Second order observations on a coaching programme: the changes in organisational culture

Geraint Evans, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire.
Contact Email: geraint@topl.biz

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to illuminate the relationship between a coaching programme and the consequent changes within a scientific services unit of a UK county police force, using organisational culture as the lens to view and interpret the outcomes. A qualitative case study is used to create a detailed description of the changes in behaviour of managers and SSU staff and the consequent shift in the organisation climate, practice and culture. The findings suggest that management behaviour influences the organisational climate and contributed to an environment that changed the way members of the SSU related to each other and the divisional aims. Furthermore, the study highlighted individual sense-making of the coaching programme and the outcomes and surfaced the paradox of using person-centred non-directive coaching for explicit directed organisational change.

Keywords: coaching programme, organisational culture, organisational change, public sector, case study

Introduction

As evidenced by the 90% of UK organisations recently surveyed who now coach their staff (CIPD, 2009), coaching has become a mainstream individual professional development intervention. Yet the literature remains largely silent on the effects of coaching upon the organisation (Megginson and Clutterbuck, 2006) and ignores the impact of the inter-connectedness of people within the workplace (Orenstien, 2002). In response, the aim of this study is to explore the organisational impact of a coaching programme. It is predicated upon the following assumptions:

1) Coaching interventions deliver "…sustained cognitive, emotional, and behavioural changes that facilitate goal attainment and performance enhancement" (Grant and Stober, 2006, p.2)

2) Organisations are dynamic, fluid social constructions that are the "…on-going creations of the people who work in them" (Flaherty, 2005, p.3).

3) Culture is not something an organisation has, it is something an organisation *is* (Smircich,1983)

Based upon these assumptions the central proposition of this research may be expressed as follows: if coaching changes people and people create organisations by their social interaction, then coaching should change organisations.

Study Context

The research used a qualitative case study to explore the organisational impact of a coaching programme on a Scientific Services Unit (SSU) of a UK county police service. The coaching programme was designed to build personal and operational effectiveness and

delivered over a two year period by an experienced and accredited executive coach. The SSU has a senior management team (SMT) of four with sixteen supervisors who manage seventy staff. They deliver a service that operates within an environment of ever increasing technical complexity, constrained by reducing budgets and pressure to deliver continual improvements in performance. The relevance for the coaching community for selecting this particular case was to gain an insight into the utility of using coaching to support organisational change within a cultural environment that has been identified as having a significant barrier to change (Skolnick, 1994), as demonstrated by its role in the failure of successive attempts at police reform (Barton, 2003). The primary aim of the coaching programme was to enable managers and supervisors to create a *"better performing and more energised team"* (M2)[1] with *"less aggressive leadership stance"* (C1). In addition, the intervention was required to facilitate the development of strategies to meet the emotional challenges being experienced as a result of the poor inter-personal relationships within the team, and to challenge the root causes of why these inter-personal relationships were poor.

Literature Review

A search of the literature generated little evidence or theory focused on the organisational impact of coaching. Therefore, this review adopted a multi-disciplinary perspective drawing on literature from executive coaching, organisational development and psychology.

There are many models of organisational structure (Morgan, 1989) which may prove useful in orientating a coach within an organisational landscape. However, it has been argued that these static models provide less insight than a holistic cultural approach (Louis, 1983) that illuminates the dynamic nature of human social systems. Organisational culture may be considered as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions… taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel" Schein (2004, p.17), yet the simplicity of this definition masks the difficulty in understanding culture, given that many aspects are intangible and hard to observe (Jreisat, 1997). Despite its opaque nature, organisational culture is suggested as crucial to the effectiveness of organisations (Davies *et al..*, 1994), affecting most aspects of organisational life (Buono *et al.*, 1985) and may be characterised as the organisational personality (Cartwright and Cooper, 1993) originating from; (i) the beliefs, values and assumptions of the organisation founders, (ii) the learning experiences of group members as their organisation evolves and (iii) new beliefs, values, and assumptions brought in by new members and leaders (Schein, 2004). Although the literature offers a number of organisational cultural models (Hofstede *et al..* 1990, Flowers and Hughes, 1978), Riad (2007) cautions against simplifying the dynamics of organisational culture through the urge to neatly categorise or classify it. Indeed it has been posited that culture within an organisation is not necessarily a coherent or singular phenomenon but may comprise of competing and differing cultures (Pfeffer, 1981; Fletcher and Jones, 1992) and this cultural plurality is often overlooked (Vaara, 1999).

In addition to the possible multiplicity of cultures, it is has been argued that organisational culture, characterised by a set of shared assumptions (Ashforth, 1985), attitudes and values (Moran and Volkwein, 1992), also encompasses a set of shared perceptions identified as organisation climate (Jones and James, 1979). The utility of this perspective for coaching is as a conceptual bridge between organisational and individual behavioural phenomena (Falcione *et al.*, 1987; Moran and Volkwein, 1992) and that it develops primarily from internal factors under the control of the management (Ostroff and Schmidt, 1993). This

---

[1] Interviewee role codes: C= Coach, M= Manager, S= Supervisor, T= Technician. For a full list of the participant codes please refer to appendix A.

is in contrast to organisational culture which is an outcome of both internal and external forces, some of which are beyond the control of the management (Alvesson, 1991).

A systems thinking perspective offers an alternative to deconstructing organisational culture by seeing the elements as part of a connected whole (Peltier, 2001), that moves the coaching paradigm from an individual therapeutic linear causal intervention to one where the individual is situated within a dynamic inter-linked systems. Indeed Tobias (1996) suggests that many individual issues are system-related and that successful coaching solutions need to involve the coachees group and organisation. Furthermore, it has been suggested that individual behaviour can only be understood in terms of organisational dynamics (Day and O'Connor, 2003; Peltier, 2001). For example, a systems-psychodynamics perspective suggests that:

> Any 'individual' presentation thus always, and first and foremost, needs to be seen as a systematic symptom and addressed at that level (Obholzer, 2003, p. 156).

Implicit in this perspective is that by coaching an individual the organisation is also transformed and conversely individual behaviour is an emergent property from the complex web of inter-relationships within the whole system (Cavanagh, 2006). Furthermore, Orenstein (2002) uses inter-group relations theory (Alderfer, 1986) to argue that the organisation and its components are an active participant in coaching and consequently to treat a coaching intervention as a simultaneous organisational intervention.

The notion that identity is inter-relationally derived is also suggested by social constructionist theory where individual identity (Davies and Harre, 1990) and meaning (Gergen, 1994; Shotter, 1993) are an outcome of relationships, and culture is constructed socially (Hofstede *et al.*, 1990). Moreover, the continual inter-action between individuals within a group ensures that culture is fluid (Jeffcutt, 1994; Wetherell and Maybin, 1997), generating on-going re-interpretations of the meaning that is ascribed to events and objects by the group members.

Whilst the systems and social constructivist theories posit a dynamic and ever evolving cultural paradigm, there is evidence to suggest resistance to cultural change, for example when two organisations merge (Chatterjee *et al.*, 1992). This surfaces the paradox that whilst culture may be conceived as 'soft', it is nonetheless difficult to change (Hofstede *et al.,* 1990). Further, it has been suggested that resistance to change, and the consequent uncertainty, comes not just from the desire for homeostasis by individuals or groups (Peltier, 2001) but also through the power of shared and mutually reinforced cultural assumptions

> ... even if that means distorting, denying, projecting, or in other ways falsifying to ourselves what may be going on around us. It is in this psychological process that culture has its ultimate power (Schein, 2004, p.32)

This review found few examples of empirical research related to the problem and even though 80% of surveyed organisations indicating that they evaluate coaching (CIPD, 2009), there is currently no evidence for the widespread adoption of formal assessment models to determine the organisational impact of coaching interventions. For example, only 3% of surveyed companies reported using Kirkpatrick (1996) to determine the business impact (ASTD, 2000). Even within coaching interventions that have an explicit organisational development focus there is little coherent explanation of which organisational dimensions will change as a result of the coaching intervention (Cacioppe and Edwards, 2005).

Despite the lack of empirical research and coherent explanation there is some evidence that coaching has wider organisational impact. Mulec and Roth (2005) found improvements in efficiency, creativity and climate, whilst a review for the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) concluded that coaching '…encourages a

collaborative learning culture in organisations' (Lord 2008, p. 66). In addition, Browne (2006) found that the coaching extended beyond the coached individuals and into the transformation of organisational practice. Furthermore, the literature does suggest a supporting environment (Kilburg, 2001) and the commitment of the senior management team (Jarvis *et al.*, 2006) are essential for effective coaching programmes, whilst Megginson and Clutterbuck (2006) posit that the maturity of an organisation's coaching culture is a key success factor. A significant determinant of organisational impact is "the sustained application of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and other qualities acquired during coaching into the workplace" (Stewart *et al.* 2008, p.88). This transference of coachee learning requires an organisational environment that is pro-development (Stewart and Palmer, 2009) and which must be committed to and supportive of coaching programmes, or they will fail (Browne, 2006). Moreover, the absence of such support may degrade team performance (Hackman and Wageman, 2005). The importance of cultural and psychosocial support within organisations was also identified during a significant cultural change programme at Vodaphone (Eaton and Brown, 2002) and supported by Peel (2006) who found a strong correlation between the culture of small businesses and the successful use of coaching. In addition to this broader support, successful coaching programmes require the active visible commitment of senior management (Eaton and Brown, 2002; Stewart and Palmer, 2009).

Methodology

This study sought to understand the organisational impact of a coaching programme using a single descriptive and qualitative case study through the lens of organisational culture. A constructionist philosophical perspective led to culture being conceptualise as something an organisation *is* and not something an organisation *has* (Smircich,1983) and to use this root metaphor as a way of seeing the organisation (Yanow and Ybema, 2009; Martin, 2002). Implicitly, this approach adopts an interpretivist mode of enquiry and rejects a functionalist and positivistically influenced paradigm which sees organisations as lifeless entities whose unitary culture is a tool created by the management for the control of the staff (Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Peters and Waterman, 1982). Therefore this study sought to uncover the participant's subjective view of possible cultural changes generated by a coaching programme.

The sampling was purposeful in that the participants were selected because they were either (i) coached, (ii) their manager was coached or (iii) one of their team had been coached; the codes used to identify the participants are set out in appendix A. To develop a thorough understanding of this particular case the following data collection methods were used; (i) non-participatory structured and unstructured observation, (ii) semi-structured interviews and (iii) some limited collection of artefacts. Observation was an integral element of the design for data triangulation, e.g. in the congruity between espoused beliefs and values and the behaviour demonstrated, but it was also used to counter the common misinterpretation of interview questions (Belson, 1981). Structured observation was undertaken during two meetings, a technical team group and the senior management team, with each lasting for approximately two hours and recorded on an analysis grid, based on Peltier (2001). This contained mutually exclusive behaviour categories and supplementary field notes. In addition, there were a number of unstructured observation visits to the two primary offices to provide contextual field notes data and further triangulation opportunities. The central focus of the research design was the use of semi-structured interviews to uncover the participant's personal interpretation of the coaching programme impact. The interviews were undertaken with eleven participants comprising of five managers, two supervisors, two technicians, the coach and a retired police inspector. Interview questions were specifically created for each work role to provide a guide (Lofland and Lofland, 1995) whilst allowing space for topics of

interest and emergent themes to be explored in more depth. The final element in the data collection strategy was the collection of documents and artefacts identified as important during the interviews or observation sessions. The collected data was then analysed inductively to uncover patterns and themes in the complex inter-relation between the coaching programme, the individuals coached and the possible changes within the organisation.

Findings

The coaching programme was initiated by the new SSU manager who functioned as a change agent (Kanter, Stein and Jick, 1992) and demonstrated how public sector managers play a key role in engendering change (Abramson and Lawrence, 2001; Borins, 2000). Indeed M1 recognised this when he observed that the changes needed:

> *a degree of leadership to indicate that that's the style that you want to either implement or continue with...I'm not sure you could implement a cultural change of that nature from the bottom up...*

Support for this view on the role leadership has in changing organisations is found in the literature (Beer *et al.*, 1990; Armstrong 1997) which argues that the role of managers and leaders is to set the direction and create a supportive climate.

A central outcome of the coaching programme for the majority of managers was a shift to a participative management style, predicated upon trust, and away from management behaviours typified by manager M3 who said:

> *Prior to coaching my management style was driven by the need to ensure that the team doesn't fall apart when I'm not there...in micro-management, to be continually involved with the detail, the technical tasks.*

The change in the default management behaviour from a directive to a consultative style has, for most participants, increased the commitment to the SSU through a greater sense of autonomy and meaningfulness leading to improved team performance, as suggested by Sashkin (1984) and a greater ownership of solutions as they found their own ways to deal with problems (Rogers, 1969), for example a member of M2's team took on a new project:

> *...organised and co-ordinated the whole thing and I'm sure it will be successful, I have no doubt. Whereas before I would have probably thought, well I need to be there, I need to make sure that everything is going to be tickety-boo.*

This shift in the power relationship was illustrated by M2 who stated there was *"...a move away from abrupt and directive verbal and written communication, toward a more consultative approach that seeks the other person's perspective and views first"*. It has been suggested by the literature that participation is a key attribute of successful organisational change projects (Kotter and Schlesinger, 1979; Porras and Hoffer, 1986), including in the public sector (O'Brien, 2002), and the non-managerial participants were positive about being included, as it satisfied to some degree the egoistic need to be heard (Sashkin and Burke, 1987). For instance, S2 remarked *"he will actually listen to what you have to say"* or the experienced technician who commented on her manager that *"it was nice because I felt like he knew who I was and it wasn't a criticism it was an acknowledgement that I'm an individual and I perhaps work differently to other people"* (T2). However some felt that the resulting consulting management behaviour goes too far, as M4 said:

> *...some staff have an opinion that they should be consulted on anything... but they're not managers, if they wanted to have that right, they should move up the ladder and take responsibility*

In tandem with and related to these changes in the senior management behaviour the participants noted a shift in workplace climate typified by access to the coaching programme. This led S1 to feel *"far more valued...[because]...what they're saying is I think that you guys down at this level we can develop you and you can become better"*. This new climate described by the participants as 'relaxed and open' contrasted with that found by the coach at the beginning of the programme when the most noticeable issues were *"people in pain, real misery, the poor internal relationship, poor personal relationships"*.

The changes in climate during the coaching programme are supported by the increasing levels of trust, both cognitive and affective (Massey and Kyngdon, 2005, McAllister, 1995, Hurley 2006). The developing cognitive trust behaviour was supported both by the changing management behaviour and also the coaching programme, for example managers are now predisposed to cognitively trust people in their teams as illustrated when M1 characterised his own behaviour in delegating a task, as *"...I'm trusting you to go away and deliver it, I'll keep an eye on it but I'm not going to come back on you every five minutes..."*. However this cognitive trust is subject to task based assessments of individual competence, such as S1 wanting to *"know what their skill set is...ensure they understand what is expected of them...make sure they have the skills"*. There was also evidence for the affective dimension, for example through explicit acts of personal support by a SSU manager for several of the participants, which in turn generated reciprocal feelings of trust and loyalty. Moreover, it was also noted that interviewees who felt trusted by their manager were likely to give their own trust to members of their own team, for example *"[M4] is trusting me, and we the new supervisors are delegating to our staff"* (S1) and this increasing interpersonal trust has improved co-operation (Massey and Kyngdon, 2005). These acts of trust and delegation functioned as a trigger to increase employee willingness to engage and participate (Jaffe *et al.*, 1994) and to do their jobs to the best of their ability (Augustine, 1998). For example, the forensic investigation of a high profile murder scene was delegated to a technical officer who in the course of the enquiry directed the SSU manager in the provision of logistical support.

This development of trust founded on a belief in individual competence, and the consequent acts of delegation and empowerment, was seen by many of the participants as a key outcome of the coaching process, supporting the findings of Eaton and Brown (2002, p.287) that it established "a virtuous circle of trust, delegation and success". But critical to sustaining this virtuous circle was the reaction of managers to failure, whereas in the past T2 observed that "there was definitely very much pointing a finger", the current situation has moved to one where the default initial reaction to a failure is now to assess the situation for opportunities of individual and group learning. This is seen by M1 as a necessary pre-requisite to embed continuous improvement within the 'way we do business' and represents a key shift in culture towards meaningful personal engagement with the organisation. The outcome of treating small failures as an opportunity for learning has deepened the level of trust between the managers and team members, supporting the findings of Ladyshewsky (2010), and has contributed to increasing self-efficacy of the individuals. This, as S2 observed, is an important factor in transference of the learning (Colquitt *et al.*, 2000) that builds both individual and team capability, a typical example of this approach was provided by S2 who stated that after an incident all those involved are asked to *"think about why that has happened, what happened, what's steps can we put in place to learn from that [and] share it with the other members..."*

In addition to the impact of growing trust and delegation the coachees suggested that they gained greater confidence, increased levels of personal responsibility and adopted more positive behaviours with colleagues. These changes were noted by the SSU manager who observed that the coachees were *"more independent... making decisions themselves...more inclusive with own team"* and had an *"enormous amount of respect for each other"*. However,

in contrast some of the senior management team felt that coaching did not fundamentally alter people and that often the changes were minor and *"mostly common sense…and a result of life experience"* (M5). Furthermore, some participants suggested that the changes were superficial, for instance a manager who under increasing pressure of work *"gets very, very defensive, to an extreme degree… and then he does visibly change his behaviour towards you, so you suddenly feel like you're a child, you feel like you're at a school"* with the result that any changes due to coaching *"went out of the window"*.

Interestingly, there were some significant variations between the reported perceptions of the impact on the coachees' behaviour as a result of the coaching programme. For instance, several participants had not observed any significant changes in coachee behaviour, e.g. a senior manager stated that they had not seen any changes in those coached and another participant who was surprised to discover that their manager had recently been coached. This latter view contrasted sharply with the perception of the coached manager who believed that the programme had a significant personal impact and said that *"my management style these days is less about tasks in general and more about people really"*. A further example of this disparity in perception was where a coachee believed that he was no longer fire fighting whilst a subordinate suggested that he was always *"flying in and out of the office at one hundred miles an hour"*. These examples may point to individual participants constructing their own personal reality and meaning of shared events and illustrates the difficulty of presenting a coherent assessment of the impact of a coaching programme.

Looking at the broader impact of the coaching programme on the working environment the coach stated that at the beginning of the intervention that it was;

> *...a remarkable environment, there was just so much infighting, there was so much disruption, there was inappropriateness in relationships with each other, there were people who simply would not simply communicate verbally with other people in the same department.*

This assessment by the coach was support by several of the participants, e.g. T2 observed that the working environment *"has been really awful in the past"*. The coach felt that the most significant shift during the programme was the changing personal relationships:

> *I keep going back to the fact that a lot of it happened because relationships changed, relationships changed because communication changed, communication change led to a greater acceptance and honouring of each other, it led to people either believing or perceiving that other people were actually interested in their thoughts and feelings.*

Moreover, the behaviours observed at management meetings consistently demonstrated respect for the key espoused values of respect, support and valuing difference. This example of the shifting 'way we do business' showed that the programme contributed to improving intra and inter network communication, which Grant *et al.* (2010) suggested should be a major focus of coaching interventions.

An outcome of the coaching challenge on personal agency was for coachees to take responsibility for their relationships with work colleagues and engage with the aims of the organisation. There was also widespread recognition by the participants that individuals can and do have a significant effect upon the organisation, that the impact of the individual could be *"instantaneous, with changes happening overnight"* (M5), and that coaching can activate people's inner resources to successfully change an organisation (Jawahar *et al.*,1992).

However, whilst some participants thought coaching challenged people to recognise and use their personal agency there were also sceptical voices. For example S2 said that it was always the same people who want to be involved in contributing to changes or putting forward ideas, while it was always the same people *"who are content to sort of sit back and*

watch things happen around them and do a lot of complaining". This supports previous literature that suggests that approximately two-thirds of the workforce opt out of participating in organisational change (Neumann, 1989). A number of participants suggested that this disinterested attitude was not changed by coaching or new management behaviour; it was a drain on the energy of the group (Cross *et al.*, 2003) only resolved when the individual with such an attitude left the organisation.

A number of the cultural organisational changes have been formalised in new ways of working. For instance, the business plan for 2009/10 aims to "invest in the retention and development of staff" as a concrete expression of the espoused belief in the division that 'we value our people'. However, there were dissenting voices that suggested *"...now it's all about looking good"* and that *"with each passing year it seems people seem to become less and less important"*, but this study suggests that this a minority view.

A further outcome of the changing nature of the culture of the organisation is a belief by the management team that the SSU is able to engage positively with change and deal with the uncertainty and in comparison to other similar units there was a confidence that *"more challenge could be thrown at it"* (M1). This capacity to embrace change is also reflected in the evidence for taking on internal change, for instance being 'held up as innovative' throughout the wider police constabulary and further supported by M4 who commented on resisting change; *"it's not an option any more...you can stay and be a dinosaur if you want, but you'll fall by the wayside"* (M4). But not everyone was comfortable with the pace of innovation as some considered that the SSU was *"taking on new technology and new things to make us look like the leading force, and trying to make us look good...which in my mind it's just so completely wrong"*, showing evidence of staff who still identified with the previous organisational routines and harbouring ideological objections to change which finds support in the literature (Thornhill *et al.*, 2000).

In summarising the impact of the coaching programme the commissioning manager stated:

> *From an organisation perspective, we've now, I wouldn't say we've got it, but we are certainly well on the way to having a better performing, more energized and dynamic workforce, who are clear on what their objectives are and who come to work wanting to do a good job. I think it's changed the culture, it's helped us to change the culture through developing individuals within teams and particularly at senior management level, trying to get that sort of drip feed through the whole team.*

However, it is not evident from this study that the changes seen within the SSU would survive the departure of the manager who was the catalyst for change and a champion for much of the subsequent initiatives including, the enlightened use of coaching within a police service to support individual personal and professional development.

In reviewing the evidence from this research study it is possible to propose a causal sequence of events that arguably links the coaching programme to changes in organisational culture and manifest in the way the SSU conducts business, such a narrative is set out in figure 1.
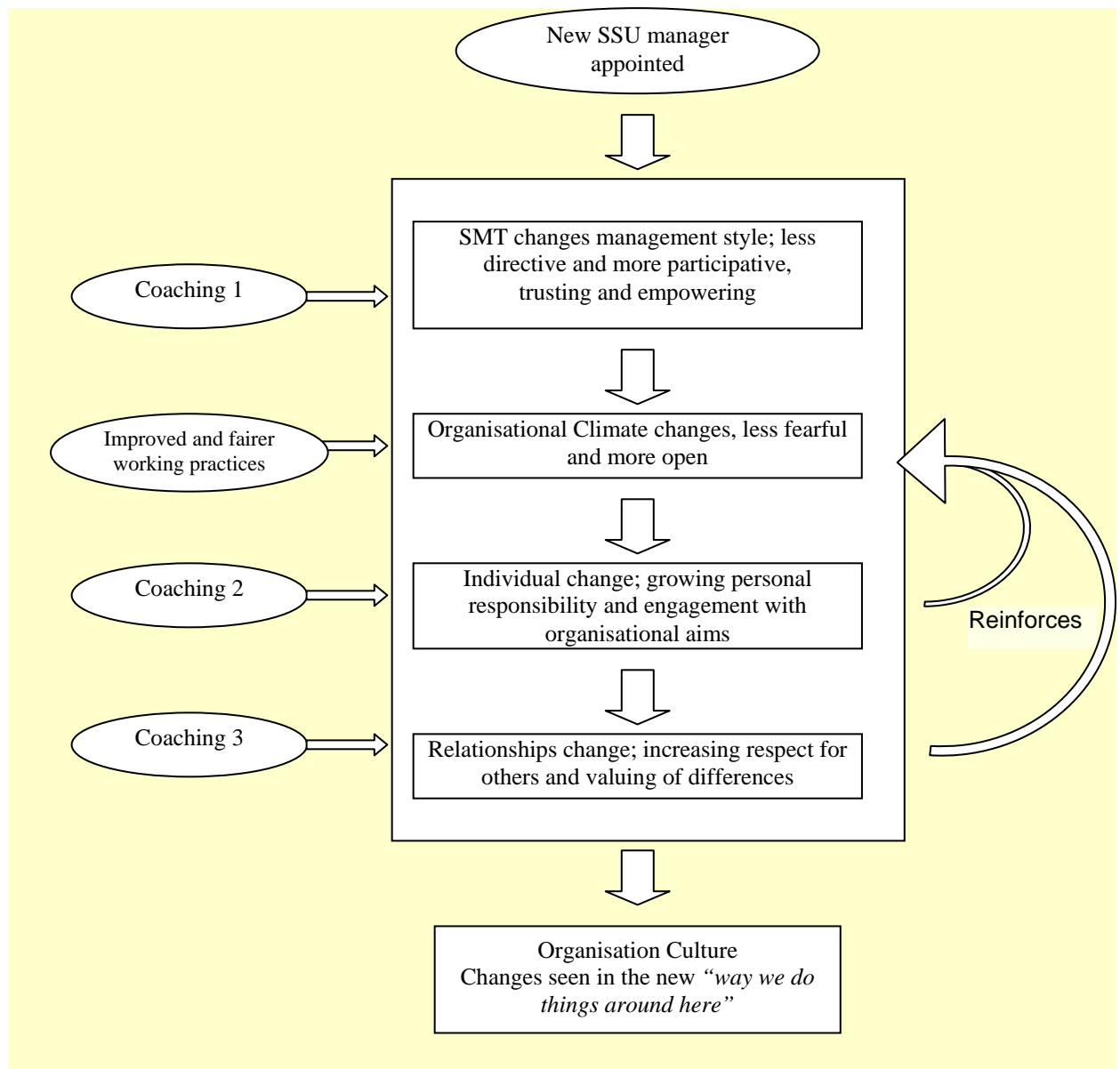
Figure 1: Sequence of changes

The utility of this simple model is that it provides a clear interpretation of the events that link the coaching programme to organisational changes over time. However, this simplistic linear causal interpretation of the evidence assumes a positivist epistemology focused on a reductionist and mechanistic paradigm which fails to illuminate the research findings of messy inter-relatedness, uncertain relationships and the differing perceptions by individuals of the effect and depth of change. An alternative interpretation is outlined in Figure 2 which is a snapshot of the SSU staff based on data from an unstructured observation site visit that places individuals within the context of their relationships and organisational environment. This finding is supported by Senge (1990, p.7) when he described systems as:

> …interrelated events that [may be] distant in time and space, and yet they are all connected within the same pattern. Each has an influence on the rest, an influence that is usually hidden from view. You can only understand the system … by contemplating the whole, not any individual part of the pattern.
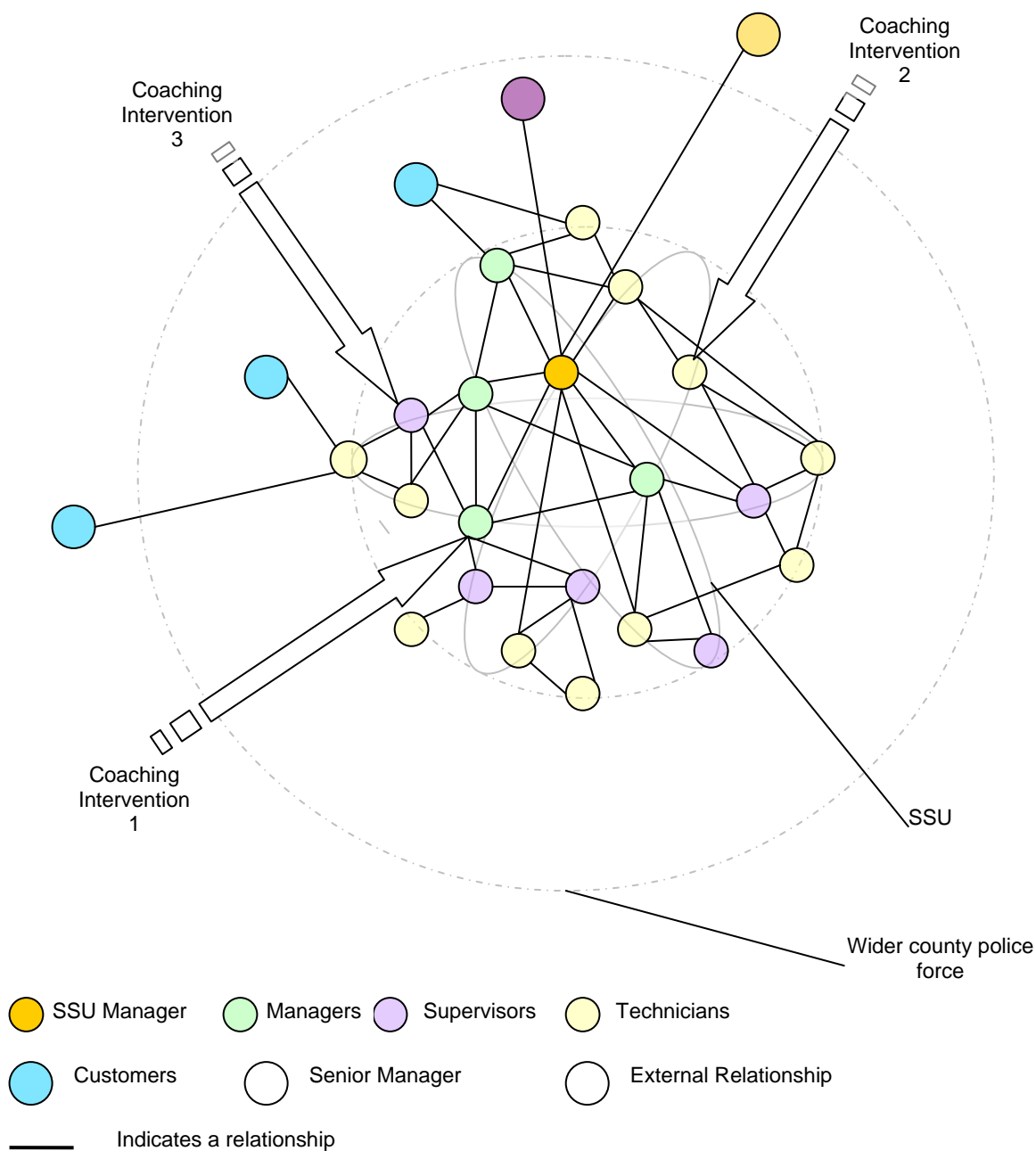
Figure 2: SSU network diagram

The findings in Figure 2 contrasts with the simplicity of the previous model and with much of the literature on organisational change (Kotter, 1998; Lewin, 1989). Clearly both diagrams are just models, and accepting that in either case 'the map is not the territory' (Korzybski, 1933), the findings of this study nonetheless caution the coaching profession against offering simplistic and neat explanations of coaching programmes to clients that do not reflect the complexity of social systems and which therefore may undermine the credibility of coaching interventions.

The importance of this study for the coaching profession is that it suggests an alternative to the established coaching focus of the individual by arguing that coaches view their work as an organisationally situated intervention that extends far beyond the client, dyad or particular techniques by placing coaching within a messy and complex social system of connectedness and situatedness. In addition there is also paradox in attempting to use a person-centred non-directive coaching intervention to achieve particular and specific organisational change objectives because of the uncertainty over the extent to which individual can influence others within the complex and interconnected environment of an organisation. In addition, the findings demonstrated significant variance in individual perception and understanding of the outcomes of this coaching programme, for both the individual and the organisation, which raises questions about the validity and meaningfulness of the current mechanisms for evaluating coaching interventions.

Limitations

There were several aspects of this study's methodological design which, with hindsight, should be reconsidered. In particular the adoption of a longitudinal research approach would have enabled the participants to recall more vividly the organisation prior to the coaching programme and to allow them and the researcher to disentangle the impact of the many other change events, such as the appointment of a new manager. The additional time would also have allowed more opportunities for observation, interviews with a wider cross-section of participants and to build sufficient trust to overcome the reluctance of team members to take part in focus group discussions. Furthermore, although the participants were purposefully sampled there were practical limitations with the availability and access to staff which resulted in a biased toward the inclusion of managers and supervisors rather than other members of staff, and therefore the findings of the study need to be considered from the perspective of managers.

Conclusion

The study highlighted the central role of leadership in changing organisations and delivering effective coaching programmes. Indeed it is probable that without the appointment of the new SSU manager there would have been no coaching programme. This finding supports the extensive literature on the impact of leadership as a change agent (Kanter *et al*., 1992; Abramson and Lawrence, 2001; Borins, 2000; Beer *et al*., 1990), and its role in successful coaching programmes (Jarvis *et al*., 2006; Eaton and Brown, 2002; Stewart and Palmer, 2009; Kilburg, 2001). The research also surfaced the paradox of directive coaching programmes designed to change an organisation, namely; coaching is a people-centred non-directive development discipline, with the agenda set by the client, whereas organisational change programmes are the deliberate and directive intention of the leadership of an organisation. Within this competing emphasis for control of the coaching intervention lies, in part at least, the uncertainty in predicting the organisational outcomes of a coaching programme and the inability of the profession to provide a coherent explanation of those outcomes.

In spite of the fundamental unpredictability of coaching outcomes the study found evidence of significant changes in how the participants experienced the culture, particularly through the emerging organisational climate as the management behaviours changed, moving from an atmosphere characterised by 'fear and suspicion' to one of 'open, friendly and relaxed'. However, it is not evident how resilient the new climate will prove to be, faced with either a change in leadership or a significant shift in the macro-economic forces, such as deep public sector funding cuts. The principle outcomes of the coaching programme, for

individuals, was their growing confidence and independence enabling them to create their own solutions and engage in relationships that moved the organisation from a place where there was *"so much in-fighting and inappropriateness in relationships"* to one that was *"no longer an angry place to be"*. Clearly the coaching programme was only one potential change force within this complex social system, and therefore no claims of unambiguous effect are possible, but it did, at least for some of the participants, operationalise the words in the business plan to 'invest in the development of our staff', whilst the majority of the senior management team subscribed to the comment by M2 that:

> *we are certainly well on the way to having a better performing, more energized and dynamic workforce…I think [coaching] changed the culture, it's helped us to change the culture through developing individuals within teams*

Set against this is that some participants felt that the effects on the coachees were marginal, superficial or not noticeable. However, these findings contrasted sharply with all the coachees interviewed who believed they had changed. This highlighted a significant finding; that individual perception of coaching, and the possible changes in people and the organisation, varied substantially between the participants, lending support to an interpretation of the findings in terms of an individual construction of sense-making which undermines simplistic and deterministic claims of the general efficacy of coaching programmes. In surfacing the complex inter-connectedness of this coaching programme the challenge to the coaching profession is to acknowledge and embrace this complexity and uncertainty and to coach meaningfully from this perspective.

APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT IDENTIFIER AND ORGANISATIONAL ROLE

Ref	Description
C1	The coach
M1	Member of Senior Management Team
M2	Member of Senior Management Team
M3	Member of Senior Management Team
M4	Member of Senior Management Team
M5	Member of Senior Management Team
P1	Police Inspector (Retired)
S1	Supervisor
S2	Supervisor
T1	Technician
T2	Technician

References

Abramson, M, and Lawrence, P. (2001).' The Challenge of Transforming Organizations: Lessons Learned about Revitalizing Organizations.' In: M. Abramson and P. Lawrence (eds.), *Transforming Organizations*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. pp.1-10

Alderfer, C. P. (1986). 'An intergroup perspective on group dynamics'. In: J. Lorsch (Ed.), *Handbook of organizational behavior*: Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. pp. 190-222

Alvesson, M. (1991),'Organisational symbolism and ideology', *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 28 No. 3, pp. 207-25.

Armstrong, M. (1997), *A Handbook of Personnel Management Practice*. London: Kogan Page

Ashforth, B.E. (1985), 'Climate formation: issues and extensions', Academy *of Management Review*, Vol. 10, pp. 837-47.

ASTD American Society of Training and Development (2000) *State of the Industry*, Chicago: ASTD.

Augustine, N.R. (1998), *Reshaping an Industry.* Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing, pp.159-87.

Barton, H. (2003) 'Understanding occupational (sub) culture – a precursor for reform: The case of the police service in England and Wales', *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, Vol. 16, No. 5, pp. 346 - 358.

Beer, M., Eisenstat, R., Spector, B. (1990), 'Why change programs don't produce change', *Harvard Business Review*, pp.158-66

Belson, W (1981) *The Design and Understanding of Survey Questions.* Aldershot: Gower.

Bolch, M. (2001) 'Proactive coaching' *Training*, Vol: 38: pp. 58-63.

Borins, S. (2000) 'Loose Cannons and Rule Breakers, or Enterprising Leaders? Some Evidence about Innovative Public Managers.' *Public Administration Review* Vol. 60: pp.498-507.

Browne, L. (2006) 'Proposing a proximal principle between peer coaching and staff development as a driver for transformation', *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring* Vol. 4, No. 1

Bryman, A. (2004) *Social Research Methods* .Oxford: Oxford University Press

Buono, A. F., Bowditch, J.L., Lewis, J.W. (1985) 'When cultures collide: the anatomy of a merger', *Human Relations,* Vol. 38, No. 5**,** pp. 477-500.

Cacioppe, R. and Edwards, M. (2005) 'Seeking the Holy Grail of organisational development: A synthesis of integral theory, spiral dynamics, corporate transformation and action inquiry', *Leadership and Organization Development Journal,* Vol. 26, No. 2**,** pp. 86 - 105.

Cartwright, S. and Cooper, C.L. (1993) 'The role of culture compatibility in successful organization', *The Academy of Management Executive,* Vol. 7, No. 2**,** pp. 57-69.

Cavanagh, M. (2006) 'Coaching from a Systemic Perspective: A Complex Adaptive Conversation'. In: D. Stober and A. Grant (eds.), *Evidence Based Coaching Handbook*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons. pp 313-354

Chatterjee, S., Michael, L., Schweiger, D. and Weber, Y. (1992), 'Cultural differences and shareholder value in related mergers: linking equity and human capital', *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 13, pp. 319-34.

CIPD, (2009) 'Taking the Temperature of Coaching – coaching survey summer 2009' CIPD

Colquitt, J.A., LePine, J.A., Noe, R.A. (2000), 'Toward an integrative theory of training motivation: a meta-analytic path analysis of 20 years of research', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 85 No.5, pp.678-707.

Cross, R., Baker, W., and Parker, A. (2003). 'What creates energy in organisations?' *MIT Sloan Management Review, Summer*, 51-56.

Davies, B., Harre, R. (1990) 'Positioning: the discursive production of selves', *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour,* Vol. 20, No. 1**,** pp. 43-63.

Davies, B., Philip, A. and Warr, P. (1994) 'Monitoring company culture: Selection tests & tools', *Personnel Management,* Vol. 26, No. 5**,** pp. 69-71.

Day, D. V. and O'Connor, P. M. (2003) Leadership development: Understanding the process. In: S. Murphy and R. Riggio (Eds.), *The Future of Leadership Development*, Mahweh, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. pp 11-28.

Deal, T., and Kennedy, A. (1982) *Corporate Cultures: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life,* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley

Eaton, J. Brown, D. (2002) 'Coaching for a change with Vodafone', *Career Development International*, Vol: 7 No. 5 2002 pp: 284-287

Ellinger, A., Bostrom, R. (2002), 'An examination of managers' beliefs about their roles as facilitators of learning', *Management Learning*, Vol. 33 No.2, pp.147-79.

Falcione, R., Sussman, L. and Herden, R. (1987), *Communication Climate in Organizations*, New York, NY.: University Press

Flaherty, J. (2005), *Coaching evoking excellence in others*, Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.

Fletcher, B. and Jones, F. (1992), 'Measuring organizational culture: the cultural audit', *Managerial Auditing Journal*, Vol. 7 No. 6, pp. 30-6.

Flowers, V.S. and Hughes, C.L. (1978), *Value System Analysis: Theory and Management Application*, Center for Values Research, Dallas, TX,

Grant, A., Passmore, J., Cavanagh, M. and Parker, H. (2010) 'The State of Play in Coaching Today: A Comprehensive Review of the Field', *International Review of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, Vol.25 pp.125-167.

Grant, A. and Stober, D. (2006) 'Introduction'. In: D. Stober and A. Grant (eds.), *Evidence Based Coaching Handbook*. New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons. pp 1-14.

Gergen, K. (1994), *Realities and Relationships: Soundings in Social Construction*, Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press

Guba, E. and Lincoln, Y. (1994) 'Competing paradigms in qualitative research'. In*:* N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (eds.) *Handbook of qualitative research* London: Sage. pp. 105-117.

Hackman, J. and R. Wageman (2005) 'A Theory of Team Coaching', *Academy of Management Review* Vol: 30 No.2: pp 269-287.

Hofstede, G., Neuijen, B., Ohayv, D. D. & Sanders, G. (1990) 'Measuring organizational cultures: a qualitative and quantitative study across twenty cases', *Administrative Science Quarterly,* Vol. 35, No. June 1**,** pp. 286-316.

Hurley, R. (2006), 'The decision to trust', *Harvard Business Review*, September 2006, pp.55-62.

Jaffe, D.T., Scott, C.D., Tobe, G.R. (1994), *Rekindling Commitment: How to Revitalize Yourself, Your Work, and Your Organization*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.

Jarvis, J., Lane, D. and Fillery-Travis, A. (2006) *Does coaching Work?* London: CIPD.

Jawahar, I.M., Stone, T.H., Cooper, W.H. (1992), 'Activating resources in organizations', in R. Woodman, W. Pasmore (eds.),*Research in Organizational Change and Development*, Vol. 6 pp.153-96.

Jeffcutt, P. (1994), 'From interpretation to representation in organizational analysis: postmodernism, ethnography and organizational symbolism', *Organization Studies*, Vol. 15 No. 2, pp. 241-74.

Jones, A.P. and James, L.R. (1979), 'Psychological climate: dimensions and relationships of individual and aggregated work environment perceptions', *Organisational Behavior and Human Performance*, Vol. 23, pp. 201-50.

Jreisat, J. E. (1997) *Public Organization Management: The Development of Theory and Process.* Westport, CT, Praeger.

Kanter, R. M., Stein, B. A., and Jick, T. D. (1992). *The challenge of organizational change: How companies experience it and leaders guide it*. New York: Free Press.

Kilburg, R.R. (2001), 'Facilitating intervention buy-in in executive coaching: a model and methods', *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice & Research*, Vol. 53 No.4, pp.251-67.

Kirkpatrick, D. (1996). 'Great ideas revisited: Revisiting Kirkpatrick's four-level model'. *Training & Development*, Vol 50: pp. 54-57.

Korzybski, A. (1933) 'A Non-Aristotelian System and its Necessity for Rigour in Mathematics and Physics', a paper presented before the American Mathematical Society at the New Orleans, Louisiana, meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, December 28, 1931. Reprinted in *Science and Sanity*, 1933, pp. 747–61.

Kotter, J.P. (1998), *Leading change: why transformation efforts fail*, Harvard Business Review on Change, A Harvard Business Review Paperback, pp.1-21.

Kotter, J.P. and Schlesinger, L.A., (1979), 'Choosing strategies for change', *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 57, March-April 1979: pp.106-114

Ladyshewsky, R. (2010) 'The manager as coach as a driver of organizational development', *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, Vol: 31, Number: 4, pp: 292-306.

Lewin, K. (1989), 'Changing as three steps: unfreezing, moving, and freezing of group standard', in W.L. French, C.H. Bell Jr, R.A. Zawacki. (eds.), *Organizational Development. Theory, Practice, and Research*, 3rd ed., Homewood, IL: Irwin. pp. 87.

Lofland, J. and Lofland, L. (1995) *Analysing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis.* Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth.

Lord, P., Atkinson, M. and Mitchell, H. (2008). *'Mentoring and coaching for professionals: a study of the research evidence'*. Slough: NFER. Available

From:http://www.tda.gov.uk/upload/resources/pdf/m/mentoring_coaching_study2008 .pdf [Accessed 23/11/2009]

Louis, M. (1983). *Organizations as culture-bearing milieux*. In. L. Pondy, P. Frost, G. Morgan, T. Dandridge and C. Thomas C. (eds.) *Organizational symbolism*. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press. pp. 39-54

McAllister, D. (1995), 'Affect- and cognition- based trust as foundations for interpersonal cooperation in organisations', *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 38 No.1 pp.24-59.

Martin, J. (2002) *Organizational culture: mapping the terrain*, London: SAGE.

Massey, G., and Kyngdon, A. (2005), 'The measurement of interpersonal trust between peer managers: a test of a specific item bank using factor analysis and Rasch Modelling', Working Paper Series, School of Marketing, Faculty of Business, University of Technology, Sydney.

Megginson, D. and Clutterbuck, D. (2006) 'Creating a coaching culture',*Industrial and Commercial Training,* Vol: 38, No. 5, 2006 pp: 232-237.

Morgan, G. (1989). *Creative Organization Theory: A Resource book*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

Moran, E.T. and Volkwein, J.F. (1992), 'The cultural approach to the formation of organizational climate', *Human Relations*, Vol. 45 No. 1, pp. 19-47.

Mulec, K. and J. Roth (2005) 'Action, reflection, and learning and coaching in order to enhance the performance of drug development project management teams', *R&D Management* Vol: 35:No: 5 pp. 483-491.

Neumann, J.E. (1989), 'Why people don't participate in organizational change', in R.W. Woodman and W.A. Pasmore, (eds.),*Research in Organizational Change and Development*, Greenwich, CT: JAI Press. Vol. 3 pp.181-212.

Obholzer, A. (2003) 'Some Reflection on Concepts of Relevance to Consulting and Also to the Management of Organisations', *Organisational and Social Dynamics: An International Journal of Psychoanalytic, Systemic and Group Relations Perspectives,* Vol. 3, No. 1**,** pp. 153-164.

O'Brien, G. (2002) 'Participation as the key to successful change – a public sector case study', *Leadership & Organization Development Journal,* Vol. 23 No: 8, pp.442 – 455.

Orenstein, R (2002) 'Executive Coaching: It's Not Just about the Executive', *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 2002; Vol 38; No 3, pp 355.

Ostroff, C. and Schmitt, N. (1993), 'Configurations of organisational effectiveness and efficiency', *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 36 No. 6, pp. 1345-57.

Patton, M. (1987) *How to use qualitiative methods in evaluation*. Newbury Park, California: Sage.

Peel, D. (2006) 'An Analysis of the Impact of SME Organisational Culture on Coaching and Mentoring', *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring* Vol. 4, No.1, Spring 2006 pp 9

Peltier, B. (2001) *The Psychology of Executive Coaching, theory and application.*, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge

Peters, T, and Waterman, R. (1982) *In Search of Excellence*, New York: Harper and Row.

Pfeffer, J. (1981), 'Management as symbolic action', in L. Cummings and B. Staw (eds.), *Research in Organizational Behaviour,* Greenwich, CT: JAI Press

Porras, J.I., Hoffer, S.J. (1986), Common behavior changes in successful organization development efforts, *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, Vol. 22 No.4, pp.477-94.

Riad, S. (2007) 'Of mergers and cultures: What happened to shared values and joint assumptions?', *Journal of Organizational Change Management,* Vol. 20, No. 1**,** pp. 26 – 43

Rogers, C.R. (1969), *Freedom to Learn: A View of What Education Might Become*, C.E. Merrill, Columbus, OH,

Salancik, G. (1995). 'Wanted: A good network theory of organization' *Administrative Science Quarterly, 40,* 345–349.

Sashkin, M. (1984), 'Participative management in an ethical imperative', *Organizational Dynamics*, Vol. 12 pp.5-22.

Sashkin, M. and Burke, W. (1987) 'Organization development in the 1980s'. *Journal of Management*, Vol.13, pp.393-417.

Schein, E. (2004) *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Senge, P. (1990). *The Fifth Discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization.* New York: Doubleday/Currency.

Shotter, J. (1993), *Cultural Politics of Everyday Life: Social Constructionism, Rhetoric and Knowing of the Third Kind*, Toronto: Toronto University Press

Skolnick, J.H. (1994), 'A sketch of the police officer's "working personality", in, B. Hancock and P. Sharp (eds.) *Criminal Justice in America: Theory, Practice and Policy*, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall pp. 89-113.

Smircich, L. (1983) 'Concepts of culture and organizational analysis', *Administrative Science Quarterly,* Vol.28:pp 339-358

Stake, R. (1995) *The Art of Case Study Research.* Thousand Oaks, CA.: SAGE

Stewart, L. Palmer, S. (2009) 'Capitalizing on coaching investment: enhancing coaching transfer', *Development and Learning in Organization* Vol 23 No.3 2009 pp: 14-17

Stewart, L.J., Palmer, S., Wilkin, H., Kerrin, M. (2008), 'Towards a model of coaching transfer: operationalising coaching success and the facilitators and barriers to transfer', *International Coaching Psychology Review*, Vol. 3 No.2, pp.87-109.

Thornhill, A., Lewis, P., Millmore, M. and Saunders, M. (2000), *Managing Change, A Human Resource Strategy Approach*, Harlow: Financial Times/Prentice Hall

Tobias, L. (1996) 'Coaching Executives', *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research,* Vol: 48 No2, pp. 87–95

Vaara (1999) 'Towards a Rediscovery of Organizational Politics: Essays on Organizational Integration Following Mergers and Acquisitions', *Helsinki School of Economics and Business Administration, Helsinki*

Wetherell, M. and Maybin, J. (1997), 'The distributed self: a social constructionist perspective', in Stevens, J. (Ed.), *Understanding the Self*, Sage, London, pp. 180-219.

Yanow, D. and Ybema, S. (2009) 'Interpretivism in Organisational Research: On Elephants and Blind Researchers'. In: D. Buchanan and A. Bryman (eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Research Methods.* London: SAGE. pp 39-60.

Geraint is Managing Partner of The Optima Partnership who specialise in developing excellence in leaders and managers using executive coaching and by creating and delivering innovative learning experiences. Geraint is particularly interested in the socio-psychological factors which affect the performance of individuals as leaders and managers. Website www.topl.biz