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The contribution made by coaching to MBA leadership development at a South African business school

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore and identify the contribution that leadership coaching, facilitated by MBA alumni, could make to MBA students' leadership development. The research study employed a mixed method sequential exploratory design with data collected from over 350 MBA students and more than 90 MBA alumni coaches. The outcomes of the study indicated that the MBA leadership coaching sessions had provided the MBA students with a new personalised learning experience that had increased their self-awareness, strengthened their self-development skills, and built a foundation for their future leadership development.

The research study made a theoretical contribution to the fields of leadership development and coaching, by showing the contribution that a person-centred coaching approach, focused on individual facilitation and development, can make to MBA leadership development. The main contribution to practice was that the study established that using MBA alumni to facilitate MBA students' leadership coaching could be a highly beneficial and financially viable alternative to using professional coaches for this purpose. A methodological contribution was made by demonstrating how a three-phased mixed method sequential exploratory design could yield a multi-faceted and fully integrated understanding of the outcomes of a study of this nature.

Recommendations are made for future research, including exploring whether similar outcomes of MBA leadership coaching can be observed at other business schools in South Africa or elsewhere, as well as the desirability of conducting a follow-up study on the MBA students that participated in this study. This could establish what impact the coaching sessions have had on the MBA students' leadership development over time.