ten months from August 2015 to March 2016 in the Lejweleputswa District (Welkom). Six women who participated in the programme, two external coaches and a business advisor from Seda were interviewed. The women's businesses came from different sectors with the six programme participants in this study being from services (1), marketing (1), finance (1), tourism (2), and agriculture (1). The women attended ten group coaching sessions once a month for a period of ten months under the leadership of two external coaches. The first programme that was implemented in the Free State province was for seven months, however, this programme was extended to a period of ten months after recommendations from the coaches of the first programme (which is presented in the findings of Case 1 of this study), and also based on recommendations from other enterprise coaching programmes implemented in the other provinces which indicated that the duration of seven months was too short. The overall programme content also depends on the needs of the entrepreneurs participating in the programme, therefore topics discussed were different in each programme. The two coaches in this programme in Case 2 used different approaches; with one being skilled with systems, and the other one with strategic planning. The focus areas of the coaches also differed as the one focused more on building the entrepreneurs themselves (that is, personal development), while the other focused more on the entrepreneurs' businesses. An on-site analysis of the business and an assessment of business operations were compiled by the coaches at the beginning of the programme as baseline data on the businesses. This information would be compared to information at the end of the programme to measure if there was an improvement or impact. The programme started with an orientation session which outlined the programme, methodologies to be followed and the roles of the different stakeholders. A strategic planning session was held to derive individual implementation plans for participants. Ten group coaching sessions facilitated by the two coaches – each with a building block – covering all areas of operations were then held monthly. Each woman enterprise was expected to compile her own action plan. In addition to the coaching sessions, experts from industry presented different topics; such as business planning and financial management, public relations and marketing, sales, being tech savvy, compliance and emotional intelligence. Development Funding Institutions were also invited to share information on funding opportunities and business support initiatives for women. Immediately at the end of the programme iindividual reports were compiled to evaluate the impact of the programme on the women's businesses.

The themes identified in Case 2 are outlined for each category in Table 4. (at the start of this chapter) to address each of the three research questions.

4.3.2 Perceived long-term impact on the entrepreneurs

Four themes were identified for the category as follows: (i) increased self-confidence, (ii) enhanced leadership competencies, (iii) developed strategic thinking, and (iv) improved organising abilities. These themes, related to the perceived long-term impact of the group coaching programme on the entrepreneurs personally, are discussed in turn.

The first theme that was perceived by the participants to have long-term impact on them was increased self-confidence. Self-confidence is expressed as being more assertive, speaking or presenting their viewpoints, being more independent in being able to 'stand on their own' and making their own decisions - as indicated in Table 22.

Table 22: Increased self-confidence

Women Entrepreneurs	**Coaches and Business Advisor**
E1: It helped me a lot with my self-confidence. I can now communicate better about my business.	C1: They learned to be more assertive and to be able to speak. C2: In a sense that they are now able to stand on their own, to fight and do things for

E2: I was able to define myself clearly because of the programme. The programme helped me to understand my space. E3: In the beginning, I was a bit shy but the coaches motivated us to speak. E4: I'm a bit more assertive.	themselves. They could stand on their own and make their own decisions. C3: Confidence is number one, the whole programme boosted their confidence.

The second theme that was identified in this category is enhanced leadership competence of the women entrepreneurs, as stated by four entrepreneurs and two coaches in Table 23. Leadership competence is expressed in areas of motivation and management of staff and improved team work.

Table 23: Enhanced Leadership competence

Women Entrepreneurs	Coaches and Business Advisor
E4: I am able to communicate better with my employees. At the same time I'm able to delegate, which is something that I struggled with prior to the programme. E5: I think on the business side, I can motivate my staff E6: Improved team work and productivity.	C1: I think the biggest impact has been time management and learning to delegate C2: She told me that after the group sessions she was able to look at herself and how she leads the employees. She was able to see that she was just a boss and not a leader [before the programme]. C3: They realised how important it is to appoint the right staff.

The third theme that emerged from this category is developed strategic thinking of the women entrepreneurs. This theme referred to their ability to think strategically about the long-term of their businesses, requiring them to adapt their businesses in relation to challenges, as indicated in Table 24. One entrepreneur (E3) highlighted the value of strategic planning tools such as SWOT analysis, competitor analysis and market identification from the programme in developing her strategic thinking,

Table 24: Developed strategic thinking

Women Entrepreneurs	Coaches and Business Advisor
E2: Change, do not remain doing the same thing, change other aspects of business.	C3: Improved strategic intent and focus in the business. They look at challenges or weaknesses in a different way to see how they can capitalise from it.

E3: Think strategically. I don't just think within the box. I don't just plan to survive. I learned that If you sit and you do your swot analysis, analyse your competitors, look at your market, you will definitely identify other services that you can provide to your client. E4: It gave me a roadmap on how to grow the business. E5: Goal setting and actions plans. This is what I use at this stage.	

One of the coaches (C2) however, pointed out that that the entrepreneurs had challenges with understanding strategic planning as expressed below:

> *C2: remember when they started, they did strategic session and whatever, I felt like they did not really understand what's in there, what should be in a strategic plan, goals and all that. It took a lot of time to get them to understand strategy and actions and how to implement all that, the outcomes*.

Improved organising abilities or skills emerged as a theme in this category. Four entrepreneurs and all the coaches highlighted better management of the business, time management, and finding ways to improve service delivery; all indicative of the impact on the participants' organising abilities as depicted in the Table 25.

Table 25: Improved organising abilities

Women Entrepreneurs	Coaches and Business Advisor
E1: Recording things assisted me to put things in order for the second business I opened. E3: I was equipped to be able to plan for a dip within the markets. When the business was slow, I was not scared. E4: There are things I am doing differently which I was not doing before I participated in the programme. E5: I have more knowledge from the programme, on how to manage the business.	C1: The biggest impact for them has been time management… C2: As a result, they are able to manage their businesses better. They learned to focus. In terms of finances, how you record before you take your stuff to accountants. They were taught how to deal with customers C3: Time management. The whole programme had impact on their businesses, how they conduct business

It’s also about how you can improve service delivery.	

4.3.3 Perceived impact on the entrepreneur’s business

Two themes were identified as long-term impacts from the group coaching programme on the entrepreneur’s business: (i) improved business systems and/or processes, and (ii) growth in the business, which are discussed in turn.

The first theme that emerged strongly is improved business systems and/or processes. Five of the entrepreneurs and two of the coaches contributed to this theme, highlighting that most of the entrepreneurs have put systems in place, they can budget for the business and there are more efficiencies, resulting in profitability as shown in Table 26. A possible reason for this strong impact on business systems may be due to the lack of systems being identified as a challenge through a diagnostic tool, with an action plan then developed, based on the diagnostic outcome – that is, to put systems in place. In other words, one of the group objectives was to implement systems in all areas of operations, as highlighted in the programme overview for Case 2 in Appendix C.

Table 26: Improved business systems and/or processes

Women Entrepreneurs	**Coaches and Business Advisor**
E1: Assisted me to put systems in place. E2: Systems are in place. I now understand the impact of the right systems in business. E3: …. And now you’ve got systems. Systems improve service delivery E4: Budgeting for the business. It gave me a clear indication on how I’m doing on a month-to-month basis. E5: The systems help me to go more paperless and everybody can work on that system.	C2: Most of them would know when you want something, they would have systems in place. So, in terms of systems, most of them have grown. C3: Systems implemented. Systems to enhance efficiency, effectiveness, productivity and ultimately profitability.

The second theme identified as being a long-term impact on the entrepreneur’s business is growth in the business. Five of the entrepreneurs reported that they had a growth in the businesses because of participating in the programme, as depicted in Table 27. Growth was reported in terms of an increase in turnover or revenue, employees and assets. Growth also involved expanding the business or starting a new business. The coaches also reported growth in businesses for the entrepreneurs with whom they still have contact. Growth is also Seda's overall objective of the programme as expressed in increase in turnover and jobs. The objectives of the programmes for Case 1 and for Case 2 in Appendix B and C respectively, also specify growth as an objective.

Table 27: Growth in business

Women Entrepreneurs	Coaches and Business Advisor
E1: Old customers are returning. I have started a second business in another district and it is "booming". E2: It helped me to change certain aspects of my business, which helped me to grow. E3: A new department that we brought in, I wouldn't identified it if it wasn't for WECP. After WECP, I started developing it. E4: We've acquired more assets but have not employed anyone. E5: When I started the business, I was at six hundred thousand, now I am over a million. E6: Systems are more efficient, effective, productive, and therefore more profitable.	C1: XXX opened another guest house. She was in the process of buying it when we were there and she wasn't certain where - if she should or shouldn't, and where she should make it, but that's a thriving guest house now. C2: Some had improvement in turnover and employees and others acquired more equipment/assets C3: Some had increase in revenue, In jobs and assets.

One of the coaches (C2) mentioned that immediately after the programme, they measured the growth in business; however, a few businesses had not survived.

> *C2: Well, directly after, when we measured - there definitely was an increase. However, two have closed down.*

Turning to the entrepreneurs, E4 did however, indicate that she could not say the growth in the business was directly as a result of the programme, but she did think the programme had an influence - as highlighted below:

E4: I don't want to lie and say the impact was as a result of the programme. But obviously whatever that I have learnt, I definitely applied it into the business. Whether I'm not conscientiously aware, there are things that I'm doing differently, which I was not doing before I actually participated in the programme.

4.3.4 Factors in the programme which contributed to the overall long-term impact

The four themes from the programme that contributed to the overall long-term impact on the women entrepreneurs are: (i) planned time-line and goal/action focus, (ii) meaningful programme content, (iii) the value of two coaches, and (iv) group learning and sharing. These themes are discussed below.

The first theme identified in this category is the planned time-line and goals/action focus of the group coaching programme. Five of the entrepreneurs and one coach highlighted that the programme had formulated objectives and action plans that had to be implemented, as depicted in Table 28. The fact that they attended on specific dates and had a schedule for the duration of the programme assisted them to plan better for attendance.

Table 28: Planned time-line and goal/action focus

Women Entrepreneurs	Coaches and Business Advisor
E1: The programme had specific dates to attend and it was easy and flexible. E2: Programme had specific intentions and formulated objectives. Goals were clearly defined. E3: The action plan, this is what I use on this stage the most.……… and I work on that action plan so that everybody can work on it E5: And you've got actions to follow. I have goal-sets I implement into the company. E6: We have action plans to implement.	C2: Every time they would report, this is what I was supposed to do, I have reached a goal C3: Adhering to set time-frames / deadlines. Action plan for them to implement. Again, having a strategic plan and goals.

The second factor was that the programme content was found to be meaningful and covered information that was important for their businesses, as shown in Table 29. The content ranged from marketing, human resources, customer service to technology in business, just to name a few topics, as highlighted in Appendix D for Case 2. Experts in areas of business and developmental funding organisations also added value to the participants.

Table 29: Meaningful programme content

Women Entrepreneurs	Coaches and Business Advisor
E1: Marketing. Visits from FDC, Accountants, Dept. of Labour, SARS. I learnt a lot. E2: Areas touched on were important. E3: I think the fact that they gave us a lot of material. There were different templates available, which I really appreciated. Importance of marketing– the right way. E4: The teaching was good but there was not enough time to implement.	C2: Content covered HR, customer service, finances etc. Experts in areas of business also assisted. C3: Every session was a topic that was identified as one of the weaknesses, e.g. marketing, sales, budgeting……..we got speakers from the Department of Labour, SARS,

The third factor that had an impact on the women entrepreneurs was the value of having two coaches on the programme. The coaches were perceived by the entrepreneurs as very good to excellent, and they had different skills and competencies to complement one another, as shown in Table 30. The different methodologies used by the coaches also ensured that both personal and business issues of the entrepreneurs were focused on.

Table 30: Value of two coaches with different expertise

Women Entrepreneurs	Coaches and Business Advisor
E1: The two coaches were excellent, fair treatment of participants. E3: The two coaches that you guys had employed were very good.	C1: Different approaches assisted. Other coach was good with systems, other was good with strategic planning. C2 By using different approaches I think that also helps because we each used our strengths. XXXX is fantastic with the logistics, record keeping, putting systems in place, those kinds of things…….I'm good with the other sides the marketing, the risking, the

E4: Coach is good with what she does, whatever she teaches you, she can see you implement it in the business. E5: Coach XXXX was at a high level. Coach XXXX is good at what she does.	ideas, the confidence – like the more building they say – I'm good with building the jockey, the person and the strategic vision within a company.

There were however, concerns raised by two of the entrepreneurs about the coaches. One entrepreneur (E2) had an issue with the manner in which one of coaches dealt with group dynamics and also highlighted the importance of sector-specific knowledge of the coaches. The quotations below capture these concerns:

> *E2: Mixed group dynamics are different. Coach should have experience in and be able to manage group dynamics, be sensitive to group dynamics. Also, to instil in the participants the skills to be able to be in a group where we are not all the same, but still be able to achieve and communicate. Sometimes the experience of the coach may limit understanding of certain sectors.*

Although having two coaches was perceived as valuable, one of the coaches (C3) cautioned that it sometimes caused confusion for the entrepreneurs as highlighted below:

> *C3: Coaches not to overlap on specialisations, one for personal development and one for business. Two coaches were meant as added value, with complimentary skills, but was perceived as "confusing".*

The fourth theme that emerged from this category is group learning and sharing on the programme. The six entrepreneurs and three coaches appreciated the peer learning and sharing, and the exchange of ideas amongst group members because they faced similar challenges, as stated in Table 31. This also improved their networking and dealing more effectively with group dynamics, due to the group being diverse, with both black and white races represented. Individual and group activities were given to ensure implementation of the learnings, and peer learning was encouraged among the participants, as highlighted in the Programme overview for Case 2 in Appendix C.

Table 31: Group learning and sharing

Women Entrepreneurs	**Coaches and Business Advisor**
E1: We share information and learn from one another. We also refer business among the group members. E2: I share with the women I met before the programme. It depended on us sharing and building one another. E3: I am usually a shy person, but the coaches encouraged us to speak in a group. E4: Diversity in group helped, learned from others. Being part of the group showed me that I am not alone. I can now ask other women for advice, if I experience challenges. E5: There's a few things that I really treasure out of it, was also the networking, to connect work with other people. It was good to be part of the group E6: I can deal better with group dynamics because of group sharing	C1: You know group coaching is important because that is pure peer learning. The moment a group of people sit together, they share real life experiences, then magic happens. C2: They would learn from each other to say, may do it this way, maybe do it that way. C3: Because they can see their challenges are not unique. You know, we all sit with the same challenges. We are all the same. Same challenges, peer learning

4.3.5 Programme factors which helped the entrepreneurs to sustain the changes

Two themes were identified that helped the entrepreneurs to sustain their changes over the long term since the programme ended, which are: (i) reference to programme material, and (ii) continued communication with the group and coaches. The two themes are discussed below.

The first theme in this category is reference to programme material. Entrepreneurs indicated that they still refer to information received during the programme as depicted in Table 32. They compiled the information in files during the programme and therefore refer back to their files if they need anything in their businesses.

Table 32: Reference to programme material

Women Entrepreneurs	Coaches and Business Advisor
E1: Manual file, we had a "red file" and I still refer to it. E2: I keep referring back to all the material that I compiled during the programme. I believe in the material that I got from the programme. E3: I have a file, hardcopy and soft copy. because I have the back-up. E5: I have the file systems I can go and I can take out and give to another person. I keep going back to the file.	C2: They have the "red file" where they know it is important stuff. C3: One of the tools was the action plan for the next year after the programme.

The second theme that emerged in this category is continued communication with the group and coaches. Participants indicated that they still keep in contact with the group and use the group for business referrals. The coaches are also available to assist, even after the programme has ended, as they still respond to queries or any questions from the participants as stated in Table 33.

Table 33: Continued communication with the group and coaches

Women Entrepreneurs	Coaches and Business Advisor
E1: We still communicate with the coach, we still have a WhatsApp group. We still communicate amongst one another even do referrals for business within our own circle. Coach XXX is always there for us. E3: Even now if you ask coaches a question, they still respond. E4: There is a WhatsApp group. I read whatever info is posted but I do not participate. E5: You have a caring group that can still motivate each other and learn.	C1: Having WhatsApp group and still posting created a camaraderie between them. Even though the WECP has long lapsed, it is still alive within the members. They still see each other as friends now. C2: They are able to talk to each other even out of the group sessions. C3: You know if the contract ends, the relationship ends but from informal, we still have a Facebook page. I am also here, they can ask something. I always have an open door, do they make use of it? Not all of them.

One of the entrepreneurs (E2) expressed a different opinion in terms of continued communication with the group, as expressed below:

> *E2: The idea of the programme was to build a networking programme even the when programme is gone, the women would continue to share. I think the programme failed dismally in that regard.*

One of the coaches also mentioned an ongoing relationship with Seda was critical in sustaining the long-term changes as highlighted below:

> *C2: The ones that have maintained a relationship with Seda are the ones that are able to sustain the changes because Seda can go and check if they are doing things differently, since the group coaching programme ended*.

4.3.6 Recommendations to improve the group coaching programme towards enhancing its long-term impact.

Four themes emerged as recommendations to improve the group coaching programme, as follows: (i) duration of the programme to be increased, (ii) more one-to-one interaction with a coach at the business site, (iii) more follow-up, (iv) allow for practical implementation in the business, and (v) improve selection of participants. The themes are discussed in turn.

The first recommendation to improve the group coaching programme towards enhancing its long-term impact was that the duration of programme should be increased to at least twelve months. Five of the entrepreneurs and all the coaches felt that the time was short and that they needed more time to implement what they had learned in the businesses, as indicated in Table 34. Some entrepreneurs (E1, E4 and E5) felt that the programme was compressed and they felt overwhelmed or rushed by the information presented and the work they needed to do on implementation.

Table 34: Duration of the programme to be increased

Women Entrepreneurs	Coaches and Business Advisor
E1: It was short. One year at least, it was too much work, I neglected family and business sometimes. E3: Time was short. Make it a bit longer. E4: Time frames were not long enough. I felt rushed. Extend time frame. E5: We need longer time. Time was short, I felt overwhelmed. It was a bit hectic for me. E6: Time was short, run programme over one year (12 sessions)	C1: Twelve to fifteen months. Give them more time to implement. C2: Time frames for the group coaching was a challenge, the programme was compressed. I think it should go, maybe for twelve months. C3: From our evaluation, they would have loved a longer period. A full year with a maintenance cool-off period after that of six months. So, make it an eighteen months programme.

Only one participant did not have challenges with the duration of the programme as highlighted below:

> E2: *Time-line was sufficient, it depends on individuals*.

Several participants proposed increasing the programme duration to 12 months, and then to have a second phase after the programme where participants could be given time to implement the learnings and on-site coaching could be done. The second recommendation was for more one-to-one interaction with the coach at the entrepreneur's business site during the programme. Three entrepreneurs and all three coaches believed that in addition to the group sessions, it would be beneficial to follow-up with one-to-one coaching at the business site so that the coach also assess other challenges that the entrepreneur is experiencing as depicted in Table 35. Although the programme allowed for on-site visits by a coach at the beginning and end of the programme, one of the coaches (C1) mentioned that it would require more budget to include one-to-one coaching as part of the programme. This will not only add value but would have more impact on the women entrepreneurs.

Table 35: More one-to-one coaching with a coach

Women Entrepreneurs	Coaches and Business Advisor
E1: They [*coaches*] used to do visitation to our business. One-on-one interaction was good. E2: I think it will be the individual approach. When I need a coach for a particular service, remember it's about me. E4: I do think you need assistance individually at some point. I would rather have a one-on-one coaching. For me it works better, I am more open when I am on my own. When Coach XXX visited my business, I could even get a better perspective on how things should be done. E5: Walk the walk with a person until there is a success story. You don't leave a person until there is a success story. E6: Incorporate more one-on-one coaching.	C1: I think what they really valued a lot was one-on-one coaching and we didn't have enough. I would add a little bit money to be able to go and visit each person once a month. C2: When coach had visited the sites, she would pick up on gaps and come up with better solutions. The challenge was that there was not enough time for one-to-one with the coach. C3: Allow one-on-one mentoring time *[with the coaches].* Some were not comfortable raising their issues in the group.

A need for one-to-one coaching was also necessary for entrepreneurs to raise some of their personal issues with the coach as expressed in the statement below:

> *C2: Coach focused more on professional issues, personal issues were not dealt with and some had serious personal challenges.*

The third recommendation for enhancing the long-term impact is allowing for practical implementation of the learnings in the business as indicated in Table 36. Four entrepreneurs felt that they did not have time to implement what they had learned in their businesses while they were participating in the programme and two coaches also recommended that an implementation phase be introduced in the programme. Entrepreneurs believed that the programme would have more impact if the programme was more practical and allowed for more implementation in their businesses. It is interesting to note that the participants perceived the coaching programme as more of a training programme than a coaching programme looking at the statements such as the "teaching was good", "basic business course" and "intense training".

Table 36: Allow for practical implementation of learnings in the business

Women Entrepreneurs	Coaches and Business Advisor
E2: Although I was not able to put all systems in place, there were certain things that I did manage to put in place in as far as my business is concerned. E3: Sometimes you need a lot of time to apply it. And there wasn't really time to apply because you are busy with WECP and then you got your own business to run. E4: The teaching was good but there was no actual – enough time for implementation. Learnt a lot, but no time for implementation. E5: *[suggested]* You have one term, where you take on a basic business and have fundamental course. Then stage two when your stuff is in place, we make it more practical.	**C2:** An implementation stage will be helpful after the programme. C3:……. Then Phase 2 is 7 months where it is not intense training but more taking their hands to implement. Because you can't implement without knowledge, You ignited the flame and then "chook", you are gone when they want to implement. They just don't start implementing new ideas immediately

The fourth recommendation for enhancing the long-term impact of the programme is for more follow-up after the programme has ended. Entrepreneurs felt it was important for the coaches to assess whether there was growth in their businesses after the programme had ended, and also to check if there were still challenges with which they were struggling, as stated in Table 37. According to the implementation files and reports from coaches, the programme only allowed for a site visit to collect data from the participants before and immediately after the end of the programme.

Table 37: More follow-up

Women Entrepreneurs	Coaches and Business Advisor
E3: …make the programme and you say then for the next two years come together once or twice, just to the coaches can come through	C2: Even if the coach is no longer there, Seda should take over and hand-hold the participants going forward.

and see what you are struggling with. Just a revisit, a follow-up E5: They can come in and assess again, to say, that side you did grow, now give attention to this. E6: Follow-up after one year to assess impact.	C3: After the twelve months period and a period of coaching, there must be another visit added to the contract to check the sustainability and to check the final impact.

The fifth theme in this category was to improve the selection of participants for the programme. Three of the entrepreneurs and two coaches felt that the selection of participants in terms of similar business sectors should be considered as depicted in Table 38. This would allow the participants to learn from one another and also share best practice as their challenges would be more similar.

Table 38: Proper selection criteria of participants

Women Entrepreneurs	Coaches and Business Advisor
E4: It is a good programme. More people could have benefited but they were excluded because their businesses did not qualify. It should not focus only on a certain turnover, include gentlemen as well. E5: You can have smaller groups, e.g. guest houses can work together on practical exercises. E6: Recruit more businesses from same sector so that they can share experiences and challenges.	C1: In our town, it was difficult to get high players, entry requirements were too high, lower them a bit. C3: Selection criteria to be strict, allow women on same level. Ensure more from the same sector enrol, to enhance peer learning. Sector specific, not only industry specific. That will make it worthwhile. Narrow the criteria so the business owner sits in class, they cannot send a PA or secretary. Since the criteria had been lowered, it showed – those who are more advanced, versus those with limited business skills and experience.

4.3.7 Summary of Case 2

The study explored the perceived long-term impact of a group coaching programme on the women entrepreneurs, factors that contributed to the long-term impact and sustaining it and recommendations to enhance the programme's long-term impact on the participants. The participants reported the programme had an impact on them personally and on their businesses.

Perceived impact on the entrepreneurs included improved self-confidence, their leadership competence was enhanced, and they also developed strategic thinking. They further developed their organising skills, which meant that they were able to manage their businesses better. The impact on the business was seen through improved business systems and/or process and growth in the businesses. The impact on the entrepreneurs' businesses was due to a planned time-line with goals and actions that they implemented in their businesses. Furthermore, the programme provided content that was meaningful to the participants and having two coaches ensured they benefitted from complementary skills of the coaches. In addition, group sharing and learning ensured that they benefitted from experiences of other members in the group.

Factors that assisted the women entrepreneurs to sustain the changes long after the programme had ended were referral to the material received during the programme and continued communication with the coach and group. Recommendations to improve the programme in order to enhance its long-term impact included extending the programme to twelve months to ensure that the entrepreneurs do not feel overwhelmed by the content and to ensure that all important areas are covered. In addition, a need for practical implementation of the learnings in the business was seen as important. Furthermore, more one-to-one coaching on the business site and follow-up by the coaches after the programme had ended were recommended. These measures would ensure that the participants are in a position to implement the learnings in their businesses, that coaches can identify other challenges on-site and also offer advice where the women were struggling. Furthermore, proper selection of participants, especially grouping the participants according to the same business sectors, would ensure that they spoke the same language in relation to the challenges they faced.

4.3.8 *Summary of the with-in case analysis*

Each of the two cases presented the perceived long-term impact of the group coaching programme on the women entrepreneurs. The perceived impact in both cases included increased self-confidence, developed strategic thinking, enhanced leadership competence and improved organising skills. The perceived impact on the women’s business included improved business systems and increased growth in both cases. Referral to the programme material and continued communication between the group and coaches also assisted the participants to sustain the changes in both cases. Common factors and differences between the two cases are discussed further in Chapter 5, where a systematic across-case analysis is outlined.

CHAPTER 5: CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the common themes and differences across the two cases according to the research questions, namely:

I. What is the perceived long-term impact of the group coaching programme on women entrepreneurs?
II. How did the group coaching contribute to the perceived long-term impact on women entrepreneurs?
III. How can the group coaching programme be improved towards enhancing the long-term impact?

The cross-case analysis entails examination of the themes identified in the within-case analysis in the previous chapter, across the two cases. The identified patterns and differences are discussed in relation to the literature as presented in Chapter 2.

5.2 Group Coaching Programme Overview

In order to set the landscape for the cross-case analysis, the two group coaching programmes are presented for each of the cases in Table 39.

Table 39: Comparison of the coaching programmes

Programme features	Case 1 (February 2014 to August 2014)	Case 2 (August 2015 to March 2016)
Region participants based	Bloemfontein	Welkom
Prior On-Site Assessment	√	√
Orientation	√	√
Strategic planning session	√	√

Group coaching sessions	7	10
Duration	7 months	10 Months
Expert presentations	√	√
Evaluation immediately after the programme ends	√	√

The two programmes followed the same approach in terms of the structure, with an on-site assessment, an orientation phase to highlight the programme objectives, a strategic planning session where all entrepreneurs identified individual goals and group goals, expert presentations during the programme, and evaluation immediately at the end of the programme. Both programmes had experts who were invited to give presentations on different topics, based on the entrepreneurs' needs, however, the speakers and topics differed between the two programmes, as highlighted in Appendix B and C, respectively.

The coaching methodologies used by the external coaches in both programmes also differed. In Case 1, the coaches used coaching exercises and coaching conversations to allow the entrepreneurs to solve their own challenges. They also allowed entrepreneurs to reflect on their learnings and give feedback on previous sessions. They focused on entrepreneurs' challenges as identified by the entrepreneurs themselves and used questioning and listening approaches to conduct the group sessions. In Case 2, the coaches had different expertise and strengths that added value to the programme. One coach was good with strategic planning, marketing, and personal development of entrepreneurs, while the other coach was good with systems, record keeping and logistics planning in a business.

In Case 1, a group objective identified at the beginning of the programme was growth planning and to improve marketing as most of the entrepreneurs struggled with growth of their businesses due to poor marketing skills. For Case 2, the overall objective for the group was growth planning and putting systems in place as most entrepreneurs lacked proper systems in their businesses which affected their growth. The durations of the programmes differed, in that Case 1 was only for seven months, while Case 2 was for ten months.

In addition, all the coaches and business advisors attended a two-day course on an Introduction to Coaching at the University of Pretoria to ensure consistent implementation of the programme across all provinces. All coaches also participated in quarterly meetings to share experiences and challenges with implementation of the programme.

In terms of the demographic profile of the entrepreneurs, in Case 1 all the entrepreneurs were black women and the coaches were black men. In Case 2, there was a mix in terms of race of the entrepreneurs: three were black women and three were white women. Both coaches in Case 2 were white women. The profile of the participants in terms of differences between the two cases is depicted in Table 40.

Table 40: Profile of participants

	Case 1 (Bloemfontein)	**Case 2 (Welkom)**
External Coaches	2 Men	2 Women
Business Advisors	1 Woman	1 Woman
Participants	6 Women	6 Women
Race of six programme participants	All Black	3 Black and 3 White

5.3 Cross-case discussion pertaining to Research Question 1

This section highlights common patterns and differences across the two cases to answer Research Question 1: What is the perceived long-term impact of the group coaching programme on women entrepreneurs? The categories of the findings discussed in this section are:

- Perceived long-term impact on the entrepreneurs
- Perceived long-term impact on the entrepreneur’s business

5.3.1 Perceived long-term impact on the entrepreneurs

The cross-case analysis of the perceived long-term impact of group coaching on women entrepreneurs personally is tabulated in Table 41:

Table 41: Perceived long-term impact on the entrepreneurs

Impact on the entrepreneurs	Case 1	Case 2
Increased self-confidence	√	√
Enhanced leadership skills	√	√
Developed strategic thinking	√	√
Improved marketing skills	√	
Improved organising skills		√

There were consistencies in three themes for both Case 1 and Case 2 which were that group coaching had a perceived long-term impact on the entrepreneurs' personally in terms of their self-confidence, their developed strategic thinking and their enhanced leadership skills. These outcomes align with the findings of studies on entrepreneur coaching where entrepreneurs gained confidence, they were encouraged to think more strategically about their businesses, and they also understood the difference between managing and leading their companies, with an improvement in leadership and decision making (Fusco et al., 2015; Kutzhanova et al., 2009). Increase in self-confidence as an outcome also concurs with studies where women in group leadership coaching programmes reported an increase in self-confidence due to the coaching (Bonneywell, 2017; Reid, 2013).

As indicated in Table 41, there were however two themes which were different across the two cases, that is, improved marketing skills (Case 1) and improved organising abilities (Case 2). In Case 1, improved marketing skills could be due to a specific group objective that was set at the beginning of the programme which emphasised growth planning of their businesses. Another reason for the improved marketing skills, was that there was also a marketing expert who was invited to share knowledge and information around social media marketing. This finding supports a study by Saukkonen et al. (2016) where only one capability area (marketing and sales) showed a significant higher level statistically for start-up companies and students participating in a coaching programme, when comparing their capabilities before and after the programme.

The other difference across the two cases was improved organising abilities which was found in Case 2. One of the group objectives was to put systems in place to improve how entrepreneurs managed their businesses. In addition, one of the coaches in Case 2 was good with systems planning, which may have contributed to this outcome. This finding appears to endorse the finding by Saadaoui and Affess (2015) that coaching gives entrepreneurs skills and capabilities to manage their businesses.

5.3.2 Perceived long-term impact on the entrepreneur's business

There were consistencies in themes for both Case 1 and Case 2 with regard to the perceived long-term impact of the group coaching programme on the entrepreneurs' businesses. The two themes, which were (i) improved business systems and/or processes, and (ii) growth of their businesses, were found in both cases. In Case 1, improved business systems were related to better management of finances, which led to improved efficiencies in the entrepreneurs' businesses. In Case 2, on the other hand, improved business systems were due to the fact that a lack of systems was identified as a challenge during the assessment stage of the programme and a specific group objective to improve business systems was hence formulated. This finding aligns to the literature that suggests that coaching gives entrepreneurs skills and capabilities to manage and improve efficiencies in the business (Saadaoui & Affess, 2015).

While it was acknowledged that a few women entrepreneurs' businesses had closed, growth of the business was another theme that emerged strongly in both of the cases, for those interviewed. Growth is the overall objective of the programme and is measured in terms of increase in turnover/sales, profits, assets or employees. In Case 1, five of the entrepreneurs reported growth, and in Case 2, all six entrepreneurs experienced growth, though one of the participants mentioned that she was not certain if the growth in revenue was directly attributable to the programme. Gray et al. (2011) found that the impact of coaching on business-related attributes was weaker. Yet, in another study, participants indicated that between 5 to 50% of firm growth was attributable to business coaching received, because they were provided the opportunity to consider other perspectives and options (Crompton & Smyrnios, 2011). Of note, Crompton et al. (2012) found that business coaching was a non-direct influencer of firm growth through entrepreneurial level of self-confidence on firm growth. Dobrea and Maiorescu (2015) evaluated linkages between a number of factors on business coaching and the level of confidence of the entrepreneurs and found that coaching contributes to business performance and growth. In the present study, the increase in self-confidence was most evident as a perceived impact of the group coaching on the women entrepreneurs *personally* – and therefore may have had an influence on the growth of their businesses.

5.3.3 Conclusion of research question 1

Group coaching had a perceived long-term impact on the women entrepreneurs in both Cases 1 and 2 through increased self-confidence, enhanced leadership abilities and developed strategic thinking. It is however, worth noting that in both cases, the participants had challenges with understanding of strategic management. The programme also had a perceived long-term impact on the entrepreneurs' businesses through improved business systems and/or processes, and growth of their businesses. The increase in self-confidence of the women entrepreneurs personally may have had an indirect influence on the growth of their businesses.

5.4 Cross-case discussion pertaining to Research Question 2

A cross-case analysis of the findings in Case 1 and Case 2 is presented in this section to answer the Research Question 2: How did the group coaching contribute to the perceived long-term impact on women entrepreneurs?
The categories of the findings are:

- Factors in the programme which contributed to the overall long-term impact
- Programme factors which helped the entrepreneurs to sustain the changes

5.4.1 Factors in the programme which contributed to the overall long-term impact

As presented in Table 42, the cross case-analysis depicts the factors in the group coaching programme which contributed to the overall long-term impact.

Table 42: Programme factors which contributed to the overall long-term impact

Programme factors	Case 1	Case 2
Planned time-line and goal focus	√	√
Meaningful content	√	√
Group learning and sharing	√	√
Coaching approach	√	
Value of two coaches with different expertise		√
Structure of the programme	√	

As depicted above, there were consistencies in three themes for Case 1 and Case 2, which are: the planned time-lines, meaningful programme content, and group learning and sharing. The entrepreneurs reported that the programme had planned schedules for their attendance, and this assisted them to plan their activities to ensure regular attendance. This finding aligns with O'Connor et al. (2017) who emphasised the importance of upfront preparations and communications to the participants about the coaching programme. In Case 2, the goal/action focus of the programme was prominent, as entrepreneurs stated that the programme had clear goals and objectives and they had actions plans that they had to implement. This finding is in agreement with literature on group leadership coaching where the participants attributed their changes in behaviour and leadership to action plans that helped to provide focus on what needed to be done and hence served as a commitment-enhancement mechanism (Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2010). In addition, the goal/action focus served to foster routinisation for the women entrepreneurs in the present study, through doing something for themselves in their businesses and practising new behaviours, which is argued by Koroleva (2016), as a key factor for embedding sustainable change from coaching programmes.

Meaningful programme content was reported across the two cases as being a key programme factor. The participants appreciated content shared by the experts from industry who focused on different topics. The representatives from developmental funding institutions, who shared content on funding opportunities and incentives for women in business, also had a positive impact on the entrepreneurs' businesses. This finding aligns to literature on the Plato Programme where guest speakers provide information on management topics, thereby enlarging the knowledge base of participants (Schoonjans et al., 2013). Reid (2013) also found that receiving external input was a key factor in leadership group coaching programmes. In Case 1, however, two participants also cautioned that sometimes what was presented by the experts during the programme was not easily accessible in reality.

Another programme factor that emerged strongly across the two cases was group learning and sharing. The participants and coaches appreciated the peer learning and experiences shared amongst group members. This finding concurs with studies on group coaching, for example, where through peer coaching, participants experienced peer support, networking and shared knowledge - and this served as a framework to understand their own experience (Kutzhanova et al., 2009). In addition, group cohesion and psychological safety of participants (Fusco et al., 2015), learning through sharing, and group support for staying on track (Reid, 2013), were found to be key programme factors.

There were some different emphases across the two cases with regard to three programme factors (as depicted in Table 5.4), that is, the coaching approach, the value of two coaches with different expertise, and the structure of the programme. The coaching approach emerged as a programme factor in Case 1 where both of the coaches were found to be professional and knowledgeable about businesses and sectors. The two coaches were seen to focus on their respective strengths and complemented one another. The participants stressed the impact of their coaching approach which focused on the participants' issues and not the coaches' agenda. They highlighted the way in which the coaches facilitated the group coaching, for example, giving coaching exercises (such as, giving participants group assignments and assisting them to find solutions for their own business problems), the questioning approach, and listening skills of the coaches - and the positive impact of this approach on the participants. In addition, De Meuse et al. (2009) found that the effectiveness of coaching is also related to the coaching methodology and approach employed by the coach or coaches.

In Case 2, the participants did not highlight the coaching approach (that is, the way in which the coaches facilitated the group coaching process). Instead, the participants in this case appreciated the value of having two coaches, as each coach had different expertise. The one coach was proficient with systems and focused more on the business, and the other one with strategic planning and focused more on the entrepreneur as an individual. The researcher had a sense that some of the coaching in Case 2 may have been more akin to a mentoring approach, as one participant referred to being taught by the coaches, rather than a true coaching approach (as was adopted in Case 1). Of note, mentoring and coaching do share some similarities and differences, with these two concepts sometimes being used interchangeably and as subsets of each other (Crompton et al., 2012; Gray et al., 2011; Peel, 2008). A key difference is that mentoring involves teaching and passing on of knowledge or advice to others, while coaching assists the client to find their own solutions by asking questions and listening (Audet & Couteret, 2012). Interestingly, another point alluded to a possible lack of group coaching competence in Case 2, when one of the entrepreneurs voiced concern with one of the coach's capability in dealing with group dynamics and cultural differences in the group. This is in line with literature on group coaching in that the group coach should have a strong understanding of group dynamics and group-based dialogue processes (Brown & Grant, 2010). Remaining sensitive to cultural differences is also key to success in sustaining learning and behaviour change (Wasylyshyn et al., 2006).

Another theme that was prominent only in Case 1 was the structure of the programme. The participants appreciated the interactive nature of the group sessions where they could deliberate and discuss issues in a group, especially because they were grouped according to their business sectors. They also cited homework which they had to do and also implement in their businesses. This aligns to the finding that the most effective groups were those that had a robust structure of the coaching sessions (O'Connor et al., 2017). It is worth noting that though the structure of the programme is outlined in the Seda programme implementation file, each coach used their own coaching process and structure to conduct the sessions, meaning that some inconsistencies were likely to occur across the two cases in how the coaching sessions were conducted. Wasylyshyn et al. (2006) cautioned that if there is no specific group coaching structure imposed on the coaches by the sponsor, this might lead to confusion. This confusion was evident where one of the participants in Case 2 asked the questions: "What were the programme goals and objectives? What was the programme seeking to achieve?" Another participant in Case 1 stated that expectations were not clearly defined at the beginning of the programme and some people had different expectations. Furthermore, one of the coaches in Case

2 also recommended that the programme be standardised, as depicted in the statement below:

> *I think maybe the whole programme across the country, the whole WECP must have a standardised outcome or a standardised model because we were one of the beginners and we did, as I said, we just follow-up on all the weaknesses that we could identify on the programme.*

5.4.2 Programme factors which helped the entrepreneurs to sustain the changes

The two programme factors which assisted the women entrepreneurs to sustain their changes after the group coaching programme ended are discussed below.

5.4.2.1 Reference to the programme material

Participants in both Case 1 and Case 2 stated that reference to the material received during the programme has helped them to sustain the learnings after the programme had ended. This theme was strong across both cases. Koroleva (2016) argues for having effective resources in the coaching process to promote sustainable change, of which one of these (based on this finding of the present study), could be having useful programme material as a reference for group coaching participants to use after the programme has ended.

5.4.2.2 Continued communication with the coaches and women

Another theme that emerged strongly across the two cases, as a factor which contributed to the long-term impact of the group coaching programme, was the continued communication with the coaches and women participants after the programme ended. The entrepreneurs in Case 1 and Case 2 indicated that they still have WhatsApp groups where they share information and business referrals among group members. Two entrepreneurs in Case 1 mentioned that they have maintained the relationship with one of the coaches, as he is their accountant.

This finding supports that of Kets de Vries and Korotov (2010), who observed that staying in contact with the community of learners was a foundation for personal change for participants in a group leadership programme. Again, continuing to be in touch with the group after the programme ends, may be one resource among others, which Koroleva (2016) argues are necessary to promote sustainable change.

5.4.3 Conclusion to Research Question 2

Factors in the group coaching programme, across both cases, which contributed to the overall long-term impact on the women entrepreneurs included the planned time lines and goal focus of the programme, meaningful content, and group learning and sharing. Some differences in three other programme factors were perceived as having contributed to the overall long-term impact. These were the coaching approach (in Case 1), the value of using two coaches with different expertise (in Case 2), and the structure of the programme (in Case 1). Referral to programme material and continued communication with the coach and the women participants, were resources which assisted the participants in both cases to sustain the changes after the programme had ended.

5.5 Cross-Case Discussion pertaining to Research Question 3

This section shows common findings and differences across the cases to answer Research Question 3: How can the group coaching programme be improved towards enhancing the long-term impact? The recommendations are highlighted in Table 43.

Table 43: Recommendations to improve the programme

Recommendations to improve the programme	Case 1	Case 2
Increase programme duration	√	√
More follow-up after the programme	√	√
More one-to-one coaching		√

Allow for implementation of learnings in the business		√
Proper selection of participants	√	√
Broader selection of coaches	√	

A recommendation to increase the duration of the programme emerged in both cases from the entrepreneurs and coaches. In Case 1, the recommendation came more from the coaches than the participants; while in Case 2, the participants felt overwhelmed by the content of the programme, perceiving that the programme duration was too short, and therefore recommended that the programme be increased to at least 12 months. Doing this, would allow the participants more time to implement the learnings in their businesses. It is surprising to see that the recommendation came more from the participants and coaches in Case 2, which was a 10-month programme, and not from Case 1, which was a 7-month programme. Any further extension of the programme will, however, have cost implications for Seda as a sponsor for the programme, and Theeboom et al. (2014) found that increasing the number of coaching sessions does not necessarily lead to improved outcomes, but this was a finding in relation to dyadic coaching, which is less complex than group coaching (O'Connor & Grant, 2017).

Another recommendation that emerged across both cases was a need for more follow-up after the programme had ended. The aim of such follow-up would be to assess if the entrepreneurs had implemented what they had learnt, to assess if there are new challenges and whether they have sustained the learnings. This finding concurs with the literature in that follow-up by the coaches allow them to assess if participants have made significant changes (O'Connor et al. 2017; Ward et al. 2014). Fusco et al. (2016) also suggest that an additional assessment 18 to 24 months after a group coaching programme could yield valuable results. Follow-up sessions for feedback to gauge the sustainability of the coaching work are considered important (Stout-Rostron, 2014).

A theme that emerged as a recommendation in Case 2 only was a need for more one-to-one coaching with one of the coaches on the entrepreneur's business site.

This individual coaching would assist the coach to assess other challenges with the business and also to deal with more personal issues that cannot be discussed in a group setting. This finding aligns with research by Ward et al.(2014), who found that group coaching is empirically effective especially if combined with one-to-one coaching. In addition, Brown and Grant (2010) advocated for a group coaching model that integrated one-to-one coaching with group coaching methodologies. Fusco et al. (2016) also asserted that a parallel process that allows participants to work at both intra and inter personal levels, exploring their self-concept in the social context, holds the key to effectiveness of group coaching.

Another theme that emerged as a recommendation in Case 2 only, was a need for practical implementation of the learnings in the businesses. The entrepreneurs felt that the learnings were beneficial, however, they did not have sufficient time during the programme to apply the learnings or implement them in their businesses. Thus, participants in Case 2 recommended that the programme duration be extended to allow for this. O'Connor et al. (2017) found that more time was needed to process goals and that capacity to connect theory to practice was important in approaching complex system issues in a group coaching programme in a large organisation.

Proper selection of participants was a recommendation across the two cases. Some entrepreneurs suggested that the programme be organised according to sectors to allow entrepreneurs to share similar experiences and challenges. Others felt that it is important to group entrepreneurs on the same level of growth of their businesses to ensure the programme content is pitched at the same level to accommodate all participants. Coaches also highlighted that it was difficult to find women entrepreneurs who met the criteria of the programme; as a result, the programme requirements had to be “relaxed” to suit the dynamics of the area from which they were recruited. O'Connor et al. (2017) recommended that the right, engaged people are selected for participation in programmes. Wasylyshyn et al. (2006) found that successful outcomes of a programme for high potential employees who sustained learning and behaviour change were related to careful selection of participants.

Proper and broader selection of coaches, a recommendation raised in Case 1, would ensure that Seda has a larger pool of coaches to choose from. The coaches are also encouraged to upgrade their skills and keep up to date with trends in the market. This finding aligns with recommendations by Kutzhanova et al. (2009) in that when coaching entrepreneurs, it is important to hire coaches with experience in entrepreneurship and in business coaching. The personal attributes of the coach such as knowledge, experience and qualifications are critical (Leedham, 2005).

5.5.1 Conclusion for Research Question 3

Recommendations to improve the group coaching programme in order to enhance its long-term impact on future participants included: increasing the programme duration, more one-to-one coaching on the entrepreneurs' businesses, and more follow-up and evaluation after the programme. Furthermore, selection of both the participants and the coaches is critical for success. These recommendations would not only ensure that participants grow their businesses, they would also assist them to sustain the changes they made after the programme ends.

5.5.2 Conclusion

In order to explore the perceived long-term impact of the group coaching, the following questions were posed:

1. What is the perceived long-term impact of the group coaching programme on women entrepreneurs?
2. How did the group coaching contribute to the perceived long-term impact on women entrepreneurs?

3 How can the group coaching programme be improved towards enhancing the long-term impact?

The answers to these questions were addressed in this chapter through a cross-case analysis of the perceptions among women entrepreneurs in alignment to literature reviewed in Chapter 2. There were consistencies in the three themes with regard to the perceived long-term impact of the programme on the women, which were increased self-confidence, enhanced leadership skills and developed strategic thinking. There were however, inconsistencies with regard to two themes; that is, improved marketing skills (Case 1) and improved organising skills (Case 2). With regard to the perceived long-term impact of the group coaching programme on the entrepreneur's business, there were consistencies in themes for both Case 1 and Case 2. The two themes that were found in both cases were improved business systems and/or processes and (ii) growth of their businesses.

Factors in the programme which contributed to the overall long-term impact included planned time-lines, meaningful programme content and group learning and sharing which were consistent themes across the two Cases. There were however, inconsistencies in the two cases, with regard to some factors which were perceived to have contributed to the overall long-term impact. These were, the coaching approach (Case 1), the value of having two coaches with different expertise (Case 2), and the structure of the programme (Case 3). Programme factors which helped the entrepreneurs to sustain the changes over the long term were reference to programme material and continued communication with the coaches and the group. These themes were consistent across both cases.

Recommendations to improve the group coaching programme in order to enhance its long-term impact on future participants included increasing the programme duration to at least 12 months to allow participants to cover the content without feeling rushed, and follow-up after the programme to assess challenges and growth in the businesses. In addition, a need for proper selection of participants and a broader selection of coaches were found across both cases. There were however, two recommendations which came from Case 2 only, which were (i) a need for one-to-one coaching, and (ii) allow for practical implementation of the learnings in the business.

The next chapter ends with the conclusions of the study and recommendations.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The research aim was to explore the perceived long-term impact of a group coaching programme on women entrepreneurs, towards recommending improvements to the programme for enhancing its long-term impact. The research aimed to answer the three questions:

1. What is the perceived long-term impact of the group coaching programme on women entrepreneurs?
2. How did the group coaching contribute to the perceived long-term impact on women entrepreneurs?
3. How can the group coaching programme be improved towards enhancing the long-term impact?

In this chapter, the study draws to an end by drawing conclusions and highlighting key findings for each research question, followed by providing recommendations to all stakeholders identified, and finally, making suggestions for future research.

6.2 Conclusions regarding Research Question 1

Given that long-term sustainability of women entrepreneurs' businesses is important, the focus of this study was to explore the long-term impact of the group coaching programme on women entrepreneurs (WECP), at least two years after the programme ended. The conclusion drawn from this study is that this group coaching programme did have a perceived long-term impact on women entrepreneurs, both personally and on their businesses. This finding therefore contributes to the literature on the long-term impact of group coaching, on which there appears to be a scarcity, particularly on the impact beyond two years after completion of the group coaching intervention, which this study did.

The impact on the women entrepreneurs personally included increased self-confidence, enhanced leadership skills, and developed strategic thinking ability. The increase in self-confidence aligns with coaching studies where participants showed improved confidence and self-efficacy due to the coaching (Bonneywell, 2017; Fusco et al., 2015; Kutzhanova et al., 2009; Reid, 2013). A difference between the two cases was that in Case 1, the entrepreneurs also improved their marketing skills, while in Case 2, they improved their organising skills, which was attributed to having different group objectives in their respective group coaching programmes.

The long-term impact on the businesses of the women entrepreneurs was seen through improved business systems and/or processes, and growth in the business. Improved business systems and/or processes led to improved efficiencies in the entrepreneurs' businesses. Furthermore, they highlighted growth of their businesses in terms of an increase in turnover/sales, profits, assets and/or number of employees.

What was different about the study was that the focus was not only on the individual entrepreneurs, but also on the growth of their businesses. As individuals' self-confidence improves, this seems to translate into managing their businesses better and leads to growth in sales or profits.

6.3 Conclusion regarding Research Question 2

This study also wanted to identify how the group coaching programme contributed to the perceived long-term impact on the women entrepreneurs. The conclusion drawn from this study is that there were several factors in the programme which contributed to its long-term impact. The findings indicate that what contributed were the planned time-lines and goals/action focus, meaningful content, and the group learning and sharing. The coaching approach, the value of having two coaches and the structure of the programme were also highlighted, yet with some variation in these across the two cases.

The programme had planned schedules which assisted the women entrepreneurs to plan their activities to ensure regular attendance, and therefore to complete the programme. In addition, the programme had clear goals and objectives at both individual and group level, with action plans that the women entrepreneurs had to implement.

Meaningful content in the group coaching programme related to relevant information shared by the experts from industry who focused on different topics of value to the entrepreneurs. This implied that the programme was not a pure coaching programme as it included some training and advice for the participants.

Group learning and sharing amongst the women entrepreneurs not only encouraged them to push through, but they also realised they were facing similar challenges in running their businesses. This benefit of group learning and sharing in group coaching has been highlighted in other studies (Fusco et al., 2015; Kutzhanova et al., 2009; Reid, 2013).

The coaching approach is another factor which contributed to the perceived long-term impact of the group coaching programme. The participants in Case 1 appreciated the coaching approach of the two coaches they had; however, in Case 2, the participants appreciated the value of having two coaches with different expertise and skills. The importance of the coaching approach, skills set and expertise of coaches in group coaching interventions has been acknowledged in other studies (Kutzhanova et al., 2009) with emphasis on experience in managing group dynamics and group processes (Brown & Grant, 2010; Kets de Vries, 2005; O'Connor et al., 2017; Ward, 2008). While the WECP has a prescribed format, there seemed to be some latitude in how the coaches facilitated the programme. Hence, for Case 1, the structure of the programme was seen as a positive factor in the way the coaches ran it, while this was not highlighted in Case 2. In Case 1, what was valued were the group discussions, grouped according to the participants' business sectors, and the homework they were required to implement in their businesses.

In addition to identifying how the group coaching programme contributed to the perceived long-term impact on the women entrepreneurs, the intent of the study was to understand what aspects of the programme assisted the women entrepreneurs to sustain their changes over the long term. In this regard, the findings revealed that what assisted the women entrepreneurs to sustain their changes after the programme ended were referral to material received during the programme and continued communication with the group and the coach/es. The latter finding concurs with Kets de Vries and Korotov (2010), who observed that staying in contact with the community of learners was important for personal change of participants in a group leadership programme.

The findings of this study in relation to research question 2 add to the body of knowledge on the emerging field of group coaching – by identifying programme factors which contribute to the long-term impact of a group coaching programme, and by identifying factors which assist participants to sustain their changes long after a programme has ended (that is, at least two years after completion).

6.4 Conclusion regarding Research Question 3

The third research question: how can the group coaching programme be improved towards enhancing the long-term impact? The conclusion drawn from this study is that there is potential to improve the group coaching programme for women entrepreneurs to further enhance its long-term impact. The findings of the research recommended the following: to increase the programme duration to at least 12 months, to implement more follow-up mechanisms after the programme has ended to monitor the changes, and to conduct proper selection of participants In addition, the inclusion of one-to-one coaching to address individual needs, allowing for implementation of the learnings in the business and the broader selection of coaches were recommended. These recommendations are elaborated on in the next section.

6.5 Recommendations for stakeholders

This section outlines recommendations for different stakeholders.

6.5.1 Recommendations for Seda for future implementation of the WECP

The recommendations for Seda Programme Assessment and Development (PAD) and Learning Division are summarised in the table 44 below.

Table 44: Recommendations for implementing the programme

	Recommendation
Duration	• Increase duration of the programme to at least 12 months. • Spread the programme to ensure all the content is covered and also to allow participants time for implementation in their businesses.
One-to-one coaching	• Allow for more one-to-one coaching in addition to group coaching (Brown & Grant, 2010). This will allow the coach to also deal with more personal issues. • To include one-to-one coaching during the assessment stage, another session after six months into the programme, and another session at the end of the programme (that is, three sessions). • For further support, one-to-one sessions could also be held during group discussions in class to clarify challenging areas and also to focus on personal growth, as well as business growth.
More follow-up	• More follow-up by coaches is required after the programme has ended to identify if the participants are sustaining the learnings and also if there are any new challenges (O'Connor et al., 2017; Wasylyshyn et al., 2006). • Two follow-up sessions are proposed: one to be done within six months and another 12 months after the programme has ended. • A Seda business advisor could be allocated to the programme to continue with follow-up sessions in cases where budget is a challenge

Allow for implementation	• Allow participants to implement learnings in their businesses – that is, give participants homework based on what they have learned to implement in their business. • During the group coaching sessions, the coaches need to follow-up to asses if the participants are implementing the learnings in their businesses.
Selection of participants	• Proper selection of participants is required to ensure participants meet the criteria of the programme (Bozer et al., 2013; O'Connor et al., 2017). • Include participants from the same sectors to allow participants to share experiences and similar challenges. • Be strict on participants' selection criteria to ensure that participants are on the same skill level and business level (Kutzhanova et al., 2009).
Selection of coaches	• Proper selection of coaches is required to ensure coaches are suitable for facilitating the group coaching programme, especially experience in managing group dynamics (Brown & Grant, 2010; Reid, 2013) and a mastery in group facilitation (O'Connor et al., 2017). • Review the selection requirements to ensure coaches have relevant experience in coaching and a track record of working with entrepreneurs. • Advertise widely in different media during recruitment to attract coaches outside Seda's database.

6.5.2 Recommendations for other organisations implementing group coaching programmes

Other organisations that implement group coaching programmes could customise the recommendations suggested for Seda to suit their own needs and context, with the purpose of enhancing the long-term impact of their own programme.

6.5.3 Recommendations for coaches facilitating group coaching programmes

It is recommended that coaches be experienced in both coaching and also group facilitation processes in order to manage dynamics within the group, especially diverse groups. In addition, using two coaches to co-facilitate group coaching is suggested, where different strengths of the two coaches can be used to optimise the group learning. Combining group coaching with one-to-one coaching for the participants will also help to ensure that individual needs are addressed.

6.6 Recommendations for further research

- To make the above recommended changes to the WECP at Seda and then have an impact assessment of the revised women entrepreneur's group coaching programme after one year, rather than only directly after the programme ends. Use a mixed method research approach to quantitatively assess the impact on the business results, and to also explore qualitatively the perceived impact on the women's businesses and on them, personally.

- To incorporate one-to-one coaching into the WECP and then assess the impact one year after the programme, by comparing this with an impact assessment of a programme when no one-to-one coaching is included. A mixed method research approach is recommended.

- To conduct a longitudinal study after a group coaching programme has ended, with a focus on how the participants are sustaining their changes over time. Suggest the participants are interviewed at 6-month intervals, over a two-year period, using a mixed method research approach, as per the first recommendation.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

There is one interview guide to be used for the coachees (women entrepreneurs). A second interview guide has been developed for the coaches and business advisors. In the latter one, the only difference is that the questions are asked in a general manner – that is, their perceptions in relation to the participants on the programme.

Each interview begins with the researcher introducing herself and her individual purpose in doing this MMBEC research. The context of the research and the purpose of the interview is discussed.

The participants are reminded of the confidentiality and possible recourse (as per Appendix C) and that the interview is recorded.

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR COACHEE (woman entrepreneur)

1. Since the completion of the group coaching programme, what do you perceive has been the impact of the programme on you personally, - up to now? (Probe: Ask for examples).

2. Since the completion of the group coaching programme, what do you perceive has been the impact of the programme on your business - up to now? (Probe: Ask for examples).

3. Looking back, how specifically did the group coaching assist you with making the long-term changes, personally and in your business? Possible probes – the structure of the programme, the time-line of the programme, the approach of the coach, being part of a group, the role of the group, actions between group sessions).

4. Looking back, how specifically did the group coaching assist you with sustaining these long-term changes (personally and in your business)?

(Possible probes – the structure of the programme, the time-line of the programme, the approach of the coach, being part of a group, the role of the group, actions between group sessions)

5. Looking back, what aspects of the group coaching programme would you say were not that beneficial to you?

6. What recommendations can you propose to further enhance the group coaching programme to improve its long-term impact on future participants? (Possible probes – the structure and content of the coaching programme, the time-line of the programme, the approach of the coach, being part of a group, the role of the group, actions between group sessions)

7. Is there anything that you would want to add that I did not touch on?

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR COACH AND BUSINESS ADVISOR

1. Since the completion of the group coaching programme, what do you perceive has been the impact of the programme on the women entrepreneurs (participants) - personally - up to now? (Probe: Ask for examples).

2. Since the completion of the group coaching programme, what do you perceive has been the impact of the programme on the participants' businesses - up to now? (Probe: Ask for examples)

3. Looking back, how specifically did the group coaching assist the participants with making these long-term changes (personally, and in their

business)? (Possible probes – the structure and content of the coaching programme, the time-line of the programme, the approach of the coach, being part of a group, the role of the group, actions between group sessions).

4. Looking back, how specifically did the group coaching assist the participants with sustaining these long-term changes (personally and in their business)? (Possible probes – the structure and content of the coaching programme, the time-line of the programme, the approach of the coach, being part of a group, the role of the group, actions between group sessions)

5. Looking back, what aspects of the group coaching programme would you say were not that beneficial to the participants?

6. What recommendations can you propose to further enhance the group coaching programme to improve its long-term impact on future participants? (Possible probes – the structure of the programme, the time-line of the programme, the approach of the coach, being part of a group, the role of the group, actions between group sessions)

7. Is there anything that you would want to add that I did not touch on?

APPENDIX B: CASE 1, PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

MANGAUNG METRO (BLOEMFONTEIN)

1.1 Introduction

The programme started off with an orientation session where the objectives of the programme were outlined and the concept of coaching explained to the enterprises. It also allowed participants to decide on the objectives to be achieved by the end of programme. This was followed by a two-day strategic planning workshop where enterprises were guide to develop strategic plans for their businesses with emphasis on growth planning.

The following topics were identified for discussion during the coaching conversations throughout the programme:

I. The Management Functions
II. Managing your Customer Base
III. Recruitment and Motivating Staff
IV. Key Performance Indicators
V. Legal Issues Affecting Business
VI. Financial Management
VII. Access to Markets
VIII. Access to Finance
IX. Skills Development
X. Effective Leadership Skills Development
XI. Health Issues Affecting Business People

During the coaching conversations, different speakers from the industry were invited to address the women enterprises on respective topics of their specialisation and corporate experience. This was aimed at exposing them to industry leaders and to allow them to engage with them and learn from their experiences and challenges and how they overcame barriers in their endeavours to enhance their career progression.

Presenters were invited from the following organisations to come and share their expertise with the group:

- SA Breweries Ltd
- Sefa
- Department of Labour
- Sage Payroll
- Standard Bank
- South African Revenue Services
- Transnet
- Eskom
- Old Mutual
- National Empowerment Fund
- Motheo FET College
- Damelin
- Office of the Premier Free State

2 OBJECTIVES

To expose qualifying women enterprises on a coaching exercise with the expressed intent of:

- Increased Turnover;
- Retained/ Increased Jobs;
- Improved Efficiency and Effectiveness; and
- Improved Compliance with Statutory Bodies.

The group came out with its own objectives as follows:

- To overcome challenges highlighted
- To grow turnover (10 – 30%)
- To network with each other
- To improve on skills levels
- To utilize Seda services

- To become competitive
- **To access financial assistance**
- To meet labour law requirements
- To meet South African Revenue Services requirements
- **To clean up financial records**

3 OUTCOMES OF MONTHLY MEETINGS

The following outcomes were achieved during the coaching sessions:

- Managerial skills transfer i.e. practical application of managerial concepts in the workplace
- Knowledge of basic requirements to access financial assistance
- Awareness of importance of good customer service to attain improved turnover
- Ability to identify business opportunities and develop strategies to capture them
- Understanding of statutory compliance requirements and implications thereof
- How to access financial interventions for business growth, building reserves and developing financial discipline
- Understanding of financial management operations and reports and use thereof
- Awareness of product differentiation and various marketing tools to capture new business
- Awareness of non-financial interventions to assist enterprise growth and sustainability
- Knowledge of skills development approaches to improve skills levels in an enterprise

4 PARTICIPANTS' PROFILES

Thirty-two participants were initially enrolled in the programme. Four of them dropped out of the programme.

The twenty-eight who completed the programme were participating in the following economic sectors:

- 11- Construction industry
- 6 - Services industry
- 5 - Hospitality and Tourism
- 3 - Manufacturing
- 2 - General Supply
- 1 - Agro-Processing

Geographical spread of the enterprises is as follows:

- 4 – Botshabelo area
- 1 – Ditlhake area
- 23 – Mangaung area

5 METHODOLOGY

The sessions were commenced with presentation from industry leaders who shared their experiences on the particular topics. This was followed up with questions and discussions on issues requiring clarity or those that participants felt are contentious.

Individual participants' challenges were brought forward discussed and recommendation advanced.

To close the session a presentation was also conducted to address areas of concern and to clarify principles and conceptual framework as well as ensuring that everyone is on the same level of understanding with regards to the day's topic.

6 KEY CHALLENGES FACED BY ENTERPRISES

There are various challenges which the enterprises are faced with, but common amongst them are the following:

- Lack of managerial capacity and leadership
- Lack of strategic focus
- Too much involvement in operational activities
- Lack of proper skills within the enterprises due to affordability
- Lack of adequate financial resources e.g. working capital
- Inability to secure professional and or technical support
- Bad credit history of enterprise owners
- Non-existence and/or outdated business plans
- Lack of enterprise strategic direction due to non-involvement of owners in the development of the business plan

7 RECOMMENDATIONS/PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

- Growing monthly income in order to create reserves which will bring about accessibility of critical skills.
- Delegate some of the responsibilities to staff in order to lower managerial pressure on owner
- Embark on continuous life- long learning through various interventions
- Networking through membership of professional bodies and or associations
- Obtain first-hand knowledge of services provided by Seda and other state-owned intermediaries for support
- Seda local branch to cultivate commitment, dedication and support towards the programme
- Involvement in the development of their comprehensive business plans and updating thereof

- Providing leadership and building strong teams for operational efficiency and effectiveness
- Resolve credit record through payment of outstanding creditors

APPENDIX C: CASE 2, PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

LEJWELEPUTSWA DISTRICT (WELKOM)

Introduction

The Women Enterprise Coaching Programme (WECP) was implemented in Welkom by a coach appointed by Seda. The coach enlisted the services of another coach for the implementation of the programme. Recruitment of participants into the programme was done through direct emails to potential participants, professional organisations, print media and social media. A recruitment advertisement was placed in the local newspaper and also shared online through WhatsApp and Facebook by the selected coach. A copy of the advert is attached in Appendix 4. A Seda branch also assisted with recruitment by identifying potential clients that met the criteria from the Seda internal database. On-site screening was done through a visit by the coach to conduct and assessment on the participant and the business. The on-site visit by the coach was also to collect baseline data on the number of employees, turnover and value to assets which would be used at the end of the programme to assess improvement or growth. The Seda Business Advisor also conducted an assessment on the selected participants in order to be able to conduct an improvement assessment assess if there was an improvement in the business at the end of the programme.

Programme Overview

The overview of the programme involved the following:

- **Orientation** – outlining the way forward;
- **Diagnostic – on-site** business analysis & individual reports;
- **Strategic planning** – individual implementation;
- **10 Sessions** – each a building block – covering all areas of operations. Each woman enterprise was expected to compile their own action plan;

- Each session had a topic, with **expert speakers**;
- **Individual mentoring**, support & on-site visits.

The Strategic Planning session

Based on individual diagnostic report Individual goals & SWOT on entrepreneur and business. Action plan was based on the diagnostic outcome – to get **SYSTEMS IN PLACE** – "getting through the day" or had an idea but did not know how to implement. The main weaknesses that were identified among the women enterprises were financial management, budgets and marketing.

Table: Overview of topics and Experts' presentations

A	Orientation
B	Strategic Planning workshop
1	Business Planning & Financial Management
2	HR – The nurturing approach, but also legal requirements, incl SARS
3	Soft skills – From fear to Freedom (Leadership) & Communication skills
4	Public Relations & Marketing
5	Sales – achieving targets
6	TechSavvy – Benefits of using the right technology in business
7	Compliancy – The legal wrap
8	Business support initiatives – funders
9	Emotional intelligence & Personal styles
10	Final – each WE to do a presentation (topic: own choice)

Group Objectives

The group had the following overall objectives:

- To grow marketing actions with 20%
- To increase turnover with 10%
- To implement systems in all areas of operations, in order to become more professional
- To attend to leadership, by spending 25% of their time on working on the business and not in the business (Strategizing & planning)

Project Implementation plan

The coaches used the following method in implementing the programme:

- Holistic approach – facilitating, coaching & mentoring 2x coaches / mentors – swopping based on complimentary skills and experience;
- Encourage full rounded leadership – the individual knowledge & personal development, business skills, life skills & soft skills;
- The participants had out of class access to most speakers for support;
- Individual & Group activities were given to ensure implementation of the learnings;
- Peer learning was encouraged among the participants;
- External knowledge / experiential sharing (speakers);
- Government initiatives (compliancy & trends);
- Homework – individual activities, group working & support sessions;
- Templates & Reading material (websites, articles etc.) issued;
- Build own POE > populate Business Plan via templates issued;
- One-on-one or on-site visits at the beginning of the programme or where a participant needed additional support;
- Customized approach – out of class to mentor WE’s (open door);
- Continuous evaluation – personally, group & individual forms.

Participants Profile

The Profile of the participants based on Age in shown in the table below:

Table: Profile of participants:

Age breakdown	Number of participants
Below 35 – Youth	5
36 – 40 years of age	1
40’s	7
50’s	3
60’s	2

Keeping the participants motivated

The coaches used the following strategies to keep the women motivated for the duration of the programme:

- Customised sessions - re-look the plan to address the needs;
- WhatsApp group & Facebook page was established;
- Linkages – amongst WE’s (+cross referral) & externally was encouraged;
- Peer learning – share success stories (motivation) among women;

- Having a soundboard to bounce of ideas;
- Safe space – to discuss personal challenges = sisterhood;
- Networking – with each other & new contacts;
- Business Hub – forwarded business related news to the women;
- Did you know and tip of the day were shared with the participants or a regular basis,
- E-support from coaches was provided' and
- Personal inter-action with & support from coaches – out of class (complimentary skills of coaches).

Measuring Impact

The coaches evaluated the following indicators immediately at the end of the programme:

- Did each woman enterprise uphold her one "promise to self"
- % Strategic plan implemented – change in business?
- Did the sales increase?
- Job creation – were there more employees?
- If received funding – Return on Investment (ROI), benefits & motivation, and how it was applied?
- Growth – i.e. bigger premises / expansion- did the participants acquire bigger premises of expand their businesses?
- New product development & entry- did the participants introduce new products in their businesses?
- Market penetration / new markets – did the participants gain access to new markets?

Table: Project impact for the whole group

	18 WE			
Objective, Impact summary (only on main deliverables)	Before	After	% growth	Notes
Did revenue/sales increase	R20 726 413.40	R39 782 808.60	92%	
How many permanent jobs were created in your business since	145	182	26%	37 new jobs created

Aug (excl part-time and contract staff)				
How did your assets value change?	R21 234 417.13	R23 596 064.00	11%	

Table: Turnover/revenue increase

	Amount	Number of participants
Turnover	Less than R500 000	3
	R500 000 - 1 000 000	7
	R1 000 000 - 1 500 000	3
	R1500 000 - 2 000 000	1
	R2 000 000 - 5 000 000	4

Table: Employees increase

	Number of employees	Number of participants
Employees (excluding part time)	1-5	7
	6-10	8
	11-15	3
Total		18

Conclusion

The programme had a huge impact on the participants. The biggest change reported by the participants included:

- Never assume
- What if? Have a Plan B
- Wake-up call & Eye opener
- Do things differently
- Out of comfort zone
- HR – Compliance
- Controlling expenses - budgeting
- Improved strategic focus / intent
- Self-confidence – value of networking
- The importance of management systems!
- Staff communication = improved productivity
- Marketing & Sales approach = higher turnover

EXAMPLE OF A RECRUITMENT ADVERT FOR CASE 2

APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANTS' LETTER

The Graduate School of Business Administration
University of the Witwatersrand
2 St Davids Place, Parktown,
Johannesburg 2193 South Africa
PO Box 98, WITS, 2050

To whom it may concern 31/07/2018

SURVEY/INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT INTRODUCTION

The perceived long-term impact of group coaching on women entrepreneurs in South Africa

This is to confirm that Mrs Boiyane Mshumpela is undertaking a bona fide academic project in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Master of Management (MM) degree at the Graduate School of Business Administration, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, (Wits Business School), provided the student can produce a valid student card that confirms his/her current registration.

Wits Business School MM students are required to carry out research on a topic of their choice, which typically, required data collection and analysis grounded in academic literature. The final project report will be available to other scholars through.

The project has been approved by the Wits Business School Postgraduate Committee and has been granted ethical clearance.

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary and if you choose to participate it is expected to take approximately 90 minutes. You are free to withdraw from the project at any time.

Please note that all responses will remain confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this project.

Should you have any questions regarding the project please contact the student, the research supervisor or the undersigned:

Student:

Boiyane Mshumpela
Tel: 051 4113820
Cell: 073204 2002
bmshumpela@seda.org.za

Research Supervisor:

Kathy Bennett
Tel: N/A
Cell: 083 6500 319Email:
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APPENDIX E: SEDA'S APPROVAL LETTER

NATIONAL OFFICE
The Fields, Office Block A
1066 Burnett Street
Hatfield 0833
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Tel: +27 12 441 1000
Fax: +27 12 441 2064

OFFICE OF THE EX
2018 -07- 3
ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
(EDD)

seda
SMALL ENT ERPRISE DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

30 JULY 2018

To Whom It May Concern

RE: REQUEST TO DO RESEARCH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES IN ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SEDA

Ms. Boijane Mshumpela (student number 1764274) has requested for permission to conduct research in Seda. This is in fulfilment of the Masters at the WITS Business School for research on **"The perceived long-term impact of group coaching on women entrepreneurs in the Free State, Province"**.

Ms. Mshumpela has completed all the research request forms for Seda and has met all the criteria set out in the research request process; as well as the ethical undertakings outlined in the forms.

Based on the above Seda's Research and Development unit hereby provides Ms. Mshumpela with the permission to conduct research and administer a survey to the relevant Seda clients. As a staff member, she already has access to clients and her study topic is beneficial for Seda.

Kindly note that this letter does not oblige Seda clients to participate in the study. We trust that the study will research study will contribute positively to Seda's strategic objectives regarding enterprise development.

Kind Regards

Ntokozo Majola
Executive Manager: Enterprise Development Division (EDD)

APPENDIX F: ANALYSIS – IDENTIFYING THEMES

Explanation: An example is given below of the final themes extracted for Research Question 1 after colour coding within and across participants' and coaches' quotes extracted from their transcripts into Excel spreadsheets.

The tables below give examples of quotes (by participants and coaches) for each colour-coded final theme (after grouping and collapsing of certain themes) – for Case 1, followed by Case 2.

CASE 1: COLOUR CODES FOR COMMON THEMES - participants

Impact on the entrepreneur

- Self-confidence
- Improved strategic thinking
- Improved marketing skills
- Enhanced leadership competence

Impact on the business

- Improved business systems and/or processes
- Growth in business

Participants	**E1**	**E2**	**E3**	**E4**	**5**	**6**
Research Question 1						
Impact on the entrepreneur	I was able to talk to others about my business	It opened my eyes towards the business			I was able to close deals and to pitching	I able to inform others about my business
		Learned about strategy and diversification. SWOT analysis	Share my vision with employees. This is where I am , this is where I am going			Gave me ideas for not concentration on one thing, diversify business
	Marketing, I am not marketing to schools	Marketing was a challenge, programme assisted	Helped me to do marketing, search for new clients	Our marketing improved	Marketing strategies assisted us	Marketing of my business, new markets
		Human resources and conflict resolution	The way I handled my staff,	Manage staff well, leader to		Labour issues and how to manage staff

			motivated them	be authentic		
Impact on the business	Taught me how to manage finances	How to manage finances	Learned to separate business accounts and finances improved	Finances. Now I have separate accounts		Paperwork, books, budgeting
	Profit margins have improved	Assisted me to put my XXX business back in business	I was on a scale of 4, now I am on a scale of 7	I'm growing	Retained clients and maintained relationships. Closed deals and market access increased	

<u>CASE 1</u>: COLOUR CODES FOR COMMON THEMES – coaches

Impact on the entrepreneur

- Self-confidence
- Improved strategic thinking
- Improved marketing skills
- Enhanced leadership competence

Impact on the business

- Improved business systems and/or processes
- Growth in business

Coaches	**C1**	**C2**	**C3**			
Research Question 1						
Impact on the entrepreneur	A lot of them gained self-confidence	They gained confidence to market their businesses	Affirmation that you are doing right			
	Programme has promoted them to think, if this happened,	We used a business model canvas (strategic				

	what can I do?	management tool)				
	Social media specialist also assisted	Understand their businesses, quickly pitch their businesses				
		Focus on the themselves, qualities as leaders	Engage staff more			
Impact on the business	They understood how systems support systems are supposed to work	Learned how to manage their finances	Planning their finances			
	We have success stories.	Now they have gone beyond tenders				

CASE 2: COLOUR CODES FOR COMMON THEMES – participants

Impact on the entrepreneur

- Self-confidence
- Improved strategic thinking
- Improved organising abilities
- Enhanced leadership competence

Impact on the business

- Improved business systems and/or processes
- Growth in business

Participants	E1	E2	E3	E4	5	6
Research Question 1	It helped a lot with my self-confidence	Systems are in place. Impact of the right systems in business	Systems improve service delivery	Budgeting for the business	Systems help me to go paperless.	Review internal systems
		Able to define myself clearly	I was shy, but coaches motivated us to speak	I'm a bit more assertive		
		Change, do not remain doing the same. Change some aspects of the business	Think strategically, think out of the box	Gave me roadmap on how to run the business.	Goal setting and action plans.	
	Recording things assisted me to put things in order		I was equipped to plan for a dip within markets	There are things I am doing differently	I have more knowledge on how to manage the business. How to improve service delivery	

				I am able to communicate better with my employees. I am able to delegate	I can motivate my staff	Improved teamwork and productivity
	Old customers are returning. I have started a new business and it is booming	It helped me to change certain aspects of the business, which helped me to grow	Brought a new department	Acquired more assets	When I started I was at 600 000, now, I'm over a million	Systems are more efficient, therefore more profitable

<u>Case 2:</u> Colour codes for common themes - coaches

Impact on the individual

- Self-confidence
- Improved strategic thinking
- Improved organising abilities
- Enhanced leadership competence

Impact on the business

- Improved business systems and/or processes
- Growth in business

Coaches	**C1**	**C2**	**C3**			
Research Question 1		They would have systems in place	Systems implementation			
	They learned to be more assertive	They are able to stand on their own, fight and do things for themselves	Confidence is number 1			
			Improved strategic intent and focus			
	The biggest impact has been time management	They learnt to manage business	Time management. The programme			

		better, record finances	had impact on how they conduct business			
	XXX opened another guest house	Some had improvement in turnover and employees, other acquired more assets	Some had increase in revenue, in jobs and assets			