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University of Chester

Executive Coaching:

A Case Study in Local Government

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A Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of University of Chester for the degree of Doctorate in Business Administration by

Rachel Veronica Robins

November 2014

Acknowledgment

The completion of this thesis and programme of study is the end of a long held very personal ambition. It has only been possible with the help and support of many people in both my personal and professional life. To those who have supported me during this time I owe a huge thank you. To my darling Robert who has been patient, supportive, challenging and a valuable proof reader, who for many reasons I could not live without and on a regular basis convinced me that the task was achievable.

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Abstract

Executive Coaching: A Case Study in Local Government

Rachel Robins

This study examines Executive Coaching in Local Government. As the use of Executive Coaching is on the increase, the study sought to determine its use in Local Government, to establish what Executives valued about the Executive Coaching they engaged in and if coaching models were used. The concept of Executive Coaching provides personal development and support to Executives in their challenging roles. Overall, a lack of clear criteria as to what the aspects of Executive Coaching are and how these are used in the selection of an Executive Coach is apparent.

The extant literature suggests that Executive Coaching as a research topic is in flux due to a confused landscape. It also highlights that Executive Coaching comes from multiple backgrounds and is influenced by a range of professions. This leads to different models and approaches practised by professionals from a range of different backgrounds.

Adopting a predominantly interpretivist stance, seven Local Government Executives were interviewed, using semi-structured interviews. These provided qualitative data from over fifteen Executive Coaching relationships. Data theme analysis was undertaken which related to Executive Coaching practice, process and characteristics. This was supported by quantitative data using questionnaires with a cross national group of Local Government Executives.

Findings and analysis identified the two different types of Executive Coaching in Local Government and also the value criteria that Executive's used in selecting their Executive Coach. Overall, the findings revealed that Local Government Executives used Executive Coaching for personal development and support. This was in order to keep their professional balance and focus whilst responding to the current changing environment in Local Government.

Conclusions indicate that in the current climate of economic constraints, to benefit from the improvements Executive Coaching can provide, organisations will need to facilitate resources to support what is perceived to be a valued personal development solution.

Finally, since Executive Coaching is under researched in Local Government; this study will assist in the contribution of knowledge in this area. It also offers a proposed model of Executive Coaching in a Local Government environment to enable more effective and efficient uses of resources.

Summary of Portfolio

The purpose of this Summary of Portfolio is to set the thesis within a context of the work previously assessed within the Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA) programme. It therefore reflects on the learning achieved and summarises key findings of the pre-thesis work, Personal and Professional Review: Action Learning; and Business Research Methods, while recognising the personal and professional journey undertaken and reflecting how I reached the starting point of the thesis component of the programme.

For many years, I considered that the opportunity to undertake doctoral study would be pinnacle of my academic achievement. I wanted to have the opportunity to make a fresh and meaningful contribution to practice-based knowledge of the Human Resource Profession.

The pre-thesis programme commenced with Personal and Professional Review module, that enabled me to review my previous Human Resources career, and my development and learning over this period. This reflection allowed me to gain a deep insight into my own actions and preferences that had guided and supported my career choices. I was able to engage in deep reflection on achievements in the light of the enhanced personal self-knowledge and review my whole career progression and achievements and plan for the future.

An element of this reflection triggered a major development in my career and at the mid-point of the DBA programme I decided to leave my role as a Director in a large local authority. Human Resources and Organisational Development was a career I had followed for over twenty-five years when I decided to start the next stage of my career as an independent Executive Coach and Organisational Development Consultant. The development of individuals and organisations had been an area of professional interest for a considerable time and in 2007 I qualified as an Executive Coach through Leeds University. As a senior practitioner, my first-hand experience in Executive Coaching, together with an interest in how individuals use coaching had led to the desire to research the use of Executive Coaching in Local Government.

Through the Business Research Methods module I was able to formulate a detailed proposal for my thesis. In the module I re-engaged with both qualitative and quantitative research methods and further increased my knowledge in this area with the acquisition of advanced research skills that provided a sound base for the commencement of my major research project.

During the journey I have had the opportunity to use my capabilities as an independent, self-reliant and self-motivated learner, together with incorporating my existing learning achievements, qualifications and experience into academic credits towards a DBA. The programme has allowed me to develop real expertise in areas of interest to me, and my profession. On reflection, it has allowed me to fulfil my desire to prove that I could operate as proficiently in an academic environment as I do as a practitioner. I now feel that I have addressed, what I felt was an in-balance. Before this journey, I considered my practitioner ability was far greater than my academic ability. Through doctoral study, I have addressed this, and recognise my achievement of gaining extensive academic knowledge, understanding and academic skills, and feel I can hold my own in an academic setting. I have also been able to gain an overview of theory and conceptual frameworks that further strengthen my approach to teaching and learning. The research into new areas and developing wider knowledge has resulted in a new Executive Coaching model that will now be shared through academic forums and professional networks to the advancement of my own professional practice and for the benefit of the wider profession.

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Definitions of key terms used in this thesis

Local Government

The term Local Government is used to define the four hundred and sixty eight Local Authority organisations in existence in the United Kingdom. The structure of local government varies from area to area. The authorities are composed of unitary, county, district, London boroughs and metropolitan district councils. These organisations range from the smallest, which is West Somerset to Birmingham, which is the largest. Local Government is one of the largest employers in the UK and employs over two million people (Local Government Information Unit 2013).

Elected Members

Local councils are made up of councillors, also referred to as elected members who are voted for by the public in local elections. Permanent council staff called 'officers' are employed to manage and support the organisation. Councillors are elected to represent people in a defined geographical area for a fixed term of four years. They have to balance the needs and interests of residents, voters, political parties and the councils and decide on the overall direction of policy.

Local Government Executives

For the purpose of this study, Executives are Council officers employed to manage then implement the policy initiatives agreed by elected members and are responsible for delivering services on a daily basis. Chief Executives, Executive Directors and Assistant Executive Directors form the senior management of Local Authorities. It is these senior groups that are referred to as Executives for the purpose of this research.

Respondents and Participants

For the purpose of this study, respondents are all the Executives who responded to the questionnaire that was distributed; and the term participants was used to refer to those Executive were interviewed.

Abbreviation of key themes emerging from research

LDP Executive Coaching	Leadership Development Programme Executive Coaching
IE Executive Coaching	Individual Engaged Executive Coaching

Chapter One:

Introduction

1.1. Purpose of the Study

This current study relates to Executive Coaching and its current utilisation and practice in Local Government. There is evidence that the private sector has shown a marked increase in the use of coaching for Executives over recent years (CIPD Report, 2012) yet there appears to be limited research into Executive Coaching in Local Government. Therefore, this current study aims to examine previous literature on coaching with regards to definitions of Executive Coaching; its characteristics, the coaching foci and processes, influences on coaching approaches and perpspectives, the perceived value that executives place on Executive Coaching; and what currently exists in Executive Coaching in Local Government. Subsequently, factors such as; what are the key issues for Executive Coaching and whether there are any praises or criticisms that had been identified within the topic area of Executive Coaching. The knowledge and insights gained from the literature reviewed ensured that there was sufficient understanding, to compare and analyse the findings of this current research against the existing body of knowledge. The review also identified what gaps could be contributed for this study and utilised to contribute towards the academic body of knowledge and professional practice.

In order to deliver community based services that are now required, Executives are now part of a collaborative leadership which requires them to have different skills where relationships and influencing skills are far more important than the skills required for delivering services through in-house provision. There is a growing requirement for Local Government Executives to have the skills and behaviours to develop resourcefulness, and to have a greater understanding of transformational change and be more commercially aware (NWEO, 2014). Eric Pickles, Minister for Local Government and Communities, responded at the County Council's Network conference

in November 2013 that authorities needed to prioritise in response to limited budgets and that the funding was going to reduce further for several more settlements (Jameson, 2013). In order to respond to this level of change, many individuals and organisations are turning to Executive Coaching to support and improve leadership skills, both to retain their experienced leaders and improve performance, and to support newly appointed leaders. Although viewed as a cost effective personal development solution, it still carries a significant resource implication. Its use can assist with increase in retention rates, and an opportunity to improve the personal performance and skills of those aiming for the Chief Executive roles (Leadership Centre, 2013).

Bacon and Spear (2003) suggest that Executive Coaching is beneficial to support executives in increasing their performance and helps to balance and keep the Executive focused and can improve retention rates of Executives. However, Bacon and Spear (2003) point out that the benefits of Executive Coaching are not really known as there is little research in this area that meets the academic rigour required for reliable research and therefore the effectiveness of Executive Coaching is not fully understood. Furthermore, as Bennett (2006) highlights, Executive Coaching research lags a long way behind the practice of coaching therefore the profession is being hindered in its development (Fillery-Travis *et al*. 2014).

The research base appears to have advanced little over recent years (De Haan *et al.* 2013) and outcome research is still in its infancy with still no agreed standard for research in the profession. It has been suggested that as a new area evolves, such as Executive Coaching, the research passes through three phases as it matures (Passmore and Fillery-Travis, 2011). Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) identify phase one approach as experiential and theoretical, two as the case study and survey phase which helps to explore the phenomena, and the final phase uses large scale quantitative techniques to explore individual experiences. Furthermore it is suggested that

Executive Coaching is in, but now coming to the end of its second phase. Therefore, this current study seeks to add to the body of professional and academic knowledge to understand the phenomena and increase learning and share practice to the wider Local Government by examining how and the extent to which Executive Coaching is used in Local Government.

In conclusion the statement of the problem to be addressed by this study is that although Executive Coaching is increasing (CIPD, 2012) the pace of rigorous research has not kept up with the advance in practice. The lag between these two activities is preventing the profession from developing (De Haan *et al.* 2013). The profession requires further studies to bridge the gap between practitioners and researcher which will add practice based research to the evidence base of the profession (Rostron and Kauffman, 2008). Moreover, as there has been limited research conducted into Executive Coaching in Local Government this current study has selected the Local Government environment as the case study this would support the view of De Haan *et al.* (2013) who argue that it is more important now to identify the active ingredients that predict the effectiveness of Executive Coaching and determine the difference in value of the active ingredients on the Executive Coaching effectiveness.

1.2. Background of the Study

The development of the professionalism of coaching was seen as important enough for a White Paper to have been developed to address the issues with the research agenda (Rostron and Kauffman, 2008). The purpose of the paper was to study the academic rigour applied to research into Executive Coaching as it was felt that at present the profession is defined by its shared body of practitioner knowledge rather than in future when it can be defined by its theoretical research. The paper from Rostron and Kauffman (2008) suggested that current research was driven by practitioners which gave two issues. Firstly, practitioners are not knowledgeable in what constitutes solid research, and secondly they only research what they find interesting. The report also suggests

that this produces highly variable research and limited solid, peer reviewed studies. To deal with this undesirable picture the paper presented by Rostron and Kauffman (2008) produced guidelines for coaching-related research with the hope that the quality and volume would increase by an improved links between practitioners and researches.

The position with regard to the research seems to have changed little as six years later when Fillery-Travis and Cox (2014), report that the research into the activity of Executive Coaching has been gradually increasing over the last twenty year and growing and developing an evidence base but that there are still issues of quality in certain areas and gaps. The research that has been conducted is still mainly practitioner led and its main focus tends to be on how coaching works as opposed to outcomes. Even with this amount of research there is limited evidence of an academic debate which would be necessary to grow the profession. It is felt that the multi-disciplinary background of coaching, which is discussed in Chapter 2.4, and the lack of funding has not helped in the development of academic debate (De Haan *et al.* 2013). They report that it still requires greater collaboration between universities, corporate sponsors, practitioners and professional bodies to address the current position (Fillery-Tarvis and Cox, 2014; Rostron and Kauffman, 2008).

1.3. Rationale of the study

Executive Coaching is often considered for executives as personal development (Passmore, 2010). When delivered by a qualified coach, coaching can be seen to improve personal and organisational performance as an outcome and can offer space for reflection by clarifying goals and supporting the solving of problems (Lewis-Duarte, and Bligh, 2012). The performance improvement through Executive Coaching of an individual and organisational performance can be achieved by helping to develop skills and challenge behaviours (Clutterbuck, 2007; Whitmore, 2009; Bluckert, 2006).

Executive Coaching deliberately provides an environment in which personal development plans are designed, and self-efficacy can be targeted for personal improvement by addressing specific components such as self-thought, guided mastery, modelling, social persuasion, and psychological states (Peltier, 2010). As individual behaviour change is a prerequisite for major improvements in organisational performance (Malone, 2001) executives select coaching at a time of major change as an individual personal development tool for self-development (Bluckert, 2006). Therefore, as Sperry (1993) suggests the coaching relationship can explore both new and old problems in confidence and enable leaders to gain fresh insights and to re-fuel their energy and motivation. Executive Coaching could be the personal flexible, cost effective support that Local Government Executives require during the significant relationship and structural changes ahead

1.4. Importance of the research

This current study is important as Local Government has had turbulent times over recent years and there is further change in service delivery planned (Solace, 2011; CMI, 2012). Leaders across all the public sector have faced and continue to face drastic reductions in funding, increased demand for services and government expectations that they will facilitate the move of services to communities. This pace of change will pose emotional intellectual and practical challenges as the business leaders respond to the transformation required (Tarplett, 2011). There has been a requirement for unprecedented financial savings over the last eight years and with further savings planned for 2015/16 and beyond (Keeling, 2013). Financial savings of this size require a dramatic change in approach and provision of service delivery (Blyth, 2013) which will require Local Government senior officers to operate as 'Change Leaders' (Blyth, 2012), this is further supported by recent research by Solace, the Local Government Chief Executives' Association who indicate that:

'The reality of operating in local government today is that you can't make any assumptions: the only constant is change. This also comes at a time of increased effective devolution of policy making to an ever more local level. The chief executive's role becomes more complex and creative than ever before'.

(Blyth, 2013)

Operating in flatter leaner organisations with such a challenging financial environment requires a wide skills set, personal resilience and excellent relationship management (Sherman and Freas, 2004). Local Government has seen unparalleled funding reductions of a further fifteen percent in the 2013 Spending Review (Jameson, 2013). This radical policy reform and a shift towards localism has required dramatic structural and relationship changes in Local Government. All of these call for a major step change in public sector leadership. These elements contribute to a challenging leadership future for local government Executives. This situation prompted a comment from the Chairman Local Government Association Improvement Board:

"In six weeks the Autumn Statement will confirm further cuts to Local Government funding. The challenge is vast. If we are to maintain the trust of our residents we must be relentless in our pursuit of innovation"

(Fleming, 2013).

There are still expectations of local government leaders' to have the ability to lead their organisation through such times of change and still increase performance, in line with customer and residents expectations. The current environment has challenged behaviours and relationships of Local Government Executives (Solace, 2011). In 2011, the Local Government Chronicle reported that of fifteen chief executives appointed between January and June 2011, sixty percent were first time chief executives, of which seventy eight percent were internal promotions. This is a very different position from previous years, when experienced chief executives would have filled most of these roles. Political changes and less than excellent performance levels in local government, has challenged the officer leadership of organisations and led to high executive officer turnover rates (Peters 2013; Werran and Peters, 2013). At times, the elected member response to poor

performance has been to delete the Chief Executive's post altogether and move to an Executive lead Director such as the move by Northumberland Council. With executives addressing such large-scale change management and relationship tensions it is no surprise that there has been an increase demand for development by Executives (Solace, 2013). Executives have a need to find time and space to reflect in a confidential environment and have an opportunity to address current issues using their effort to achieve quick results as well as the opportunity to long term plan (Warran, 2013). Senior executives are not immune from feeling vulnerable and fallible and at times even as insecure as the rest of the workforce (Olesen, 1996). The Executives problem can be that they do not like to admit this. Subsequently this could make the confidential environment of coaching attractive to executives in Local Government who work in a challenging political environment and do not want to be seen as vulnerable to an ambitious elected political Council Leader. The confidential nature of Executive Coaching conversation provides the environment that allows executives to share how vulnerable and fallible they feel at times and ask for support (Bluckert, 2006).

1.5. Research Aim

This research examines Executive Coaching in Local Government from the Executive's perspective**.** The research aims to contribute towards the academic debate and contribution to practice by enhancing the development of the profession within Local Government.

1.6 Research Objectives

1.   To determine the characteristics of Local Government Executive Coaching.

2.   To examine how Executive Coaching in Local Government is currently utilized.

3.   To establish what Executives in Local Government value about the Executive Coaching in which they are engaged.

4.   To critically evaluate if the background perspective and profession of the Executive Coach are important when Local Government Executive's select an Executive Coach.

5.   To make recommendations for professional practice.

1.7. Structure of the Thesis

This current study consists of seven Chapters. Chapter one provided a brief background of Executive Coaching in Local Government. It sets the research aim and highlights the nature of the problem that the current research addresses.

1.7.1. Chapter Two: Literature Review

The second chapter critically reviews the literature on the key elements of Executive Coaching, the characteristics it contains, processes that are used within the coaching relationship, influences and perspectives of Executive Coaching, perceived value from the Executive's perspective and what currently exists within Local Government Executive Coaching. Recent literature will be critically assessed and the views of numerous authors cited, in order to identify gaps which the current research explore and address.

1.7.2. Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods

This chapter discusses the research methodologies that are appropriate for this study and the methods used to collect and generate the data in order to achieve the objectives. The chapter presents the research methodology, and the methods of data analysis. Reasons for the approach of research methods are given and details of the instruments used for questionnaires and semi-structured interviews outlined.

1.7.3 Chapter Four: Questionnaire Findings

Chapter Four presents the findings of data collected from the questionnaire survey. It gives the background of those surveyed in this study. This chapter also analyses the collected data on the usage of executive coaching in the wider Local Government executive group.

1.7.4. Chapter Five: Semi-Structured Interviews Findings

Chapter Five provides the results of the qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews. This chapter presents the information gained through interviews and provides an analysis of data collected through data theme analysis.

1.7.5. Chapter Six: Discussion of Findings

This chapter provides the discussion of the findings from both the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews provided by the sample group of Local Government Executives.

1.7.6. Chapter Seven: Conclusions, recommendations and limitations

Chapter Seven presents the summary of the research. It draws conclusions and highlights the contribution to professional practice and Local Government development. It addresses the limitations of the study, provides recommendations and presents suggestions for further research.

1.8. Chapter Summary

This chapter provides the background to the study in order to demonstrate its significance and relevance. An overview of the current challenges for executives in Local Government was included which set the key research aim. To position the discussion, gaps in the literature were identified as Executive Coaching as an activity is still developing.
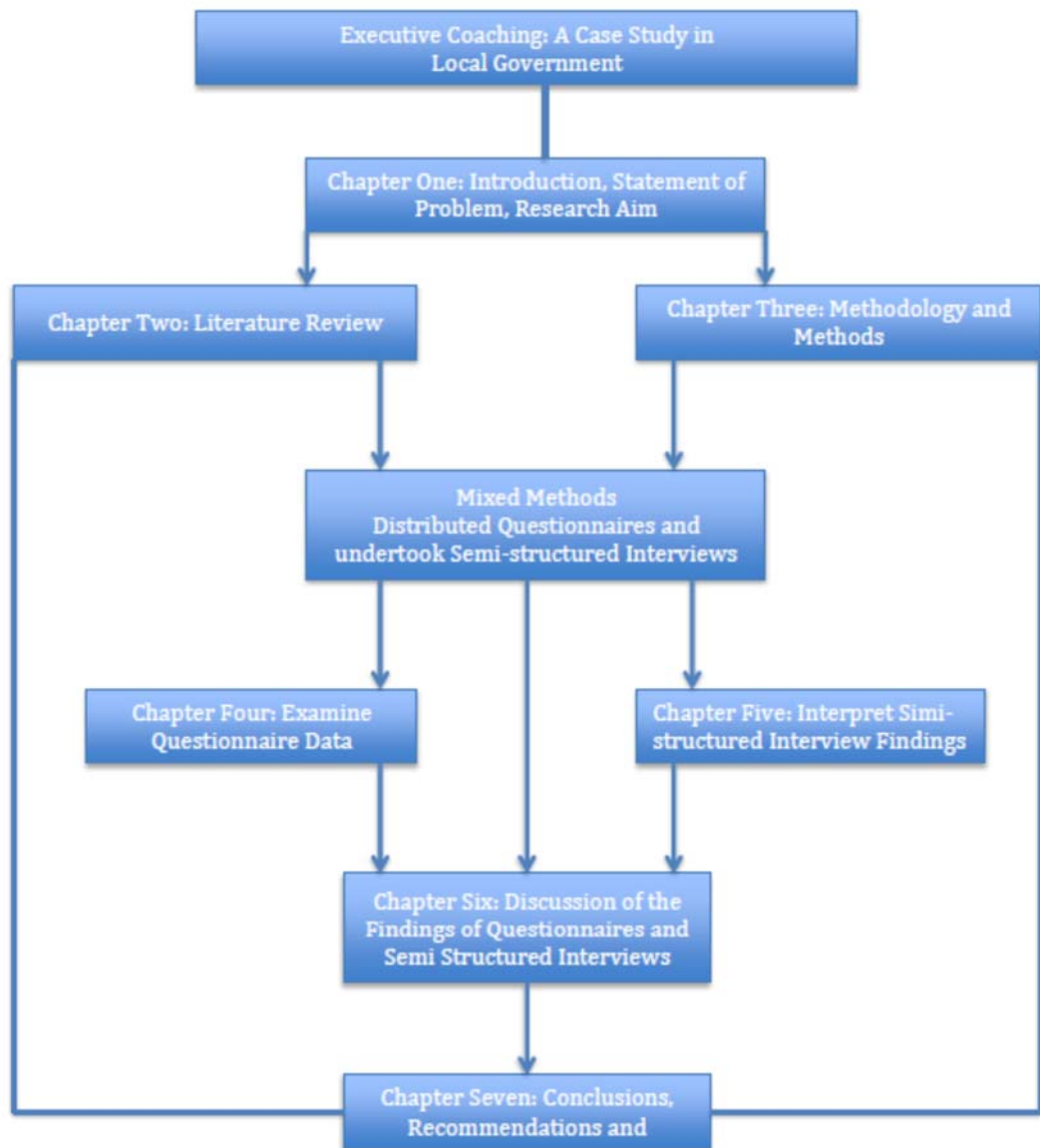
Figure 1 - Structure of the thesis - developed by the current researcher

Chapter Two:

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter critically reviews the extant literature relevant to Executive Coaching. This study is only concerned with that coaching applied to Executives and senior leaders in organisations. This type of coaching is referred to as 'Executive Coaching' and used most effectively with those individuals who have significant responsibility for the current and future success of an organisation and who have the potential to develop and change. This chapter is divided into eight sections: 2.2 discusses and defines the concept of Executive Coaching; whilst 2.3 highlights the use of definitions and discusses how the approach and background of the Executive Coach effects the definition used. The influences and perspectives on Executive Coaching are visited at 2.4.The section also seeks to understand if there was a consistent approach between the background of the Executive Coach and therefore coaching perspective and which type of coaching is delivered. In 2.5 the characteristics that define the Executive Coaching activity are reviewed. In 2.6 the perceived value that Executives place on Executive Coaching is discussed. Finally, in 2.7 addresses Executive Coaching in Local Government.

Executive Coaching is a growing phenomenon and as such is indebted to a number of disciplines including consulting management, organisational development and psychology (Sherman and Freas, 2004). Kampa-Kokesch, (2001) suggest that Executive Coaching as a concept is also delivered through multi-disciplinary perspectives so material from psychological, training learning and development, and management literature including scholarly as well as practice/professional publications. The literature has been reviewed from early studies to give the background to the debate surrounding Executive Coaching, through to the most recently published material.

2.2. Executive Coaching

The concept of one person assisting another in their development has been around for many years. Socrates could have been seen as a forerunner of coaching with his method of asking questions to help seekers find an answer for themselves (O'Connor and Lages, 2007). Moving forward into the 21st century and the research has moved on to referencing the etymology of the noun 'coach' as being Hungarian. It is derived from the word for a vehicle or a carriage, with the link being that instructors carried their pupils (CIMA, 2002). It poses the question: are the Executives of today looking to be carried through the current turbulent times? Stern (2004) adds to this origin of coaching with the actual origin of the word coaching coming from the Hungarian village of Kocs and the more comfortable, covered wheeled wagon or carriage (Koczi) first developed there to carry passengers through the harsh terrain protected from the elements on their way from their point of departure to their destination. This could again fit with today's Executives where the terrain can certainly be harsh (Solace, 2013).

The review of literature identified that the activity of Executive Coaching has emerged as an outgrowth of Leadership Development Programmes and is delivered from a range of perspectives, the main three being psychological, management, training and development (Stern, 2004). Over the centuries the term of coaching has itself travelled along several roads of use. It has moved from sports coaching, to carry the athlete through practice, the game and the competitive season, to the reference of academic coaching which was referred to as carrying students more safely through exams (Stern, 2004). Executive Coaching is just one more evolution of the term where the coach helps to carry/ or now facilitate an Executive from one point to another. This can be seen as not physically carrying but through increased self-awareness achieved through the process of Executive Coaching (Bluckert, 2006).

The widespread adoption of Executive Coaching by consulting firms began around 1990 (Kilburg and Hopkins, 1996). This view is reflected in the work of Eggers and Clark (2000) who suggest that the fastest growing areas were among consultancy companies and individual management consultants. It is further suggested that the term Executive Coaching became used on an increased basis in the business world because coaching sounded less threatening than other types of interventions (Tobias, 1996). As an intervention, by the late 1990's Executive Coaching was moving from the introductory phase to the growth phase (Judge and Cowell, 1997). This increase in Executive Coaching was due to a range of possible issues; rapidly changing global economy requiring continuing development (Sperry, 1993), the fact that other high-performance individuals, athletes, performers and public speakers had used coaching as a means of improving performance and it therefore appeared attractive to business Executives (Witherspoon and White, 1996).

The growth of Executive Coaching continued through the 1990's with the recognition that interpersonal skills are key in effectively managing oneself and those they manage (Levinson, 1996). Sherman and Freas (2004) suggest that the continued increase in the use of Executive Coaching is more significant and associated with an increased move to flatter leaner structures of fast moving organisations that have also recognised the requirement for increase executive competencies of communication and interpersonal skills. In the last two years the growing popularity of Executive Coaching is often credited to the response to all the growing workplace demands (Joo, 2012). In summary the literature identifies that Executive Coaching has grown and developed substantially over the last twenty years and covers a wide range of definitions for Executive Coaching yet still there is no one common definition in use (Kilburg and Hopkins, 1996; Sherman and Freas, 2004; Joo, 2012).

2.3. Definitions of Executive Coaching

A review of the literature shows many definitions of Executive Coaching from Levinson (1996) who described it as usually involving coping with focal problems, mostly of maladroit executive behaviour

that must become more adaptive, through to De Haan *et al.* (2013) who believe that it is a form of leadership development that takes place through a series of contracted one-to-one conversations with a 'qualified coach'. These definitions move from deficit Executive Coaching through to a supportive Executive Coaching over a period of eighteen years. However the transition of language in the definitions is not that linear as Rosinski (2003) speaks of the art of facilitating the unleashing of peoples potential to reach meaningful and important objectives and Whitmore (2009) six years later also speaks of unlocking a person's potential to maximise their own performance.

De Haan *et al.* (2013) point out that the definitions of Executive Coaching change in line with the professional background of the author. This pattern can be seen when looking back over the last fourteen years when Kilburg (2000) concentrated on performance improvement and skills development provided one of the most quoted definitions of Executive Coaching, which includes the use of an external consultant but also includes the use of behavioural techniques and methods to develop the executive to achieve a mutually identified outcome for professional performance. In contrast to this, Bluckert (2006) who has a psychology background and defines coaching as facilitating the understanding of the inner self. Stober and Grant (2006:17) define coaching as "a collaborative process of facilitating a client's ability to self-direct learning and growth, as evidenced by sustained changes in self-understanding, self-concept, and behaviour". This definition into the psychological perspective of Executive Coaching clearly portraits an emphasis on the behaviour rather than on performance improvement. Therefore, it could be considered that many definitions often do not say what coaching is, but define what coaching the approach is seeking to achieve.

The analysis of a range of definitions found in the literature review is shown in Table 1 below, not only appeared to show a link with professional background of Executive Coaching but also, across a

period of almost twenty years they relate to the purpose, focus, scope, process, approaches, relationships, feedback and participants. This plethora of definitions and approaches means that the individual professionals are practicing in very different ways, with Executive Coaching interventions being tailored not only to the needs of the Executive client but also to those of the Executive Coach and the particular background, theoretical orientation and interests they have (De Haan *et al*. 2013).

Table 1 Analysis of Definitions of Executive Coaching in chronological order

Authors	Definition	Approach
Kilburg (1996)	Defines Executive Coaching as a helping relationship formed between a client who has managerial authority and responsibility.	Management
Levinson (1996)	Executive coaching usually involves coping with focal problems, mostly of maladroit executive behaviour that must become more adaptive.	Management
Kilburg (2000)	A helping relationship formed between a client who has managerial authority and responsibility in an organisation and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioural techniques and methods to help the client achieve a mutually identified set of goals to improve his or her professional performance and personal satisfaction and consequently to improve the effectiveness of the client's organisation within a formally defined coaching agreement.	Psychological
Zeus and Skiffington (2000)	Executive Coaching is a collaborative, individualised relationship between an Executive and a coach the aims of which are to bring about sustained behavioural change and to transform the quality of the executive's working and personal life.	Psychological
Carter (2001)	Defines Executive Coaching as a form of tailored work-related development for senior and professional managers that span business, functional and personal sills.	Management
CIMA (2002)	Defines Executive Coaching as focusing on achieving specific objectives, usually within a preferred time scale.	Management
Downey (2003)	Refers to Executive Coaching as the art of facilitating the performance, learning and development of another.	Training and development
Blackman-Sheppard (2004)	Leadership development for Executives.	Training and development
Kilburg and Hopkins (2004)	Executive Coaching focuses on improving the performance of leaders in organisations.	Psychological
Stern (2004)	Executive Coaching is experiential, individualised leadership development process that builds a leader's capability to achieve short and long term organisational goals. Conducted through one-to-one interactions, driven by data from multiple perspectives. Based on mutual rust and respect.	Psychological
Ennis *et al* (2008)	Executive Coaching is an experiential and individualized leader development process that builds a leader's capability to achieve short and long term organisational goals. It is constructed through one to one interactions, driven by data from multiple perspectives, and based on mutual trust and respect. The organisation, an Executive, and the Executive Coach work in partnership to achieve maximum impact.	Psychological

Peltier (2010)	Psychological skills and methods are employed in a one to one relationship to help someone become more effective manager and leader.	Psychological
Lewis-Duarte and Bligh (2012	Executive Coaching is commonly utilized in organisations to facilitate the personal and professional growth of executive.	Management
De Haan *et al.,* (2013)	A form of leadership development that takes place through a series of contracted one-to-one conversations with a 'qualified coach'.	Psychological

Although the literature identifies a significant range of differences in definitions, it also shows a range of common elements. A number of definitions identify that the activity is containing a one-to-one relationship, an experiential individualised development, and leadership development process that builds leader's capability to achieve short and long term organisational goals (Levinson, 1996; Longnenecker; 2010; Stern, 2004). A common element in the definitions is the role of relationships where the emphasis is on the partnership or collaborative relationship between the coach and Executive as an essential element of the coaching process (Joo, 2005). The International Coach Federation (ICF, 2014), point out that coach partnering with Executives in a thought-provoking and creative process is required so that this inspires the Executive to maximize their personal and professional potential. This compares well with Eggers and Clark (2000) who feel that it caters for the human need to be heard and understood, however it can be considered an industry without widely accepted standards but works due to the human nature of coaching. Subsequently, this is double edged as the variables of human nature make this difficult to quantify (Sherman and Freas, 2004). With no clear standard definition for Executive Coaching but with some agreed among authors (Bennett and Bush, 2009) and no agreement on what happens inside the coaching relationship (Kilburg and Hopkins, 2004) it is understandable that to establish a single definition and agreement for the approach required for the activity is difficult. It therefore seems relevant for the researcher to examine what the literature reveals on Executive Coaching influences and perspectives.

2.4. Influences and Perspectives on Executive Coaching

If the definitions of coaching are not consistent as there is no clear consensus (Bennett and Bush, 2009) and there is no agreement on what happens inside the coaching relationship (Kilburg and Hopkins, 2004), and the foci of what Executive Coaching seeks to achieve originates from many perspective, then it is difficult to see where there could be any consistency in the process and delivery of Executive Coaching. The researcher therefore considers it is relevant to examine what the research says on the perspectives that drive Executive Coaching. In particular, the three main area perspectives psychological, training and development and management (Kampa-Kokesch, 2001) will be reviewed.

The literature identified that the background of the coach has an influence on the approach of the coaching sessions (Dembkowski *et al.* 2006). The range of influences across the literature are varied and the list adapted from Dembkowski *et al.* (2006) shows a comprehensive view of both the psychology and training and development and management authors to the activity (Table 2).

Table 2. Background Influences on Executive Coaching

Field	Examples of Authors
Psychology	Wilber (2000) Skiffington and Zeus (2003)
Emotional intelligence	Goleman (2004)
Learning Theory	Kolb (1984)
Thinking Skills	De Bono (2009)
Sports psychology	Galwey (2000)
Motivation theory	McClelland (1988)
System Thinking	Senge (2006)
Management development	Blanchard (2010) Covey (2004)

Fillery-Tavis and Cox (2014) suggest that the research that has been conducted is mainly by practitioners and therefore has been published in coaching journals or marginalised in journals from the discipline source and further suggest that this situation exists because the methodological rigour required by academics has not been the priority of the practitioner and that this position could be addressed   if universities, sponsors, practitioners and professional bodies worked together in the future. As the literature identifies that the background of the coach and affects the coaching delivered

(Kampa-Kokcesch, 2001); (Dembkowski *et al.* 2006): (Fillery-Tavis and Cox , 2014), a review of the three coaching perspectives of psychological, training and development and management was undertaken to aid the understanding of a coaching influences and perspectives and the impact they have on the Executive Coaching activity.

2.4.1 Psychological Perspective

With executive coaching emerging as one of the most significant approaches to the professional development of senior managers and Executives, the balance of the literature brings with it an almost implicit assumption that if coaching practice is underpinned by any theoretical model, this will be from a human psychology and particularly a psychotherapeutic perspective (Gray, 2009). This psychological perspective of Executive Coaching aligns with Kilburg (1996) conclusion following his literature review and which suggests that the foci of Executive Coaching is rational self; conscience; idealised self; instinctual self: cognition; emotion; defences; conflict: knowledge; skills; abilities: personality; styles, jobs, roles, tasks. This view sits firmly within the area of psychology and is therefore unsurprising that it is published in a psychology journal. Even moving the research forward by ten years and it is this same psychological paradigm of Executive Coaching that is put forward by Bluckert (2006). It appears therefore, that the main foci of psychological Executive Coaching is on the personal development of the Executive's 'inner self' Bluckert (2006). This increased self-knowledge seeks to increase of self-awareness, improvement of self-resilience, greater effectiveness through self-knowledge with a new level of personal mastery (Natale and Diamante, 2005). Brotman *et al.* (1998) support this approach, however they concentrate on the change in the executive's behaviour by focusing on their internal personal sphere as being at the core of the outcome of this approach. Kilburg (2000) adds to this view by suggesting that this approach also has the outcome of increasing personal resilience and understanding of their attitude to issues and how this can impact on their own and other behaviour. The approach however does not appear to have one consistent model and it appears to

support the informal process of coaching in that it is delivered through a confidential conversation where the behaviours attitudes and beliefs of the client are challenged by the coach. Through this process the client is able to increase their own self-understanding.

2.4.2 Management Perspective

The management perspective approach to coaching focuses on the organisational development and improvement that coaching of executives can produce (CIMA, 2000). The complex debate widens with the management view stressing that during recent years, the growth of an emergent coaching industry has resulted in some academics calling for the development of a genuine coaching profession (Joo, 2005). Contemporary organisation development and human resource development practitioners conceive of coaching as an extant core component of their respective fields of study and practice and many of the papers from this perspective are published in Organisational Development Journals.

This management perspective is further supported by Cater (2001) who suggests that management coaching of an Executive concentrates on working towards organisational goals through a tailored work related approach which needs to be business related (Berglas, 2002). Downey (2003) refers to this as the art of facilitating the performance of the executive through learning, the outcome being a different skill is learnt which is then used to improve the organisation. It can also be an opportunity for quality integrated thinking time creating confidential space to develop trust which are seen as equally important for Executives if an organisation is to perform well financially and sustainably (Blackman-Sheppard, 2004). However even in the organisational development journals with a focus on organisational improvement there is an understanding that Executive Coaching as opposed to manager coaching has as its purpose the increase in self-awareness and behaviour (Joo, 2005).

2.4.3 Training and Development Perspective

The training and development perspective approach focuses on personal development with an emphasis on skills development (Olesen, 1996). It is perhaps not a surprise, as many of the published papers from this perspective are in commercial training journals that examine how people develop new individualised ways of working to increase their performance (Edwards, 2003). This approach is process driven from internal organisational processes such as appraisal. It looks to optimise learning of specific content in response to appraisal deficits when it is classed as remedial coaching or part of a response to employee development plans (Thach and Hemselman, 1999). As the emphasis is on a response to internal processes, it is understandable that Executive Coaching is seen as an element of organisational Executive development programmes. As an internal facility it can be offered when an Executive's performance is perceived as below expectations, when it could be used as an alternative to termination, or move into non-critical role (Judge and Cowell, 1997; Eggers and Clark, 2000).

The literature reviewed shows the continuing divide of the three main disciplines involved in the Executive Coaching profession - psychological, training and development, and management. Research also revealed some differences in the key competencies identified by psychologist and non-psychologist coaches (Hamlin, *et al.* 2009). This lack of single approach to Executive Coaching interventions was researched by Bono *et al.* (2009) who found that despite the breadth of Executive Coaching interventions in business organisations, there is little uniformity in the practices including assessment tools; scientific or philosophical approaches, activities; goals; and outcome evaluation methods. Their study looked at the on-going debate about the role of psychology in Executive Coaching. They compared the practices of psychologist and non-psychologist coaches, as well as looking at the practices of coaches from various psychological disciplines including counselling, clinical, and industrial/organisational. This view was further supported by De Haan (2013) who held the view that the Executive Coaching field was in a state of flux with individuals entering from diverse

backgrounds of psychologists, psychotherapists and sports coaches and only just beginning to be regulated as a profession.

The comparisons in the research show many differences between psychologists of differing disciplines as were found between psychologist and non-psychologist coaches. It is marked at this point that there is still is no one single approach to the activity of Executive Coaching. Empirical research on Executive Coaching, however, has lagged far behind, and theoretical work on the processes underlying it has been limited (Lankau, 2005). However, much of the literature on coaching brings with an almost implicit assumption that to an extent when coaching practice is underpinned by any theoretical model, this will be from a human psychology perspective (Gray, 2009); Tuner and Goodrich (2010), argues that effectively addressing challenging problems in Executive Coaching requires the use of not one, but several, theoretical models. These are: psychodynamic; cognitive–behavioural; and systems. The literature review suggests that even with the psychological perspective, that Executive Coaching applies theories on behaviour change, as well as theories and research from areas of personality, adult development and social group psychology. It is worth reflecting at this point that although there are groups of literature with three perspectives - psychological - training and development - management, there have now appeared sub-disciplines within those areas being defined as connected (Passmore and Fillery-Travis, 2011).

Regardless of the background of the coach and the perspective from which they are driven, which can be seen as varied, the one element that is consistent is that there is a structure used within the coaching sessions (Whitmore, 2009; Thorpe and Clifford, 2003; O'Connor and Lages, 2004). The perspectives may be different, which gives different language in the definition of Executive Coaching they use, therefore the focus may be different and seek different outcomes. Executive Coaches reported that they use different tactics depending on the desired outcome of the influence attempt: coalition and

pressure were utilised to change behaviour, whereas coaches used consultation and rational persuasion to both change behaviour and assign work (Lewis-Duarte and Bligh, 2012). It could be seen there are many differences in Executive Coaching but there are areas in the characteristics that are consistent.

2.5. Characteristics

With a wide range of professional backgrounds it is perhaps expected that the characteristics of Executive Coaching could be numerous. Many of the existing characteristics now come from the world of psychology, however there is contrast in the application of the Executive Coaching activity as there are still substantial number of business academics, consultants, former athlete and lawyers delivering the activity each with their own lexicon (Berglas, 2002).

Common characteristics of Executive Coaching across a range of research papers are a process: selection of a coach; coaching tools and techniques; type of delivery; focus of the sessions; purpose of Executive Coaching; length of relationship (Wasylyshyn, 2003; Blucket, 2005; Sherman and Freas, 2004; Joo, 2012). These characteristics will now be examined individually in what follows. The view on the importance of elements is a feature of many of the articles and appears to relate to the background profession of the paper authors. Wasylyshyn (2003) goes on to include the importance of the coach holding a psychology degree and being knowledgeable in business, perhaps not surprising as this is published in a psychology journal.

The review of literature showed the process of Executive Coaching as an important characteristic. This characteristic provides a framework for the coaching delivery as outlined by Thorpe and Clifford (2003:25) who suggest that: *"Whilst the key to successful coaching is about the relationship between the two people involved, it is possible to identify a process that can be followed to achieve the required*

outcome". However, not all sessions follow a formal or consistent process. Among the terms used is a system, an approach, a focus or a model (Whitmore, 2009). The components as individual types of a process in Executive Coaching have been researched extensively (Kilburg, 2001). A range of areas that have been the subject of research are: a system (Tobias, 1996); Iterative feedback model (Diedrich, 1996); Transformative approach and Development model (Laske, 1999); Constructive developmental theory approach - (Fitzgerald and Berger, 2002); Existential approach (Peltier, 2010); GROW Model (Whitmore, 2009); ACHIEVE Model (Dembkowski *et al.* 2006); Gestalt Approach to Coaching (Bluckert, 2014). However there is still a view that there is a gap in the research with regard to what the overall coaching process is (Fillery-Travis and Cox 2014). From the wide range of research examining processes and models, over a number of years, there are some key processes that have been identified and referred to more frequently than others. The GROW Model (Whitmore, 2009) is one of the most frequently referred to. The letters - Goal ,Reality, Opportunity, and Will/Wrapping Up/What next, form the stages of the process. There are other models (Dembkowski *et al.* 2006) that again use the letters to guide the process through the coaching session. The use of a model gives structure to a coaching session and guides both the coach and client through the sessions. Whether the process is a system or an approach, a focus or a model, the research shows that all processes are affected by the background of the coach   (Dembkowski *et al,* 2006). Therefore it appears the perspective of the coach and their professional background drives the selection of the type of the coaching process and not the type of the process itself, which then drives the perspective that has been employed.

The characteristics of the coach are arguably the most important element of a successful coach-coachee relationship (Executive Coaching Forum, 2008). Furthermore, Hawkins (2012) suggests that an effective Executive Coaching requires three key competencies. Firstly, high level skills and experience in coaching, secondly a psychological understanding especially in adult learning and development with an understanding personality types and learning preferences. Finally, the Executive Coach requires an understanding of organisational behaviour and the world of business either by

experience as Executive or by the achievement of a management qualification (Hawkins, 2012). The business knowledge required by be transferable across several sectors however research suggests that in practice the clients look for an Executive Coach who has experience at their own level and if possible in their own business or one similar (O'Connor and Lages, 2007).

The use of tools and techniques in Executive Coaching to make an assessment of where the Executive is at the start of the coaching contract is mentioned as a characteristic in Executive Coaching models. There is an extensive list of tools used most providing some benefit but with no conclusive proof that they work (Wilson, 2007). Those most often used, but not an exhaustive list are 360 degree feedback assessment, use of the Johari window and use of an autobiography statements (Rogers, 2004). These tools are used in order for the Executive Coach to understand the Executive and also for the Executive to acknowledge and increase their self-awareness at the start of the coaching relationship (Bluckert, 2006).

The type of delivery method for Executive Coaching appears as a characteristic with Executive Coaching being delivered through one to one confidential meetings. Executives personally often source professional externals to their organisation (Stokes and Jolly, 2014). It is also delivered through formal leadership development programmes with the purpose of embedding organisational leadership competencies and behaviours. In this delivery method the Executive Coach is allocated by the Leadership Development Programme leads.

The characteristic of the overall purpose of Executive Coaching is used more often to describe the Executive Coaching activity than a definition and concentrates in the main areas of skills coaching, performance coaching and developmental coaching and Executive Agenda (Witherspoon and White,

1996; Grant and Cavanagh, 2007; The Executive Coaching Forum, 2008). The purpose is to provide one- to one support to Executives in an organisation on the principle that positive changes can enhance the individual and the organisation. It can be used in a deficit situation but is currently more usually used to develop high potential performers and has become a popular mainstream way to improve Executives and organisations (Peltier, 2010). Therefore, the purpose of Executive Coaching is seen by the majority as equipping Executives with tools, knowledge and opportunities they need to develop themselves and become more effective (Peterson, 1996).

The literature shows a mixed picture with regard to the characteristics of Executive Coaching (De Haan, 2013). As the research shows there is no clear definition as to what Executive Coaching is, and there are a variety of descriptions on what the Executive Coaching relationship sessions focus on. The foci of Executive Coaching ranges from a deficit model (Thach and Heinselman, 1999) which addresses 'derailed' Executives to those seeking to increase learning, increased self-awareness and development and more effective leadership (Kampa and White, 2002). The foci also includes looking to optimizing people's potential and performance (Whitmore, 2009) and working one to one with Executives to help them learn how to manage and lead and to assist them to establish, structure, plan for, and lead the Executives organisation (Stern, 2004) and Personal behaviour change; enhancing leader effectiveness; and fostering stronger relationships (Wasylyshyn, 2003). The Executive Coaching activity therefore appears to focus and be utilised in the main areas of skills coaching, performance coaching and developmental coaching (Grant and Cavanagh, 2007).

Research across a variety of professional backgrounds *shows "what happens in coaching engagements remains quite mysterious"* (Kilburg, 1997: 204), as there is a lack of detailed case studies that describe what practitioners actually do with their clients'. This may be that Executive Coaching has *"caught on more as an area of practice than as one of theory or research"* (Lowman, 2005:90). Even at this

point, research is limited as to what actually occurs in practice within the coaching relationship. This position is supported by management research conducted by Feldman and Lankau (2005), whose research found that the use of Executive Coaching, as a developmental intervention had increased in the previous decade which had led to an increase in practitioner literature on the topic.

In the early 1990's Executive Coaching focused on remediation of problematic or failing Executives (Stern, 2004). The picture, however, is changing. Despite the expanse of Executive Coaching interventions and activity in business organisations, there is limited uniformity in the practices and approach. It is therefore the personal-developed or goal focused approach which Brotman *et al*. (1998) comment on that Executive Coaching work is often focused on the internal sphere of the organisation. This work not only links Executive Coaching to the internal individual but also states typical assignments as being involved with talented Executives whose future success requires them to relate to people more effectively. As Executive Coaching has been proposed as an intervention to improve performance it is worth noting that what happens, why it happens and what makes it effective or ineffective is still not fully understood (Bacon and Spear, 2003). However, Executive Coaching is most frequently used for the development of high potential, acting as a sounding board for Executives on organisational and strategic matters, addressing derailing behaviour (Couta and Kauffman, 2009).

The length of the coaching relationships appears to be a key feature characteristic of Executive Coaching and is discussed at the commencement of an Executive Coaching engagement (The Executive Coaching Forum, 2008). There is a view that coaching should be of a short duration, often six to eight sessions. However, offering a longer relationship, perhaps over a year can be useful to Executives who are taking on major new role or facing challenging times (Wilson, 2007). However, not all researcher's hold this view as they believe that an experienced coach can be an invaluable resource to a senior Executive even over a sustained period of time relationship (Wasylyshyn, 2003).

2.6. Perceived Value of Executive Coaching

Collings and Mellahi (2009) suggest that as Executive Coaching is a significant expense it is therefore essential for the organisations and individuals who fund this development to consider new ways of increasing its effectiveness. Collings and Mellahi (2009) further point out that as Executive Coaching is still in development and there is still no general consensus of definition and standards, more theoretical and empirical research on Executive Coaching effectiveness and value to the Executives is required.

As academic research into Executive Coaching is a relatively new field, it is only now beginning to build a wider evidence base about the impact of Executive Coaching on individual Executives and organisational outcomes (Passmore and Gibbes, 2007). There have been only a small number of empirical studies on the effectiveness and benefit of Executive Coaching as a development tool to the individuals or the organisations in which they work (Blackman, 2006; Kampa-Kokesch and Anderson, 2001; Lowman, 2005; Passmore & Gibbes, 2007; Wasylyshyn, 2003). Research conducted has used short-term affective reactions as outcome measures rather than measuring long term change, and ignored coachee learning, behavioural changes, coachee perceptions and organisational outcomes as effectiveness indicators (Feldman and Lankau, 2005; Kombarakaran, Yang, *et al.*, 2008). Therefore, a gap has been identified in the literature, highlighting the long- term effectiveness of the outcomes of Executive Coaching such as behavioural changes. Furthermore, Wasylyshyn (2003) examines Executive's reactions to working with a coach and the coaching tools that Executives favour while stressing that in future if companies are going to continue to invest in expensive coaching they should explore the value. Wasylyshyn (2003) also ranks the criteria Executives use in the selection of a coach and shows the value they place on each element. Unsurprising as it is published in a psychology journal it identifies a graduate trained psychology coach as the most valued followed by experience in and understanding of business and thirdly the reputation as a coach. It also found the value of personal

characteristics of a coach as being a coach having the ability to develop a strong connection with the Executive; professionalism; and the use of clear and sound coaching methodology. From Wasylyshyn's (2003) sample all respondents valued the external coach and linked trust and confidentiality as their primary factor in their selection.

Lewis-Duarte (2012) sought to evaluate the usage, timing and outcomes of coaching. Therefore, this work indicated the limitations of sample size and self-reporting impacted on their research. This is therefore an area where there is little evidence of outcomes due to access issues to a large enough sample. While there is a belief that there is a direct link from effective process to effective outcomes (Bluckert, 2006), there are others who concentrate their assessment of effectiveness on whether the executive's goals have been achieved (Eggers and Clark, 2000).

2.7. Executive Coaching in Local Government

A review of literature on Executive Coaching while numerous in articles, does not appear to show research having been undertaken in the sector of Local Government. Therefore, to review what exists in Local Government, the researcher reviewed what has been published within the Local Government domain and non-academic sources. Providers of development, regional employer organisations and the national development support were examined for material in order to understand current provision of the activity of Executive Coaching.

North West Employers Organisation (NWEO) is an example of a regional employer organisation that is centrally funded to provide organisational and individual support to Local Authorities. Their wider banner of Learning and Sharing Skills provision offers Personal and Team support and within this provision they include Personal Coaching which includes Executive Coaching. Interestingly, their

introduction mentions deficit coaching but is clear that their offer is developmental coaching for high performing Executives. Their offer is underpinned by clear values. These include the executive taking responsibility for learning; learning occurs at the edge of known and unknown elements; commitment to explore new areas is also required (NWEO, 2014). Although the organisation explains that their Executive coaching comes from many disciplines, their values and explanation is a psychological coaching approach (Bluckert, 2006). Their coaching focus is on internal dialogue; influence from external to internal; increases self-awareness; a challenging process; requires both coach and coaches to be willing. They also ensure personal fit through offering 'test' sessions before engagement. The NWEO also deliver a Post Graduate Certificate in Business and Executive Coaching in conjunction with Peter Bluckert, a professional experienced coach and researcher.

A survey of a 103 Chief Executives and Directors that researches the support the Executives most value reports Local Government Executives as 'time poor'. They are more interested in having time to reflect and plan rather than formal development and support this with forty four per cent of their respondents valuing one-to-one coaching. They comment on the view of Local Government executive role as being a 'thankless and lonely role'. The report gives the valued elements of coaching as providing a confidential environment; space where they can be their true selves; not having to think about the political implications while they think (Blyth, 2011).

Within the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE, 2013) there is evidence of an on-going debate on Local Authority Chief Executives future leadership requirements and the support and development to support this. Their recent survey designed to inform how the continuous professional development needs of existing and aspiring Chief Executives may be met. The survey examined existing elements of the Chief Executive role and how these may change, together with their development needs now and in the future to support the changing role and environment. The research

identified a clear move away from more formal development to be mentoring, shadowing and action learning sets as preferred and most valued development methods. The future development methods were identified as requiring a greater coaching pool and a potential of sharing a coaching pool across several authorities; opportunities to gain political understanding, knowledge and experience in the real world; and early career exposure to wider situations. This further confirms that the most valued forms of development are informal and on-going with opportunities to share experience and expertise. SOLACE, as a provider of Executive development suggests that their core support should include buddy systems, mentoring and coaching, Action Learning Sets, and informal specific topic sharing events. They also support recently retired Chief Executives being developed as sector coaches. SOLACE (2013) also examined if the sector was 'Asking the right Questions' and looked at the skills, values, attitudes and behaviours to support the transformation required.

2.8. Chapter Summary

The literature review identified that the research on Executive Coaching lags behind what is actually happening in coaching practice and is undertaken mainly by practitioners, however this position could be addressed and research improved both in quality and quantity, if academics and practitioners worked closer together (Feldman and Lankau, 2005; Cox *et al.* 2014). The literature is contained in three main bodies of psychological, training and development, and management research. However it does not address whether each of the areas of professional discipline has its own set of best practices and standards. Further the literature seems to explore the phenomenon of Executive Coaching as a whole not its individual component parts (Fillery-Tavis and Cox, 2014).

In summary, the review of the literature on Executive Coaching provided a complex and mixed view and found that the field is considered to be in a state of flux and only just beginning to be regulated as a profession with Executive Coaches practicing different models and approaches of Executive Coaching from a range of professional backgrounds (De Haan, *et al.* 2013). There is also evidence that

as Executive Coaches come from multiple professional backgrounds the Executive Coaching is influenced by multiple professional perspectives (Lewis-Duarte-Bligh, 2012).There is evidence of some common ground on three main perspectives that influence Executive Coaching as being psychological perspective, training and development perspective, and management perspective and that the literature is published in these same three professional areas (Cox *et al.*2014). However, this does not lead to agreement on which professional background or influence perspective produces the most effective coaching (Kampa-Kokcesch, 2001).

Despite there being evidence of an agreement that Executive Coaching is on the increase there are still differing views on almost all other aspects of the Executive Coaching activity (Kilburg and Hopkins, 1996; CIPD, 2011; Bluckert 2006; Cox *et al.* 2014). There appeared to be no consensus on a definition of Executive Coaching and the definitions in use covered a range of areas including purpose, scope, process and relationships (Savage, 2001; Peterson 1996; Kilburg and Hopkins, 1996; Stern, 2004). Many of the definitions do however hold the view that Executive Coaching is the process of facilitating the unlocking a person's potential to maximize their performance through a one to one relationship between a qualified Executive Coach and an Executive (Passmore, 2010).

There also appears to be an agreement that Executive Coaching has a structure, and that that structure should contain a combination of characteristics and that these could include a process; selection of coach; coaching tools and techniques; type of delivery; focus; and purpose (Wasylyshyn, 2003; Bluckert 2006). There was a common view held that the structure should contain a process but there was not a prescriptive view on what the process should be (Dembkowski *et al.* 2006). The contents of what a process could be ranged from an informal approach of challenging conversations, to formal coaching models, a system process and different approaches and foci (Whitmore, 2009; (Bluckert, 2014; Peltier, 2010; Fitzgerald and Berger, 2002). However, there is still a gap in the literature as to

what the overall Executive Coaching process is (Fillery-Travis and Cox 2014) and a better understanding of what aspects are critical is required (Passmore and Fillery-Travis 2011).

There is evidence that the overall purpose of Executive Coaching is used more often to describe the Executive Coaching activity than an explanation of purpose and identifies the main areas as skills coaching, performance coaching, developmental coaching and Executive Agenda (Witherspoon and White, 1996; Grant and Cavanagh, 2004; The Executive Coaching Forum, 2008). These four main purposes of Executive Coaching provide a wide range of views as to the foci of the Executive Coaching sessions, from further developing high performing executives and facilitates self-motivated improvement with career or performance focus (Judge and Cowell, 1997; Peltier, 2010) to fixing toxic behaviour in Executives through a deficit coaching model (Coutu and Kaffman, 2009; Thach and Heinselman, 1999). The literature reviewed showed that Executive Coaching deals with the current environment and therefore deals with 'what is' (Greco, 2001) and there is general agreement on the overall purpose of executive coaching being to equip executives with the tool, knowledge and opportunity to become more effective (Peterson, 1996; Couta and Kauffman, 2009).

When selecting a coach there is agreement in the literature that the Executive Coach should be skilled (Bennett and Martin, 2001), use a methodology; be experienced; use expert questions (Greco, 2001) and be external to the Executive's organisation (Judge and Cowell, 1997). There is strong evidence that coaching needs to have a match between Executive Coach and coachee and the strength of that relationship is linked with the success of the coaching, as the coach is seen not as the expert, but the 'thought partner' (Thach and Heinselman, 1999). It is suggested that the coachee already has the vast majority of answers and facts and the coach's role is to stimulate that knowledge/learning and allow the coachee to unlock and achieve their true potential. (Eggers and Clark, 2000; O'Connor and Lages, 2004; Jones, 2005). Executive Coaching is delivered through confidential meetings, a one to one basis,

through both individual engagement by the Executive and through the formal Leadership Development Programme format (Cox *et al.* 2014), regardless of the method of delivery tools and techniques are used to assist with an initial assessment of the starting position of the Executive (Wilson, 2007). There is evidence that this Executive Coaching relationship could be as short as six sessions or have value to an Executive dealing with major change of extending the session over a longer period in excess of a year (Wasylyshyn, 2003; Wilson, 2007).

With regard to perceived value, the Executives appear to value coaching when they have a professional qualified coach who understands their business; when they respect and can trust the Executive Coach and are provided confidentiality to the sessions (Wasylyshyn, 2003); and who asks questions of them to evoke thought in problem solving (Bennett and Martin, 2001).

A review of Executive Coaching in Local Government identified limited research which may be due to the time lag between practice and research (Feldman and Lankau 2005) or could be a disconnect between Local Government and academic research (Fillery-Travis and Cox, 2014). There was evidence of sector providers understanding the importance of Executive Coaching and viewed Executive Coaching as an element of flexible informal, valuable support for Local Government Executives, to support them in a challenging changing environment (SOLACE, 2013; NWEO, 2014). There is also evidence of links with Action Learning Sets which are organised to provide a safe environment for the sharing of Executive experience and provide a safe environment for their discussions (SOLACE, 2013).

2.8.1. Gap in the Literature

Whilst it is recognised that there is an abundance of literature on the use of Executive Coaching, skills for Executive Coaching, and models used, this does not give a clear picture of the activity of

Executive Coaching in the Local Government sector (Kampa-Kokesch, 2001). Much of the research into Executive Coaching to date has been practitioner led into exploring how coaching works in organisations or situations (Cox *et al.* 2014) and not into sectors. Therefore there appears to be limited Executive Coaching research backed up by evidenced research in Local Government. What is required is a better understanding of what aspects of Executive Coaching are the critical factors (Passmore and Fillery-Travis, 2011). It is therefore difficult to establish what happens with Executive Coaching and more so in the Local Government sector. The present study therefore makes a significant contribution towards an awareness and understanding of Executive Coaching in Local Government.

As a result, there has been limited comprehensive studies of the component parts within the coaching process even though three elements of coach-client relationship, duration of the process and identification of purpose and model of practice are often identified from literature (Fillery-Travis and Cox, 2014). Fillery-Travis and Cox, (2014) suggest that the gaps are due to the multi-disciplinary nature of coaching and the lack of funding available for research. To increase research quantity and quality it would require collaboration between researchers, sponsors, practitioners and professional bodies. This position is supported Orenstein (2006) and Grant (2013) who although writing seven years apart arrive at the same conclusion that the lack of further rigorous research and academic debate are slowing the growth of the profession. Given the increased use of Executive Coaching in Local Government (SOLACE, 2013) more research is needed in sector to support its use of Executive Coaching with regard to workplace outcomes such as improved performance and support to individuals Executives (Cox *et al.* 2014). Therefore this research aims to contribute to the number of studies undertaken on the subject of Executive Coaching and its use and outcomes produced. It will add the Local Government perspective to the bank of existing knowledge and explore the discipline to contribute to the research evidence base.

The researcher is also seeking to establish if the limited research is because Executive Coaching in Local Government is not as prolific as in other sectors or whether it does exist but has not been the subject to academic research. Subsequently, research also shows that coaching research falls behind coaching practice (Lowman, 2005) therefore this study seeks to provide data of the wider Local Government Executive Coaching practice. The continuing challenges in the sector mean that leaders will require continuing development to have the ability to perform to a high standard. If coaching has a role in this development the greater the understanding of the activity, how effective it is and what improves effectiveness of Executive Coaching, the greater the benefit there will be to the profession and the industry (Fillery-Travis and Cox, 2014).

2.8.2. Conceptual Framework

The researcher used the literature reviewed to inform the development of a Conceptual Framework (Figure 2). The figure shows the interrelationships as indicated within the literature between background perspectives, coaching approach and coaching activity. It must be noted that the various aspects of Executive Coaching are often conflated and then separate through the process. It further identifies the types of coaching process and the terms used. This framework mapped the territory to be investigated and was used as a framework for reference during the case study research to guide the research and to uncover what currently happens inside Executive Coaching in Local Government (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This study concentrated on examining if those elements were present in Executive Coaching in Local Government. The researcher sought to understand the elements in the framework and what role they contributed to Executive Coaching in Local Government. The current study focused on the background and perspectives of the Executive Coaches. It aimed to identify how did the Executives select their coach, did they know the background of those they engaged and what role did it play in their selection. Further, and what type of process would be used to deliver the coaching and finally what was it that they valued about the coaching.

The conceptual framework was a current version of the *"researchers map of the territory being investigated"* Miles and Huberman, 1994:60) at the commencement of the research. As the researcher's knowledge of the terrain improved the map became correspondingly more differentiated and integrated (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The case study approach facilitated conceptual refinement of the emerging theoretical formulation and led to the discovery of new insight and interpretation of Executive Coaching in Local Government environment and led to a development of the conceptual framework into a proposed model (Willig, 2001).

Figure 2   Conceptual Executive Coaching Framework
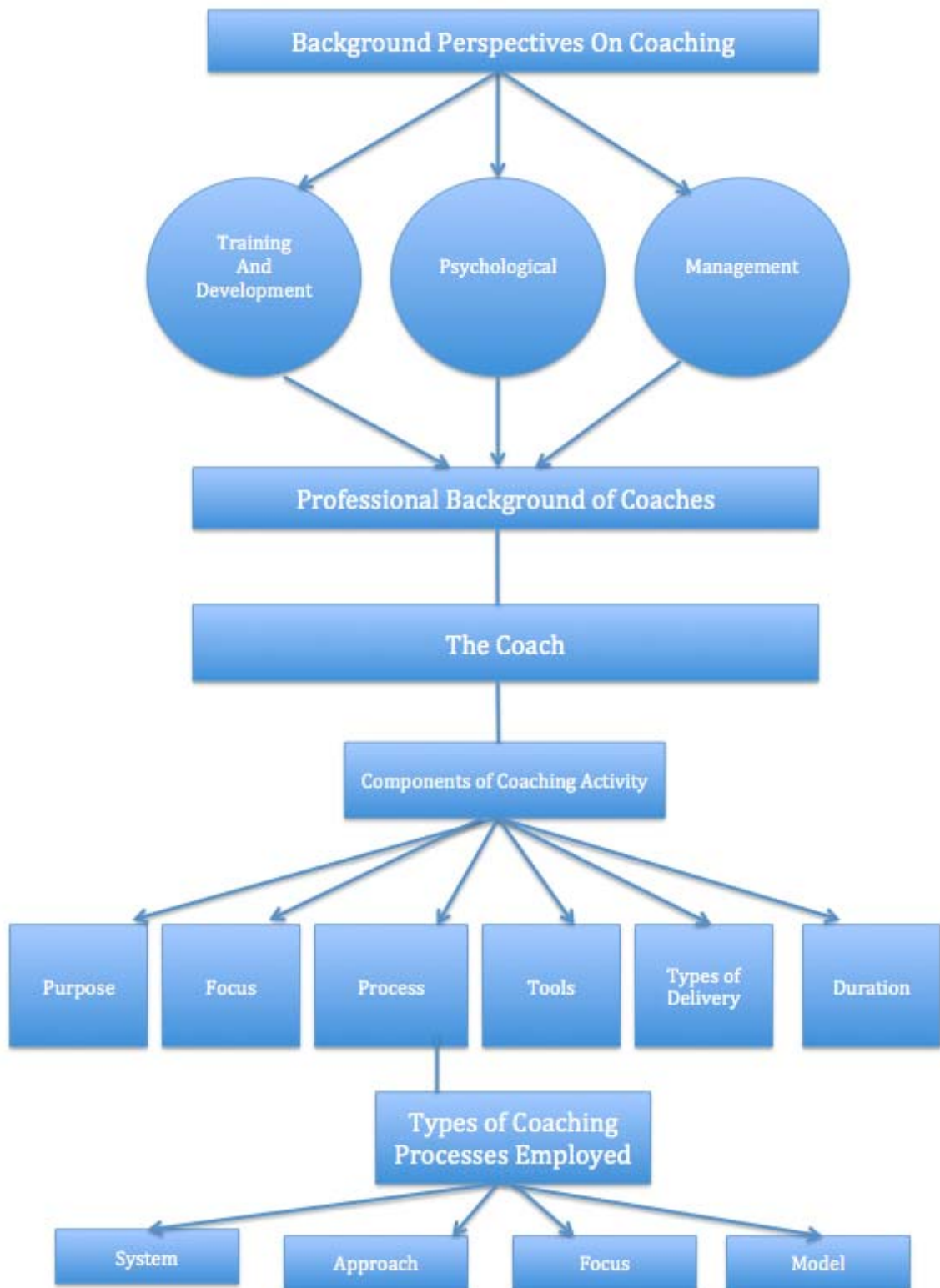
2.8.3. Summary of key authors with the current literature

It is apparent that the literature on Executive Coaching, which is summarized below, is under researched. Furthermore, the literature on Executive Coaching remains behind the current professional practice of Executive Coaching and lack evidence of the current ingredients used in the activity is delaying the development of the profession.

Author	Date	Focus of Study
Cox, E. Bachkirova, T. and Clutterbuck, D.	2014	Discusses Executive Coaching and identifies definition and role in organisations. It looks at adult learning theory and its importance underpinning coaching.
Fillery-Tavis and Cox	2014	Identifies the current research position for Executive Coaching and gives reasons for gaps and future research requirements.
De Haan, E., Duckworth, A. Birch, D. and Jones, C.	2013	Provides outcome research of Executive Coaching and contribution of common factors. Suggests that Executive Coaching is in a state of flux and that coaches come from diverse backgrounds and deliver Executive Coach through many approaches.
Joo, B. K.	2012	Investigates the theoretical background of manager as coach, Executive Coaching and formal mentoring and examines definitions, purposes, practices and research. It makes recommendations for future research.
Lewis-Duarte and Bligh.	2012	The study examined coaches' perceived use and effectiveness of the outcome timing and objective of proactive influence in Executive Coaching relationships. Identified that different tactics were used depending on desired outcome of influence attempt.
Passmore, J.	2010	Identifies a wide range of Executive Coaching models and techniques in order to extend professional practice.
Passmore and Fillery-Travis.	2011	Summaries the current state of Executive Coaching research as a basis for future studies. Covers nature of Executive coaching, behavior studies, client behavior studies, relationship studies and Executive Coaching impact studies. Concludes with the future direction research may take.
Peltier, B.	2010	Discusses the principles of psychological perspective of Executive Coaching and identifies the basis for effective coaching.
Turner, R. A. and Goodrich, J.	2010	Argues that effectively addressing challenging problems in Executive Coaching requires the use of not one but several theoretical models.
Bono, J. E. Purvanova, R. K. Towler, A. J. Peterson D. B.	2009	Compares role of psychology in Executive Coaching and examines practices and interventions.
Bennett, J. and Bush, M. W.	2009	Discusses the current trends and future opportunities for coaching in organisations.
Collings and Mellahi.	2009	Discusses top talent management the fact that talent management lacks a consistent definition and clear conceptual boundaries and identifies the expense of Executive Coaching.

		Draws insights from a number of discreet literature bases.
Rostron and Kaffman	2008	White Paper identifies areas of research necessary for coaching to develop the theoretical and empirical literature for the professionalization of coaching.
Ives, Y.	2008	Sets out the argument that issues both theoretical and practical divide the various approaches of Executive Coaching. It does not suggest that any one approach is better or right; each approach would be appropriate in a particular situation.
Bluckert.	2005	Examines the Executive Coaching relationship and the critical factors for success and sets out the characteristics of a successful coaching relationship and how to establish it from a psychological perspective.
Natale and Diamante.	2005	Examines the process of Executive Coaching and suggests that a better understanding of process will enhance practice efficacy and accelerates empirical investigations.
Joo, B. K.	2005	Examines the practice of Executive Coaching and related areas from management perspective. It outlines extant literature of Executive Coaching and offers a conceptual framework.
Feldman, D. C. and Lankau, M. J.	2005	Reviews the position of Executive Coaching research and how it lags behind practice. Examines how coaches professional training, client characteristics and type of coaching impact the effectiveness of the activity.
Stern, L.	2004	Proposes a working definition of Executive Coaching that specifies its process and methods and differentiates it from other forms of coaching and suggests a set of perspectives, principles and approaches needed to guide its professional practice.
Wasylyshyn, K. M.	2003	Presents the results of a study that explored factors influencing the choice of a coach, the pros and cons of both internal and external coaches, the focus of Executive Coaching and coaching tools favored.
Edwards, L.	2003	Defines Executive Coaching from a training and development perspective and reviews the selection of coach.
Cater.	2001	Explores the Management perspective of Executive Coaching providing a definition and why it may be used by employers to improve performance.
Kampa-Kokesch.	2001	Provides a comprehensive review of Executive Coaching literature. Covers the history of the practice and research. Identifies how the literature clusters into three main bodies of psychology, training and development and management.
Eggers, J. H. and Clark, D.	2000	Discusses the management perspective of Executive Coaching.
Olesen.	1996	Explores the issues with the difficult role of Executives and how they can obtain development and how they may use Executive Coaching to achieve the support they require from a training and development perspective.

Chapter Three:

Methodology and theoretical framework

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the researcher's theoretical positioning and form a methodological framework for the research undertaken. All research needs to have a strong theoretical and philosophical grounding, (King and Horrocks, 2010; Guba and Lincoln, 1994) as this establishes the position and stance from which the research has been conducted. Understanding and establishing the epistemology and ontological position of the research comprised one element of the background knowledge that was required to ensure that an appropriate methodological approach was adopted.

Silverman (2010:10) argues that, *"in choosing a method everything depends upon what you are trying to find out"*. In addition this point is stressed by many researchers in the field (Silverman, 2010; King and Horrocks, 2010; Blaikie, 2007). Therefore, this was naturally the foundation of the consideration of the research approach. As the study focused on individually-articulated perceptions of the effectiveness of coaching, an interpretivist epistemological approach through the lens of social constructionism was adopted. It was important therefore to ensure the research approach allowed for the interpretation of the social reality experienced by the Executives. Bryman (1988:72) has commented that *"the ability of the investigator to see through other people's eyes and to interpret events from their point of view"* which has given the richness of data for the research study.

The research approach was selected following consideration of the view of Trauth (2001:196) who stated that *"once the researcher allows social intervention into the research setting, then an*

interpretivist perspective on data must replace the positivist perspective of detached, objective observation". With this in mind, the researcher reviewed an interpretivist perspective as a starting point. However, as social intervention between the researcher and the participants within this approach might also affect the participant's responses, the issue of researcher reflexivity (Symon and Cassell, 2012) was also considered. This will be addressed in more detail later in the chapter.

In order to ensure the research achieved the aims and objectives detailed in Chapter 1.5 and 1.6., the chapter will explain the stages adopted in this research and justify why the selected research philosophy, paradigm, method, approach, and data collection were appropriate. It will also examine the ethical considerations, reliability and validity of the research undertaken (Blaikie, 2007).

3.2 Research Paradigm

The research paradigm selected by the researcher was defined and influenced by the epistemological stance. That is, how the researcher thinks about what is accepted as knowledge and the ontological view, that is, how truth is defined. This understanding assisted the researcher to conduct the study in an effective manner as it concerned how the social world is experienced (King and Horrocks, 2010). The researcher compared ontological stances in order to answer the question *"what is the nature of social reality"* and epistemological stances in order to take a view on *"what counts as knowledge"* (Blaikie, 2007:13)

In order to set an ontological stance the researcher viewed the two main ontological approaches that can be followed for social scientific enquiry – realism and idealism (Blaikie, 2007). The researcher selected an idealist stance. Idealist ontologies assume *"what we regard as the eternal world is just appearance and has no independent existence apart from in our thoughts"*, (Blaikie, 2007:17)**.** This

approach locates reality in individual thoughts and experience and assumes that reality has no independent existence. For the purpose of this study, the researcher took an idealist ontological stance, in line with the interpretivist epistemology. This claims or has an assumption about a particular approach to social enquiry and what this makes about the nature of social reality (Blaikie, 2007). As social reality is an individual's own perception of what is real, this is different for each individual. This stance assumes that we cannot separate ourselves from what we know and is therefore appropriate for the study of Executive Coaching.

A realist ontology stance would not have been appropriate as it assumes that *"both natural and social phenomena are assumed to have existence that is independent of the activities of the human observer"* (Blaikie, 2007:15). It relates to positivism and assumes that there is a single reality. It also makes the assumption that each of us observes phenomena that are regarded objectively and interpreted as facts in common.   This allows enquiries that test established existing theoretical positions by using deductive methods.   Although this paradigm may be relevant in studying inanimate objects, for example in a natural science study it would not meet the aims of the study for two reasons. Firstly, it denies the intrusion of human values and feelings into a context, which can be diverse, not least due to cultural differences. Secondly, individuals will not always behave in predictable ways (Burrell and Morgan, 1979).

Having established an ontological stance the researcher then sought to agree an epistemological stance to be taken. In order to achieve the aims of the research, the researcher took an interpretive epistemological approach through the lens of social constructionism in which the world is viewed as socially constructed. This approach understands that the observer is part of what is observed and knowledge of the world is intentionally constituted through a person's lived experience and constructed through social conversation and interaction. Therefore, the approach is that social science

enquiry is driven by human interests (Easterby-Smith, *et al.* 2008). This was selected in line with the research aim that is to understand from the perspective of the Executives what makes their experience of coaching effective. This knowledge recognising that reality is *found "in one way or another as people talk it, write it and argue it"* (Potter, 1996:98), was constructed through conversation within the semi-structured interviews that were conducted.

Whilst acknowledging that although both interpretivism and positivism are valid and *"not mutually exclusive"* (Saunders *et al.* 2012:85) it was felt that the most appropriate approach to unlocking the research questions was interpretivism. An interpretivist paradigm is guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied (Guba, 1990). Trauth's (2001) view is that if the research involves 'social intervention'' then an interpretivist stance is appropriate and fits with this view.

Diverse views need to be encouraged in the study to reflect individual accounts of becoming and understanding. This justifies the use of a social constructivist approach, which *"reflects the indeterminacy of our knowledge of the social world"* (Bryman and Bell, 2011:23) and *"social actors construct their reality and interpret their own actions and experiences, the actions of others and social situations"* Blaikie, 2007:22).

This current study aims to understand what contributes to ensuring that Executive Coaching is effective from the Executive's perspective, and will seek to understand how coaching sessions, which occur in a conversation between the Executive and the coach contribute to that effectiveness. The study used the data generated through semi-structured interviews and information gained from questionnaires. Bryman (1988:52) is more direct when he comments that for social scientific

researchers the subject matter is *"people and their social reality"* and they cannot usefully be extracted from that reality to be examined in a laboratory. Additionally, Bryman (1988) recognises that to gain an understanding of social reality, a researcher requires experience of that reality. This was the case in this research as the researcher had experience as an Executive Coach and as a director in Local Government.

A positivist approach was discounted as this supports the view that the world exists externally and that its properties should be measured through objective methods (Goulding, 1999; Easterby-Smith *et al.* 2008). Ayer (1990) questions the applicability of the positivist philosophy to studies of human behaviour as the stance seeks a single truth and therefore would not be appropriate for this study of Executive Coaching activity.

3.3. Research Strategy

To establish the most appropriate research strategy the researcher considered several approaches of inductive, deductive, retroductive and abductive (Blaikie, 2007). These provide different ways of answering the different types of research questions that can advance the knowledge by solving intellectual puzzles and practical problems in different ways. The two main approaches are inductive and deductive, however all approaches were considered by the researcher before the selection of the inductive with elements of an abductive approach was made.

Considerations were first given then between an inductive or abductive strategy as they are both based on the study of particular cases rather than just derived from theory. Silverman, (2010) states that where knowledge is derived from data in an emergent and iterative way, this acknowledges the role of

interpretivism and therefore either strategy potentially could apply. It is also the case that both the inductive and abductive approaches to research are suitable for leadership development research as they both acknowledge that knowledge is socially constructed, is often subject to alteration and interpretation through dialogue and are both dependant on the environment and context (Klenke, 2008). These are all elements relevant to the ever-changing context of leadership and therefore leadership development.

Looking first at an inductive stance, it presupposes that knowledge emerges through conversations and is understood from the individual's point of view. This stance builds knowledge that then links that knowledge to theory (Gill and Johnson, 2010). An individual's understanding of the world does not contain a single truth but a multiplicity of truths. Each individual see the world differently. Therefore an individual's own perception of the individual, constitutes their own truth (Silverman, 2010). With the aim of the research being to understand how effective executives feel coaching is and to examine what contributes to that effectiveness, the iterations through conversation make this strategy suitable for the research. In line with this approach the case study method of data collection allows for the environment in which these conversation can take place through semi-structured interviews (Yin, 2009).

An abductive approach requires a researcher to "*enter the world of the object being researched in order to discover the motives and reasons that accompany the social activity*" (Blaikie, 2007:10) this requires the researcher to have knowledge of the field being researched in order to aid the understanding of "the social life in terms of social actors' motives and understanding (Blaikie, 2007:68). It appeared that the role of the researcher is a key difference between the two strategies and was fundamental to the final selection of approach taken.

Abductive logic was initially used primarily in natural sciences, but is now being used as a method of theory construction in interpretive social science with a constructionist approach (Blaikie, 2007). Blaikie (2007:90) also suggests that *"the social scientist's task is to describe (an) " 'insider' view, not impose an 'outsider' "* view on it so the role of the researcher is acknowledged again as inductive, interpretivist. It appeared to the researcher that this stance could meet the requirements of both the research aim and the researcher's profile as a practitioner.

Looking at the view of Peirce *et al*. (1903, cited in Cooke 2006:41), *"Deduction proves that something must be; Induction shows that something actually is operative; Abduction … suggests that something may be"*. This interpretation of an abductive strategy fitted with the research strategy. The elements defined from the literature review, of what contributes to coaching, were used as a frame of reference to categorise the executives' responses, through the research analysis. This information gained 'maybe' something new or may not, the researcher only knew at the conclusion of the research.

Through interaction with the Executives, the research seeks to understand existing social perspectives. Through analysis it places the data gathered into categories, and in light of the knowledge gained from the literature review, together with the researcher's experience in coaching and Local Government, then it could be said that the abductive strategy was appropriate (Blaikie, 2007:89).

It was clear from the detailed considerations of both inductive and abductive strategies that they both had clear links and would produce benefits to achieve to the purpose and aims of the research. This understanding was in line with the views of Miles and Huberman (1994:5)

> *"The paradigms for conducting social research seem to be shifting beneath out feet, and an increasing number of researchers now see the world with more pragmatic, ecumenical eyes*."

Therefore, the researcher felt that as *"no study conforms exactly to a standard methodology: each one calls for the researcher to bend the methodology to the peculiarities of the setting"* (Miles and Huberman, 1994:5) the research approach would be largely inductive (builds knowledge that then links that knowledge to theory), with a social constructionist stance (knowledge emerges through conversations and is understood from the individual's point of view), but would also adopt contain elements of an abductive approach (produce technical account from lay accounts).

The two approaches that were considered unsuitable were deductive and retroductive. The deductive approach, rooted in natural science (Bryman, 1988) seeks to test a hypothesis in order to find if it is true. Therefore, this did not meet the requirements of the interpretivist approach of the research study that acknowledges that there are multiple truths interpreted from individuals' different perspectives. The retroductive approach was not considered, as this requires the researcher to first construct a hypothetical model and comes from either a depth or subtle realist ontological stance (Blaikie, 2012:68). It was not considered suitable for leadership development research where the knowledge was sought from conversations during semi – structured interviews.

3.4 Research Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach in the collection of data from the interviews (allowing for interpretation of conversations to gain understanding) and a quantitative approach taken to the collection of data from the supporting questionnaires (Johnson, *et al.* 2007).

The mixed method approach used quantitative research to facilitate qualitative research (Bryman and Bell 2011: 636) included two methods that came from different assumptions and included standard

positivistic-qualitative and interpretive-qualitative components and a mix of qualitative interpretive data collection (Klenke, 2008). This approach was used as it offered better opportunities to gather the required data (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). This mixed approach allowed for comparison of data from the two sources during the analysis stage (Bryman, 2004). The cohesive approach of qualitative and quantitative increased the scope for research questions to be answered and trusted findings and conclusions to be drawn.

3.4 .1 Reflexivity

Researcher reflexivity is an issue of significance that was addressed when evaluating the appropriateness of the methodology of the social research. As reflexivity is having awareness of the researcher's contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process and an acknowledgment of the impossibility of remaining 'outside of' the subject matter while conducting social research (Symon and Cassell, 2012) the concept required careful consideration.

Personal researcher reflexivity (Willig, 2001) is seen as particularly relevant to a social constructionist epistemology as it requires researchers to consider their contribution to the construction of meaning and involves the researcher giving consideration to the ways in which the beliefs, interests experiences and identities of the researcher might have impacted upon the research undertaken (King and Horrocks, 2010). If Denscombe (1999:240) is right when stating that there is *"no prospect of the social researcher achieving an entirely objective position from which to study the social world"* then it is right that the researcher considered the impact that reflexivity could have. This concept has increased significance as the researcher has adopted an element of abductive approach to the research strategy that considers the role of the researcher to be the 'insider ' holding research topic knowledge and using this to assist in the interpretation of the data to aid the understanding of findings. This

approach, therefore while containing certain risks also can be seen as adding a positive value.

The researcher actively considered the issue during developing the research approach, carrying out the field research and during analysis of findings and writing up the research to ensure that the researcher's own knowledge and behaviours did not impact negatively on the outcome of the research. The elements the researcher used to mitigate any impact and prevent distortion of the data was using precision about the analytical methods and data collection procedures used, being aware of the possible impact and acknowledging it could exist: using a heightened level of self-awareness; using reflective notes of personal experiences to challenge behaviours and perceptions during the process (Lambert, *et al.* 2010)

3.4.2. Case Study Strategy

A case study approach was used with the term case study being used to define the boundaries of the research. The research aimed to offer a richness and depth of information. It identified how a complex set of circumstances came together to produce a particular activity (Yin, 2009) of coaching for the individual Local Government Executive. This study's use of case study research, gave the context and breadth to describe a particular case (Local Government Executives) in detail and take learning from that and develop theory from that approach. As a method it is very versatile, as it uses many methods of gathering information, from observation to semi-structured interview or survey. It excels at bringing an understanding of a complex issue or object and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research (Yin, 2009). The case study method was used as it emphasizes detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships. It is widely used by social scientists, in particular, as a method of qualitative research to

examine contemporary real-life situations and provides the basis for the application of ideas and extension of methods (Blaikie, 2007) and therefore was considered appropriate for the study.

These case study findings related directly to the everyday experience of Executives in Local Government and facilitated an understanding of complex real-life situations that they face. However, there were considerable strengths and limitations of using a case study approach to research. *"Using case studies for research purposes remains one of the most challenging of all social science endeavours"* (Yin, 2009:3) and certainly requires the skills of the researcher to be at a high level. The more the questions seek to explain the present circumstance, the 'how' and 'why' of some social phenomenon works, the more a case study method will be relevant. It is also more relevant the more extensive in-depth description the requirement. Further, Yin (2009) believes that the case study method has an advantage when a 'how' and 'why' question is being asked about a contemporary set of events and/or over which the investigator has little or no control. The researcher believes that this criterion fits the aims of this research, in that the research aims to understand why Executives in Local Government seek to undertake coaching and this is therefore a contemporary event over which the research has no control. The concern of lack of rigour in the use of case study will be overcome by the use of systematic procedures outlined above.

The first step in case study research was to establish a research focus to which the researcher referred to over the course of this study. The researcher had established the focus of the study by forming questions about the situation to be studied and determining a purpose for the study. The research objects in this case study are the Local Government Executives who have been engaged in coaching.

Case study research generally answers one or more questions that begin with "how" or "why." The questions are targeted to a limited number of events or conditions and their inter-relationships. To

assist in targeting and formulating the questions, the researcher has conducted a literature review that informed the questions to be asked. This review established what research has been previously conducted and has led to the research questions about the issue.

However, one of the criticisms of the case study method is that the case under study may not be representative of a wider social setting and therefore it has been argued that the results of the research cannot be used to make generalisations (Bryman, 1988). The researcher acknowledges this view yet believes that the research methods are appropriate for transferability of the research and this will be discussed later in this chapter.

Case study research is a methodology that can take either a qualitative or quantitative approach. In the case of this research a mixed method approach was taken (Gray, 2009). The qualitative approach applied to semi - structured interviews and the quantitative approached applied to the use of questionnaires.

A case study can include an organisation, an institution, a single person or a group of people. In the case of this study the group of people were Executive Local Government officers. Case study research ranges in its complexity from a simple description of a single event or occurrence, to a more complex analysis of a social situation over a period of time (Stake, 2000). In the case of this research, it will be based on the face-to-face interviews wherein the range of coaching sessions with executives have been engaged will be discussed.

Before selecting a case study approach the use of grounded theory, first formulated by Glaser and Strauss (1967) was considered as a systematic approach to data collection (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). As the grounded theory methodology is based on the belief that, as individuals within group

environments comprehend events personally, and common patterns of behaviour are revealed it is considered appropriate for a wide range of organisational issues, particularly predicting and explaining behaviour. The method requires the collection of data and data coding with the aim to discover the theory implicit in the data. This method requires considerable access to organisations and research participants to gain 'theoretical sampling saturation'. The author's research had limited access and limited interview time due to the role of the participants. For this reason a grounded theory method was not selected for this research. There was restricted access and a limited sample size for this research due to the organisational roles of the Executive participants (Symon and Cassell 2012).

3.4.3 Data generation

It is important for the research methods to be aligned with a research philosophy and approach (Silverman, 2010; Klenke, 2008; King and Horrocks, 2010; Blaikie, 2011). Before selecting semi-structured interviews supported by questionnaires as a method, observation and existing text analysis were considered as a method of data generation.

There are several reasons why observation was rejected as a method of data collection by the researcher. The coaching relationship, between coach and coachee is a confidential space and a dynamic environment and it was considered that the dynamics in the room would be adversely affected by a third person in the room. This impact is described by Bryman (1988) as "reactivity". Therefore as the observation could not have been carried out without impacting and causing reaction on the research subject, the method was deemed not to be appropriate.

The second method that was rejected was analysis of text. In this case, it would have been the analysis of text that is completed by some executives in the form of either reflective logs or diary entries

conducted as reflections on their coaching sessions. Firstly, it was considered that it would be unlikely that the research subjects would share these document due to the very confidential nature of them. Secondly, Mayring, (2002) recommend that qualitative content analysis seems less appropriate if the research question is highly open-ended, explorative and variable and of merely explorative-interpretive interpretation of the material. With the understanding of value of observation and the difficulty with obtaining the material it was rejected as a method for the research. Finally the researcher adopted semi-structured interviews within a case study approach supported by questionnaires to gain additional data. The in-depth semi-structured interviews allowed the flexibility and freedom to glean personal experiences not provided by the other methods.

3.4.4. Selection of sample

In selecting a sample, the researcher must determine whether to study cases which are unique in some way or cases that are considered typical and may also select cases to represent a variety of geographic regions, a variety of size, or other parameters. In order to ensure meaningful research, the selection process adopted for this study has repeatedly referred back to the purpose of the study in order to focus attention on where to look for cases and evidence that will satisfy the purpose of the study and answer the research questions posed (Silverman, 2010).

The research sample could be seen as a purposive sample using the non-probability technique (Saunders *et al.* 2012). This research accessed existing networks and relationships with Local Authorities that the researcher has had previous experience of working with and/or has been employed by to collect data. This selection technique has been identified due to the qualitative nature of the research; the access to a small number of subjects and the in-depth information required to give good insight into the issues about which little is known (Patton, 1990). This was not a representative group of Local Government Executives but could also have been seen as *"a convenience sample that was*

available to the researcher by virtue of its accessibility" (Bryman and Bell, 2011:190). All executives receiving the questionnaire were asked if they would agree to be interviewed. Those answering positively were then selected from the sample.

The sampling involved the selection of individuals with a particular purpose of coaching in mind (Silverman, 2010). In this research case, they also had current expertise as Local Government Executives. They formed a non-representative sub-set of the larger population of Local Government Executives to serve a very specific purpose of gaining access to a group where access is normally limited. The purpose of this is in line with the views of Mays and Pope (1995) who suggest that it is not to establish a random or representative sample but rather to identify a specific group of people who either possess characteristics or live in circumstances relevant to the social phenomenon being studied. It is not possible to specify the population of Executives due to the dynamic fluidity of the roles and access to all would be difficult, therefore a sample form existing networks will be selected on a basis of access. However, Patton (1990) suggests that the sample size is less important than the criteria used to select cases with a smaller group in many instances providing sufficient information to draw meaningful conclusions. The sample group will firstly complete a questionnaire and from this information a smaller sample will be interviewed to gain increased detailed information (Coyne, 1997).

The sample size.

Questionnaires sent Respondents	50 28 Local Government Executives
Interviews (3face to face /4 phone)	7 Local Government Executives

3.4.5. Interviews

Within the context of case studies, interviews represent an essential source of information (Klenke, 2008) and provide an opportunity for the researcher to elicit valuable insight from individuals. In this study, this was the Local Government Executives who had engaged with coaching. A focused interview (Merton, *et al.* 1990) was adopted which consisted of participants being interviewed for no longer than one hour. The researcher sought to ensure where possible, that a conversational approach (King and Horrocks, 2010) was actively encouraged during each session. Interview questions that were informed by the themes identified within the theoretical framework and the practitioner experience of the researcher, were intended to guide the discussion. Where the conversation had stalled, probing was used to gain greater clarity and appreciation of the experiences of the interviewee (Yin, 2009). Interviewing is one of the most common methods used in research, using a small number of case studies, in which the interviewer sets up a general structure by deciding in advance the ground to be covered and the main questions to be asked. This approach allowed development of ideas during the interview, and the person being interviewed had a degree of freedom in how much to say, and how to express it. This is explained clearly by Holstein and Gubrium (1995:79) who comment on inductive interpretation of interview data as:

> *"Respondents' talk is not viewed as a collection of reality reports delivered from a fixed repository. Instead, the talk is considered for ways that it assembles aspects of reality in collaboration with the interviewer."*

The space for development following the response to set questions is particularly important given the interviewing of senior executives. Semi-structured interviewing is a very flexible technique for small-scale research. It is not suitable for studies involving large numbers of people, but is most helpful in mini-studies and case studies (Klenke, 2008).

In developing the interview questions, attempts have been made to avoid the use of "why" as this can

be perceived as threatening and is not conducive in maintaining a conversational flow to the discussion. Where possible, "how" was used in place of "why" as this supported efforts to answer lines of enquiry whilst ensuring a "friendly" approach to the interview (Yin, 2012).

The interviews were not recorded due to the confidentiality of the information and in order to assist the flow of the conversation. It is acknowledged that the recording of interviews is always preferable in qualitative research (King and Horrocks, 2010). However, for this study several executives had agreed only if interviews were not recorded, as they preferred to give 'personal' and non-attributable insights into their experiences.

As these interviews are modelled more closely on unstructured rather than structured interviews it leaves the researcher the opportunity to rephrase questions and include further enquires (Klenke, 2008). The ability to develop the focus during the interview requires the researcher to be continually aware that they may direct the interviewee into responding how they may want them to and thereby the data being the researcher's story and not the subject of the research story. The role of the researcher in qualitative interviewing is collaborative in order to explore the research subject's truth not to distort the research subject's account of their experience (King and Horrocks, 2010).

3.4.6. Questionnaire

A questionnaire (Appendix 1) was used to support and facilitate (Bryman and Bell, 2011) the primary data collection method that was through face-to face and phone, semi-structured interviews.

There were two main reasons identified as to why this study would benefit from the use of structured questionnaires. Firstly, due to the number of individuals concerned, questionnaires represent a more appropriate method of surveying Executives within a wide geographical spread of Councils. Secondly, the geographically dispersed nature of a number of local authorities means that questionnaires provide a cost effective and time efficient method of obtaining responses relevant to the research.

In constructing questionnaires, Gill and Johnson (2010), identify skills of ability to structure, focus, phrase and set questions, whilst ensuring design principles consisting of wording, planning and appearance, all of which were critical in minimising research bias. To ensure clarity of purpose and understanding, questions were structured using plain language and consisted of both open and closed questions. The initial use of closed questions initially was helpful in establishing rapport with the respondent and also encourages participation (Hair *et al.* 2003). The questions were informed by the review of literature and professional practice experience of the researcher. The questionnaires were sent electronically through existing professional and sector networks. Prior to use of the questionnaire, a pilot test was undertaken through discussion with range of professional colleagues across existing networks. This gave the researcher the opportunity to gain an understanding of the survey's face validity (Saunders *et al.* 2012).

A limitation that was recognised is that in using questionnaires, with closed questions, there must be an understanding that there is a level of researcher imposing limitation on how the respondent can respond. It was the researcher developing the questionnaire that would decide what range of responses would be available, meaning that when developing the questionnaire, the researcher was making their own decisions and assumptions as to what was and was not important; therefore they may be missing something that is of importance (Ackroyd and Hughes, 1981). In order to address this, the researcher

has paid particular attention to a range of alternative answers that have been drawn from the review of relevant literature. There is also an awareness that the sample population may read differently into each question. Therefore, they may have replied based on their own interpretation of the question. The pilot discussions included this area to ensure consistency (Holstein and Grubrium, 1995).

3.4.7. Interview Process

Interviews generate rich data for thick descriptive analysis (Bryman, 2012). Semi-structured interviews will adhere to principles of ethnomethodology and use participants' "practical reasoning and the ways in which they make the social world sensible to themselves as the central focus" (Bryman, 2012:53). They permitted "an openness to changes of sequence and forms of questions" (Kvale, 1996:124) to explore issues of importance to the participant. Although structured interviewing can be useful to discover data about participants, it was considered too rigid as it would not enable the researcher to pursue unexpected issues that arose during the course of the interview that could be essential to an individual story their experience of being coached.

3.4.8. Requirement for Informed Consent Form

An informed consent form was sent to all participants before interview. Attached to this form was an information sheet that summarised the purpose and scope of the research; identified their role in it; detailed issues of confidentiality; and explained how the findings will be reported. The consent form also gave them the option to withdraw at any stage of the process and without justification. To become a participant, they each had to sign a consent form (Bryman and Bell, 2011)

3.4.9. Interview Design

Semi-structured interviews were selected in order to give the scope for wide responses and to create a setting for 'narrative' to take place. In order to ensure this, an interview guide (Bryman and Bell, 2011) was created and used to guide the interview, as opposed to set questions. There are several groupings of areas that could form the basis of an Interview Guide (Symon and Cassell, 2012; Smith Flower and Larkins, 2009). However the researcher selected the following; Descriptive; Narrative; Structural; Contrast; Evaluation; Circular; Comparative; Prompts; Probes. These categories allowed for a wide range of areas to be adopted and the variation of responses to emerge

> "*such a tactic can elicit different viewpoints and deeper insights, especially when incorporated as part of a detective orientation, where the researcher follows new leads and tests her or his evolving understanding of the context*"

(Symon and Cassell, 2012:248).

This stance also allowed the researcher to use follow-up questions to encourage the participants to be more specific in their disclosures and probing questions and asked direct questions to pursue a point in greater depth (Kvale, 1999).

Prior to each interview, the researcher analysed data from the supporting questionnaire to identify specific areas to probe during the interview. This permitted the researcher to build up truly individual stories as the interview content is personalised for each participant.

From the outset, the researcher adopted the stance that nothing should inhibit the collaboration and flow of conversation. It was believed that the presence of recording equipment, even with the maximum assurance of confidentiality and security of storage would affect the richness of data collected. The required outcome was 'to elicit an authentic account of the interviewee's subjective

experience' (Klenke, 2008). Thus, it was decided that in order to give consistency of approach, none of the interviews would use recording equipment. Contemporaneous notes were made during the interviews of the main points to assist the interviewer in maintaining focus (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2005) and support subsequent analyses. Interview notes were taken during the interviews and reviewed as soon as possible after the interviews in order to ensure as much information as possible was captured. These notes were shared with the Executives following the interviews to ensure the full meaning of the interview had been recorded. To reduce scope for possible participant stress, anonymity has been maintained with all participants being given a number and no local authority being identified. This anonymity had been assured to all respondents, with key themes developed from the data are included the findings chapter of this report.

Due to the geographical location and work commitments of some of the participants it was necessary to conduct both face-to-face and phone interviews. The researcher is an experienced telephone coach and therefore had the skills and expertise to conduct the phone interviews effectively. The same format was used for both types of interview and differences on responses were included in the findings chapter of the study.

3.5. Analysis

The researcher examined the raw data from questionnaires and interviews to look for linkages between the research objectives with reference to the original research questions. Throughout the evaluation and analysis process, the researcher remained open to new opportunities and insights that would allow for the identification of differences and similarities between participants to be recognised (Yin, 2009).

The researcher's analysis moved beyond initial impressions to improve the likelihood of accurate and

reliable findings (Bryman, 2012) to findings which could change practice (Kvale, (2007). The researcher categorized, tabulated and used template analysis for the interview data, (Symon and Cassell, 2012) to address the aims and objectives of the study, and conduct cross-checks of facts and discrepancies where found (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This was most useful for understanding the rationale or theory underlying the relationships (Ackroyd and Hughes, 1981).

3.5.1. Data reduction

The researcher undertook a process of data reduction to give a formal structure to the analysis. Following data collection, data reduction was undertaken leading to revised templates and conclusions. Data reduction is not a separate to analysis but an integral part of it, as it privileges the process of *"selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the data"* (Miles and Huberman, 1994:10).

The researcher followed the steps for analysis as adapted from Miles and Huberman, (1994):

- Affixing codes to a set of field notes drawn from observations or interviews
- Noting reflections or other remarks in the margins
- Sorting and sifting through these materials to identify similar phrases, relationships between variables, patterns, themes, distinct differences between subgroups, and common sequences

In addition, the idea of 'a theme' (De Santis and Ugarriza, 2000) was relevant as the researcher pursued the key themes in the data. By grouping the data around central themes or issues this aided the understanding of the knowledge gained through the interviews. The counting of words, as suggested in content analysis, (Bryman and Bell, 2011) had some usefulness as it helped to reveal the potential themes within the data. It was not however, the final arbiter of establishing a theme. When

coding the data, counting supported the decision-making in on-coding, although the researcher was alert to the possibility of a theme that could be significant despite having few instances.

Field notes were used to categorize and reference data so that it was readily available for subsequent reinterpretation. Field notes recorded feelings and intuitive hunches, posed questions, and documented the work in progress. They were used for early signs and as warning of impending bias and signalled emerging patterns. Maintaining the relationship between the issue and the evidence, ensured rigour for the research. The researcher stored securely the data electronically and in hard form. The researcher also documented, classified, and cross-referenced all evidence so that it could be efficiently used over the course of the study (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

3.5.2. Interview Template Analysis

The researcher selected to use a template analysis that provided a flexible technique, rather than a prescribed methodology, that enabled the researcher to tailor the method to match the requirements Miles and Huberman (1994). Madill, (2000); Jordan and Shirley (2000) suggest the value of template use in analysing a context from a constructivist position, to bring order to the data, given that *"there are always multiple interpretations to be made of any phenomenon"* (King, 2004:256). In considering template analysis, the researcher was aware of advice from Sandelowski (1995:375) that *"any framework for analysis must ultimately be data-derived, or must earn its way into the study by virtue of its fit with the faithfulness of the data"*. The framework was very useful for organising data into displays, but did not provide clear guidance about how to extract meaning from the display. This was achieved by the template being refined as part of considering the essences of the data and enabled similarities and differences between participants to be recognised.

3.5.3. Questionnaire Analysis

Nine of the ten questions contained in the questionnaire were themed as part of the analysis. The themes established were the executives recent development experience; coaching experience; length of coaching relationships; who initiated and selected the coaching; coaching outcomes and finally would be interviewed as part of the semi-structured interviews. The single question un-themed was on the length of the coaching relationships undertaken.

The analysis sought to establish any meaningful relationships within these themes and to understand the position of all relevant findings. A template analysis was undertaken and graphs complied to demonstrate the findings which were presented in table format.

3.6. Reliability and Validity

Many well-known and respected case study researchers (Stake, 2000; Yin, 2004) have written about case study research and suggested techniques for organizing and conducting the research successfully that ensure reliability of findings and rigour to the research. The researcher will use data gathering tools, questionnaires and interviews appropriately in collecting the evidence.

The validity of the research was ensured by following Angen's (2000) criteria:

- By evaluating the substance and content of the interpretive work by template analysis, which in this study was undertaken from the interviews.
- Review of evidence of the interpretive choices the researcher had made with regard to analysis of data and theming of the data.
- Making an assessment of any biases inherent in the work over the lifespan of a research project through researcher notes; this was by careful and professional work of the researcher.

- The researcher self-reflecting to understand personal transformation during the research process.

Throughout the design phase, the researcher will ensure that the study is well constructed as previously outlined, to ensure construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability.

Trustworthiness involving establishing credibility, transferability and dependability of a research study is important to evaluating its worth (Guba and Lincoln, 2000). Credibility of the current research was achieved by ensuring that the research was conducted in a professional research practice manor outlined within this chapter so that there could be confidence in the 'truth' of the findings. Transferability is discussed further within this thesis and shows that the findings have applicability in other contexts (Guba and Lincoln, 2000). It is therefore the role of the case study researcher to review and confirm the findings in order to indicate the findings are valid and the procedures are rigorous. Rigour is built into this process by focusing the strategies used to generate meaning from the qualitative data. The use of the defined procedure for the case study design will ensure that the procedures used are well documented.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

In seeking access to participants and associated information, some concerns were identified by Churchill (1999) affecting the researcher-participant relationship. These were considered by the researcher and addressed as were the elements put forward by Angen (2000). When approaching participants, no pressure was applied, an explanation was provided as to the research aims and questions and an indication of required input outlined. Prior to further engagement, consent to participate was obtained as previously discussed. All information was held in a responsible and safe

manner and kept secure at all times and copies of interview notes were made available to all individuals interviewed.

When conducting the research the researcher was conscious of both the business and political environments in which the participants operated. Due to the confidential nature of the information shared during the interviews with Executives, assurances were given on an individual basis that data would not be attributed to individuals at any time. Therefore, because ethical issues were likely to be important throughout the research, it was important that the ethical integrity from the researcher be maintained without question throughout by the ensuring participants names and details are kept confidential.

3.8. Chapter Three Summary

This chapter has explained the stages the research followed of an interpretivist philosophy located within an inductive/abductive paradigm with a constructionist epistemology. A case study approach was selected with data collected through semi-structured interviews that were supported by questionnaires. The research strategy was structured and rigorous and ever mindful of ethical considerations.

Chapter Four:

Findings from Questionnaires

4.1. Introduction

This research examined Executive Coaching used by Executives in Local Government. To generate data a mixed method approach was used, both qualitative and quantitative. Questionnaires were used to support and enhance the in-depth semi-structured interviews. This chapter analyses the findings from the data collated from the questionnaires. This chapter shows the analysis of the quantitative data using spread sheets and presented through graphs. The interviews were analysed through template analysis and present through identified themes and will be presented in Chapter five. The discussion of the findings of both questionnaires and interviews are discussed in Chapter six.

4.2. Questionnaires

The questionnaire was distributed electronically via the researcher's existing professional networks. The responses received did provide an interesting reasonable assessment and facilitation to the in-depth interviews and contribution to the research question. The questionnaire contained ten questions (Appendix 1). Those interviewed were selected from the sample group of 50 executives who responded to the initial questionnaire. As the questionnaires facilitated the in-depth face-to-face interviews, the analysis of the questionnaires has been presented first.

4.2.1 Questionnaire Sample

The sample for the questionnaire was 28 executives. The questionnaire was distributed to 50 Executives and 28 were returned. This gave a response rate of 56%. The Executives in the sample group came from a wide geographical area of North West, North East, Midlands and South East. Their

positions in authorities ranged from Chief Executive, Executive Director, Director and Assistant Director.

4.2.2. Questionnaires

The questionnaires (Appendix 1) contained 10 questions in order to establish firstly if the executives had any experience of coaching and then if so the length and value of that experience.

4.2.3. Questionnaire themes

To facilitate the exploration of the data and to structure the analysis the ten questions in the questionnaire were grouped into three main themes of

- Coaching experience
- Initiation and selection of coaching
- Coaching outcomes

These were selected as themes as when analyzed together they were considered to contribute to the theme understanding and enrich the data findings.

Theme 1 - Coaching experience This theme contained the following questions:

- Question 2 - Have you ever undertaking coaching for personal development?
- Question 3 - Were you informed about coaching before you pursed it as a means of development?

Theme 2 - Initiation and selection of coaching This theme contained the following questions:

- Question 7 - Was undertaking coaching driven my yourself or someone else
- Question 8 - Did you find your own coach?

Theme 3 - Coaching outcomes This theme contained the following questions:

- Question 4 - Was it important for improving your personal performance to undertaking coaching?

- Question 6 - Did you transfer what you discovered in the coaching relationship back to the workplace?

The remaining 2 questions in the questionnaire and mentioned below were analysed individually as these were informative for the research but did not contribute to one of the named themes.

- What type of personal development have you undertaken in the last 2 years?
- How long a period did your coaching sessions cover?

4.2.4. Theme 1 - Coaching Experience

Questions 2 and 3 were analysed together as they contributed to the data collection on if the executive had received formal coaching and if the had been informed about coaching before they pursed it. When analyzing the findings they showed that where there was a high 78 percent of the respondents who had undertaken formal coaching however, there were only 64 percent who felt that they were informed about it before pursing it.
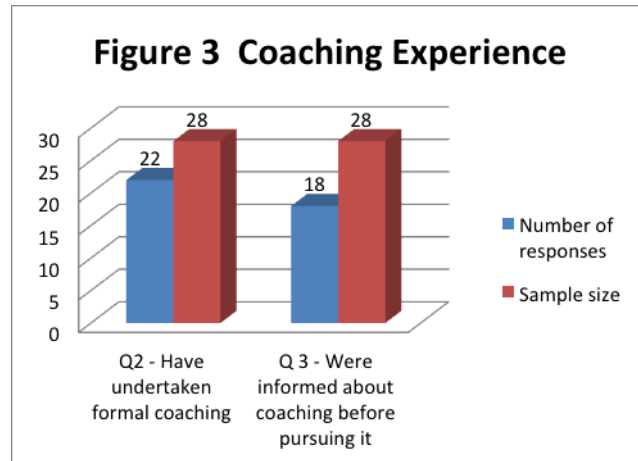
4.2.5. Theme 2 - Initiation and Selection of Coach

In analysing the findings from questions 7 and 8, which contributed to how coaching was initiated and selected, it showed that although there were 71 per cent of Executives driving their own coaching and seemly in control of the process only 43 per cent of them were actually being able to select their own coach.

Figure 4 Initiation and selection of coaches
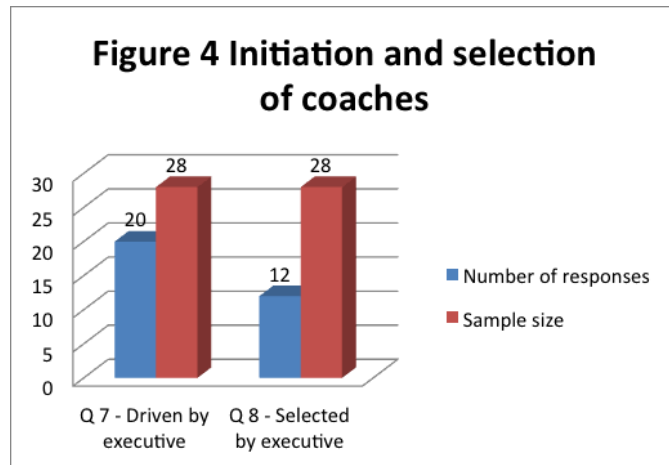
4.2.6. Theme 3 - Coaching Outcomes

Questions 4, 6, 9 and 10 were analysed together under the theme of 'outcomes'. This analysis showed that while 78 per cent of the executives felt that coaching was important for improving their personal performance and that almost as many of them (75 percent) also thought that pre-setting their outcomes was important only 60 per cent of them actually evaluated the effectiveness of their coaching.

All the respondents that responded that they had been coached, also responded that coaching was important for improving their personal performance.

Figure 5 Coaching Outcomes
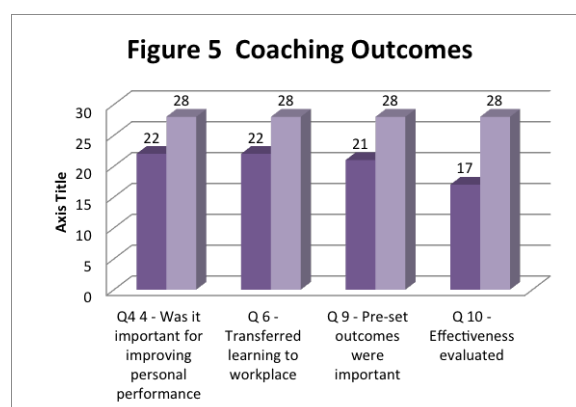
4.2.7. Questions Outside of the Themes

Questions 1 and 5 were not included in those analysed in themes and have therefore been shown separately.

4.2.8. Types of Recent Development

The questionnaire also sought to establish the type of development recently undertaken by the executives. This was asked to establish if the sample group was active with regard to their personal development.
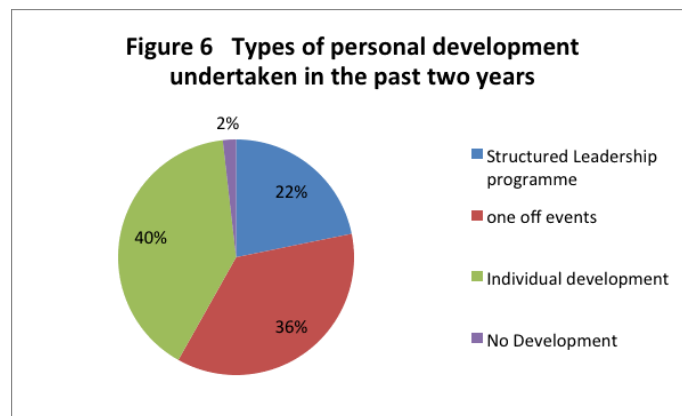
The findings show that all but 2 percent of the Executives have had development recently and even 74 percent had undertaken more than one type of development in that time period. Of the three types of personal development offered for selection in the questionnaire, the 98 percent of the respondents who were active in personal development selected the Structured Leadership Programme option least at only 22 percent. The results showed that individual development was by far the most popular development for the Executives.

Figure 7 Length of Executive Coaching Relationship
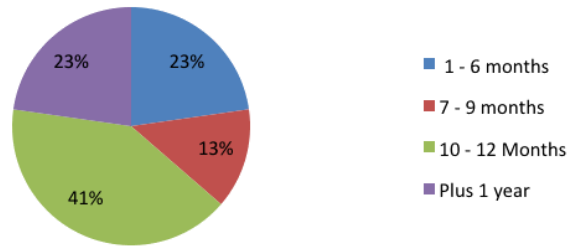
The findings on the length of time the Executives were in the coaching relationship covered a range from one month to over a year. 64 percent of the respondents continued their coaching relationships longer than 10 months while only 23 percent continued these relationships for less than 6 months. Further examination as to the relationship between the length of the Executive Coaching relationship and other data collected has not been included in this analysis.

4.3. Summary

This chapter has presented the questionnaire data. The data obtained concerned the personal development of Executives in Local Government and their use of Executive Coaching as an element of that development. The questionnaire was used to support the semi-structured interviews by providing the data of personal development undertaken by Executives and wider data on those who had engaged in Executive Coaching in the previous two years. The questionnaire also sought to establish the type of development recently undertaken by the Executives and was asked to establish if the sample group was active with regard to managing their personal development. The response rate was 56% and while not excellent was understandable in the sample group who were and still are in the process of major change and challenging budget setting.

The findings show that 98 percent of the executives had undertaken development in the previous two years and 74 percent of those had undertaken more than one type of development in that time period. Structured Leadership Programmes were the option least at undertaken by the sample group of executives with individual development being the most accessed.

A high percentage of Executives are currently in, or have been recently in coaching relationships, however, not all of them are well informed before engaging with an Executive. In analysing the findings those Executive with experience of being coached the majority of them had initiate their own coaching, however less than half of those with coaching experience had been able to access their own coach with the rest being restricted by their organisation in who they could select. This restriction was identified as being limited to selecting from a prepared list within their organisation. A high percentage of those Executives with experience of being coached reported that the coaching was important for improving their personal performance and that the defining of outcomes before the coaching commenced was also important as was to the pre-setting their outcomes at the start of the coaching relationship. All of the Executives coached reported that the transferred the learning to the

workplace and there was evidence of the commitment to evaluate the effectiveness of their coaching with 60 percent conducting evaluation at the end of the relationship.

Finally, the findings looked at the length of time the executives were in the coaching relationship and showed that there was a range from one month to over a year. The most popular period of time for the coaching relationship to last was between ten months and a year with 64 percent of the respondents reporting this. However, 23 percent of those with experience of being coached continued their coaching relationships longer than a year.

The issues relating to the data will be discussed in more depth in Chapter Six.

Chapter Five:

Findings from Interviews

5.1. Introduction

The interviews gave rich data the research required to understand the issues taken into Executive Coaching sessions by the Executives and the value of coaching to them. The Executive's stories emerged from the coding process and were rendered meaningful through the template analysis using inductive logic. Three steps were used in the process. Step one involved coding the response data. Step two led to reflections on common issues and salient points that might not fit broader groupings. The final step three formed the major themes that led to key essences of the data. The themes were then put forward and supported by extracts in the Executive's own language to convey insight into emotion and strength of feeling.

5.2. Interviews

The semi-structured interviews were undertaken with a total of 7 executives and were guided by an Interview Guide (Appendix 3). The data collected during the interviews was analysed through template analysis and data reduction methods (Appendix 5) in order to establish themes which occurred across the interviews.

5.3. Coding

In order to analyse the interview data, Template Analyse was conducted. The coding used was alphabetical and numerical and contained three Steps (Appendix 6). Respondents were labelled in order to ensure confidentiality and were referred to as R1: R2: R3: R4; R5: R6: R7 during the research.

5.3.1 Step 1 Coding - Similar responses

In Step 1, codes were also given to all similar responses (Figure 8). The coding used during the Template Analyse was alphabetical and ranged from A through to AL. A number of the respondents had a number of coaches where this applies the multiple coaches were recognised.

Figure 8 Step 1 - Sample of data coding using respondents R1 and R2 and question1

Interview Responses

Q. 1. Would you share with me how you selected your coach?
 	
Respondent 1
Have had 3 coaching relationships over a number of years.
Twice have made a personal selection for a coach from a pre drawn up list.
Have never used a coach already personally known. But have recognized names on a list
Selected by looking for credibility B of coach and knowledge of sector - LG Experience A
Questions asked - Would they know my situation - understand the day to day role C
Have used coaches with 2 different backgrounds
   • Local Government Chief Executive (coach 1)
   • Local Government Chief Executive (coach 2)
   • Local Government Training and development specialist (coach3)
Respondent 2
Have received coaching from 2 different coaches
   • Selected following attendance at national executive Leadership programme
   • Selected following promotion
Selected from pre-prepared lists
Local Government background important in selection A
Service knowledge important but not service experience
Credibility and track record of achievement important B
Needs to be a personal fit C
Look for fit of back ground to outcome required (leadership styles experience if change in Leadership style required)
I really the right fit - you have to gel in order to be able to speak about such confidential things C

5.3.2 Step 2 Coding - Common Issues

Step 2 of the coding analysed similar responses form the executives into common areas in order to establish wider groups of common understanding and views of the respondents (Figure 9).

Figure 9   Step 2 - Sample of data coding using Respondents R1 and R2 and question 1.

Interview Responses	Common issues Leadership Development Programme (LDP) – Executive Coach	Common issues individually engaged (IE) Executive Coach
Q. 1. Would you share with me how you selected your coach? **Respondent 1** Have had 3 coaching relationships over a number of years. Twice have made a personal selection for a coach from a pre drawn up list. Have never used a coach already personally known. But have recognized names on a list Selected by looking for credibility B of coach and knowledge of sector - LG Experience A Questions asked - Would they know my situation - understand the day to day role C Have used coaches with 2 different backgrounds • Local Government Chief Executive (coach 1) • Local Government Chief Executive (coach 2) • Local Government Training and development specialist on leadership programme (coach3) **Respondent 2** Have received coaching from 2 different coaches • Selected following attendance at national executive Leadership programme • Selected following promotion Selected from pre-prepared lists Local Government background important in selection A Service knowledge important but not service experience Credibility and track record of achievement important B Needs to be a personal fit C Look for fit of back ground to outcome required (leadership styles experience if change in Leadership style required) I really the right fit - you have to gel in order to be able to speak about such confidential things C	Selected from the LDP list The professional background of the coach is important when selecting a coach - senior leadership experience and or training and development	**A** The professional background of the coach is important when selecting a coach **B** Executives make a judgment as to the credibility of the coach before engaging **C** Personal fit is important

5.3.4. Step 3 coding - Interview Themes

The interview data was analysed and produced 8 themes with 38 issues of common issues. The themes are outlined below and then presented with the common issue areas supported by phases from the individual interviews (Figure 10).

Figure 10   Step 3 - Sample of data coding using respondents R1 and R2 and question1

Interview Responses	Common issues Leadership Development Programme (LDP) – Executive Coach	Common issues individually engaged (IE) Executive Coach	Theme
Q. 1. Would you share with me how you selected your coach? **Respondent 1** Have had 3 coaching relationships over a number of years. Twice have made a personal selection for a coach from a pre drawn up list. Have never used a coach already personally known. But have recognized names on a list Selected by looking for credibility B of coach and knowledge of sector - LG Experience A Questions asked - Would they know my situation - understand the day to day role C Have used coaches with 2 different backgrounds • Local Government Chief Executive (coach 1) • Local Government Chief Executive (coach 2) • Local Government Training and development specialist (coach3) **Respondent 2** Have received coaching from 2 different coaches • Selected following attendance at national executive Leadership programme • Selected following promotion Selected from pre-prepared lists Local Government background important in selection A Service knowledge important but not service experience Credibility and track record of achievement important B Needs to be a personal fit C Look for fit of back ground to outcome required (leadership styles experience if change in Leadership style required) I really the right fit - you have to gel in order to be able to speak about such confidential things C	**A** Selected from the LDP list **B.**The professional background of the coach is important when selecting a coach - senior leadership experience and or training and development	**A** The professional background of the coach is important when selecting a coach **B** Executives make a judgment as to the credibility of the coach before engaging **C** Personal fit is important	Selection of a coach

5.3.5. Themes Established Through Template Analysis

Table 3. Themes Established Through Template Analysis.

Theme	Area covered
Theme 1	The coach
Theme 2	Coaching Issues
Theme 3	Coaching process
Theme 4	Successful coaching criteria
Theme 5	Post coaching feelings
Theme 6	Colleague perception of coaching
Theme 7	Alternatives to having a coach
Theme 8	The perceived value of Executive Coaching

The 8 themes were then analysed to identify key points and common language used by the respondents.

The stage 1 of the template analysis identified that the Executive Coaching undertaken by the Executives in Local Government sample appeared as two different types of environment. The first was an element of formal Leadership Development Programmes and the second was Executive Coaching which had been individually engaged in by the Executive. The differences and similarities in the two different types will be shown in the details of the findings that follow using the prefix LDP or IE where appropriate.

5.4.1. Theme 1 - The coach

The areas discussed that contributed to this theme was how had the Executives selected their coach. The common issues for the theme had a range of responses as how the Executives selected their coaches and showed the main differences between LDP and IE Executive Coaching. There are three common issues identified in IE type which were: the background of the coach: coach credibility;

personal fit of a coach. There were two common issues identified in LDP type which were: selected from a LDP list: Professional background.

IE Common Issue A - <u>The professional background of the coach is important when selecting a coach</u>

The professional background of the coach was an important factor for all respondents. There was an expectation that the coach would know and understand their worlds. While there was an expectation from some that a Local Government background was essential, others felt that understanding the context the roles operated in at a *"conceptual level"* (R7) was sufficient. There was considerable emphasis on this area with the following comments:

"This is at times a very strange world, I need a coach who knows and understands that world"(R1).
"I wanted someone in a similar line of work but they don't have to have Local Government experience" (R5)
"Not having a LG background wasn't important as she understood the issues and relationships issues of the role" (R6)

However it was also very clear that there was not an expectation of the coach have had experience of the their role by statements as *"Service knowledge is important for me but that doesn't have to be service experience - but I don't want to be explaining how things work all the time"* (R2) *and "I wanted someone who understood the complexities of my role and the environment of local government"* (R3). This view was so strong that only one of the respondents had had a coach who did not have Local Government or Public Sector background.

IE - Common Issue B - <u>Executives make a judgment as to the credibility of the coach before engaging</u>

All the respondents spoke about the judgement process that they went through in order to reassure themselves that the coach was credible before engaging them. This credibility covered not only their performance as a coach but also that in Local Government and the wider public sector. The Executives had checked either through local colleagues or through current and past networks to establish the performance of the coach. This view was supported with statements such as:

"Credibility and track record of achievement are important to me" (R2)
"I selected by looking for credibility" (R1).

This judgement came from several areas and was sometimes related to knowledge.

" She possessed knowledge of professional area so could challenge my thinking" or to the behaviours of the coach " he was tough and had high expectations of himself" (R3).
"I would always look for a coach who is experienced" (R7)

One respondent (R5) found the credibility of character they wanted in a Managing Director in the private sector coach as this person had experience and a reputation at a senior national level.

IE - Common Issue C - Personal fit is important

All respondents stated the personal fit of the coach as being a key element in their section. This was often achieved by the coach offering a 'test' session to trial if the relationship would be productive. This was expressed in several ways.

" It is important to me to test the relationship out, it needs to gel at a human level" (R5)
"I really needed the right fit - you have to gel in order to be able to speak about such confidential things" (R2).
I select my coach according to style - I would look for a different style to me so that I am challenged more - they will see different things (R7)

LDP – Common issue A Selected from a Programme list

The Executive Coaches had to be selected from a pre-prepared list when coaching was as a result of a formal Leadership development programme and could not be freely selected.

LDP – Common issue B Professional background

Although the Executive Coaches in this type were selected from a prepared list the Executive still stressed that they made their selection by considering the Executive Coaches background and experience in leadership and management.

5.4.2. Theme 2 - Coaching Issues

The areas discussed that contributed to this theme were the kind of issue or objective that the Executives took into coaching. The two types of Executive Coaching showed very different issues

being discussed. In IE type the responses covered a wide range of issues and included all areas of change: relationships; to gain greater personal insight; a space where they can think and talk and career development. Whereas in LDP type the issues were the embedding of the skills and competencies that were contained in the programme they were following.

IE -Common Issue D - <u>Change - including Transformational, behaviour and style</u>

Change issues were given by all respondents and were spoken about for much of the interviews. The respondents said that these issues were never far from the front of their minds and therefore were often taken into coaching. The issues, in the language of the Executives, included behavioural change (R 1&2); transformational change (R1); style change (R1); culture change (R2): driving through change issues in general (R 1,2,3,&4); Micro Behaviours (R5);   Change in cultures due to wider use of partnerships (R5). All the executives spoke about the financial challenges of their roles and included the comment *"situational issues in the current context of the challenges in Local Government" (R7)*

IE -Common Issue E - <u>Relationships</u>

The respondents spoke about the management of relationships as being an essential element of their roles and an area where they all wanted to improve their competency. They felt that these fell into two different groups of Elected Member relationships and officer relationships.   These were both relationship inside their own organisations but also relationships with the wider stakeholders from across the business.

"It was about me and did give me a better understanding of the relationships round the table" (R6)
"Upward relationships with political leaders and other members - they were really confidential" (R5)

IE -Common Issue F - <u>Gain personal insight</u>

The opportunity to gain greater insight into their own personal behaviour and actions was spoken with feeling by the respondents. The feeling of needing to understand more about themselves and their relationships came through several comments:

"I needed to gain a greater understanding as to what was going with me and around me. Things were "happening and I didn't know why" (R1).
.
"I needed to know how I was coming over to other people. I was being interviewed for promotion but not getting the jobs, and I didn't understand why" (R4)

IE - Common Issue G - Confidential space to think and talk

The opportunity for Executives to have space to think in the coaching session was high on many of the executive's lists. They spoke about wanting space and confidentiality and also the need to share what was going on in their world and conversations that they felt they could only have in their heads.. Several Executives spoke about the difficult environment and at times how they did not know who to trust. This was often spoken in conjunction with statements on their roles being very lonely.

Examples of these issues are as follows:
"
"Knew what I wanted to do - what should be done but needed to talk it through" (R3)
"I was finding it personally overwhelming - I needed to think things through without the chaos" (R3)
"Coaching gave me the opportunity to get off the hamster wheel and to reflect over past events and think through future events" (R7)
"To be able to discuss the combined complexity of issues that span relationships and behaviours - big issues that need the understanding and influencing" (R7)

IE - Common Issue H - Career development

The executives took the issue of career development into coaching sessions as they felt that a career move for them would be such a sensitive issue and could be career limiting if the political leaders were to hear if they were considering moving from the authority. The respondents spoke about discussing in coaching both future roles (R1); how they could improve their performance at interviews (R4) and internal promotion issues. (R6)

LDP –Common Issue C – Embedding skills from the leadership programme

The main issues taken in to the session in this type were practical skills development from the LDP being undertaken in the area of taking Time Management; Prioritizing; and Organisational Development Strategy skills development.

LDP –Common Issue D – Opportunity to discuss impact of LDP on existing relationships

Where the LDP had involved teams from within the organisation the Executives had taken the opportunity of the Executive Coaching session to discuss how they may use the new skills and competencies gained from the programme.

Salient Points

There were additional salient points mentioned under this element that did not occur across all respondents to be consider under the theme selection but were worth noting.

- Two executives took personal issues from outside of the working relationships into the coaching sessions. (R1) (R6).

5.4.3. Theme 3 - Coaching Process

The areas discussed that contributed to this theme were whether there was a process or format followed during their Executive Coaching sessions. There were two different responses depending on the type of session being discussed. When discussing IE type the responses covered what actually happened in the coaching session and were limited about a formal process. Most of the Executives did not know of a formal process for coaching and discussed the order in which the coach and they interacted during the session. Several of the Executives discussed techniques that they had used as part of the sessions but these were given as an after-thought after being probed by the researcher. Whereas when the Executive were discussing the LDP type these appeared to contain the use of a coaching model and associated techniques.

IE - Common Issue I - Followed clients agenda

All of the Executives interviewed spoke about the importance of their coaching session needing to follow their own agenda and that this was the key element of the process for them. For some of the executives the session commenced with the client discussing their issue

"It was my space" (R4)
"more a sense of me - my agenda" (R6)
"I have had one coach that just wanted to tell me what they did in the circumstances and not allow me to work things through for myself. That coaching relationship didn't last long after that" (R7)

IE -Common Issue J - No formal model - Sessions flexible - meet the needs of the client

Although many of the Executives interviewed had heard of coaching models none of them had been part of a coaching relationship in this type of Executive Coaching that had used a model and many had difficulty in recalling the name of a model. The process of the IE sessions were seen as flexible and designed by the coach to meet the client's needs.

"Often unstructured - dealt with issues that bubbled up" (R5)
"This was a more informal process" (R6)
"One of my early coaching relationships did use a form of Grow model but did not present it as such". (R7)

IE - Common Issue K - Made executive stop and think (challenge thinking)

A significant amount of the conversation in the interviews was on the coaching process and how the Executive Coach made the Executives stop and think and having their thinking challenged. For many this was achieved by the coach asking questions and giving space for the Executive to think the issue through.

"The coach challenged me - made me think about what and how I did things" (R4)
"It would get me to question what I thought and why I thought it" (R6)
"We discussed an issue and would work on things like visualising how things may work" (R6)
"It was me talking through my issue and the coach challenging me and at time asking me to consider things I could do to address things" (R7)

IE - Common Issue L - Shared issues then questions from coach

Almost all of the Executives described a process of sharing their issue with the coach. Details of the issue are shared and the coach then asking questions to increase the executives understanding of what is happening.

> *"Discussion starts with an issue I introduce and the coach questions and challenges to assist me in gaining greater insight" (R5)*
> *"Coach kept asking me why - why do you do that - and then waited for me to answer" (R2)*
> *"I don't reflect readily but was encouraged to in this process" (R2)*
> *"I set objectives - we had planned session - and we evaluated how effective they were" (R7)*

LDP - Common Issue E – <u>Use of formal coaching models</u>

Those Executives who had taken part in LDP sessions referred to how the sessions were structured and followed a set pattern. There was evidence of formal coaching models being used although not all the Executives could name the model used. Several of the models referred to appeared to follow the GROW model

LDP - Common Issue F - <u>Used 360° before sessions started</u>

The executives shared during the interviews a variety of techniques that had been used in the coaching sessions. There was use of 360° feedback process (R2) (R5) before the Executives started their coaching. The MBTI assessment for understanding preference of styles was used by one executive (R5). One Executive (R6) had experience of a coach using NLP techniques during a session with the use of visualisation and verbalisation of issues.

Salient Points

There were additional salient points mentioned under this element that did not occur across all respondents to be considered under the theme selection but were worth noting.

- Formal notes were only used by one coach (R1)

5.4.4. Theme 4 - Successful Coaching Criteria

The areas discussed that contributed to this theme were what did the executives think were the main differences between good, and not so good coaching sessions. The Executives were very clear about the elements that made a session successful for them. The list came very quickly to mind and was said with conviction. The main points for all Executives for the IE type was that the sessions were required to be client driven and provide the challenge and honest view of themselves that they were unable to obtain from anyone else. They spoke of their roles being very lonely place and needing someone that was confidential and with whom they could be themselves. They included a wide range of elements that were required to be a successful Executive Coaching session. Whereas the main element for the LDP type was that the Executive Coach understood the elements of the Leadership programme and had the knowledge of leadership skills.

IE - Common Issue N - Always Client's agenda

In talking about what makes coaching successful for them the Executives all had a strong reference in all interviews to the need for the agenda of coaching sessions to be very firmly that of the clients.

> *"Needs to follow what the client is looking for" (R2)*
> *"Needs to follow what I needed" (R3)*
> *"It always being my agenda - always about me" (R4)*
> *"Never tells you what to do" (R5) (R7)*
> *"But then again not too much challenge that it starts to follow the coach's agenda and not mine" (R6)*

IE - Common Issue O - Gaining insight

In many of the interviews the Executives spoke about the gaining of insight into either their actions or behaviours as at the beginning of their list of what made coaching successful for them.

> *"Good session allows the gaining of insight into an issues or situation that wasn't there before" (R1)*
> *"Need to come out with greater insight" (R2)*
> *"Need to result in my greater understanding" (R2)*
> *"Allowed me to see things clearly - I needed to be more direct" R3*

"They hold up a mirror for you to see yourself - language and behaviours" (R5)

IE - Common Issue P - Challenge from the coach

The ability to find a coach that could challenge their thinking was one of the key factors named as an element of a successful coaching session. The Executives spoke about the coaches probing their responses and waiting for a response. The coach not filling the space with their own conversation but giving the executive space to think and question impressed several of the executives. A range of responses were;

"It is a delicate balance between listening and challenge"R6
"You need a sponge to listen to everything you say but someone that will challenge your interpretation of the issues and relationships" R6
"Coach needs to fit with me but needs to challenge my thinking" R2

IE - Common Issue Q - Credibility of coach

Whereas the credibility of the coach was spoken about in almost all areas of discussion in the interviews, when discussing the successful coaching criteria this was spoken about as an essential and that this would be *"checked out"* and established before engagement. There were only two executives who referred directly to credibility in the following way:

"You need a coach who is skilled enough to keep you focused and that is a creditable professional"
R3

"They need to be creditable with an external perspective" R2

IE - Common Issue S - Can bring back things you thought you had forgotten

The Executives were eager to talk about already having thought or tried things they spoke about in coaching before, but shared that many of the things that they brought up in coaching had been *'forgotten'* by them in the busy day-to-day working life. The ability of the coach to 'bring out" or

'uncover' things they thought they had forgotten was an element of success. The following comments were also repeated by several of the executives.

"Reminded of things that were known previously but brought back to front of mind" R1
"Brought back things had forgotten about - really useful" R4
"Ability to guide to get the right response" R5

IE - Common Issue T - Transferrable and having a plan

Achieving something tangible by the end of the coaching session was discussed by several of those interviewed as a sign of a successful session. Having the opportunity to develop a plan in a safe environment or developing a solution to an issue was discussed by many of those interviewed. They spoke of being able *'see a way forward'* or having the elements to go away and use to continue planning. The importance of the outcome for the executives was that it was transferable back into the workplace. This issue was highlighted with the following comments:

"There needs to be a product or outcome" R2
"Need to come out with greater insight so that I can transfer it to work setting" R2
"It needs to be relevant to the workplace and transferable" R4

IE - Common Issue U - Taking real issues into a session

The Executives emphasised that the issues discussed in a coaching session need to be *'real'* issues. This remark came for those who had been coached by both IE and LDP coaches. They felt that the *'realness'* of the issue had an impact on the level of success of the session and made the following comments:

"Needs to be a real issue" R2
"That the session is focused and on real issues" R4
"For the executive to have clear objectives for the session - you need to know what you want to achieve before starting" (R7)

IE - Common Issue V - Coach being external

The issue of the coach being external was introduced several times during almost all of the interviews. The Executives were all very clear that when engaging their own coach they would always seek an external. During the discussions the Executives made links between of needing absolute confidentiality, of needing someone who did not have a role in their organisation and someone who would *"understand their world"*. The following are examples of comments given during the interviews:

"Delivered by an external" R1
"Needs external perspective …wouldn't use and internal coach ….need confidentiality" R2
"A balance between sufficient understanding of the issues I had - but not steeped in the internal function of the organisation or relationships" R6
"To be off site with external coach is very important to me" (R7)

IE - Common Issue W - A safe environment

The provision of a safe environment was a major element in achieving a successful coaching session discussed by many of the executives. The executives linked the opportunity for the coaching to be conducted in a safe environment to the confidentiality of the coaching conversation. They referred to the sessions as *'safe space'* that was something they felt they did not have in their day-to-day role. The follow are examples of comments given during the interviews:

"It is a lonely place - you need a safe environment to think out loud, need to be able to see where and what is the truth - work out who you can trust" R3
"Gives me somewhere safe that I can discuss things, without being on my guard, I could be myself "R4
"It is a lonely place - you need a safe environment to think out loud" R3

IE - Common Issue X - Skilled coach

The Executives all agreed that the coaches they engaged were required to be skilled in the understanding of people behaviour and linked this closely with the coach's credibility. They listed a full range of communication skills as being required but were very clear that they required these at a very high professional level. The ability to be non-judgemental was mentioned by several executives. The follow are examples of comments given during the interviews:

"You need a coach who is skilled enough to keep you focused and that is a creditable professional"
R3
"Focused me to what I needed to do - with someone skilled" R4
"The coach needs to have good listening skills" R4
"The coach's ability not to be too quick to give feedback - allowing space for the client to think through the issue" (R7)

Common Issue Y - Engaged client

There were some comments from the Executives that for a coaching session to be successful the Executive themselves had a major role in ensuring that they contributed. There were feelings that if the Executives held back and did not ensure that they were fully engaged the session would lack something the comments *"The person being coached needs to be fully engaged - honest and open in a session" R4* and *"You need to take the opportunity" R4* was expressed by several of the executives during the interviews. There was also a strong sense of the Executives understanding that they needed to *"you give your self-chance to prepare before the session" (R7)* in order to take full advantage of the sessions.

LDP - Common Issue G – Breath of leadership experience of the coach

Those Executives who had used an PDP Executive Coach spoke about expecting the coach to very skilled in leadership behaviours and competencies and have the ability to allow them to gain in insight into how they may use the skills that had gaining from the leadership programme.

LDP - Common Issue H - Gave new ideas

Those Executives who had received coaching as part of LDP spoke about the coach giving them new ideas to try out in the workplace

5.4.5. Theme 5 - Post Coaching Feelings

The areas discussed that contributed to this theme were how 'did a coaching session leave the Executive feeling'. The responses fell into three main areas of common issues of reflective, tired, and with a plan. It was the one discussion area that required the most time for the Executives to answer requiring them to have time to consider how to respond. Once the responses had started to be formulated the conversation then began to flow and the responses often moved between the previously mentioned themes. For example there was a combination of being refocused and therefore having a plan. All Executives shared that they tried not to go straight back to work after a coaching session as they wanted to keep their own space and to continue to think things through and to confirm their planning. All the Executives agreed that they felt different after a coaching session.

LDP Theme J and IE Theme Z - Reflective

The issue mentioned by many executives following a coaching session was their requirement to reflective on the discussions that had happened in the session. Many of them appeared surprised that it had caused them to reflect long after the session had finished with comments such as:

"Reflecting over the issues" R2 "Reflective" R3 R4
"I am not a normal reflector and a session makes me reflect - I am normally the activist - I have done this now I am ready for the next move" R6

LDP Theme K and IE Theme AA - Tired

Several of the executives were not only reflective but mentioned that the sessions left them tired and at time exhausted following a coaching session and spoke about this being associated with the amount of themselves and their emotions that went into the coaching conversation. Some of the following were common phrases used during the interviews:

"Tired and reflective" R2
"Just tired" R2 and R3
"Tired and energized depending on session" R2

LDP Theme L and IE Theme AB - Had a plan

For those executives who recognised themselves as activists they spoke of the time following a session as the *'time to get moving'*. Several spoke of the sessions unblocking their thinking and leaving them with a clear head that now had a way forward, and therefore they felt ready to act with a plan developed. Those who spoke about the LDP session wanted to get back into the workplace to try out their new skills Examples of the comments were:

> *"A sense of achievement as I had a gained insight to create a plan to resolve an issue" R2*
> *"Spurs me on - makes me feel that I now need to get on and do things" R6*
> *"Gives me confidence to try out what I have discussed" R4*
> *"The best coach takes you to the point of planning 'what next'" (R7)*

IE Theme AC - Refocused

For some of the Executives they chose to use the word *'refocused'*. They spoke about a feeling before the session of having *' a head full of thoughts - but too many thoughts'*. Whereas following the session they felt that through the coaching conversation their thoughts were in a more logical order and made more sense to them and were then not overwhelming. The spoke of being refocused, and unburdened as they had been able to reach a point where they felt more confident of a way forward. This was the only post coaching session emotion that IE Executive Coaching produced that LDP Executive Coaching appeared not to. The following are examples of some of the comments:

> *"The sessions question and reframe for me" R4*
> *"The sessions are challenging but I need to understand why - I reflect afterwards" R4*
> *"Unburdened" R5*
> *"Cleared my thinking" R3*

5.4.6. Theme 6 - Colleague Perception of Coaching

The areas discussed that contributed to this theme were what other people may think about the Executive engaging in coaching. This was not an issue for those Executives speaking about the LDP Executive Coaching as the programmes were widely known about. For those Executives using IE type although the responses fell into two common groups the Executives conveyed a sense of this not really

being an issue for them. However there is some of the language used that may suggest that this is not really the case.

IE Common Issue AD- people knew but not an issue

For those Executives who responded that their colleagues knew they were using a coach, there was a range of responses The executives also shared that they felt that the views of people having a coach were changing and that is was now seen as a positive thing. However, this was balanced with those who commented that is was only their business.

R2"I haven't spent much time thinking about it" R3
"I don't mind others know - just considered it my own business" R3
"I think there is a positive view of coaching now - I think it has changed" R4
The political leader knows and sees the benefit of it - they trust me and trust my judgment - maybe I am in a lucky situation (R7)

IE Common Issue AE - Not widely know

For the Executives who believed that their coaching sessions were kept private, they wanted to share why this was the case. For many it was concerned with the associated costs at a time when development budgets had been vastly reduced. For others it was very clearly about what other would think of them *'needing'* a coach. Following comments show the type of language used when explaining the issue:

"Understand there are perceptions about spending budget on personal development but think it is essential in current climate" R4
"I'm not overt about my coaching but will discuss if someone asks" R4
"I haven't kept it confidential but I don't broadcast it" R6
"I think it is so valuable that it should be built into CEO's contracts" R6

Salient Points

There were additional salient points mentioned under this element that did not occur across all respondents to be considered under the theme selection but were worth noting.

- A comment that their Executive Coaching was *"development coaching not deficit coaching - I think that would be seen differently and I may not have share so openly if I ever need deficit coaching as opposed to developmental"*. (R2)

- A comment that the Executive understands there are perceptions about spending budget on personal development but thinks it is essential in current climate (R5)

- A comment that the Executive is not overt about my coaching but will discuss if someone asks (R5)

- A comment form one Executive that *"I understand there are perceptions about spending budget on personal development but - we need to find a way of changing what we think leadership development is. Coaching is real personal support for the role of CEO. I think it is about maturity of leadership and we need to take it further. If there was more coaching in my region we would see the impact"* (R7)

5.4.7. Theme 7 – Alternatives to Having a Coach

The areas discussed that contributed to this theme were what the Executive would have used if they could not have had access to formal coaching. The common issues for the theme fell into two main areas. These covered those Executives who would have used elements of their existing networks and those who responded with information about not using an internal colleague in the role of informal coach. This theme did not apply to LDP Executive Coaching as the Executive's responses only referred to the IE Executive Coaching.

IE Common Issue AF - Would use existing networks for service issues but not the same issues as taken into coaching.

Several of the executives spoke about using the existing networking that they had established for a considerable time such as an Action Learning Sets. For some their *'sounding board'* was the professional network of peers. These were either regional or in some cases national. All of the executives spoke of how useful these groups were but also mentioned that although they would

discuss service issues, they would not use these networks for personal or work relationship issues. For most executives there was an issue with the Action Learning Sets being too big for them to ensure the confidentiality they required.

> *"I have used personal networks and Action Learning Sets outside of my patch and these are*
> *very useful but they do not replace the need for a coach." R5*
> *"The coaching relationship has the confidentiality that you do not get anywhere else" R5*
> *"In these kind of roles people do not challenge you so honest feedback is very valuable" R5*
> *"Through networks I will discuss some things with other CEO's with those who have shared*
> *experiences" R6*
> *"You can discuss and see the way other operate but would not discuss personal issues in these*
> *settings" R6*
> *"With no coach there are times when I would have struggled to deliver" (R7)*
> *"I have used Action Learning Sets - these are very useful but they do not replace the need for a*
> *coach" (R7)*

IE Common Issue AG - Would not have used internal coach even if provided

Some executives also commented on whom they would not use in the informal coach/sounding board role. The respondents were very clear that they would not use any of their internal colleagues with the majority using confidentiality and some extent peer competition as a reason. Internal coaches were considered by the executives as too close to the organisation to provide the independent view, external perspective, and challenge they required. The following comments give an example of some of the language used:

> *"Needs to be external independence and confidentiality" (R3)*
> *"The coaching relationship has the confidentiality that you do not get anywhere else" (R5)*
> *"In these kind of roles people do not challenge you so honest feedback is very valuable" (R5)*
> *"Personal issues around relationships and behaviours would only be taken into a confidential*
> *coaching setting" (R6)*
> *"There are pressures in the role - it can be a lonely place and there is certainly a need for confidential*
> *space - this wouldn't be an internal" (R6).*

5.4.8. Theme 8 – The Perceived Value of Executive Coaching

The areas discussed that contributed to this theme were what the Executives perceived to be most valuable about their coaching experience. The responses fell into the following five main common issue groups for those Executive using IE Executive Coaching and two main groups for those on LDP Executive Coaching.

IE Common Issue AH - Space to create a plan or way forward

The majority of the executives spoke about the most valuable element of coaching for them was the space it gave for them to be able to think through an issue and for them to find a way forward to their issue. This was not only working through to achieve a plan, in some cases this was being challenged by the coach in order for them to gain greater insight into how they themselves behaved. The opportunity to verbalise and visualise their way through the issues was commented on by many executives. The following are examples of the language used.

"Work out how to reframe and 'move on' - it can unblock things" (R4)
"I have had some valuable feedback on my style and how it makes people feel - that has led me to changing my behaviour" (R5)
"Space and environment to better understand myself to do the job better" (R6)
"The opportunity to grapple with different situations" (R7)
"Space to un-pick situations' (R7)

IE - Common Issue AI - External to the organisation

Every Executive commented that the value of the coach they had used had been that they were external to their organisation. They felt that this gave them an external perspective and confidentiality that would not be achieved by the use of an internal coach. The following comments were with regard to this common issue:

"An independent view is valuable element - therefore wouldn't use an internal coach even if one was available" (R1)
"External to the organisation - need for a wider view" (R2)
"Having someone to speak to in confidence that is outside of the organisation" (R3)
"That it is external brings a different perspective" (R4)

IE - Common Issue AJ - Confidential safe space it provides

All the executives valued the confidential space provided by the coaching sessions. They spoke about their roles being *'a lonely place'* and that time away from the busy day job was very limited. Several spoke about not having anyone to share the issues discussed in coaching with.

The following comments below show the language used by the executives:

"You can't put yourself out there - it is a lonely and competitive place" (R2)
"Space and confidentiality to reflect and think through plans" (R6)
The value of not feeling you are alone - that others have difficulties - these are lonely roles and you can think - everyone else can do this why can't I? (R7)

IE - Common Issue AK - Being challenged

The opportunity to have their thinking challenged is valued by all of the executives. They spoke about working in an environment where others find it difficult to challenge them. They are often surrounded by officers who want to please them and therefore would not challenge their thinking. The coaching session give them the safe environment in which they could expand their thoughts and try out different ways of thinking. The executives felt that using a skilled coach who could challenge effectively so that it did not limit their thinking was of great value to them. The following were some of their comments given in the interviews:

"It is a lonely place - need somewhere to talk things through but to be challenged and pushed" (R2)
"Testing out my judgment (that a Recovery Pan was required)" (R3)
"Opportunity to test and try things out - to say things - see if they work" (R4)
"To be with someone who will challenge what I say and think - at this level that isn't always easy to find" (R6)

IE - Common Issue AL - Being kept balanced

The common issue of *'being kept balanced'* pulls together many such statements around this phrase. Some of the others were sane, head above water, and grounded, all of which showed the stress and tensions in the roles they fulfilled. It was clear from the interviews that executives placed high importance on their coaching support and several commented that the difference it made really did

allow them to keep operating at that level. The following comments are a sample of some of the language used for this issue:

"Help to keep me sane during difficult times" (R2)
"Being able to ground myself to comeback and move on" (R3)
"Receive critical support to keep head above water" (R5)
"Being able to keep self-aware - Insight into your own style" (R7)

LDP Theme M – Opportunity to practice elements of formal programme

For those Executives who had been on a formal leadership development programme the Executive Coaching associated with it had the value of giving them the opportunity to try out the new skills and competencies that they had learnt and the chance to this in a safe environment.

LDP Theme N – Honest feedback on performance

For those Executives who had been on a formal leadership development programme the Executive Coaching associated with it gave them honest feedback both from the Executive Coach and from the tools such as a 360̊ feedback survey.

5.5. Summary

This chapter has presented and analysed semi-structured interview data. There were a number of Executives who shared in their interviews that they had been engaged in several coaching

relationships; so that although seven Executives were interviewed, the data refers to in excess of fifteen coaching relationships. The Executives interviewed were candid and open in their responses by the level of detail shared. At times the Executives shared confidential information about themselves that took place in the coaching sessions. The level of detail shared gave richness to the data collected.

The data obtained concerned Executive Coaching in Local Government and the use of template analysis established that there were eight themes. These themes were: the coach; coaching issues; coaching process; successful coaching criteria; post coaching feelings; colleague perception of coaching; alternatives to having a coach; and what is valuable about coaching from the Executive's perspective. Stage one of the data analysis identified that the Executive Coaching, for the Executives in the case study, occurred within two types of environment. The first type was Executive Coaching delivered as an element of a formal Leadership Development programme (LDP). These were delivered internally by the organisations and by sector providers. The second type was Executive Coaching individually engaged by the Executive (IE). Therefore the data showed that Executives did not refer to a definition of Executive Coaching but referred to the outcomes it achieved.

Theme One of the findings show that an LDP Executive Coach was allocated by the programme organizers with many having a Local Government background with a professional background in training and development or senior management. Whereas, in IE Executive Coaching the Executive used their judgment to make a selection of Executive Coach. There was evidence that the key element of this type of Executive Coaching was selecting their own coach and ensuring that they achieve a personal fit. The fit of this relationship was very important to the Executives and referred to on many occasions. They achieved this fit by having trial sessions before engaging their coach. It appeared that all Executives in IE type used the professional background of the coach as an element of their selection criteria. They also expected the coach to be qualified, experienced and ideally from a Local

Government background, but if not, then with a firm understanding of the environment in which the Executives work. The Executives made a personal judgement as to the credibility of the Executive Coach before engaging them.

Theme Two identified that the main purpose of LDP Executive Coaching sessions was to embed the organisational or sector leadership competencies and skills from the programme and used coaching models and techniques to facilitate this. The relationships lasted for the length of the programme and were in the region of six sessions. Whereas, the findings showed that within IE Executive Coaching the main purpose was on-going personal improvement which followed the Executive's personal agenda. The focus for the Executives was looking at understanding their behaviour and increased understanding of themselves. The focus of IE Executive Coaching was mainly related to change management, relationships and the opportunity to gain greater insight into their own behaviour. However, the opportunity for having space to think in a safe environment was mentioned by all the Executives as being the main focus of their coaching sessions in IE type Executive Coaching. They used the sessions to think through issues caused by the current rapidly changing environment which in many cases was a response to current Local Government financial challenges. The fact that they were looking for how they could balance relationships and stakeholder expectations while being able to deliver the current financial reductions was mentioned by all those interviewed. The duration of the coaching relationship in type IE was not seen as short term and on average these were over a year, while LDP type was for the length of the programme and often for six sessions.

The findings show that in Theme Three there was limited evidence of coaching models or techniques being used in IE Executive Coaching relationships and the coaching process did not appear to be of importance to the Executives. With limited evidence of formal coaching models being used, the coaching sessions included explanation of the issues by the Executive, followed by challenging

questions that made them think from the Executive Coach. However in LDP type there was evidence of formal Executive Coaching models and techniques being used.

The interview data analysis in Theme Four identified twelve criteria that Executives felt made IE Executive Coaching successful. The criteria the Executives used formed four main groups of credibility; professionalism; challenge from an external Executive Coach; safe space for them to develop transferable plans that addressed their current issues. The environment in which this type of Executive Coaching occurred was commented on by all the Executives. The Executives not only expected a safe environment as regard to confidentiality, but also extended the meaning of 'safety' to include that the Executive Coach did not have any existing relationships inside their organisation that could impact on the sharing of information. All of the Executives mentioned that the sessions would take place away from their place of work giving them physical separation as well in order to think and plan.

Theme Five of the analysis showed that most of the post coaching feelings were the same for both types of Executive Coaching except for when those Executives spoke about being 'refocused' by IE Executive Coaching. This emotion was not share as a post coaching feeling those undertaking LDP Executive Coaching.

The interviews identified two views on how the Executives responded to others knowing about their coaching sessions in Theme Six. One group shared that others knew but that it was not an issue. The others were more guarded and spoke of it not being confidential but not being openly shared.

The alternatives to Executive Coaching was only discussed when the Executives spoke about IE type Executive Coaching in Theme Seven. The Executives had limited alternatives if coaching was not possible. They were facilitated into joining Action Learning Sets (ALS) when they are newly appointed into roles. These are valued and allow the Executives to discuss service issues and share best practice. However, the Executives commented that these do not replace Executive Coaching. The sets do not provide the confidentiality and individual space or the heightened challenge that coaching provided, as at times the ALS members were their competition. The Executives did show concern as to how much they spend on Executive Coaching may be seen by others. The difficult financial environment had reduced development budgets and the Executives were balancing the knowledge that the coaching was valuable to them and therefore the organisation on the one hand and the lack of development for other officers on the other.

Finally, Theme Eight showed that the Executives valued Executive Coaching most for the space it gave them to create a plan or to think through a way forward in the current changing environment that was not possible in the busy life of an Executive. They spoke about their roles being lonely places and the opportunity for being challenged was not normally available, so the Executive Coach being external to the organisation was very important. There was evidence that the Executive Coaching session gave them an opportunity to reflect, re-focus, plan and be kept balanced to continue to perform at a high level.

Chapter Six:

Discussion of Findings

6.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to consider the findings of this study in light of the literature on Executive Coaching in Local Government, in order to draw conclusions in relation to the research aim and objectives outlined in Chapter 1.5 and 1.6. Firstly, the concept and aspects of Executive Coaching are summarised then the discussion proceeds to the aspects and characteristics of Executive Coaching found within this study and links these to how Local Government Executives used background, qualification and experience in their selection of an Executive Coach. The discussion then moves on to how Executive Coaching is utilized and what the sessions focus on in Local Government compared to the extant literature view. The value Executives place on Executive Coaching and alternatives that Local Government Executives have used in the absence of an Executive Coach will be reviewed before summarising the research position of Executive Coaching.

6.2. Concepts and aspects of Executive Coaching

The concept of Executives engaging in personal development to improve their performance both as individuals and improving their organisations was supported by the questionnaire and interview findings of this study. Furthermore, this showed that the majority of Executives actively engaged in personal development; with individual development being the most used method. This is perhaps not surprising due to the time constraints of the Executive roles and the confidential issues they seek personal development for.

This study confirmed that the concept of Executive Coaching was known, understood and used by the study sample of Executives in Local Government. Over eighty percent of the respondents having

actively engaged Executive Coaching recently to improve their performance. More importantly for organisations, which often fund the Executive Coaching, almost all those who had received it were also transferring their learning from it back to the workplace. So although as the current literature shows that Executive Coaching is expensive, organisations are achieving a return on their investment (CIPD, 2012).

Literature suggests that the mixture of influences and backgrounds on Executive Coaching has led to a profession in flux. This has resulted in a lack of progress in the academic research and development of Executive Coaching because there is no single research base (De Haan, and Duckworth, *et al.* 2013). However, interestingly this study showed that the practice of Executive Coaching in Local Government environment appears to be unaffected by the mixed academic views contained in the literature. This study's research interviews show that Executives consider they have enough knowledge to make a judgment that Executive Coaching is a personal development option they require. The state of the wider professional research issues were not mentioned.

6.3 Characteristics and utilisation of Executive Coaching

The characteristics of Executive Coaching referred to by Joo (2012) are having:

- A focus
- A purpose
- Use of a process
- Use of tools
- A certain length of relationship
- Being delivered in a certain way

These characteristics are all in evidence through this study's research interviews, in Local Government Executive Coaching. However, these are not found, consistently in use, in any one of type of Executive Coaching found. The Executive interviews within this study shows that the term Executive Coaching has a dual use in the Local Government environment and is used to describe two very different approaches to Executive Coaching. Interestingly it is the content and use of Joos' (2012) common characteristics together with the impact of the type of background influences that impacts on the Executive Coach described by Dembkowski *et al.* (2006). This makes the approaches to the two types of Executive Coaching very different.

This dual use of the term Executive Coaching in Local Government has been established through the analysis of this study's research data which produced eight themes of the coach; coaching issues; coaching process; successful coaching criteria; post coaching feelings; colleague perceptions; alternatives to having a coach and what is perceived valuable about Executive Coaching by the Executives. This study shows evidence of the first type of Executive Coaching was delivered as an element of a formal 'Leadership Development Programme' and referred to by the researcher as LDP. The second was as Executive Coaching 'individually engaged' by the Executives, and referred to by the researcher as IE. The characteristics and background influences of LDP Executive Coaching will be discussed first, followed by IE Executive Coaching in order to identify the characteristics of the type and compare them to those in the extant literature.

LDP Executive Coaching appeared to show the background influence approach in line with a combination of 'training and development' and 'management' approaches described by Downey (2003) and Lewis-Duarte and Bligh (2012) respectively. This approach was present in the interview data by the focus and purpose of the Executive Coaching sessions. There was evidence from this research study's interviews that the purpose of this type of Executive Coaching was to embed the

organisational aims, which is a management approach to Executive Coaching and leadership skills, which is a training and development approach of the LDP with the focus and utilization on skills development. This type of Executive Coaching did not deliver through the 'psychological' approach to Executive Coaching described in the extant literature by Peltier (2010). The key focus of the session was leadership skills development and practice and embedding leadership competencies that had been introduced as part of the wider programme the Executives were taking part in.

This current study did establish, through interviews, that predominately the LDP Executive Coaches were not selected by the Executives, an element that Wasylyshyn (2003) stressed was valued by Executives, but they were allocated by the programmes. The findings showed that although the Executives were matched for suitability in this type of Executive Coaching, the selection was undertaken from within the group of Executive Coaches engaged by the LDP. This practice is contrary to the view in the literature which identifies the benefits of Executives selecting and valuing an external coach with no internal organisational links. However, the Executives interviewed did not appear concerned at not selecting their own Executive Coach. Their comments were connected with the leadership skills and management background of the Executive Coach they were allocated which is interesting when compared to the extent literature where both personal selection and qualified background of the Executive Coach are both of importance in selecting a suitable Executive Coach. In the LDP type of Executive Coaching in Local Government, the Executives appear to acknowledge the important of the appropriate skills of the Executive Coach above being able to select a Coach themselves. The evidence coaching tools as defined by Rogers's (2004) in use in LDP Executive Coaching further supports the view that the approach is from a combination of 'management' and 'training and development' perspectives. These tools and techniques were often used in the wider leadership development programme and then linked to the Executive Coaching element, such as the use of 360º feedback tools. There was also evidence through this study's research interviews that

formal coaching models such as Whitmore (2009) GROW model were used in this type of Executive Coaching.

The number of Executive Coaching session in the LDP type of Executive Coaching in Local Government were near to the lower end of the range described by Joo in 2005. Although the delivery of the Executive Coaching was flexible, it was within the boundaries of the LDP and therefore the duration of the coaching relationship was of the limited length of the LDP and often limited to six sessions. The findings show that the Executives would have found a longer relationship to have been more beneficial. This highlights the tension between individual and organisational needs.

The analysis of interview data from this study confirmed IE as the second type of Executive Coaching being used in Local Government. The coaching background influence and characteristics of IE Executive Coaching were very different than those seen in LDP Executive Coaching and mark the major difference between the two types of Executive Coaching in Local Government. IE Executive Coaching appeared to exhibit a 'psychological' approach and while having the wider purpose of personal development, the focus was the Executive's personal agenda of increasing the understanding of themselves and their impact on others. The utilization and purpose of these sessions was to give space for the Executive to think and plan and for them to have their thinking challenged in a safe and controlled environment. These characteristics all demonstrate Bluckert's (2005) description of the psychological approach of Executive Coaching. In this type of Executive Coaching, the Executive placed prime importance on the selection of the Executive Coach and wanted to ensure that they were external, skilled and from a professional background. This need for an external Executive Coach discussed in the extant literature to ensure independence and total confidentiality was exemplified through the Local Government Executives interviews where the majority commented that they would not consider an internally selected Executive Coach.

The findings showed that when IE Executive Coaching used a psychological approach the importance of being qualified had greater prominence a view which supports Wasylyshyn's (2003) view. However, while being qualified was important, of equal or greater importance to this study's Executives was the business and Local Government knowledge of the Executive Coach. The language used by Executive R1 and R2 showed the strength of feeling in their need for their Executive Coach to understand their world in the current Local Government climate. The main focus of IE Executive Coaching was the impact of the current financial climate, the impact of changes on new and old relationships and the dramatic services changes that were required. The Executives were firm in their belief in needing an Executive Coach who would understand this environment.

The requirement for an effective relationship and 'personal fit' of the coach was found to be high on the Executives agenda This confirms the research by De Haan *et al.* (2013) who also found the importance of the relationship between coach and Executive to be key to effective Executive Coaching. All of the Executives interviewed spoke about the need for someone they could 'gel with' due to the confidential and at time emotional issues they wanted to discuss. The Executive Coaches met the requirement to ensure personal fit by offering a trial session before the Executive committed to engage them.

The IE type of Executive Coaching present in Local Government did not appear to contain the characteristic of using coaching tools and techniques to provide a starting point for the Executive Coaching sessions. It appears that this stage was undertaken in practice through conversation between the Executive Coach and Executive. This confirms the psychological Executive Coaching view in the work by Peltier (2010).

The key characteristic of IE Executive Coaching was the flexible delivery. The Executives required the sessions to be away from the workplace and at a convenient time for them. There was evidence that the Executives placed high value on the flexibility of the sessions and although the coaching relationship often started with a six month engagement these were often extended and many of the Executives had been in Executive Coaching relationships for over a year. This was in line with the work by Wilson (2007), which identified that psychological approach Executive Coaching was delivered through of long term duration engagements.

Interestingly, existing literature whilst not adopting a typology of two different types of Executive Coaching through two different methods, does discuss characteristic of Executive Coaching in some detail. Significantly this current study showed that there were two types of Executive Coaching being delivered in Local Government using two different professional approaches and providing two different types of development for the Executives in Local Government.

The three main background disciplines 'psychology', 'training and development', and 'management' (Kampa-Kokesch, 2001) are in evidence in Local Government Executive Coaching but appear in the different types. The four main purposes defined in the work by Witherspoon 1996; Grant and Cavanagh 20004, which are:

- skills coaching
- performance coaching
- development coaching
- Executive's agenda

These are not all present in Local Government Executive Coaching. The findings display the tension between improving personal performance and following the Executive's agenda. The purpose of

Executive Coaching in Local Government is the Executives Agenda in IE Executive Coaching and improved leadership skills in LDP Executive Coaching.

The different approaches, together with the different characteristics, are shown in the Table 4 below which identifies these element compared to the research of Executive Coaching characteristics by Joo (2012).

Table 4 Comparison of Findings from Local Government Executive Coaching and Empirical research

	Adapted from Research Joo, (2012)	Individual Executive Local Government Coaching (IE) (Current Study Findings)	Local Government Leadership Development Programme (LDP) Coaching (Current Study Findings)
Purpose	Self-awareness Learning Behavioral Change Performance Management	Executive's Agenda Current Change issues Current Behavioral issues Current relationship issues	Aligns individuals to organisational behaviours and goals. Adapt to new responsibilities Improve retention Support organisational change
Coach	External Professional Unregulated so credentials not obvious	External Selected by Executive Consultant/psychology background Professional Business Knowledge LG environment knowledge	Internal to programme Allocated by programme Training and development background
Process	Structural Systematic	Unstructured Unlikely to use formal model Unlikely to use techniques	Structured Formal process Uses techniques e.g. 360°
Focus	Issues Problems	Relationships Transformation Opportunity to slow down Space to think and plan Increase self-awareness Feedback on their words and actions Improved personal insight Understanding their environment	Leadership skills and behaviours Strategic coaching integrates personal development and organisational needs.

Duration	Short Term	Longer Term	Short Term in line with LDP

6.4. Value of Executive Coaching and what makes it successful

The findings from this study identify that the Executives in Local Government valued highly the individual and personal relationship of Executive Coaching. All the Executives spoke about the relationship with the Executive Coach as being key to the success of the coaching sessions. In the Executive Coaching delivered as an element of LDP, the Executives valued the time to discuss and be challenged in order to embed the aims and behaviours of the programmes they had been undertaking. They placed high value on the tools such as 360° assessments that were provided commenting that these gave them greater insight into their own behaviour. With regard to the IE Executive Coaching the findings show that Executives valued being able to select their own external coach to ensure a personal fit and achieve a relationship that they valued. The Executives wanted an Executive Coach that was experienced, qualified and knew the environment but *but not steeped in the internal function of the organisation or relationships"* (Executive R3). Furthermore, they valued the confidential space to think and spoke of the roles they held as being *"lonely places"* by Executive R2, describing these as pressurised and that they were in the spot light to perform, so that pre-planned time away, where they could think things through and plan a way forward was of value to them. There was evidence of links to the Executives feeling the pressure of the current financial environment and the need for additional support and development to assist them in being prepared and therefore seeking personal development (Lewis-Duarte and Bligh, 2012 and Passmore, 2010).

The criteria that Executives in the case study sample used to make a judgment on what makes successful Executive Coaching depended on which type of coaching they were considering. When the Executives engaged with LDP Executive Coaching they had only three criteria which were; breadth of leadership experience, ability in leadership skills, and the transfer of new idea. Whereas in IE Executive Coaching the Executive had a varied list of twelve criteria (Interview Finding Theme 4).

The main criteria of successful IE Executive Coaching from the Executives perspective, were credibility, business knowledge, being external to the organisation and having a safe space to plan and think. This appears again to emphasis the two different types of Executive Coaching found. LDP which has a focus of leadership skills transfer, where the Executives judge success by if the Executive knows how to develop an individual's skills and requires a short period of time as opposed to IE where the approach is behavioural change and requires a longer period. Interestingly the difference may also be that Executives considered LDP Executive Coaching as renewing some that they already had where as in IE they were uncovering something new about themselves.

The findings showed (Executive R7 interview) that although Executives placed value on Executive Coaching they were conscious of the cost of the development at a time when development budgets were very limited due to the current financial climate. There was evidence (Executive R2, R3 R7 interviews) that many of the Executives were currently, or had been part of Action Learning Sets (ALS's). These were formal ALS's established at the time of their new appointments or as part of previous development activity. The ALS's were valued and appeared to provide support for the Executives by providing the opportunity to learn from discussion and sharing of operational issues. However, these were not used as an alternative to Executive Coaching as they did not provide the confidential environment the Executives valued.

6.5. Executive Coaching Research

Although there has been considerable research undertaken over the past twenty years concerning Executive Coaching, the literature offers fewer than twenty studies that are able to offer robust outcome studies. One reason for this was suggested as: the costly requirements to get rigorous research, another was; rather than studying with detachment, research has been undertaken by

practitioners studying their own effectiveness (De Haan *et el.* (2013). Furthermore, the research identified that Executive Coaching as Executive development was on the increase and therefore further research into its effectiveness was required (Joo, 2012). The literature review of this current study found that there was limited research undertaken in Local Government Executive Coaching, although it found evidence of considerable Executive Coaching being undertaken. Therefore, the lack of research into Executive Coaching in Local Government is limiting the understanding and thus limiting the sharing of the aspect of and models used in this environment. There is evidence that research into Executive Coaching is undertaken mainly by practitioners rather than academic researchers and that therefore the research potential has limitation (Joo, 2005). Further, there is evidence from a number of studies that further research needs to be undertaken to achieve a better understanding of what are the aspects of Executive Coaching are rather than the previous studies that have concentrated on defining the field of Executive Coaching (Passmore and Fillery-Travis, 2011).

This study confirms De Haan *et al.* (2013) view that the landscape of Executive Coaching is in a state of flux as there is a wide range of backgrounds and a plethora of models and approaches means that individual professionals are practicing in a variety of different ways. However, this appears not to affect the value that the Executive who receives the Executive Coaching place on it. The Findings of this current study support the Lewis-Duarte and Bligh (2012) study that identified that in Executive Coaching there are different tactics and therefore different approaches used depending on the desired outcome. This view was present in the findings (Chapter 6.3.) which identified the two different approaches of LDP Executive Coaching and individual Executive Coaching being present in Local Government which delivered two different approaches of skills and psychological Executive Coaching. A summary of the findings against the objectives are highlighted below at Figure 11.

Figure 11 - Objectives against the main findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data

Objectives	Questionnaire Findings	Semi-Structured Interview Findings	Summary Comments
Background and characteristics of Local Government Executive coaching and how Executives select a coach	The questionnaires showed that the majority of executives engaged their coach for between ten months and a year. This was longer than the short duration that the literature suggested that coaching was used for. They questionnaires showed that high percentage of executives initiate and select their coach personally, however a large number were un-informed on the details of coaching before engagement.	The interviews showed a range of characteristics that Executives considered essential to make coaching successful, these included the coach being experienced; the background of the coach; coach being external; length of coaching relationship; having flexible delivery. There was limited evidence of the use of techniques before and during sessions, and no use for formal models or systems. However, when coaching is offered as an element of a leadership programme there was less opportunity for the executives selecting their own coach as they were allocated by the programmes. Executives used a range of criteria when selecting their own coach which included: selecting professional background; making a judgement on coach credibility; making sure the coach had understanding and experience of LG environment; and ensuring personal fit.	The research methods together showed the characteristics of Local Government Executive Coaching, however there is evidence that not all the characteristics mentioned in the literature were of importance to the study group.
Executive Coaching purpose and utilisation	The questionnaires found that coaching is used as one element of executive personal development and that it is engaged in mainly either as part of a formal leadership development programme or as stand-alone development. It is used by a high percentage for improving personal performance and the same percentage transfer their learning back to the workplace. However not all those who are coached evaluate the effectiveness of this development. The questionnaire also highlighted that a small percentage of executives had a	The study found that the overall purpose of the Executive coaching was personal self-development to equip the executives to develop themselves to increase personal effectiveness and remain balanced. A small number of executives interviewed had been coached as part of Leadership development. However the majority engaged a coach as individual development. There was a clear separation between the issues discussed in coaching as part of a Leadership programme and those discussed when the coach had been engaged as individual development by the Executive. The majority of the executives interviewed valued the opportunity to select their own coach using their own criteria. The interviews supported the literature in the issues that were taken into coaching sessions. The issues were more often skills based when coaching was offered as an element of leadership programmes whereas in individual coaching the sessions followed the executives own agenda. In contrast to the literature the findings from the interviews suggested that formal models of coaching are not used	While the research shows that there are common areas taken into LG coaching as identified by the literature it suggest that the balance of how LG executive utilise coaching is different. It concentrates more on behaviours/attitudes and gaining personal insight and therefore would show a link as to why they more readily select a coach from a psychological back ground. Consistent with the literature there is little evidence of coaching evaluation present in practice, but there is evidence of transfer of learning into the workplace. Executive Coaching in Local Government

	number of coaches over a period of time.	in individual coaching and the emphasis was on the sessions following the clients agenda. Many of the session followed the same format of executives sharing their issues then question from coach that challenged them to stop and think. This was different when attached to Leadership programme when there was evidence of models	appears to be more a conversation with purpose rather than following a formal model that is found in much of the literature.
Perceived value of Executive Coaching	Questionnaires identified that 78 per cent of those coached were able to transfer their learning back into the workplace.	Interviews showed that the Executives valued the opportunity to gaining personal insight and have confidential space to think and talk while being challenged by the external Executive Coach in a safe environment.	In line with literature reviewed the value is on short-term effectiveness of Executive Coaching

Chapter Seven:

Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to draw together key points from the research and subsequent discussion and identify trends and patterns that address the overall research aim of Executive Coaching in Local Government. These are:

- What the characteristics of Executive Coaching in Local Government are

- How Executives utilise Executive Coaching

- The perceived value Executives place on it

- Criteria Executives use to select their Executive Coach.

Considerations for practice are then presented, that will serve to point the way in which Local Government organisations may further support Executives through Executive Coaching and gain from the transfer of learning that takes place. A proposed model for the types of Executive Coaching in Local Government is presented to summarise the key points. The limitations of the current research and the highlighting of areas for future research conclude this chapter.

7.1.1. Conclusions relating to the key literature

This current case study in Local Government supported the literature from key authors Joo, (2012), De Haan *et al*. (2013) and Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck (2014). The findings showed that Executive Coaching was used by Executives for the purpose of personal development. The research suggested four main areas of use for Executive Coaching which were identified as the Executive's agenda, performance and skills, performance and Executive's own agenda. There was clear evidence of the use

of Executive's agenda and for the use of improving leadership skills. There was limited evidence of Executive Coaching being use for performance improvement as defined by the literature although all Executives reported that overall their Executive Coaching was for personal development.

The Executive Coaching was influenced by the different approaches of 'training and development' 'management' and 'psychological' and the characteristics found confirmed those identified in the literature. However, the findings of this study indicated that there were two different types of Executive Coaching being used in Local Government Leadership Development Executive Coaching (LDP) and individually engaged Executive Coaching (IE).

The findings identified that the Executives do not use definitions of Executive Coaching but refer to the outcome that they will achieve. This lack of an agreed definition does not appear to affect the Executive Coaching being delivered or the value the Executives place on it in Local Government. The Executives appeared not to require a definition of Executive Coaching in order to understand the development that they would receive and as long the Executive Coaching provided the development they required, there was not a concern as to the professional approach it was based on.

7.1.2. Utilisation of Executive Coaching in Local Government

The utilization of Executive Coaching in Local Government occurs in two environments to fulfil two different development needs. IE Executive Coaching that is delivered through a psychological Executive Coaching approach, is used by Executives to support them on their own agenda. It also develops Executives as individuals to respond to the challenging environment in which they work. The findings of the majority of the Executive interviews of this study show that many of the issues taken into IE Executive Coaching sessions are as a result of the financial challenges faced by Local Government. Executive Coaching provides the support and environment that Executives require to

plan major organisational and service delivery changes that are required to meet dramatic budget reductions.

Whereas LDP Executive Coaching, delivered through a combination of training and development and management Executive Coaching approaches, is used by Executives to acquire and enhance leadership skills and organisational competencies. The leadership development programmes, facilitated by organisations and sector providers, ensured that Executives had the skills and competencies to lead the changing organisations of Local Government.

The findings also showed that both types of Executive Coaching are utilized for personal development but are looking to achieve very different outcomes. In IE Executive Coaching it was the Executive's own agenda often described by Executive as finding space to think things through without the chaos and to work through what was going on in their heads. Whereas, in the LDP Executive Coaching the focus was on embedding the skills and new behaviours from the leadership programme.

7.1.3. Characteristics of Local Government Coaching

This study identifies the Executive Coaching characteristics as being a purpose, focus, process, tools and techniques, and the duration of the relationship. However not all characteristics were present to the same extent in each type of Executive Coaching found in this study. For example there was evidence (Chapter 6.3) of less use of tools and techniques in IE Executive Coaching as opposed to their use in LDP Executive Coaching where models and techniques were used such as the use of Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) techniques described in the Executive interviews and contained in Theme Three of the analysis.

In line with the two different types of Executive Coaching this study identified the focus of the sessions were different. The LDP focus was on new skills and competencies of the changing organisations. Whereas the IE Executive Coaching focus was on supporting the Executives to develop themselves to respond to the challenging environments they were working in. There was clear evidence in this current study, that the current focus of the session in IE Executive Coaching were centred on how the Executive managed themselves and their organisations during substantial change related to the current financial challenges.

There was a further difference, identified through the discussion of the findings that in the duration of the Executive Coaching relationships was of different length. In LDP Executive Coaching there was a limit on the relationship by the length of the leadership programme and on average this was for six months. However, through the interviews, there was evidence that the relationship was of a longer duration when it was an IE Executive Coaching type. While the process associated with Executive Coaching appears to be important to the professionals and has been the subject of considerable research, it appears not to be important to the Executives being coached in Local Government. There was limited evidence of one single model being used although within the LDP Executive Coaching there was evidence of a formal structured approach and only an informal conversational approach within IE Executive Coaching.

7.1.4. Local Government Executives Perceived value of Executive Coaching

There was a different emphasis shown by the Executive for the perceived value Executive Coaching provided between the two types of Executive Coaching present in Local Government. The Executives in the LDP Executive Coaching valued the time to embed the LDP aims and objectives, and it gave them an opportunity to increase their self-awareness through the use of tools and models. Whereas IE

Executive Coaching was valued for the space it provided and the environment it created. It enabled the Executives to refocus and take a critical look at their approach and style at work by facilitating them to identify barriers that are preventing them from being more effective in their jobs and relationships. The discussion of the findings also identified that this IE Executive Coaching type is valued for the external Executive Coach and the space and confidential environment it provides to the Executives which they use to think and plan a way through their current and future issues.

Executive Coaching of both types, LDP and IE, was valued for flexible and tailored approach to development that it provided and the individual self-awareness and self-management approach it promoted. There was also evidence that it provided Executives with honest feedback they found difficult to get anywhere else due to their positions in authorities. Executives also identified the Executive Coach as someone who would listen and they could talk to without judgment. Although Executive Coaching was reported as a challenging and demanding experience that could be used to facilitate changes in attitudes and behaviour, the value of it was also seen as it could be translated back into the workplace and that it could help to accelerate learning (Passmore, 2010).

Both types of Executive Coaching in Local Government are valued and all the Executives agreed that they would want this provision to continue. However, there appeared to be an issue with the funding of IE Executive Coaching due to the reduction in authorities development budgets. Organisations need to support the allocation of funding in order for Executive to access Executive Coaching.

7.1.5. Executive Coach Selection in Local Government

This study found that when Executives in Local Government selected an Executive Coach they looked for different qualities depending on the type of Executive Coaching they were undertaking. When

engaged in LDP Executive Coaching they often selected from a prepared list provided by the programme and were selecting for senior management and leadership skills experience. Whereas when engaged in IE Executive Coaching although they considered a range of criteria outlined in Theme analysis, a key criteria was the relationship between themselves and the Executive Coach. There was also a stronger emphasis from the Local Government Executives as to the background of the Executive Coach understanding their environment and having business knowledge, more so than that stressed in the extant literature, where there was an importance on the qualification of the Executive Coach (De Haan and Duckworth *et al*. 2013). Therefore, this current study supports the view of Wasylyshyn's (2003) study that explored the factors influencing the choice of a coach with regard to IE Executive Coaching but this is not evident in the LDP Executive Coaching where Executive Coaches are allocated by the programmes.

This study also found that Action Learning Sets were an additional support accessed by the Executives and highly valued for access to learning and sharing service issues. However, they did not think that this environment could replace Executive Coaching. This study emphasises that Executives use great judgement and place value on selecting their own Executive Coach for personal fit, when engaging in IE Executive Coaching. The active relationship in this type of Executive Coaching was viewed as the most important element. Executives wanted a skilled coach with business knowledge and understanding of Local Government. Their focus was to engage an Executive Coach who would facilitate them in gaining increased self-awareness and someone to challenge their current thinking in a safe environment. Executives in this IE Executive Caching did not appear to see the need for or want skills based coaching on an individual basis. Whereas in LDP Executive Coaching when associated with leadership development, the Executives value the Executive Coach for possessing and sharing leadership skills.

7.1.6 Summary

The two types of Executive Coaching found in Local Government contain the recognised characteristics of Executive Coaching. However, while both have the overall purpose of personal development, they use different Executive Coaching approaches, are utilized differently, and have a different focus. The two types of Executive Coaching found in Local Government are summaries in Table 5 below.

**Table 5. Framework of types of Executive Coaching present in Local Government**

Leadership Development Programme (LDP) - Executive Coaching
Purpose of this coaching is leadership skills improvement and Leadership behaviours: Designed to support organisational competencies and re-enforce the content of the leadership programme This element of the programme is time limited and normally runs for between 4 and 6 weeks

Format
    • Uses some techniques such as NLP or MBTI and may commence with a 360 being conducted.
    • Often recognized coaching models used with this coaching
    • The coaching is often influence and delivered by experienced Training and Development practitioners
The coaches used are normally selected by programme and allocated by the programme leader.

Individual Engaged (IE) Executive Coaching
Purpose: For Executives to take time to contemplate their own behaviours or actions and designed to give space for Executives to gain an increased awareness and notice and recognise their own words and actions. It can empower them to assume responsibility for the wide impact they have. It is a form of individual active-learning, which can through time, space, environment, challenge and support, provide the pathway to transfer essential planning, communication and relationship skills directly back into the workplace.

Format
    • The Executive self-selects their Executive Coach
    • Executive Coaches are qualified experienced coaches with business knowledge
    • The coaches deliver psychology based coaching concentrating on facilitating the executives to find their own answers through increased self-awareness.
    • It is not usual for coaching models to be used
    • It is valued for the space it provides in a safe environment for the executive to think and plan
It is designed to equip the executive in self-development

7.1.7. Proposed Model of Executive Coaching in Local Government

The researcher has taken the conceptual framework diagram designed through the understanding and interpretation of current literature (Figure 2-Page 52), and developed it through this study firstly into a Framework (Table 5 on page 137) and then further into the Proposed Model of Executive Coaching in Local Government below (Figure 12- Page 139). The Proposed Model uses information from the review of literature and research data gathered during this study. It identifies the two different delivery types of Executive Coaching present in Local Government, Individual Executive Caching and Leadership Development Programme Executive Coaching. The model highlights the background

influences, utilisation, processes, foci and coach selection criteria for each type of Executive Coaching. It can be used by current and future Executives to consult as they engage in and select the type of Executive Coaching that is the most appropriate to their development requirements.

Figure 12   A Model of Executive Coaching in Local Government
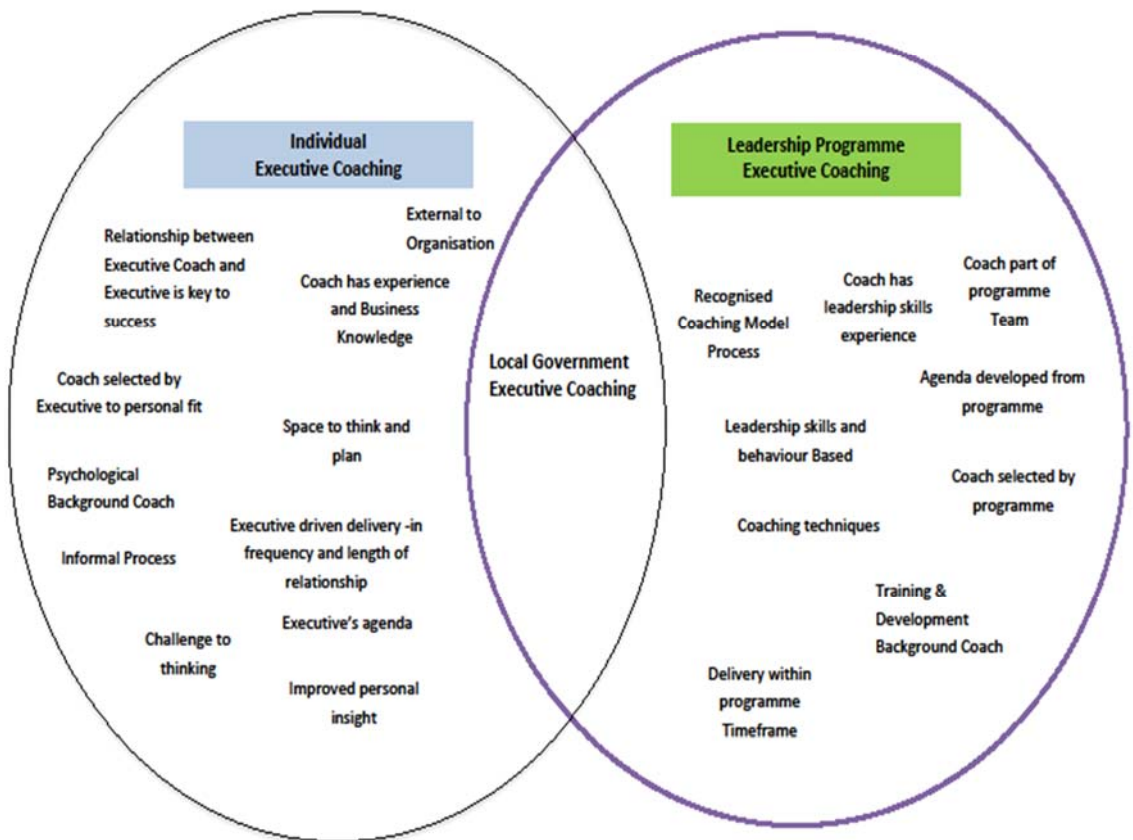
7.2. Recommendations

The literature suggests that Executive Coaching supports and improves Executives and that the learning they achieve can be transferred to the workplace to improve their organisations. Participants in this study who had engaged in either one or both types of Executive Coaching found in Local

government valued the experience. The researcher therefore recommends the following actions to ensure the continued and enhance contribution that Executive Coaching can make to the development of Executives in Local Government and support them in the current and future challenging roles they undertake.

1.   Local Government organisations should recognise and facilitate the access to both Leadership Development Executive Coaching and Individual Executive Coaching. Both types of Executive Coaching require support and understanding for the value to the organisation of an Executive being coached. Access to appropriately qualified and experienced coaches is also required as is the respect for the requirement for time to be coached. The access to funding for both types of Executive Coaching should also be facilitated by the organisations and sector providers.

 2. As there is evidence of transfer of learning, and therefore a return on investment, from Executive Coaching to the workplace there is an organisational benefit for employers to invest in it. In order to ensure Executive Coaching can be funded in the current financial environment Executive Coaching should be included as a commitment by the organisation to the Executive in their employment contract.

 3. That newly appointed Executives should be facilitated into an Executive Coaching relationship along- side the current practice of facilitating an Action Learning Set by those in Local Government responsible for Executive development.

 4. As there is limited research into Executive Coaching in Local Government, further research should be conducted in this environment to further enhance the knowledge base.

5. Researchers and practitioners should work more closely together to ensure future studies meet the academic requirements and rigour to be classed as valuable research that can contribute to the professional body of knowledge on the growing profession of Executive Coaching.

7.3. Limitations of the study and Transferability of Findings

While the current research was conducted using a considered research design, which sought to minimise threats to the reliability and validity of the outcomes, as with all research, limitations are still present. These limitations are now addressed.

The sample size of this case study may be viewed as limiting however, the size of the study allowed the gathering of rich data, through privileged access, to an exclusive group of Local Government senior leaders, shapers and opinion formers. The case study has emphasized detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events and relationships. The research has allowed understanding of a complex area of first had personal experience which has add strength and knowledge to what is already known through previous research.

The context in which the study was set was limited to Executives in Local Government and therefore may limit the transfer of the learning from this study to a wider environment. However similar environments currently exist in the wider public sector and therefore the learning could be a base for further research in this area, in line with Greenwood and Levin (1998). However, it will require the reader to use their professional knowledge and understanding of Executive Coaching and Local Government in order to apply the information. The key point in transferability is that the burden of proof as to suitability lies with the person seeking to apply the study elsewhere and not with the researcher of the study. Therefore, as the researcher cannot know how or where the applicator wishes to use the research, but has considered their responsibility and has provided sufficient descriptive data to make similar judgements possible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

7.4. Contribution to knowledge and practice

This study has provided additional insights into the previously underexplored area of Executive Coaching in Local Government. This may provide some knowledge to facilitate improvements in practice. Executive coaching in Local Government is increasing yet it is under severe threat from current funding reductions. The financial position is challenging yet this additional knowledge may provide a cost effective strategy for personal development.

This study makes an academic contribution by building on the work of Passmore (2010); Turner and Goodrich (2010) and Bluckert (2006). This study has increased the knowledge on the aspects and characteristics of Executive Coaching in Local Government that were absent from the existing research by researching an under researched environment.

The developed Proposed Model of Executive Coaching in Local Government (Figure 12-Page 138) should be of benefit to Local Government Executive Coaches, Local Government development professionals and Local Government Executives who wish to engage in Executive Coaching. The model identifies for Executives the elements to look for when considering selection of an Executive Coach. It allows Executives to make an informed choice on the type of Executive Coaching they pursue to meet their development needs. The model contributes to professional practice by providing practitioners with the details of the types and characteristics of Executive Coaching used by Executives. The model demonstrates to practitioners the expectations of Executives when selecting Executive Coaching, and identifies to practitioners the elements that Executives value in the Executive Coaching relationship.

This research will be shared by the researcher through professional networks. The researcher has been invited to share this research with the Society of Local Government Chief Executives (SOLACE) which delivers Chief Executive Development across Local Government. Early conversations with the Chief Executive of SOLACE has indicated interest in the knowledge gained through the study and

that they would welcome its use in future developments of the Executive Coaching provision they provide.

The researcher is also active in the CIPD community and is an active CIPD Group Committee member. The research will therefore be shared across these CIPD regional and national networks through development events to increase the knowledge and improve professional practice. Furthermore, as a Senior Lecturer on Undergraduate and Post Graduate HRM programmes the research will enhance the learning of the future HRM practitioners.

Finally, there are several areas of the research that merit further investigation in the future that come from this study:

- Further investigation to understand how the learning from the Executive Coaching relationships that the research identified, is transferred to the workplace. It would be useful to understand the processes that Executive use to transfer this learning to the wider oganisation.
- Further research to seek to establish if there is a link between the Executive Coaching outcomes and organisational improvement.
- It would be interesting to understand how long the behavioural change the Executives believe they achieve from Executive Coaching is maintained.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Questionnaire

Appendix 2 - Letter to Executives

Appendix 3 - Interview Guide

Appendix 4 - Informed Consent Form

Appendix 5 - Interview Themes

Appendix 6 - Data Reduction Framework

Coaching Research Questionnaire

For Leaders

The questionnaire can either be completed and returned by e mail to   or if you would rather print off and return by post to Rachel Robins -   . If you have any questions with regard to the questionnaire please contact me on my mobile.

The leaders the research is covering are Chief Executives, Directors and Assistant Director levels.

Name
Organisation

1. What types of personal development have you undertaken in the last 2 years? Please tick any that apply

☐ structured leadership programme

☐ one off events

☐ individual development

☐ other – please list

2. Have you ever undertaken formal coaching for personal development?

☐ Yes

☐ No

3. Were you informed about coaching before you pursued it as a means of development?

☐ Yes

☐ No

4. Was it important for improving your personal performance to undertaking coaching?

☐ Yes

☐ No

5. How long a period did your coaching sessions cover?

☐ 1 to 6 months

☐ 6 to 9 months

☐ 9 to 12 months

☐ Other – please list

6. Did you transfer what you discovered in the coaching relationship back to the workplace?

☐ Yes

☐ No

7. Was undertaking coaching driven by yourself or someone else

☐ myself

☐ someone else

8. Did you find your own coach?

☐ Yes

☐ No

9. Was it important for you to set outcomes to be achieved before you commenced your coaching?

☐ Yes

☐ No

10. Was it important for you to evaluate the effectiveness of your coaching?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Thank you for your contribution to this valuable research.

I would like to carry out a number of face-to-face interviews to increase the research data. Would you be willing to be interviewed at a future date? You can be assured that at no time will your responses be identified back to yourself nor will your organisation be identified.

☐ Yes

☐ N0

February 2014

<u>Executive Coaching in Local Government - Doctorate Research</u>

Dear Colleague,

Having worked in Local Government Human Resources and Organisational Development for many years, I left in November 2011 from Warrington BC as Director People and Improvement. My experience as shown me how difficult it is for Local Government Chief Executives to find personal development that they value and find effective. I have therefore decided to undertake my research on the effectiveness of Executive Coaching in Local Government

I am currently undertaking a Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA) at Chester University and would really appreciate it if you could spare me a few minutes to complete the attached questionnaire. I would also like to know, if you have been coached, whether you would be willing to be interviewed: the questionnaires will support the face-to-face interviews that will provide the rich data of the research. The interviews will aim to identify the effectiveness of the coaching, the types of issues that Local Government Executives take into the coaching relationships, what methods do executives use to measure the effectiveness of coaching they have engaged in, and what provision, if any, do organisations have for Executive coaching. I anticipate that this research will not only give value to Local Government leaders by identifying what issues are addressed in coaching but also contribute to the body of professional knowledge for HR and OD professionals. I will ensure that all those that contribute receive a copy of the findings of the research. You have my guarantee that all information you share will remain absolutely confidential and my final report will not attribute any response to an individual or organisation. All data will be retained secure at all times and will be destroyed at the appropriate time.

The questionnaire can either be completed and returned by e mail to   if   you would rather print off and return to me by post to the address on the questionnaire.

If you have any questions with regard to the questionnaire please contact me on my mobile.

I would like all responses returned as soon as possible please.

Thank you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely

Rachel Robins MA FCIPD

Interview Guide

	Question	Prompts	Probes
Descriptive	Would you share with me how you selected your coach?	Self selected - was this import Did you enquire about back ground of coach - Psychological: Training and Development; Management/Or Development	Would you use an internal coach if provided by the organisation? Did the background of the coach matter to you?
Narrative	Can you share with me the kind of issue or objective you took into coaching	Behavioural change Understanding self Increasing personal resilience Dealing with organisational change Increasing effectiveness Skills development Understanding relationships Understanding attitudes	What caused the issue? Was there an incident? Did you set clear outcomes you required/
Structural	Can you tell me about any process or format have you followed during your coaching session?	GROW Model Followed clients agenda Number of sessions	Did you use 360 Mental toughness Feedback interviews
Contrast	What do you think are the main differences between a good and not so good coaching session?	Amount of challenge from coach Listening skills of coach Validity of questions used Your openness & honesty inside the session Care and focus of coach to your needs	Did the coach have relevant knowledge eg Local Gov: member relationships What made it effective? Learning relevant to apply in work
Evaluation	How does a coaching session leave you feeling?	What did you appreciate most about coaching How would you rate your progress against your goals	Stimulate reflection Start planning Unsettles
Circular	What do you think other people think about you having a coach?	What feedback, if any, have you received from other about a change in their perception of your behaviour or you skills	Response from Elected Members Reaction from Peers
Comparative	What do you think the impact would have been if you hadn't had a coach?	Do you use any one as an informal coach	Who would you use as a sounding board for ideas before coaching

Informed Consent Form

Executive Coaching in Local Government - Doctorate Research

Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA) at Chester University

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study.	
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.	
3. All data will be retained securely at all times and will be destroyed at the appropriate time.	
4. I understand that any information which I may give, may be used in future reports, articles or presentations by the researcher.	
5. I understand that neither my name or the name of my organisation will be not appear in any report, article or presentations.	
6. I agree to take part in the above study.	

Name of participant ……………………… Date…………………Signature……………………….

Researcher …………………………………Date…………………….Signature……………………….

When completed please return in the envelope provided. One copy will be given to the participant and the original will be kept on file with research documentation.

Executive Coaching in Local Government - Doctorate Research

Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA) at Chester University

Having worked in Local Government Human Resources and Organisational Development for many years, I left in November 2011 from Warrington BC as Director People and Improvement. My experience as shown me how difficult it is for Local Government Chief Executives to find personal development that they value and find effective. I have therefore decided to undertake my research on the effectiveness of Executive Coaching in Local Government

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It is anticipated that this research will not only give value to Local Government leaders by identifying what issues are addressed in coaching but also contribute to the body of professional knowledge for HR and OD professionals.

I will ensure that all those that contribute receive a copy of the findings of the research.

You have my guarantee that all information you share will remain absolutely confidential and my final report will not attribute any response to an individual or organisation.

Researcher

Rachel Robins MA, FCIPD

Interview Data by Theme

Theme	Area covered	Issues from LDP Executive Coach	Issues from IE executive Coaching
Theme 1	The coach	**A** Selected from the LDP list **B** The professional background of the coach is important when selecting a coach - senior leadership experience and or training and development	**A** The professional background of the coach is important when selecting a coach - not a skills based coach - requires business knowledge **B** Executives make a judgment as to the credibility of the coach before engaging **C** Personal fit is important
Theme 2	Coaching Issues	**C** Embedding skills from leadership programme **D** Opportunity to talk through existing Relationships and impact of LDP	D - Change - including Transformational, behaviour and style E - Relationships F - Gain personal insight G - Confidential space to think and talk H - Career development
Theme 3	Coaching process	**E** Use of formal coaching models - GROW **F** used Techniques (MBTI/NLP/360) before and during sessions	I - Followed clients agenda J - No formal model - meet the needs of the client K- Made executive stop and think (challenge thinking) L - shared issues then questions from coach
Theme 4	Successful coaching criteria	**G** Breadth of leadership experience of the coach **H** Gave new ideas and techniques that could be used **I** Skilled coach with leadership skills experience	N - Always Clients agenda O - Gaining insight P - Challenge from the coach Q - Credibility of coach S - Can bring back things you thought you had forgotten T - Transferrable and having a plan U - Taking real issues into a session V - Coach being external W - a safe environment X - Skilled coach Y - Engaged client
Theme 5	Post coaching feelings	**J**– Reflective **K** - Tired **L** - Had a plan	Z – Reflective AA - Tired AB - Had a plan AC – Refocused
Theme 6	Colleague perception of coaching		AD- people knew but not an issue AE - not widely know
Theme 7	Alternatives to having a coach		AF - Would use existing networks for service issues but not the same issues as taken into coaching AG - Wouldn't have used anyone internal coach even if provided
Theme 8	The value of Executive Coaching	**M** Opportunity to practice elements form the programme **N** Honest feedback on performance	AH - Space to create a plan or way forward AI - External to the organisation AJ - Confidential safe space it provides AK - Being challenged AL - Being kept balanced

Synthesis of data reduction and analytic induction methods   **Appendix 6**

	Miles & Huberman (1994)	**Johnson (2004)**	**Practice**	**Research Stages**
Step 1	Affix codes	Define and categorise	Initial coding	Identification of similar responses
Step 2	Noting reflections	Provisional list	Refining / re-coding	Grouping of common issues
Step 3	Sorting and sifting	Case features	Clarifying essences	Identification of major themes